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### Sketches of Pioneer Baptist Preachers in North Carolina.

BY JOHN W. MOORE, STATE HISTORIAN.

MEMOIR V—REV. LEMUEL BURKITT.

#### CHAPTER FIVE.

The treatment of historical subjects is largely subject to the same rules of treatment that regulate a painting—illustrative of some event in the past. Thus we find the artist gives prominence of place in his grouping and the highest sights to the chief actors in the scene he depicts. On the same principle in our reproduction of the Baptist past in North Carolina, we must give Lemuel Burkitt all the space and position his unequalled services merited. It takes more space to tell the story of such a life because it was so much more frequent and abiding in its influence for good. He had brethren, no doubt, who were as zealous and faithful as he, but the measure of his deeds and achievements so far surpassed them all that comparisons would be simply odious. Indeed with the single exception of the great work of enlisting Baptist support in the cause of Foreign Missions and Education, he had left nothing to be added to the completeness of his work as a reformer. Nor was he to withhold his aid from those other steps for higher usefulness and consecration in the individuals and churches. He was to align himself along side of Martin Ross, when that great preacher introduced his first memorable resolutions into the session of the Kehukee Association held in 1803, whereby they were exhorted to put themselves on the same level as had been lately witnessed among the Baptist people of Kettering in England. Dr. Carey had gone on his way to seek the lost millions of British India, and Andrew Fuller was left to lead his people into a proper support of the new apostle to the Gentiles. American Baptists had manifested great interest in the salvation of their Indian neighbors, but that they owed any duty to heathen nations beyond the seas had never suggested itself to their minds. It required just such leaders as Ross and Burkitt to bring on so great proposals. Of course the old conservatives were there in force to protest against the Lord's work, simply because they and their fathers had not found it their duty to help in the conversion of the heathen millions. But with two such champions of missions to thunder forth the defence of the work they had embraced, the smaller natures were either abashed or so silenced, that a proper circular was framed and sent out to the churches urging them to go forward in the work of the Lord.

It was remarked at the conclusion of the last chapter that Mr. Burkitt came back from his recent participation in the great revival in the West in 1801 as one who had been freshly inspired and magnified in his office as God's ambassador to perishing men. Never before had his voice such wondrous power on listening multitudes. It seemed that some wonderful spiritual magnetism flowed out from his person and prostrated the hardest hearted and most unbelieving of sinners. Vast crowds were in tumult of a varying emotion as the great preacher waxed ever more impressive and resistless in his pictures of the terrors awaiting the unrepentant death-bed. With equal force, but in the most melting appeals, the safety and beatitudes of those who trust in Christ's atonement was presented as the wise alternative. His first meeting with his Baptist people on his return was at the Kehukee Association, held that year with the church at Great Swamp in Gates county. In a sermon he told of the wonders of God's grace he had witnessed in the West. How in eight months more than six thousand souls had been converted, and how the work was still widening and deepening as it extended over the settlements of the new States. The effect was profound in its immediate and consequent results upon the people attending the session.

Great revivals at once began in the surrounding churches, and the next year two thousand additions to the membership of the congregations were reported to the Association. As a specimen of the deep concern which had taken possession of the peo-

ple's minds in relation to the salvation of their souls, a short and exceedingly modest account from the pen of Mr. Burkitt himself is herewith given. Says he:

"At a Union Meeting at Parker's (Meherin) Meeting House in August, 1803, it was supposed there were four thousand people. The weather proved very rainy on Sunday. There was a stage erected in the meeting house yard, and at about half after eleven o'clock Elder Burkitt ascended the stage to preach, and it was expected from the appearance of the clouds it would rain every moment, and before he was done preaching it did so. Yet notwithstanding, the numerous congregation still kept together; and although every effort was used to shun the rain by umbrellas, carriages, blankets etc., yet we believe one thousand people were exposed to the rain without any shelter; and some crying, some convulsed on the ground, some begging the ministers to pray for them; and they composedly stood and received the falling shower without ever being dispersed."

