

## Why Is There A Seminary Called Hood

Hood Theological Seminary, Salisbury, North Carolina

by

Reginald W. Brown, M.A.

Many people regard a theological seminary as a place to talk about God, study the Bible, and train for the ministry. Some see it as a seedbed nurturing the divine call of God's servants. Although a man-made structure can represent an icon of Christian character, organized discussions about God can take place anywhere.

There is a school on a hill overlooking a section of Interstate 85 in Salisbury, North Carolina with an extension in Greenville, Alabama. These are the third and fourth venues in its history where preachers of the Gospel struggle to perfect their call. Its name is Hood Theological Seminary.

### A Seminary for Zion

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E. Zion Church) succeeded after several attempts in establishing a seminary on the campus of Livingstone College. A growing African American Methodist church with a distinctive theological perspective, it was thought, needed to supersede its traditional ministerial apprentice – the conference training system. The demand for a seminary was also in response to racially biased theologies directed at black Americans. Furthermore the A.M.E. Zion Church General Conference demanded an adequate theological training program for the church's clergy.

The 21<sup>st</sup> General Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church held in Washington, D. C. on May 2, 1900, however, failed to raise the \$6,000.00 necessary to establish and operate a first-class theological department. A year later in March 1901, the Board of Bishops met in Rock Hill, South Carolina and appointed a committee of 33 to develop a plan to establish a fully operational theological department. William Harvey Goler, the second president of the College and a professor in theological studies, responded to the committee's recommendations and the concerns of Zion's clergy by organizing a graduate theological department in the fall of 1903, with additional

theological teachers. The seminary was created from the remnants of the graduate theological department. The Livingstone College Board of Trustees in 1904 named the new department, Hood Theological Seminary (Hood) after its first board chairman and Senior Bishop of the A.M.E. Zion church, James Walker Hood. Its purpose was to train ministers and missionaries for the pastoral itinerate service of the A. M. E. Zion Church.

Hood Theological Seminary's support and value increased tremendously by 1908. The minutes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Conference held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania stated:

The dominant idea on the minds of the fathers of the church in their effort to found an institution of learning was to meet the necessity of a growing church for a well-prepared and trained ministry. From the beginning of the work we have had in mind a trained ministry as a necessity absolute for the perpetuation and edification of the Church, ... The young men having gone out from us are acquitting themselves creditably, many of the churches having testified to their hearty and helpful influence, some of them are occupying the largest and most influential charges in the Connection, ... <sup>1</sup>

Then at the General Conference of 1912, it was voted to make Hood a graduate school of religion with provision for a dean under the sponsorship of Livingstone College.<sup>2</sup> It eclipsed the goal set at the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of making "Hood Theological Seminary equal to any Seminary in the South" and is now perfecting its mission to prepare siblings of the human race for transformational leadership in the Christian ministry. This leadership transforms Christ like attitudes into action by exercising the faith and Christian praxis that anchors souls to God.

The seminary's first building was dedicated in 1911 and currently houses offices of the Livingstone

College president. Hood's second home dedicated in June 1965 as the William Jacob Walls Center is today's college student life center. After the Seminary's corporate separation from Livingstone in 2000, under the leadership of its first president Dr. Albert J. D. Aymer, it relocated to the site of a former motel at present day 1810 Lutheran Drive in the fall of 2005. The site was transformed into an idyllic sprawling campus. Aymer led the effort in securing the status of full accreditation with The Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Today, Hood is a highly acclaimed institution with a variety of graduate programs, including the Doctor of Ministry, and an interracial diverse student body representing various Christian traditions. Dr. Vergel L. Lattimore, Hood's second president, directs the seminary's continued growth, while also securing a leading role for Hood within ATS's organizational programs and services.

