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## For the Advocate. Our Virginia Correspondence.

BY REV. JOHN E. EDWARDS, D. D.  
THE RELIGIOUS WEEKLY.

In looking over the columns of a newspaper, more particularly a religious weekly, I sometimes inquire how much of the contents is read by the great majority of those who look over the columns from week to week? Very many of the subscribers barely run over the headings of the leading articles, glancing here and there at a few paragraphs, then delay for a few moments on the editorials, if they are found to relate to subjects of special interest, then run the eye over the advertisements, and miscellaneous scraps thrown in to fill out the columns, and then cast the paper aside, and that is the end of it. But even this is better than not to see and read the paper at all. This, however, is not the end of it. There is the wife who picks up the paper, and while she does not read all, she nevertheless finds something that interests her that escaped the eye of her husband; it may be, who first ran hurriedly over its columns. But it does not end here. Some of the sons or daughters, or other members of the family, pick up the paper, in an idle moment, and read the scraps in the poet's corner, and the marriage notices, and perchance some of the obituaries, so that when the paper is discussed at the table, or in the family circle in the evening hour, it is found that everything in the paper has been read by one or another of the family. Nothing has been overlooked or lost, and it becomes common stock. The interchange of opinion on the different articles, and miscellaneous scraps and paragraphs, adds something to the store of knowledge and general information in the family. In this way the weekly religious paper becomes an educator; and even in the absence of a library of choice books, it will be found that the family, where the paper is regularly read, is well informed, and prepared to enter into conversation upon the current news of the day, and really has a respectable fund of information upon the general range of subjects, engaging the thought and the pens of the writers of the day. The value of the weekly religious paper is not to be determined so much by what any one member of the family culls from it, as by the addition which it makes to the stock of knowledge in the household.

### SOMETHING FURTHER.

There are too few persons who really rise to a proper estimate of the value of the family newspaper as an educator. It stimulates thought, and draws out the mind, and puts the reader on the path of inquiry and investigation. A single paragraph, not longer than one's finger, not infrequently contains the results of years of patient toil on some line of scientific inquiry. That paragraph finds a lodgement in the memory of the reader. It is a seed planting. It quickens the mental capabilities, and possibly turns the whole current of the after life. In like manner a single scrap of less than a dozen lines at the bottom of a column may contain the outcome of long years of doubt and conflict in Christian experience. That little scrap may put the reader at a point on the path of the divine life that was attained by weary years of up-hill toil by the traveler who went before him. Some apparently trivial incident, narrated in the compass of a few inches in the printed column, may furnish an illustration that may find its way into the pulpit, and not improbably throw light upon some mind, touching a question that has been the occasion of perplexity and trouble though a whole religious life. We cannot easily over-estimate the value of a weekly religious newspaper, in the family, as an educator. The value of the paper in our day far exceeds its value in former times. For many years the religious weekly was confined almost exclusively to the discussion of controverted points in theology, notices of revivals, obituaries, and but little besides. In later years, running up to the present, the religious weekly has spread itself out over the whole range of science, philosophy and general literature. The reader of a live, wide-awake paper, in the present day, is better up in all the material that constitutes a well assorted stock of digested and classified information, than was the man or woman of a past generation, who had access to the best private libraries of the land. It will surprise any one, who has not been very observant, to sit down and classify the subjects that are introduced, and treated more or less extensively in a single issue of a good weekly. The catalogue will be found to touch history, biography, invention, science, art, physical geography, general literature, etc., etc. The object of the foregoing line of remark and observation

is to excite in the public mind a higher appreciation of our weekly papers. There is positively no investment that pays so well as the subscription price to a first-rate religious weekly for family reading.