This was in all truth a severe test upon Mr. Burkitt's powers in holding the attention of his congregation. Very rare have been the instances of such unusual influence over a mixed multitude. It proves conclusively that he was indeed a great orator. Yet those who heard him preach said that his voice was far from being strong and sonorous. He was of medium height, well-formed and active in his movements. So much was he loved and trusted by people of all creeds that in the State Convention called to meet in Hillsboro in 1788 to consider the propriety of adopting the new Federal Constitution, he with no solicitation on his part was chosen along with Maj Samuel Harrell as a delegate to represent Hertford county. He had been so uniform in his support of the American cause and so firm in his adhesion to the more democratic views of Mr. Jefferson and his supporters, that it was safely left to his discretion to determine for his constituents as to what should be done in the premises.

With increasing years beginning to warn him of failing strength, Lemuel Burkitt, after his return from the revival in the West, only redoubled his previous zeal and labors for the Lord. Though not yet an old man so far as the lapse of years is concerned, he was yet sensibly feeling the results of ceaseless labor. The night was close at hand when a long rest would be his. He who giveth his beloved sleep had one more great work for the faithful servant, and then like Moses on Pisgah, all the weary load of toil and responsibility would forever be lost in the peace of God. The famous query touching the duty of the Baptist churches then constituting the Kehukee Association as to Foreign Missions had developed in the ensuing years plain proofs of a want of unity and homogeneity as between the congregations east and west of Roanoke river. While the ascendancy of Messrs. Burkitt and Martin Ross was too great for open opposition to a scheme of love they both so warmly advocated, yet there were such delays in action and such cold commendation from most of the churches lately returned from their temporary revolt, that the two great preachers, along with Hon. George Outlaw of Bertie, were convinced that if the Albemarle Baptist churches ever expected much christian growth and development, then it was time to sever all entangling ties with the torpid and lifeless crowd that only hung as an incubus on their best efforts to advance the cause of the Lord and his people.

Moving on this line, petitions were sent up from the Albemarle churches to the Kehukee Association as it met in session at Meherrin in 1805. Then and there the great body, since known as the Chowan Association, had its origin. It was in the next year that the first session was held, and from that day to this the mighty results on the one hand wrought by the new body, and the schism, slow decay and total non-effectiveness of the other, show how wise and timely was the movement. If Burkitt and Ross had been gifted with such length of years as Methuselah, and the leavening power of the Chowan churches had still in the clear vision of old by sheer force of higher zeal and faith kept this people from the ruin and downfall of 1827, it would have been accomplished at great cost. Not only would many a noble step taken in reaching a higher plane of usefulness been checked and retarded by the crowd who could see nothing good beyond what was practiced by their fathers, but the wear and tear of souls thus chained to a body of death would have realized something of the Apostle's torture when he cried out in his anguish as to who should deliver him from such tribulation. There is no course greater to any christian sect than churches which are so lifeless and stolid, that they were ever found as stumbling blocks in the way of others who are anxious to give themselves and their means to the Lord's cause. The human heart is never so cunning and remorseless as when framing excuses for withholding any bestowal of its hoarded treasures. Men who are apparently godly in other respects, find their shibboleth on such an occasion. With all their sighs, groans and loud prayers in public, they find it impossible to part with that accursed gold that has stolen their souls from the Master.

Elder Burkitt had planted a new church at Potocasi, but it was not organized until the year after his death. He saw the Chowan Association move off on that noble and illustrious career which, under God's providence, has resulted in so many blessings to the Baptists of the whole State. He served as its Clerk for the two years he was spared to

his people, but his long service in the same capacity in the old Kehukee made his soul still yearn for the presence and companionship of many that he loved very tenderly. It was thus that he missed no session of the venerable mother of so many Associations. The greetings were as warm as of old, and on Sunday the great crowds of people listened with a strange awe and delight to a preacher they had long thought the greatest in the world, and yet here he was aflame with a strange light in his eyes, and his voice thrilled with a burden it never bore before. Overflowing with the greatness of the issues at stake and the shortness of his time in this world, he would descend with streaming eyes from the pulpit, and, falling on his knees, he would beseech his hearers to be reconciled to God.