### Why Was Bishop Hood's Name Chosen?

There are several reasons that Bishop Hood's name is the moniker of a theological school and a women's dormitory at Fayetteville State University. Some reasons stem from Bishop Hood's theology of church and race, his social political activism and his Christian character. Some theological reasons originated from his view of Revelation 4: 6-14 that defines genuine Christianity, especially the ministry, in terms of courage, patience, intelligence, and divine action. He saw God's church resting upon the apostles of the Lamb, rather than Peter alone, and the body of Christian principals and beliefs taught by the twelve apostles, which form the basis upon which the doctrinal church of God rests. According to Hood,

It is not built upon philosophy, nor human reason, nor human tradition, but upon the doctrines of revealed truth, proclaimed by the apostles of divine authority. Not by any one of them alone, but by the whole number twelve, which is the number signifying perfection. The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner stone; and the same idea is signified here in that they are called the apostles of the Lamb.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of sanctified reason, faith is rational and sound logic is never condemned in the scriptures. Authentic biblical truth established by irrefutable premises demands logic and clear, sensible thinking. Revealed truth is not self contradictory or irrational. Christ is incarnate truth, and He cannot deny himself (2 Timothy. 2:13). "No lie is the truth" (1 John 2: 21). Paul's deductive statements about the importance of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, and Hood's interpretation of Revelation are products of sanctified reason. According to Hood,

The religion of Jesus is not a system of dark sayings, nor a mass of ambiguities, as were the responses to heathen oracles; it is not superstition, nor fanaticism, nor cunningly-devised fables. It is truth capable of being demonstrated, and worthy of the deepest meditation, and the profoundest thought of the highest order of intelligence.<sup>4</sup>

His core doctrinal convictions stressed works in progress rather than finished products and governance of Christian life instead of achievement. (Phil. 3: 12-16) Like John Wesley, Hood saw Christian Perfection as purity of intention, dedicating one's life to God and the mind which was in Christ, that enables us to walk as Christ walked.<sup>5</sup> He believed that

Patient resignation to the will of God, under every dispensation of His providence, is in our judgment, the capstone of Christian perfection. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect by suffering; and we, to be confronted to him must patiently endure our sufferings (2 Tim 3:12)<sup>6</sup>

This could mean that a relationship with the life and suffering of Christ produces human qualities and awakens dormant thoughts. Could such qualities define the Christian character of an institution? According to Israel Gerber, a former professor at Hood Seminary, suffering encourages an inventory of beliefs and perfects a more profound understanding of God<sup>7</sup> as demonstrated by Job's suffering. "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." (Job 19: 25) Like Job, Hood Seminary

and its progenitors progressed and continue to perfect its mission through the patient resignation to the will of God.

Hood demonstrated his commitment to the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian Perfection when it was under siege by a number of Zion's clergy and laity at the turn of the twentieth century. He said,

The A. M. E. Zion Church is a Methodist body; and one of the cardinal principles of Methodism is Christian Perfection. While I have not made a hobby of this doctrine, (as I do not believe in special hobbies) yet on suitable occasions I have tried to set it forth to the best of my ability. I have seen in the Star [Star of Zion News Paper] several attempts, either direct or indirect to discredit this doctrine<sup>8</sup>

### The Role of the Church

The church having opened the way for the development of the black man, other means have followed, and still others will follow, until his opportunities are equal to that of any other race. The African Church will then have accomplished its special work – not till then.<sup>9</sup>  
James W. Hood

Hood's vision of the black church as the primary source of African American salvation consisted of six roles. First, the church was an instrument of liberation from slavery and sin. Second, it was a source of intelligent leaders during emancipation. Serving as the source of Reconstruction and Post Reconstruction era political leaders was the church's third role. Supplying intelligent African American missionaries to go south and evangelize was its fourth role. Fifth was the "Negro church as a divine instrument to save souls." The sixth role was to serve as the key institution for uplifting black Americans.<sup>10</sup>

According to Bishop Hood, if the Negro church in America did not exist, the race would have been without intelligent leaders. The church was the only institution ex-slaves could claim as their own. It was the source of their development like other institutions were to the rest of humanity. Their church served as a lyceum, college, municipal counsel, legislature,

and congress. Through the black church people transitioning from property to citizenship learned the rule of law, usages of civil society, and the art of government. Therefore, according to the senior bishop, a comparatively few distinguished people were produced except for those among the ministry. Those who were not ministers acquired their skills through the instrumentality, of the church where speakers had a platform, audience, and an opportunity to develop. Bishop Hood draws attention to Frederick Douglass's admission of indebtedness to the little A.M.E. Zion church in New Bedford, Massachusetts for his success.

