

BIBLICAL RECORDER.

THE ORGAN OF THE NORTH CAROLINA BAPTISTS—DEVOTED TO BIBLE RELIGION, EDUCATION, LITERATURE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

Volume 53.

RALEIGH, N. C., WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 1889.

Number 5.

The Biblical Recorder.

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY.

OFFICE:

Corner Hargett and Salisbury Sts., Raleigh, N. C.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION:

One copy, one year \$ 2.00
One copy, six months 1.00
Clubs of ten (copy extra to sender) 20.00

Remittances must be sent by Registered Letter, Postoffice Order, Postal Note, Express or Draft, payable to the order of the Publisher.

Obituaries, sixty words long, are inserted free of charge. When they exceed this length, one cent for each word must be paid in advance.

The Editor's Third Year with the Recorder.

His Sole Management of the Paper.—Its Success, &c.—Influence of the Baptist State Convention.

In my last article I had reached the time when I had bought half of the RECORDER stock, and by mutual consent took entire control of the paper. This was near the close of 1885. During the ensuing year I prosecuted my business as best I could and not only extended the circulation of the RECORDER but secured by solicitation a material increase in its correspondence. This I regarded as essential to its success.

Of the contents of the paper, while I managed it, I have but little to say. I wrote for it as well as I could, and never heard any complaint of its not being sufficiently Baptist. I never believed in any other system of religious faith as a whole, and felt no misgivings of conscience when I judged it necessary to set forth Baptist doctrines and principles with as much distinctness as I could command language to do. When in my reading I encountered articles or newspaper paragraphs which misrepresented our principle or practice, I felt it my duty to straighten up the matter, and if necessary bring it to the test of scripture. And here I may add that while religious controversy, as sometimes conducted, may be and often is an evil rather than a benefit; it is of much importance that the organ of a denomination keep before its readers the leading and distinctive doctrines which they profess. To this end well instructed correspondents, who have more leisure for preparation than editors, may render valuable assistance. Thus, while the younger readers would become better indoctrinated, the older ones would be strengthened and confirmed in their faith. Baptists of all professed Christians ought to be able to give an intelligent reason of their faith and hope in Christ.

In the several religious journals which it is the happiness of the writer to peruse, he finds much more of religious intelligence than of religious doctrine. This is doubtless owing to the progress the cause is now happily making. But the correspondents should bear in mind that religious intelligence, however interesting, is not doctrine, and that it is practicable and often well to incorporate both in their communications. The idea here presented is strikingly illustrated in the interesting sketches now being furnished by our venerable father in Israel Dr. Ryland. This writer cannot speak for others, but can say he reads said articles with increasing interest. The gifts and excellencies, toils and sacrifices of the beloved of whom he writes are by no means overdrawn. In early life and in his native State it was the pleasure of this writer to hear many of these preachers of the past as they stood forth before the people with power and eloquence "holding forth the Word of life." And now, as the hand of time is bringing him nearer and nearer to the great change which they have already passed, he can but anticipate the scene of this grand galaxy of Christian heroes—faithful soldiers of the blood-stained cross—as they appear before their heavenly King to hear the welcome "well done."

Again I have fallen into another digression—a fault which writers of my years not infrequently commit. But after all we write or read for benefit or interest, and if we don't find it in one direction we are apt to seek it in another, and sometimes, yea, often, we may count ourselves happy if we find it at all.

But to return to the thread of my story. This year was attended with the usual changes and occurrences common to the different seasons, and to the editor one very unusual occurrence. It happened in the month of April, 1886; that is, he married; went into the new house he had bought and entered upon the many little duties and cares of house-keeping. To him, of course, the year was quite different from all previous ones. The gaiety of the bridal visit to his friends in Caswell was somewhat colored by a request just at that time to preach the funeral discourse of a beloved sister in Christ who, after ministering for many years comforts to the public servants of her Lord, had fallen asleep. The editor also attended the anniversaries at Wake Forest, Oxford, &c., and no doubt wrote of their proceedings with more interest and warmth than he had been accustomed to do. But when in Raleigh his situation suggests an anecdote related by a wealthy farmer who resided in Halifax county, Virginia, who, when pressed repeatedly by his pastor for liberal subscriptions to good ob-

jects, becoming somewhat wearied by his importunity, replied: "My brother, I find it a pretty hard job to prepare for two worlds at the same time." A young editor with his bride, a new house to furnish, and the entire duties of his office to perform without assistance, had, to say the least, his hands full.