The premonition of coming death was one of the strangest incidents in the life of this extraordinary man. He was but fifty-seven years old and apparently in health, but the inner voice was repeating ever and anon, "Labor while it is yet day, for the night cometh wherein no man can labor." The event abundantly justified the correctness of these mysterious premonitions. He was preaching in July, 1807, when in the midst of his discourse he was seized by an ague. The end sure enough had come at last. They bore him in much love and tenderness to his humble home and were soon to bear him to his grave. Like Charles II., he never rallied from the fatal effects of those awful chills that slew so many thousands before the world and the doctors had learned the value of quinine.

Thus passed from the theatre of his usefulness a most richly and variously gifted man. In thirty years he had managed to bring about larger and more lasting improvements in the eastern Baptist people than all his predecessors had been able to accomplish in the century preceding. He was not one of those men who was great on a single line of human excellence. He was no more eloquent or successful in the pulpit than he was deep and accurate in his theological stores. With a strong bias to practical fancies, he could yet make as deep and subtle an analysis of any chain of reasoning as if the impassioned images of his vision never led to such rapturous flights in his oratory. His greatest usefulness after all were the personal magnetism and tact that enabled him to win all hearts and then keep them in spite of the fact that he was so often brought in temporary antagonism with such friends as he pressed on his way as a reformer of abuses. It was seen and known that though only the Clerk of the Association, yet it was Lemuel Burkitt's will and schemes that were the rule of all the great christian body. Yet no one ever resented or denounced this powerful control exercised by a subordinate officer. It was accepted as a matter of course and the reformer was thus left to go on his way rejoicing. But these and all things else earthly were become things of the past when the Rev. Aaron Spivey as the preacher of the funeral sermon, and his sorrowing brethren far and near, gathered to bury his remains out of human sight. "A great man and a prince in Israel" had fallen in his armor. He had served long and nobly, and in dying had left not his like in all the land so abundantly blessed by his life and labors.

[Pub. by request of Elizabeth City Bap. Church.]

### The Birthday Ball.

BY REV. CHAS. A. G. THOMAS.

And the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.—Mark 6: 22.

It was the spring of the year 29 when Herod sent out invitations to the best society of his province to attend his birthday ball. As the night of festivities approaches, Herodias, the unlawful wife of Herod, is quietly scheming vengeance on John the Baptist for his scathing denunciation of her illegal union. The night arrives. Behold the scene! The hall is decorated in splendor. The table is laden with a sumptuous feast. The fashionable society with elegant costumes grace the occasion with their presence. They feast until satisfied. They drink until intoxicated. They call for the dance. Hired dancers appear and go through the movements of that day. But that is not all. There appears upon the floor another figure—a princess—breaking through the standards of propriety and dancing before their lustful eyes in garments which, combined with her movements, worked upon the hearts of the guests with unspeakable effect. This ball was to that day and place what the average ball is to this, and gives me the occasion to discuss the modern dance and its influence upon the people.

I discuss the dance because I believe it to be one of the greatest social evils. I believe it is immoral, and must warn my people against it. But let me say that I do not brand every one who dances as immoral or unrefined. I believe there are numbers of women of refinement who dance. They are innocent of anything like impurity, but they are drawn into it by a society whose first thought is self-indulgence, and whose influence is against spiritual religion. I am not discussing the dancers, but the dance; not the dance as it was or might be, but as it is.

#### I. OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

(1) "There is no more harm to dance than

to gossip." Admit it, but it proves nothing; certainly not that dancing is innocent, for you are comparing dancing with a harmful thing. Gossip is very sinful, and if dancing is no better it also is sinful on your own ground. But when you offer this objection you are not paying yourself a great compliment, for you are making the admission that you can't converse without gossip, or else you can only pass the time either with a sinful use of the tongue or feet. It seems to me that the objection condemns rather than justifies.

(2) "The Bible says there is a time to dance." It also says in the same chapter "a time to kill." Now, suppose upon that authority you get up a "killing ball." The Bible also says "a time to plant;" and isn't it remarkable that the people who do the most of the dancing do the least of the planting?