As sexton, class-leader, and local preacher, he got his inspiration and the send-off which made him one of the most remarkable men of the age.<sup>11</sup>

Part of Hood's outlook on the Christian ministry was a vision of the preacher as the main participant in civic affairs. This was a source of dismay and in some cases ridicule among critics who viewed the black preacher in low esteem. Hood acknowledged that there were few "intelligent leaders" in the race besides the Christian minister.<sup>12</sup> He said, "Christianity promotes intelligence. A few great minds have wasted their energies on infidelity, but the great masses of great intellects have been the products of Christianity."<sup>13</sup>

### Hood's Social Political Activism

Hood's organizing and political activities began in 1864 at New Bern and Beauford, North Carolina where he brought two churches into the A.M.E. Zion denomination. These were two of the more than 360 churches throughout coastal North Carolina, southern Virginia, and northern South Carolina he helped to establish, along with the North Carolina Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church.<sup>14</sup> He was a founder of Zion Wesley Institute in 1879 later re-chartered as Zion Wesley College in 1885, and renamed Livingstone College in 1887.<sup>15</sup> He discovered Joseph Charles Price, Livingstone's first president.<sup>16</sup> He also founded the church's newspaper the *Star of Zion*. Moreover, Hood helped to establish 18 Prince Hall lodges, served as Grand Master of Masons of North Carolina, Grand Patron of the Order of Eastern Star, and Chaplain

of the Grand Lodge of World of Good Templars.<sup>17</sup>

Bishop Hood presided over the first statewide political convention of African Americans in Raleigh, North Carolina to secure civil and political rights in September 1865.<sup>18</sup> In 1868 he participated in creating the North Carolina Constitution<sup>19</sup> that established homesteads, women's rights, and public school provisions for all citizens.<sup>20</sup> The passage of the new Constitution established county and township governments and legislated elections by popular vote of all state executive officers, judges, county officials, and legislators. Property qualifications for voting and office holding were abolished also.<sup>21</sup>

Hood was assistant superintendent of public instruction for North Carolina with special duties for African American children. While in that position, he advocated for separate schools for blacks and whites after observing that most white teachers regarded black children as inferior. Another of his concerns regarding the miseducation of black children was his experience with teachers from northern missionary societies during Reconstruction. William Gravely hailed the first wave of teachers leaving Boston for the South as the new "Pilgrim Fathers" who promised "a New South after the Puritan and perfect pattern."<sup>22</sup> The bishop disfavored the patronizing tone of their puritanical rhetoric and praxis. One can safely conclude that white southerners were also not enthusiastic about the missionary zeal from the north. Accordingly he disassociated himself from white missionary schools for blacks and integrated southern public schools. Contrary to these sentiments he objected to codifying the word 'segregation' into the 1868 state Constitution.

Make this distinction in your organic law and in many places the white children will have good schools ... while the colored people will have none.

Hood insisted that self-help requires African Americans to have total control over black institutions of higher learning. Fayetteville State University (1867), Livingstone College (1879) and Hood Theological Seminary (1904) are products of Hood's efforts and convictions.

When the conservatives regained control of the state legislature, his superintendent's position

was eliminated. He subsequently served briefly as an unpaid magistrate and deputy collector of customs from 1868 to 1871. Later he assumed the position of assistant superintendent of the Freedman's Bureau in North Carolina until President Ulysses S. Grant terminated the program.

The irony of Hood's position on self-help was the Jim Crow segregation laws that followed. His philosophy of self-help merely advocated for the advancement of African American economic, educational, and social interests within an environment of southern white hostility, without prescribing to black separatism. He rejected the repercussions of the Supreme Court ruling in "Plessey versus Ferguson" in 1896 that disenfranchised African Americans.