Having omitted to mention it in its proper place, I will now say the Baptist State Convention, in 1885, held its session in the town of Warrenton; but as nothing of unusual interest occurred in its proceedings, I can only add that for a large delegation it was a meeting of much harmony and good feeling, and in this respect in striking contrast with some I had attended in previous years. In union there is strength. Education and missions were now receiving much attention. The body adjourned to meet in Raleigh in October, 1886, the year of which this article treats, and without further allusion to other things I will here speak of what occurred in that memorable Convention. Its sessions had previously been held in the old church-house when it met in Raleigh, but the body had so increased that the house did not afford accommodation, and this meeting (1886) was held in the Common's Hall of the Capitol. The subject of education had been discussed and agitated till it had reached a higher point of public attention than ever before, at least among the Baptists; and when the report on that subject was read a proposition was made for subscriptions to increase the endowment of Wake Forest College, which was then small. The discussion of the subject brought out more zeal and eloquence than had ever been witnessed in this body before. I cannot now recall but two of the speakers, Rev. W. H. Jordan and his half brother Dr. A. M. Poindexter, of Virginia. The latter, by the force of his arguments and the power of his eloquence, completely carried the Convention. I had often heard him, but never before speak as he did on this occasion. The result was a subscription of \$40,000 added to the endowment fund of the College, the largest amount ever subscribed for any one object by the Convention. The sessions of the Convention held in 1885-'86 produced a decided impression on many parts of the State. The Baptists were more and more aroused to increased activity and zeal, and our missionaries, whose number had increased, were carrying the glad tidings to many desolate fields. The lookout was more promising, and the RECORDER was witness to it all. J. J. JAMES.

Yanceyville, N. C.

Old Baptist Preachers of Virginia.

BY R. RYLAND.

An Omnibus.

There is a large class of ministers whom I saw in my younger days and became partially acquainted with, but I do not know enough of their character to justify me in attempting its minute portraiture. I propose, therefore, in this paper to present them in a group.

Samuel E. Straghan, of the Northern Neck of Va., is described by R. B. Semple in a small book, as a man of gigantic power. He was tall, open-faced, beaming with good will, of a loud, clear but musical voice, and brim-full of deep pathos. The only time I remember to have seen and heard him was at my father's house. The large parlor was crammed with neighbors who had come at early twilight to hear the strange preacher. Some one—I know not who—had delivered a brief but prosy, somniferous sermon. At its close, Straghan rose and, without taking a text, began to speak of the privileges of God's people in the present state. I must have been a very small boy, for I recall only one illustration in his address. As the spies brought back from Canaan a cluster of the grapes of Eschol for a pledge and prophecy of the luxuriance of the land, so God often gives us a foretaste of heaven here in the wilderness as a sort of first fruits of the abundant harvest in the blessed future. The whole room was stirred. Some were melted to silent tears. Others uttered gentle, but distinct accents of praise to God, and others shouted aloud for joy. But the preacher went on rolling out words of fire and love, till, overcome himself with emotion, he sat down and covered his face, as if his thoughts were too big for utterance.

Reubin Ford presented to my young and curious eyes, at a meeting of the Dover Association, a large, venerable form, with long, gray hair, and a sonorous voice that commanded the attention of the giddy multitude. (If any reader should be inquisitive enough to inquire into the history of this dear old man and should find that he was dead before I was born—March 14, 1805—he will please write the name of John Courtney in the place of Reubin Ford—to exempt me from the charge of anachronism—for I have only, hanging up in the chamber of memory, the imposing form of the patriarch, quite distinct, but the name is faded by time.) At any rate Ford was a cotemporary with, and very similar to, John Courtney, and like him left a fragrant name among the people of the next generation.

