

HISTORY

BAPTISTS

CRAWFORD TOY 1836-1919 – He left his faith

Crawford Toy was one of the most brilliant and promising Baptist scholars of the 19th century. His downfall is a warning to all who forget the simplicity that is in Christ.

A brilliant student, Toy enrolled in the University of Virginia in Charlottesville at the age of 16 where he came under the influence of the renown Baptist pastor and scholar, John A. Broadus. Toy was baptized by Broadus in 1854. In 1856 he graduated from the university, and for the next three years he taught at the Albermarle Female Institute. In 1859 Toy enrolled in Southern Seminary in Greenville, SC. He completed the three years' course in about a year.

In 1860 Toy applied to the Southern Baptist Mission Board as a missionary candidate to Japan. The Board accepted his application, but before he could depart, war clouds began gathering on the horizon, and the Mission Board felt it would be unwise to send any new missionaries to the field. Toy was disappointed and considered going anyway, but he eventually accepted the Board's decision. The Board's fears became a reality when war broke out between the states in 1861.

Toy enlisted in the Confederate infantry and was appointed a chaplain in General Robert E. Lee's army, participating in most of the war's great battles. At Gettysburg, when the Confederate army retreated, Toy chose to remain with the wounded and dying. This decision resulted in his capture and imprisonment.

At the war's conclusion, Toy spent the years of 1866-68 studying in Germany. Unfortunately, he drank deeply from the poison waters of German rationalism. Upon his return from Europe, he accepted a professorship at Southern Seminary teaching Old Testament interpretation and oriental languages. Gradually and insidiously, the rationalism he had acquired in Europe began to destroy his faith in the inspiration of the Scriptures. He began to teach that Moses was not the author of Genesis and that the creation account was compiled by several authors from material borrowed from the Babylonians. He also embraced Darwin's evolutionary theories as truth revealed by God. In addition, he came to believe the New Testament writers had used faulty hermeneutics in identifying several Old Testament passages as Messianic, pri-

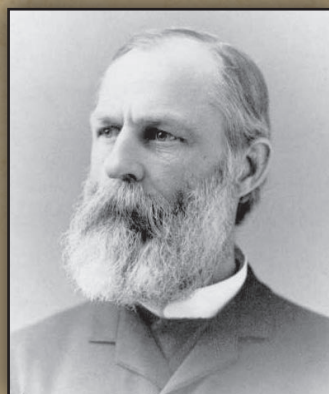
marily Psalm 16:10 and Isaiah 53.

John A. Broadus, his fellow professor and former teacher, advised Toy to abandon his new philosophy and warned if he continued on this path it would eventually lead him to universalism. In 1879 Toy wrote an article for the *Sunday School Times* expressing his views on Isaiah 53: 1-12. His radical views produced a storm of protest among the Southern Baptists. This turmoil forced the Southern Board of Directors to examine Toy's doctrinal beliefs. Toy presented to the Board his views on Scripture along with his resignation. He felt he would be vindicated but the Board voted 18 to 2 to accept his resignation.

Toy's journey into rationalism had come at a great cost, alienating him from lifelong friends and separating him from the woman he was engaged to marry. The woman Toy was engaged to marry was renowned Baptist missionary Lottie Moon. Toy had met Miss Moon while he was teaching at Albermarle Female Institute. Lottie was a brilliant student and Toy's intellectual equal. In 1861 he had asked Lottie to become his wife, but she declined his offer.

However, about 17 years later they began to exchange letters and Toy again proposed marriage, and this time she accepted. Lottie had been serving in China for about six years and was unaware of the controversy surrounding Toy's orthodoxy. When she was informed by friends about Toy's theological problems, she purchased several books supporting his new position. She was shocked by what she read, and then she wrote to Toy expressing the incompatibility of their views and breaking their engagement.

Toy accepted a professorship at Harvard Divinity School, but he remained a Baptist uniting with a Baptist church in Cambridge, MA. In about 1886, John Broadus's prophecy was fulfilled. Toy severed all relationships with the Baptists and joined the First Unitarian Church. This decision was a complete denial of the faith of his youth. Surprisingly, Toy is considered a martyr and a hero to many moderate Baptists. No one knows the number of impressionable young men whose minds were poisoned by the man who deserted the faith once delivered to the saints.



Crawford Howell Toy

by Thomas Ray