### AN EASY TRANSITION.

The transition from weekly papers to books is easy and natural. Let us then turn to books. What a vast number of books is written, printed, and advertised that finds but a limited sale! Neither author nor publisher is indemnified against financial loss. Again, how many books are bought that are never read by the purchaser! This applies with special emphasis to books hawked around, and sold by subscription. The canvasser is glib of tongue. He has a list of recommendations, generally, from well-known and popular preachers. He discants on the merits of the book; shows the fine pictures; enlarges on the elegance of the paper, type, binding, etc. He parries every attempt to put in a word on the part of the person to whom he offers the book for sale. The price can be paid in monthly installments. Quite as often to get rid of garrulous canvasser as otherwise, the book is taken. It is laid on the centre table as an ornament, but never read. There is an immense amount of humbuggery in selling books by subscriptions. I do not now remember a single book—I speak not of encyclopedias—that I ever bought from a book canvasser, selling by subscription, that I would not have gladly disposed of for one half its cost, in less than three months. Possibly I might except Dr. Pond's History of the Church of God. For myself I have quit buying any book sold by subscription. So I tell the canvasser as he unstraps his bundle, and begins "to say his piece." It is a good way to save time and money. This is my way. Others can do as they please. But, in turning from newspapers to books, I was thinking of a little bundle that came to me on yesterday by mail, from our Publishing House in Nashville. There were two span-new little books that took my eye at once. The title of the first one I opened was, "Alma's Lamp," by some gifted woman whose pen ought not to be idle. The little story is charmingly told. Young Church members, of both sexes, ought to read it. The style is simple and yet bewitchingly beautiful. It adds another to the new books just now coming from our Publishing House, exactly adapted to Sunday-school library purposes. Only 50 cents per copy. The other book has the title, "Working Together for Good," by the author of "Two Weeks with the Greys." This too is an admirable little book, sold at 60 cents. Like the other it is suited to private reading, and at the same time just the book to be added to the Sunday-school library. It is brim-full of encouragement and comfort for those who are struggling with adverse fortune. I cannot speak too highly of these new books.

### ANOTHER TRACTATE.

Our press at Nashville is fruitful in the line of pamphlets or tractates. Here is another with the title, "What Church shall I join?" By Rev. G. L. Chilton, of the Alabama Conference. In the main, the author disposes of the public objections to joining the Church in a clear and forcible manner, and gives good advice as to the Church one should join. But, there is one point on which, personally, I disagree with the author. I refer to his argument with the man who says; "I will not join the Church till I am converted." The person so objecting, in my judgment, is right, and the author wrong. This is the fly in the pot of ointment. It may be safe, where there is a probation to Church membership, to advise some, not all, to join on trial, as a seeker of religion; but no one should be received into full fellowship in the Church without conversion, by which I mean being born again. The abrogation of probation, as a condition to membership, contemplated conversion as the scriptural condition of fellowship with the body of believers. The reasoning on this subject in the tractate under notice, as it strikes my mind, is fallacious, sophistical, and unscriptural; and as I believe it to be, un-Methodistic in the Church, South. It is worse than a calamity—it is a positive curse—to fill up Church-membership with unconverted persons. It is idle to quote the General Rules on the subject. A Society is a different thing from the Church. The dancing, card playing and theatre going that prevail in some portions of Southern Methodism is traceable to the fact that numbers are received without conversion. There has been no satisfactory evidence of conversion, "the genuineness of faith," given on examination by the pastor prior to admission. It is full time that this

loose-jointed way of receiving members were stopped; and it is no time to circulate tracts, the design of which, in part at least, is to overcome the scruples of an honest man who says; "I will not join the Church till I am converted." I have been a pastor for fifty consecutive years, and I have yet to receive the first person into the Church, who did not give evidence of conversion. I am not going into any controversy with any body, in any of our papers, on the subject. I have no time for that.

Danville, Va., Mar., 1885.

## For the Advocate. Our Texas Correspondence.

BY REV. H. M. DuBOSE.

I congratulate you, Mr. Editor, upon the continued improvement of the RALEIGH CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE. Its well filled columns—filled with fresh, juicy matter—its neat appearance and generous dimensions have placed it amongst the first and best of our *Advocates*. What a difficult art the editing of a paper must be; and how greatly must the difficulty be increased when the paper to be edited is a religious weekly. The conclusion reached in my own mind, after a somewhat limited observation, is that the danger of becoming dry and vapid through a certain constrained religiousness on the one hand, and that of becoming on the other, too literary, are about equal. In other words, I apprehend the dangers menacing the man in the pulpit are about the same as those menacing the man on the tripod of a religious newspaper. As specimens of what I mean, take in the first instance the ordinary holiness sheets, and, in the second, such papers as the *Christian Union* and the *Independent*. Incomparable weeklies, these latter, but a little too *secular* and *political* to be styled exclusively *religious*. These, understand, are only the views of a uninitiated scribe, and are not meant to be taken either as advice or criticism; but as this is a newspaper era, and one in which the religious newspaper especially flourishes, I suppose every one accustomed, or privileged, to talk in print may express an opinion thereupon.