Samuel Harris, of Bedford, who baptized J. B. Jeter, the two Witts, and several other preachers, was a good man, a sound Christian, but a moderate preacher, though

revered by the whole community. He always traveled on horseback—with a long-stemmed pipe projecting from his pocket—a Bible and hymn-book in his saddle-bags, and always ready to attend a funeral, to marry a couple, or to hold a night meeting at a moment's notice. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."

Jacob Grigg, an Englishman, an eloquent and orthodox divine, who served the First Baptist church of Richmond, for some time, and was put forth at the Dover Association to preach on the Lord's day, was an emblem of strength and weakness. He migrated to some Western State and became grossly addicted to drunkenness! After years of humiliation, he came back to Virginia a redeemed man, but bowed down with the deepest penitence. We all forgave him, because we thought God had forgiven him, but he never forgave himself. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." He gave me a thrilling account of Robert Hall whom he had often heard in England, saying that the charm of his preaching was its simplicity and colloquial style. On one occasion when Hall began his sermon, the hearers sat back in their seats with cold indifference. As he advanced, they gradually leaned forward as if anxious to catch the falling words. Presently they rose, unconsciously, one after another, to their feet and stood in a breathless, incumbent posture. And finally they placed their hands on the backs of the pews before them and with stretched out necks and fixed gaze seemed to drink in the melody of his discourse. If this is not an exaggerated account, we poor creatures have got to learn how to preach!

Samuel (?) Davidson, of Campbell county, presents an extreme picture in another direction. He was the pastor of Stonewall church in the lower skirt of the county. He was never guilty of "rubbing his back against college walls," nor of rubbing his brain against the brain of men wiser than himself. His strongest argument against "learning" was that he had never been to college, and he had gotten along remarkably well. By a process of literal interpretation he had persuaded himself and his people that *feet washing* is an ordinance of Christ and of permanent obligation. Accordingly, once or twice a year, the church assembled and went through a regular and formal ablution of one another's feet—the brethren serving the brethren, and the sisters, the sisters. It was brought before the Strawberry (?) Association once, I think, either by the foes or the friends of the custom, and the inquiry was into the legitimacy and bindingness of the custom. The body wisely voted that the pastor and members of Stonewall should be allowed to wash their feet as often as they needed washing, but that they should not make the omission of the custom a bar to fellowship with other churches. This was exactly right. Bro. Archibald Macclay, of New York City, with his Mulberry Street church, celebrated the Lord's Supper every Sunday morning. Nobody objected, and he and his people objurgated nobody for a different course. It is when extreme men magnify their differences and insist, each, that his views shall be universally adopted, that strife and schism get the ascendancy and *new sects originate!* An evangelical body of Christians once *split into two*, because one party regarded the Psalms of David as the only words to be lawfully sung in a gospel church! So far as my knowledge extends, the seceding body still exists, and the only element of discord was the one here stated. Speaking of cleanliness reminds me of a visit I made to Elder Davidson's people during my Lynchburg life. They were having a protracted meeting and I rode down to see and hear and help, if need be. An old brother Matthews was already in the stand, and preached the only sermon I ever heard that didn't have some good in it. He commented on Acts 8: 32-40. When he got to the phrase "a certain water," he argued stoutly that the word *certain* signified that the water was deep enough to baptize in! Near the close of the discourse he paused and looking over the audience, asked, "Are there any *sunuchs* here to-day? If so, come and be baptized." The administration of the ordinance by the pastor was ludicrous and disgusting in the extreme. Seizing the ill-dressed candidates, and pronouncing the baptismal formula with irreverent haste, he slung them into the water and pulled them out in the most unseemly manner. One poor creature came up out of the stream and rolled herself over and over on the new plowed earth until she was a spectacle of filth and folly! It was the first time, and I trust may be the last, that I was ashamed of the beautiful rite that my blessed Lord instituted when he said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." How touching and significant is this ordinance when performed slowly, reverently and believingly for the honor of the Master! I beg our pastors never to hurry through the solemn service merely to convince gainsayers that twelve men can immerse three thousand in one day!