### Early Influences

James Walker Hood was born on a rented farm in Kennett Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania on May 30, 1831. His birth was three months before Nat Turner's southern Virginia rebellion and during a second American religious revival fueled by a Great Awakening. He and five brothers and six sisters were the children of Levi and Harriet Walker Hood who lived near the Pennsylvania - Delaware state line. Their home was a station on the Underground Railroad, the secret network for people fleeing southern slavery into the northern states and Canada. The family and other free blacks in the area faced constant threats of being kidnapped and enslaved. His early life gave birth to his Christian character and the desire for racial justice and clerical gender equality that he championed as a politician, minister and itinerate bishop.

His father Levi was a shoemaker and minister of the Union Church of Africans in Wilmington, Delaware nine miles from the family home. He arranged for his children to work for food, clothing, and six weeks of education per year until their 16th birthday. When Hood fulfilled his father's commitments, he began working in Philadelphia and New York, attending school in Pennsylvania and Delaware,<sup>23</sup> and teaching himself general and theological studies except for being tutored in Greek. He learned grammar and received encouragement to become a public speaker from his mother. His character formation was also

influenced by social factors. The hostile racial attitudes in Pennsylvania, Delaware's proximity to a slave state, and Quaker theology and practice helped to shape his point of view. He learned to temper his demeanor. He developed into a thoughtful and insightful minister, evangelist, missionary, politician, and educator.

He accepted his salvation through the enlightenment and encouragement of his mother and sister Charlotte without the drama most 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelicals placed on religious conversions. His spiritual and Christian intelligence instead of emotional zeal awakened him to his salvation and call to the ministry. He started preaching and married Hannah L. Ralph in 1852 who died three years later. Hood received his preaching license at a Union Church of Africans in New York City in 1856 and moved to Connecticut in 1857.

Since there was no Union Church of Africans in Connecticut, Hood acquired a license to preach from the A. M. E. Zion Church and subsequently a pastoral appointment in New Haven, Connecticut.<sup>24</sup> A headwaiter's job supplemented his income for himself and his new wife, Sophia J. Nugent as he converted hotel coworkers and brought them into the A.M.E. Zion denomination.<sup>25</sup> He was ordained deacon in September 1860, and later traveled to Nova Scotia, Canada where he gathered a small congregation. In 1862, he was ordained elder at Hartford, Connecticut. After six months of service in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Hood was assigned as a missionary to the newly freed people of the South. He arrived in New Bern, North Carolina in 1864 and preached to the federal African American troops as Union and Confederate forces clashed outside the town.<sup>26</sup> Between the closing months of the American Civil War and the end of Reconstruction in North Carolina, he pastored three years in New Bern, two years in Fayetteville, and over three years in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1872, Hood became the seventeenth bishop in line of succession of the A.M.E. Zion Church. He advocated for the equality of women in the ordained ministry of The A.M.E. Zion Church during his episcopacy. Sophia his second wife who bore him seven children, four of who survived, died in 1875. He married Keziah P. McCoy in 1877, a widow from Wilmington, North Carolina, who bore him two children.

Bishop John Jamison Moore, father of the Western North Carolina Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church before his death in 1893, witnessed

Hood's Christian character ...

distinguished for his coolness and deliberation in excitement. He was a great projector of measures in council, a great conciliator, a deep reasoner and a self-sacrificer for his devoted cause. His Christian integrity stands unimpeached. He is a great worker, and of an invulnerable spirit. Very discerning, genial and affable in his personal bearing, and kind to friend and foe, aged and young.<sup>27</sup>

Hood's moderate response to the Wilmington Massacre, also referred to as the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898, renders support to Bishop Moore's assessment. It also bears witness to the Quaker influence that helped shape his character. Upon the destruction of the Daily Record, North Carolina's only black newspaper, white supremacists violently overthrew the duly elected mayor and bi-racial fusion government of that town killing many blacks and forcing others into exile. The African American middle class was devastated and Wilmington's population was no longer predominately black. Hood blamed the event on demagogues and overwrought passions on both sides and gave a rational, objective, and Christian response to the event in his Episcopal address at the 1899 North Carolina Annual Conference held in Goldsboro. Bishop Hood advised those who contemplated retaliation against the white reactionary forces not to seek revenge. He counseled peace on the grounds of Christ's commandments and the consequences of destruction.