### DECLINE OF INFIDELITY.

One of the most hopeful signs in connection with our work in the Southwest is the evident decline of infidelity in its more brazen forms. A widely circulated daily paper that has been for years the mouthpiece of infidelity in the West has recently excluded from its columns certain communications, the object of which was to perpetuate controversy by radical utterance against Christianity; and this action was taken avowedly in deference to the religious sentiment of the country, every day becoming more and more decided. We hail this as presaging a deepening respect and reverence for the truths of the Bible, which may eventuate in their more general and practical acceptance.

I cannot refrain from remarking in this connection that it is my conviction that this hopeful state of feeling has been brought about by the judicious silence maintained by the Christian community. Infidelity will soon spend itself if left to beat the air. Besides, it usually germinates and flourishes in that status of intellect with which it is impossible to reason; hence the best argument with which to meet its platitudes and generalities is the argument of silence and consistent Christian lives. The fact is that every error in the world, whether appearing in its own proper guise or masquerading in the semblance of truth, is courting opposition and controversy. They have no other means of perpetuating their existence. If we could only prevail on the teachers of religion everywhere to leave Ingersollism and all its kindred "isms" alone, the whole brood would soon die out. The Pauline Epistles preserve a marked silence respecting the organized errors of the Apostle's times, except where they may have insinuated themselves into the young and growing Church; and the charge to the young Bishop of Ephesus is especially to avoid "perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth."

### A GREAT NEED.

You will, I trust, pardon me, Mr. Editor, for referring to a matter which I have already mentioned in your paper; but my heart really yearns to see a movement made to meet the need which becomes every day more and more apparent. The need is that of a monthly Magazine of high order in the South. The time has come when

such an enterprise should no longer be an experiment. What is needed is a publisher with ample means and large confidence in the scheme, together with a little patience—a willingness to wait the results. I make the assertion that the time has arrived when such an enterprise would abundantly succeed after careful observation. I have not been in a city, village or hamlet East or West of the Mississippi, where there was not exposed for sale in the news stalls one or more of the leading Magazines of the North—the *Century* and the *North American Review* always leading. A recent issue of the former periodical reached the enormous circulation of two hundred thousand copies, and I am prepared to assert that fully one half of the reading matter of said Magazine was the product of Southern pens! We have talent in the South, but it is measurably inactive, because there is no great channel through which it may speak. For this reason, as soon as man acquires repute as a writer, he must either migrate to New England, or compete at great odds with the literati of that favored section. Let some of our publishers who have faith in the talent and growing taste of their section inaugurate this movement. It must be no experiment—no niggardly attempt to get something out of nothing. It must spring full fledged from the brain, heart and purse of its originator. With this condition it would meet with an enthusiastic acceptance and support.

### OUR DEAD.

Texas Methodism has suffered, since the beginning of the New Year, irreparable loss in the death of several of its most gifted and heroic preachers. Chief among these fallen brethren was the Rev. William H. Seat, D. D., a pioneer and a man of remarkable gift, and phenomenal power in the pulpit. In the early days of Methodism in Texas, he stood without an equal in this particular, and many remain to testify to his untiring zeal and godly life, witnessing for the Master. And now to add to these afflictions comes the crushing news of the death of Bishop Parker. We of Texas felt that he was in an emphatic and endearing sense *our* Bishop. His first official acts were performed in our midst and the first two of his three years of Episcopal service were given exclusively to Texas. In fact, he had become the Paul of our Border Work. During the period of his assignment to the district of Texas, he went everywhere, establishing and strengthening our Missionary work amongst the Spanish populations of the border; and his name will always be remembered and tenderly revered amongst those dusky children of the Church. What a marvel of earnestness and consecration is presented in the life of Bishop Parker. From an humble beginning and with few early advantages, he rose to the highest rank of usefulness and distinction; and in the full fruition of his holy and consecrated life, he has been called to an eternal reward. How rapidly the great and good of our Israel are passing over the flood. What shining ranks of princely spirits are marshaling on the other shore! God of our fathers, be praised, it is no uncertain hope in which we rest.