(3) "But David and Miriam danced." Yes, David danced, but before whom? A fashionable belle? The Book says, "before the Lord." Miriam also danced, but not in the embrace of a dude. There are several facts about the Bible dance which should be mentioned. (a) It was a religious act. Is the modern dance religious? (b) Practiced on great and joyful occasions. In certain places the great occasion for a dance is the presence of fiddlers. (c) It was usually performed in the day. Now it is done in the night. (d) The sexes were separated. Now they are very closely united. (e) Those who perverted the dance were deemed wicked, and were punished. Job 21: 11.

(4) "But dancing in the abstract is not wrong." Did you ever see anybody dance in the abstract? All that I have ever seen or heard of has been in the concrete.

(5) "If I never do anything worse than dancing, simply keeping time with my feet to music, I'll get along very well." Here again is bad logic. No sensible person holds that there is any harm in keeping time to music. Many persons do that in church. Keeping time to music is not all that is in the modern dance. This I will now try to show.

#### II. EVILS CONSIDERED.

I have engaged in the dance. The Tuesday night before I gave my heart to Christ I danced nearly all night. I have on several public occasions since seen the dance, and I am fully convinced that it is evil in every particular.

(1) It is detrimental to health. The heated room, atmosphere heavily freighted with impurities, the passing out of these into cold halls and porticos, the late hours, exciting movements, all tend to undermine the health. The continued exercise is exhausting and unfit for the duties of the next day. All these, combined with the unfitness of the costumes, have a tendency to produce pneumonia and consumption and other diseases.

(2) It is detrimental to mind. The dancers as a rule are the novel readers of a community. How much time they waste upon extravagant dress to the neglect of the mind. Read the newspaper accounts of the last ball, and it is a rehash of fine dress. It takes but little brains to dance. Monkeys can beat men at it. There is no exchange of ideas in the dance, but a great deal of emotion and magnetism. The action of the trustees of the North Carolina University indicates clearly what they think about the matter, and shows clearly that the dance takes the mind from its best interests. Distinguished scholars have gone to the commencement to deliver addresses, and only a few of the students heard them. Attention was called to it, and it was found that they danced all night on Tuesday and Wednesday. An order was passed that dancing should stop at one o'clock on those nights. The next year the order was disregarded and the dance continued until three a. m. The visiting committee then recommended to forbid dancing on those nights. This was carried by a vote of twenty to five. President Winston spoke in favor of the report. Now the ball occurs after the session closes.

A correspondent of the *Richmond Dispatch*, writing from White Sulphur Springs in 1887, says: "Time was—not very long ago—when non dancers were considered social bankrupts, but such is not the case now. A young lady can be a belle and not enter a ball-room, for it becomes more and more apparent that the best men—that is, the most agreeable, intellectual, substantial men—do not dance; and a cultured girl need have no fear of being a 'wall flower' even when the german is in progress."

The *Christian Inquirer* of New York, a year or so back, had similar statements concerning summer resorts, and asks the question, "Is the common sense of the world going to join the church in regarding the dance as, at best, a trivial and unsatisfactory recreation?"

(3) It is detrimental to morals. (a) Dancing violates the best standards of social conduct, and thus touches good morals. If I were to draw a picture of a man and woman in the act of waltzing on a blackboard, or were to call up a wife or sister and give an object lesson, it would shock every person in this house. I saw children dancing to music last summer, and the position of the children was altogether different from that of the young men and women. The combination of music and bodily motion among the children gave them pleasure, and seemed innocent and helpful when done in moderation. But as the age advances it passes from a form of exercise—exercise is no longer enough—to an act of familiarity which would be tolerated nowhere else in