### **A Man of Courage**

Temperance and African American civil rights in public transportation yield testimony to Hood's courage. He was convinced that alcohol and gambling were worst slave drivers than former slave owners and when the ex-slave was free from the bondage of these vices, he was uplifting himself and his race. Hood influenced the inclusion of a statement on temperance in the recharter of Zion Wesley Institute as a college in 1885. Part of charter's preamble states,

That it shall not be lawful for any person or persons to set up or continue any gaming table,

or any device whatever for playing at any game of chance or hazard, by whatever name called, or to receive or use any license to retail spirituous liquors, ...<sup>28</sup>

Hood predated the 1960s civil rights activists by more than a century. From 1848 to 1863 conductors of the Pennsylvania Railroad tried on several occasions to remove him from first-class passenger cars. He was removed from New York City streetcars five times in one night in 1857 for ignoring the seating policy for blacks. In 1868 Hood acquired cabin passage on the Cape Fear River steamers despite its prohibition. The agents informed him that the steamer company would yield to his demands because Cape Fear was under military authority and advised the bishop not to take advantage of this, as it would be worse for him when the military withdraws. He responded by saying that he would enjoy it while he could, and trust the Lord for the balance.<sup>29</sup>

### Rest Old Warrior

Long and arduous were thy labors, but thou canst rest. No traveling amid snow and rain, no more afflictions, no more misunderstandings, no more vexations, no more paralytic strokes. Thy tongue which was palsied by the strokes is not needed where thou art now.<sup>30</sup>

On October 30, 1918, James Walker Hood died at home in Fayetteville, North Carolina, at the age of 87, having served as an itinerant minister for about 60 years and as bishop for 44 years. His body rests in a family plot in Cross Creek Cemetery near historic Evans Metropolitan A. M. E. Zion Church. The spirit of his Christian character, embodied in the seminary bearing his name, lives on a hill in view of one of man's busy byways and among those within its bounds who are perfecting their service to God as apostles of the Lamb. So, What's in a name? The answer is the Christian character that defines an individual and an institution-named Hood Theological Seminary.

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Minutes, *Twenty-Third Quadrennial Session*, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Big Wesley, Philadelphia, PA, 1908, 211

<sup>2</sup> Walls, William J. *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Reality of the Black Church*. Charlotte, NC:: A.M.E. Zion Publishing House 1974, 318; Minutes 23<sup>rd</sup>. Quadrennial Session. *President's Report*, 211.

<sup>3</sup> Hood, James W. *The Plan of the Apocalypse*. York, PA: P. Anstadt & Sons, 1900, 183.

<sup>4</sup> Hood, James W. *Negro in the Christian Pulpit, or the two Characters and Two Destines as Delineated in Twenty-One Practical Sermons*. Raleigh, NC: Edwards, Broughton & Co., Steam Power Printers and Binders, 1884. 285

<sup>5</sup> Wesley, John. *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. 25-35 City Road London: 1952, Reprinted 1960. 109

<sup>6</sup> Hood, James W. *Negro in the Christian Pulpit, or the two Characters and Two Destines as Delineated in Twenty-One Practical Sermons*. Raleigh, NC: Edwards, Broughton & Co., Steam Power Printers and Binders, 1884 284 . Woodson, Carter Godwin. *Collection of Negro Papers and Related Documents, 1803 - 1936*. Washington: Library of Congress, Photo duplication Service, Hood, James Walker: *Correspondence and Writings, 1892 - 1916* Container 9; Reel 6. (Schomburg Library, New York, New York) *Collection of Negro papers and related documents*

<sup>7</sup> Gerber, Israel J. *Job On Trial, A Book for our Time*. Gastonia, NC E.P. Press, Inc. 1982 134

<sup>8</sup> Woodson, Carter Godwin. *Collection of Negro Papers and Related Documents, 1803 - 1936*. Washington: Library of Congress A letter addressed to the Star of Zion.