Houston, March 10th, 1885.

### For the Advocate.

## Division of the N. C. Conference. DIVIDE OR NOT DIVIDE; THAT IS THE QUESTION.

BY REV. J. T. BAGWELL, D. D.

Whether or not a discussion of the question will accomplish any good, it will give all who desire to do so, an opportunity to express their views, and commit themselves on the subject. This will probably show the trend of sentiment before the meeting of our Conference where decided action is to be had pro or con. I like the spirit which has characterized the writers so far. If some of the arguments have been bad, the temper has been good. We can hold each other to rigid logical account, without asperity. If our heads would be level, our brains must be cool.

The friends of division have advanced, with more or less clearness and cogency, what they seem to think sufficient arguments to show not only the utility and practicability of, but the necessity for division. Some of the salient points are these: *previous promise to the transferred territory—Conference too large and unwieldy—necessity for too great haste in the transaction of business—want of opportunity to speak—obstreperousness*

*of members—burden of entertainment—expense of travel—the more rapid development of the west.*

I think these pretty well cover the ground traversed by the writers in favor of division. For the sake of perspicuity, I shall take these points up *seriatim*, and number them as I proceed.

### I. PREVIOUS PROMISE TO THE TRANSFERRED TERRITORY.

What the character of the promise, by whom made, and by what authority it was made, I do not know; but of two or three things, I am satisfied:

First. The transferred preachers, as a rule, have fared thus far as well as they could have done in their own Conference—have had as many honors and as good appointments. If so, they have no right to complain.

Second. The type of Methodism—and of Christianity as well—in the transferred territory, so far as I know it, has vastly improved since the transfer; a fact that even many of the laymen have recognized and confessed. If so, the people ought to rejoice that they have been brought under a different administration and are being assimilated to the old N. C. type.

I am not now criticising men or methods, but stating a fact that has been noted by every preacher who has served both classes of territory.

Third. The laymen so far as I know them in the transferred territory—and the laymen so far as I know them all over the State—not only do not desire a division, but are earnestly opposed to it. I do not know a man, woman or child in the Charlotte District in favor of division; since coming to Winston, every layman whom I have heard mention the subject, has expressed the earnest hope that the Conference will not divide.

### 2. TOO LARGE AND UNWIELDY.

This is a reflection either upon the ability of the presiding officer or upon the character of the body, or both. If this be the case, it applies as well in the government of a smaller body. If the presiding officer is inefficient, and the body of men composing the Conference is untractable, the decrease of the size of the body will improve neither. The *esprit de corps* of an army will depend upon the *esprit de corps* of each regiment and company, and further, upon each soldier. Surely no one will seriously argue that a Bishop of moderate executive ability cannot manage the movement of two or three hundred orderly men—men who claim to be Christian gentlemen. It ought not to require the special qualities and spirit of a martinet to do that.

If it is argued that the fault is in the method, then the same method would be employed by a smaller body. As a rule, the persons who complain most of government, are themselves hardest to govern.

### 4. NECESSITY FOR TOO GREAT HASTE IN THE TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS.

This might have some weight if an Annual Conference were a legislative body, called upon at each session to review our system with the view of reconstructing old, or making new machinery. Such revisions and readjustments would require much time and slow and careful deliberation. But, where it is chiefly year by year the repetition of routine business that every intelligent preacher and layman perfectly understands before meeting, what is the necessity for such prolonged sessions? We could transact all legitimate business of an Annual Conference in one week if the body were twice as large as it is.

The trouble is not haste, but *waste*—unnecessary waste of time either by exhaustive talking upon plain and simple things, or by transacting business that does not necessarily belong to an Annual Conference. It requires comparatively little time to ask and answer questions marked, 1, 2 and 3, if men mean business. If they mean pleasure or buncombe, then the case is different.

