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For the Advocate. Our Virginia Correspondence.

BY REV. JOHN E. EDWARDS, D. D.

DEACON AT EVANGELIST, H. W. BROWN

The uppermost topic, in Danville, and the one which seems for the nonce to occupy every mind is that which relates to the evangelist, H. W. Brown, who is just now conducting a meeting at the Main Street Methodist Church. The pastor, who has worked with him, and preached earnestly, prior to the coming of the evangelist, takes a subordinate position. Mr. Brown is the leader. He conducts Bible readings in the afternoon of every day; preaching may be called preaching—every night, after which he conducts an "after meeting," usually lasting till 11 o'clock. The church is crowded at each service. Hundreds are turned away for the lack of room. Hundreds stand in the vestibule and around the church. No night service passes without the report of a large number of converts, ranging from 25 to 40 souls. Last Sunday 100 converts were reported as having taken place during the day. The meetings have now been in progress for the space of two weeks, and the score stands at 500!!! Before Mr. Brown came to Danville I was wonderfully impressed with the reports that reached us from Charlottesville, and from Clay Street Methodist Church in Richmond. Of 100 conversions in a single day! It seemed like a second Pentecost. The reports amazed, and surprised me. But since I have heard the teaching, witnessed the methods, and seen how the count is made, I am no longer surprised at the startling numbers. The surprise with me now is that the number of converts, at a single service, is not greatly in excess of anything that has been reported. Perhaps the number is limited by the lack of non-professionals in the congregation.

HOW IS IT?

If I understand the process of conversion it may be stated as follows; and I would not intentionally misrepresent it. Nothing is said about repentance, as a previous condition to conversion, and nothing on the subject is scouted, and "flung to the dogs." Possibly the evangelist takes it for granted that all that bear him have repented. Be that as it may, he says that feeling has nothing to do with conversion. He goes further, and says that he would rather that the christian workers would say nothing at all to the seekers of religion, than to say a word to them on the subject of feeling. What then? Well, as I understand the process, which is not Pauline, in the 7th of Romans, nor Wesleyan, in any of the books, experience, or teachings of the Methodists—the process, as a writer in the *Reform Christian Advocate* states it is brief: "Stand up, if you accept Christ as your Savior." That simple and single point is pressed. "If you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, and believe on him, stand up." All that one need stand, in response to this proposition, are counted as converts. Many of them may be backsliders; but all are counted as converts. If I do not state it fairly, it is not for want of intention to do so. That some, who have been earnest seekers of religion before, for a longer or shorter time, are truly converted by this new process, I do not pretend to doubt. I am too glad to believe that some are truly converted—born again—pass from death into life. But, that even as a general thing, they are converted in the Scriptural sense, and in our Methodist sense, I dare not believe. I rejoice in all the good that is done, and deprecate the evil that, to my mind, is inevitable.

WHAT WILL MR. BROWN SAY TO THIS?

It is a matter of but little concern to me what Mr. Brown may say of this report of his proceedings. No one has been more disappointed in his preaching, methods, and the results of his work than myself. He is sharp, impatient, dictatorial, dogmatic, egotistic, and by no means respectful or polite towards those who differ from him; or who dare criticize his methods, doctrines, or management. He is brusque and rough in his manner. As such it would not surprise me to hear that he said as coarse and offensive things about me, as he said in reference to a gentlemanly editor in Danville, who ventured, in a good spirit and temper, to suggest to Mr. Brown that a little modification of his manner and language would give less offense to good people, and enable him to do more good. In a spirit of resentment he charged "long ears, and braying on him; called his paper a "dirty sheet," and said he did not "care a button for the editor, or what he wrote." He ordered the people out of the church who did not remain, for the "after meeting," either as christian workers or as sinners desiring to be converted. If they did not go out as he ordered them, he said; "if you were ladies and gentlemen you would go out." He further stated that, when he started down South, he left his feelings at home with his wife. Now, with all that I have stated, and a great deal more in the same line, is true; it affords me pleasure to say that Mr. Brown reaches a class of persons, not ordinarily reached by our regular services. That he does some good admits of no reasonable doubt; that evils will follow his teachings and methods is equally certain. Some church mem-

bers who never go to Sunday-school, and who are slack-twisted, at best, as christians, go wild over Mr. Brown. Some of the soldiers of the cross (?) in all our churches, are forward and conspicuous on a field day, and in a holiday parade, who are laggards, "camp-followers"—simply "no account" in the long campaign, and on the day of battle. But, having given my views in previous letters, concerning "evangelists," and their methods, etc., I will say no more on that subject just now, further than to reiterate what I have before written, and to state that what I have recently seen and heard only confirms me in the views heretofore expressed.