social life. If a man was to look through a parlor window and see his wife or daughter alone with a man in the attitude of the waltz, there would be a divorce suit or murder. Think of it! A man with but an hour's acquaintance with a woman, putting one hand around her body and with the other clasping tightly her hand, and with limb to limb, body to body, head to shoulder, and the dress exposing arms and bust of the woman, they whirl to the strains of enrapturing music. I emphatically declare that such an amusement, as thus violates the high and noble standards of good society, is immoral, and the patronage of the "best society" nor the recognition of any church, can give it respectability. However pure and innocent the women may be who engage in the dance, familiarity allowed tends to immorality and stimulates to excess. (b) The dance opens the avenues to unholy desires. Men do not dance together. Women do not dance together. Who ever heard of an old bachelor's ball? Who ever attended an old maid's dance? Why not have these? Every man knows why. Marriage usually puts an end to dancing. Very rarely married women dance except when unhappily married. Almost every circumstance connected with the dance points to passion. Gail Hamilton says, "The thing in its very nature is unclean and cannot be washed. The very pose of the parties suggest impurity." Did you ever listen to the conversation of the boys after a dance? (Now, boys, I'm going to tell on you.) Listen: "She dances up to a fellow alright." "I wouldn't give a cent to dance with Miss—. She is as cold as a post." That means passion and nothing less. Have you ever seen the beginning of a ball? The boys bring the girls, and when they get to the door the girls go to their room and "lay off their wraps." The boys go to the hay stacks and "lay off their wraps," to be used between sets. Ask any physician if the modern dance can exist without stimulating to unholy desires, "and if he says yes, he is either a fool or a liar; a fool because he does not know physical science, or he loves to dance and lies to conceal his sin." Dr. Vincent quotes a minister of large experience as saying that any intelligent and honest physician will tell you it sets the passions on fire. Prof. Wilkerson says, "And shall I not cry shame upon a usage that, under cover of respectability, regularly titillates and tantalizes an animal appetite as insatiable as hunger, more cruel than revenge? \* \* \* I charge that here, and not elsewhere, in the anatomy of that elusive fascination which belongs so peculiarly to the dance, the scalpel is laid upon the quivering secret of life. Passion—passion transformed if you please never so finely, subsisting in no matter how many subtly contrasted degrees of sensuality—passion, and nothing else, is the true basis of the popularity of the dance."

Byron is a competent witness. I can give only one extract:

"Round all the confines of the yielded waist,  
The strangest hand may wander undisplaced;  
Thus all and each, in movement swift or slow  
The genial, o'ertact gently undergo;  
Till some might marvel, with the modest Turk,  
If 'nothing follows all this palming work'  
True, honest Mirza! You may trust my rhyme,  
Something does follow, at a fitter time;  
The breast thus publicly resigned to man,  
In private may resist him—if it can."

(c) Ruinous to christian influence. The world has no middle ground for the christian. When a christian dances the report goes abroad, "Miss Piety danced," but nothing is said about "Mr. Worldly." A christian woman once said "there was no harm in the dance," and in the next breath declared that "the dance kept her children from the church." The best and most intelligent christians take a stand against the dance. The Catholic Bishop of Quebec said, "The round dance is a particular kind of dance possessed of the devil." The Bishop of the United States in 1866 said it was "revolting to every feeling of delicacy and propriety, and is fraught with the greatest danger to morals." Bishop Hopkins of the Episcopal church said, "Dancing is chargeable with waste of time; hindrance to useful study; the indulgence of display and vanity; and tends to the excitement of the passions." Bishop Meade, of the same church, said, "It is in itself wrong, improper and of bad effect." Bishop Cox, of Western New York, same church, says, "The modern dance—waltz, german, or whatever else they call it—is immoral." Adam Clarke, of the M. E. church, said, "I know it to be evil and that only." Bishop Pierce, of the M. E. church, said it was "the silliest amusement that rational beings ever engaged in." Dr. Cuyler, of the Presbyterian church, says, "The whole trend of the promiscuous dance is against moral purity and spirituality." Dr. Palmer, of the same church, said the dance "will open wide the flood-gates of immorality."

God's word is against the dance. Gal. 3: 19-21; 1 Peter 4: 1-8. There is hardly a doubt but that the word "reveling" corresponds to the modern dance. "Love not the world." "Be separate." "Be not conformed." &c. Similar counsel from God's word is against the dance. What should be our attitude to the dance as a church? I believe that after due warning, counsel, entreaty, if members still persist, they should be excluded from membership. But we have reason to thank God that we are free from dancing church members. I saw and

[CONTINUED TO THE FOURTH PAGE.]