### 4. WANT OF OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK.

This is adduced as a very powerful argument. Pray, brother, where is the necessity for speech making? You certainly have lost sight of our beautiful democratic (?) economy. Don't you know that nearly all the business requiring speech making is done in the Bishop's Council? What little is left, is done in the Committee rooms. Making of Missions, making or changing the boundaries of circuits and districts—more important than almost anything else done, and about which neither preachers nor people have anything to do though they are more directly concerned—discussing the qualifications or disqualifications of all men, but themselves, making appointments—all are done outside of the main body.

The educational matters of the Conference used to evoke some discussion; but they are now so adjusted—

as they should be—so that the Conference has little to do with them. Nothing in fact, but mere formal action. What is left of formal business is so matured by Committees that little is to be done, but read and adopt their reports. The recommendation and admission of candidates is almost exclusively by the P. Elders, the Conference knowing and seeming to care very little about it. Now, if the above is true, my loquacious brother, what is there to speak about that you so sigh for an opportunity to give expression to your burning eloquence?

Besides, people should learn by observation and some already by experience, that too much speaking does not contribute either to the popularity or influence of the man so frequently exercising his special gift.

### 5. TOO MUCH NOISE AND CONFUSION IN AN OVERCROWDED CONFERENCE.

This is urged as a reason for division. Compared with other bodies, we are remarkably tranquil. The writers are unintentionally guilty of very great exaggeration upon this point. While there is more noise than suits the placidity desired by a nervous man excited unduly by Conference viands, Conference smoking, and late hours, it is not attributable to its size so much as to other matters that would also be attendant upon a smaller body. The confusion of a Conference room is due to several things, some of which might easily be obviated, others would be harder to control. It is due in part to distributing blanks, papers, etc., preparing reports—in doing which, sometimes a preacher has to change his seat to consult his P. E., or some layman about some unfinished matter germane to the report and necessary to its completion—making reports, financial and statistical. To attend to these matters during Conference hours, requires considerable movement on the Conference floor. Sometimes a preacher is button-holed by a layman who wishes to have a talk with him in the vestibule. (I hope the *vice versa* report cannot be given by a layman.) The members of Committees must sometimes consult a little before a meeting. It may be replied that these matters could be transacted in the interim of sessions if the body were smaller. So it could now if we would try. Tardiness is the principal cause. But does not any person know that if a preacher is slow in making his reports in a large body, he will be equally so in a smaller? The size of the body will not accelerate the movement of a slow coach. Another source of confusion in the Conference room is social intercourse—chiefly between preachers and old friends whom they there meet. But this would be the same under any other set of circumstances. It is the necessary outcome of the social life of preachers and people.

But even these do not distract or obstruct business so much as the fact that so many preachers stand outside of the Conference room and talk and smoke cigars instead of being in their places and giving attention to what is being done. This is the principal reason so many "do not know what motion is before the house," and what the action of the Conference is. They are not likely to hear through intervening walls. But is the Conference to be blamed for the inattention and therefore ignorance of such men? Would it be better in a smaller body? Does not every one know that it is even worse at a District Conference than an Annual? Sessions are delayed because it is often difficult to get men in the house. Size has nothing to do with it.

### 6. BURDEN OF ENTERTAINMENT.

This is specially stressed by the friends of division. This ought to be considered from two points of view, the abstract and the concrete. As a matter of fact abstractly considered, there are twelve towns and cities where Conferences have been handsomely entertained, and where they would like to have the opportunity and enjoy the pleasure again.

This would require twelve years for the wheel to revolve, supposing the alternations to be regular. But some of the larger places desire it oftener, which relieves the others of the supposed burden. *Pari passu* with the growth of the towns is the improvement and enlargement of Church buildings so as better to meet all the demands of a growing Conference.

I suppose few of the stations where Conference is held have a less number of members than the number of members of Conference. Some considerably more—embraced in two Churches. The average entertainment of each member, even if the numbers were about equal during the twelve years, could be easily calculated. The curious manipulator of figures could

(CONTINUED ON THIRD PAGE.)