<sup>9</sup> Hood, James W. *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*. 1895., 48

<sup>10</sup> Hood, James W. *Sketch of the Early History of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church with Jubilee Souvenir and an Appendix; Part III. Gods Purpose in the Negro Church as Seen in the History of the Movement*. J. W. Hood, 1913, 59 - 66.

<sup>11</sup> Hood, James W. *Sketch of the Early History...* 1913 63

<sup>12</sup> Martin, Sandy Dwayne. *For God and Race, The Religious and Political Leadership of AMEZ Bishop James Walker Hood*. University of South Carolina: 1999 University of South Carolina, 16

<sup>13</sup> Hood, James W. *The Plan of the Apocalypse*. York, PA: P. Anstadt, 1900, 30

<sup>14</sup> <http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/articles/pages/4303/Hood-James-Walker-1831-1918.html>">Hood, James Walker (1831-1918) Minister, activist, Chronology, Freed slaves and activism, Affiliated with fraternal orders

<sup>15</sup> Martin, Sandy Dwayne. *For God and Race, The Religious and Political Leadership of AMEZ Bishop James Walker Hood*. University of South Carolina: 1999 University of South Carolina, 39.

<sup>16</sup> Martin, *For God and Race*, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Martin. *For Good and Race*, 38

<sup>18</sup> Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863 - 1877*. New York: Harpers and Row 1989, 113

<sup>19</sup> NC Secretary of State. North Carolina 1868 State Constitution. Publications Division

<http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/pubsweb/nconst.aspx> [7/7/11]

<sup>20</sup> Martin. 1999, 70, 71. Woodson, Carter G. The History of the Negro Church, Second Edition. Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers 1921, 237.

<sup>21</sup> Sanders, John L. NC Constitutional History, 1868 – 1875.

<http://ncpedia.org/government/constitution/1868> [6/7/11] Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of North Carolina at its session 1868. Raleigh: Joseph W. Holden, Convention Printer, 1868 <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/conv1868/conv1868.html> [6/7/11]

<sup>22</sup> Gravely, William B. Gilbert Haven, Methodist Abolitionist, Nashville: Abington Press, 1973, 98.

<sup>23</sup> Jordan, Robert B, President of the Senate and Ramsey, Speaker of the House of Representatives. General Assembly of North Carolina 1987 Session Ratified Bill Resolution 25, House Joint Resolution 963 A joint Resolution Honoring Bishop James Walker Hood on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Re-Chartering of Livingstone College by the North Carolina General Assembly, 19 May 1987

<sup>24</sup> Martin. 1999, 28

<sup>25</sup> Martin, 1999, 29

<sup>26</sup> Barrett, John Gilchrist. North Carolina As A Civil War Battleground 1861 - 1865. Raleigh, N. C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1960, 67, 68 Simmons, William J. Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising. Cleveland, Ohio, Geo. M. Rewell & Co. 1887, 135

<sup>27</sup> Moore, John Jamison. History of the A.M.E. Zion Church in America. Founded in 1796, in the City of New York. York Pa: Teachers Office, 1884, Charlotte, NC: The A.M.E.Zion Historic Society 2004, 240-241.

<sup>28</sup> Laws and Resolutions of the General Assembly at its Session of 1885; Chapter 25, pages 770 - 773. An Act to Incorporate Zion Wesley College, Ratified the 19th day of February, A.D. 1885. Raleigh, North Carolina @North Carolina Archives ( Also H.B. 308 to be entitled: An Act to Incorporate Zion Wesley College copy of handwritten rough draft. )

<sup>29</sup> Bell, John L. Jr. J. W. Hood (James Walker), 1831-1918 <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hood/bio.html> 01/ 02/ 2009. Simmons, William J. Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising. 1887, 136

<sup>30</sup> Clinton, George Wyly. "Eulogy for J. W. Hood". The Star of Zion, October 31, 1918 : 8