File
Hon Degree
1976

THOMAS WYATT TURNER

Now embarked upon his centennial year, Thomas Wyatt Turner, descendant of slave forebears in Southern Maryland, cradle of colonial Catholicism, has given nearly a century of service to his Church and to his people.

Refusing to abjure his Faith in return for a scholarship to a sectarian college, he entered Howard University, from which he was graduated in 1901. Forced to discontinue graduate studies at Catholic University for lack of funds, he joined Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute, then returned to Howard where he taught Biology and served as Acting Dean of the School of Education. Subsequently, upon completion of his doctorate at Cornell University, he devoted two decades to teaching and administration in the science department of Hampton Institute until his retirement in 1945.

An early champion of the cause of his black co-religionists, Turner organized the Federated Colored Catholics of the United States, which constantly put before the American hierarchy the needs and aspirations of black Catholics. The efforts of this pioneering group ultimately bore fruit in the ~~crumbling of racial barriers~~ development of constructive interracial relations within the Church, ~~the reopening of the University to black students~~, and in the creation, more recently, of the National Office of Black Catholics.

Charter member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and of the George Washington Carver Scientific Foundation, fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, founder of the National Science Institute, he has enriched the lives of countless students, colleagues, and associates in the struggle for racial justice.

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Three-quarters of a century after his initial enrollment, therefore, The Catholic University of America happily confers upon Thomas Wyatt Turner, the degree of Doctor of Science, honoris causa.