Absalom Waller belonged to a preaching family—some of whom have figured in Kentucky and some in Virginia. He had very light, almost white hair in his youth. His voice was effeminate, unless when approaching loudness, and his general carriage indicated restfulness and composure of mind with fixedness of purpose. I never

heard him preach, but he was classed among the leading ministers of his day and left a fragrant memory in Spottsylvania county, where his name is embalmed in a large and flourishing church known as "Waller's." My impression is that he brought up a large family of children who took a high social position, but I've lost all traces of them by the disturbing effects of the war and the lapse of years.

John Bryce was first associate pastor with "Father Courtney," and then sole pastor of the First church of Richmond. He was a portly and graceful man, of black hair and a benevolent visage, and of self-possessed bearing in the pulpit. I do not know why his pastorate was brief in the metropolis. It requires constant study and systematic visiting to hold one's ground in a city where rival churches are courting the popular favor, and I do not think he was intensely studious, or active in his pastoral calls.

He became the pastor of Fredericksburg, and found his salary so small as to impel him to the practice of law. When R. B. Semple dissuaded him from such a divergence and received the excuse that his income was too scanty for his support, he replied, "Bro. Bryce, if you were to receive a thousand dollars, you would spend twelve hundred, and if your income were raised to this last sum, you would go beyond it in outlay." From this remark I presume the kind hearted man was not a good financier, for he did engage in the legal practice, and ultimately removed to some part of the West where he hoped to find a wider field. Reports came back to his native State that he was not as abstemious as Paul exhorts Timothy to be in 1 Tim 3: 3; but as to the truth of these rumors, or whether he learned wisdom from experience, I have had no means of ascertaining. He certainly was a person of generous impulses and of a sympathizing heart; and, I trust, if he fell, that he rose again, wiser and stronger by the error. He was married four or five times, and, blessed with loving wives, was an affectionate and faithful husband.

John (?) Johns was an old man when Clopton, Jeter and Witt were raised up to occupy the area in which he had labored in the early years of this century. I never heard him preach, but was occasionally at his house and saw how kindly he felt towards the new comers and how respectful they were to him. Old men should never cherish jealousy towards the young, nor should these put on airs as if they were the men and wisdom would die with them. This old man told me a bit of his personal history to prove that old folks can't safely adopt new fashions of dress. I will put it nearly in his own words: "I was going to start to Richmond in a few days to sell my tobacco, when my two daughters begged me not to go to the big city wearing my pants hanging on my hips in the old fashion, but to wear *suspenders*, which all the gentlemen had then adopted. I told them I preferred the old style, but to please them I agreed to wear them if they would knit me a nice pair. This they cheerfully promised to do. Accordingly I put on the suspenders when I started to the city. But the next morning when I got up to attend the warehouse, I forgot all about the suspenders and left them dangling down behind all day while I was busy with the merchants! When I came home I told the girls, they said, 'Well, father, we'll give you up,' and I've never put on a pair since."

William Y. (?) Hiter lived in the latter part of the days of persecution, and used to describe with a zest the old times and the old preachers with whom he had associated. He was never troubled himself, but he saw how the truth had prospered in proportion as it had been opposed, and he was confirmed in his convictions of its divine origin and its final triumph. He traveled much and kept a diary of his journeys, his efforts and his experiences, but they are not such as would interest the reader, though they evidently interested him exceedingly. Indeed, like Bro. Johns, he kept up the old fashions, not as to dress only, but also as to the methods of conducting worship, until the young people revolted. I was once present at a meeting in which a sermon of close fitting truth had just been uttered, and knowing his predilection for long windedness, I ventured to suggest—for I was in the pulpit—that anything added might divert the consciences of the hearers from their sins and do positive harm. He appended a tedious "exhortation" to the sermon, as was the old custom, and, I still believe, to the detriment of the audience. But he was so hurt by my officiousness I had to make an humble apology. This was not the first nor the last time that my tongue got me into trouble.

Spilbe Woolfolk, of Caroline, sent his son Charles to Andrew Broaddus, while I was his pupil, and by going home with the son I learned something more of the father. He told me that in his young manhood horse-stealing was a capital offense in Virginia, and that he had seen a man hung for that crime. How lightly did the old-time people value human life! I heard him preach occasionally at Burruss's old meeting-house. He began by saying he would "grind his peak of corn only once," i. e., would be brief and would not repeat, and then gave us a variation of the Savior's life from Bethlehem to Calvary. It was the old story, but recited with tenderness and reverence. Everybody loved "Uncle Spilbe," and, though not learned in the

schools, he did good by being good. Is there any better way?

William Leftwich, of Bedford, the father of two preachers—James and George W. Leftwich—was for many years the fearless champion of truth in his county, and was greatly blessed in his work. I heard him, with sincere pleasure, only once in Rev. 22: 17—"The Spirit and the bride," &c., and if that was a fair specimen of his preaching, he was no ordinary man. The Baptists are not skilled in bringing out their strong advocates, and if these have not in themselves a little "modest assurance," they often live and toil and die in obscurity. But the Master will honor them.

Robert T. Dantel, whom I saw and heard only at the General Association in Lynchburg about the year 1830, labored partly in Virginia and partly in North Carolina. He was a lovely man out of the pulpit and a lively one in it. I hope to learn more of him when we meet in the heavenly country.

Robert Hurt, of Halifax, the familiar friend of John Kerr in their young days, was with him at a camp-meeting in that county about 1831, and was of the same type of preacher, except that he was less impetuous. A. M. Poindexter, greatly his junior, had preferred some charges against him on account of his supposed worldliness, but they did not materially impair his standing. Alluding to that difficulty, he introduced his discourse on that occasion by saying meekly that he had more serious charges against himself than any which fallible man had ever brought against him, but that he was still trusting in the mercy of God. His modest way of uttering this apology seemed at once to disarm criticism, and he was heard with respectful attention. Not having informed myself as to the charges and evidence, I confess I was inclined to the charity that "hopeth all things."

N. B. As I can't get all the passengers into my "omnibus," I shall have to make another trip.

Whens.

When a person tells me that he does not go to church because the poor are not welcome there, I cannot resist the conclusion either that he has never been, or that he is poor in other respects than in lack of money. There is a poverty of character, manliness, perception, far worse than any of purse.

When a church member tells me that he is going to the faith-cure prayer meetings instead of the church prayer-meetings, I can only utter Elisha's prayer for his servant: "I pray thee, O Lord, open his eyes, that he may see." He will be of little or no use to church or world any more until that happen.

When a young minister says he finds it much easier to preach extempore than to write his sermons, I have sympathy for his congregation.

When a poor woman who has not the means to support herself and children says she has to pay ten dollars for prayers for the repose of her sister's soul in Purgatory, I feel that somebody is practicing an imposition on ignorance and poverty which is no better morally than highway robbery.

When a member of another denomination says he has changed his views of doctrine and wants to unite with mine, and at the same time seeking a small loan to help him out of immediate necessities, I look into his record to discover how many other churches he has belonged to and borrowed from. A Christian should not be suspicious over-much, neither should he squander over-much on church tramps.

When a politician says he seeks no office and is visiting Washington purely for pleasure, I look in the newspaper each morning to find out if he has yet received the appointment to something he professedly does not want.

When the deacons of a church are to be found in the vestibule before and after service, welcoming strangers and smiling everybody into good spirits, I congratulate the pastor, and perhaps envy him a trifle.

When the saloon keepers offer the argument against prohibition that it does not prohibit, I feel a good deal more confident that it does. And when they raise corruption funds to defeat it, I know that every good man ought to vote for it.

When a real-estate agent tries to use pastors as his assistants in disposing of valuable new lots and plots by offering them a land or money consideration, I instinctively question the real value of what he has to sell, and fear the buyer would be more sold than the property.

When a man tells me that he believes Shakespeare has done the world as much good as the Bible, I do not know how well he is acquainted with Shakespeare, but I do know he must be vastly ignorant of the Bible.

When a woman tells me that she does not go to church any longer because a sister there once criticized her poor clothes and dowdy bonnet, I know that she is the unconscious victim of pride, and thinks more of her neighbor's opinion of her dress than she does of her duty to God and the eternal welfare of her own soul.—*Laurens in Chicago Standard.*