ONCE FOR ALL.

I hereby return my thanks to the brethren and sisters who have written to me, expressing their hearty concurrence in the ground taken by me on the subject in question. It is a pleasure to know that I do not stand alone. My thanks are due especially to Brother C., of the N. C. Conference, for his friendly letter; and for the manly and sensible views contained in the letter touching the subject in hand. It is a pleasure to know that the men and women—preachers and laity—of experience and influence, coincide with me in the views I have expressed on the general subject of the work of irresponsible evangelists. My remarks do not apply to such laborers as Sam Jones, and Mr. Small, who, like myself, are accountable to a regularly constituted church tribunal for their doctrines, teachings, and morals. Mr. Brown has not only said that the day of miracles is not past, but has himself, according to his own statement, performed miracles of healing. He is a pre-millennial adventist, withal; and is the most boastful braggart I ever heard in the pulpit. It is due to the Methodists that these things should be known before they invite him to hold meetings for them.

OTHER MATTERS.

The meeting in Lynchburg, at the Memorial Church, under Dr. Hamon, assisted, as he has been, by Brother Stamey of Reidsville, N. C., and by Dr. A. C. Bledsoe of North Danville, has been attended by wonderful results. At last accounts about 400 persons had professed conversion, in the old Methodist style. Deep convictions, thorough repentance, conscious conversion divine attested, resulting in joy and rejoicing, have marked the progress of this wonderful meeting.

Rev. P. A. Peterson is still at the Hot Springs in Arkansas; but, at last accounts was without any decided improvement. Mrs. Ann M. Saunders, of Lynchburg, died as she lived, two weeks ago, at the age of 82 years. A more beautiful and consistent christian character never adorned the annals of Methodism in Lynchburg, or anywhere else, than Sister Saunders. She was known to every preacher in the Va. Conference. No member of the Conference attended the annual sessions of the body with more uniformity than Sister Saunders. She was rarely ever absent at roll call, from day to day. On one occasion, when one of our Bishops was preaching at a Conference in Richmond, she got happy; and finding she could not restrain her joyful feelings, she said, aloud; "I know it is unashonable to shout, but glory be to God I am happy and I will praise him." I attended her funeral at Court Street Church, where she held her membership, on Sunday afternoon, April 24th. No funeral occasion, in the history of Lynchburg, was ever more largely attended. She formed about the last link in the chain connecting the Methodism of the present, with the Methodism of the early decades of the 19th century.

Danville, Va., May 7th, 1887.

For the Advocate.

The Late Mr. Beecher.

BY HON. W. M. ROBBINS.

That part of your New York Correspondent Taylor's letter this week which speaks of Beecher and of the recent critique upon him by your Georgia Correspondent Smith, moves me to say a few words. Mr. Taylor was too easily consoled by Brother Pell's kind-hearted remarks on the subject; for he was probably correct in his first impression that Smith's opinion was likewise the opinion of most of the *ADVOCATE's* readers, as to Beecher's life and teachings being detrimental rather than helpful to the cause of evangelical Christianity. But he is mistaken in supposing this opinion to be based on feeling and not judgment, and particularly feeling arising from Beecher's relation to "a certain question," meaning (as I gather from subsequent allusions in the letter) his relation to the former sectional controversy which rent our country. I am sorry our New York friend should have suspected for a moment that any of your readers were narrow enough, either in mind or heart, to feel or think less kindly of any man, and especially of one so lovable and admirable in many respects as Henry Ward Beecher, simply because he was opposed to them in that strenuous fraternal conflict now happily ended. Our repeated efforts to confer the highest honors upon those who stood (as Beecher never did in *our eyes*) among the most conspicuous of our adversaries, both in ideas and in arms, upon the arena of that great strife, ought to shield us from such suspicions. That Beecher possessed a wondrous

intellect, great warmth and tenderness of heart and geniality of temper, surpassing eloquence of tongue and pen, masterful power to move and sway the minds of men—everything, in short, which goes to constitute genius of one of the highest and most imposing types, no one will question. Nor need it be denied that he was a man of sincere, though perhaps not very stable and settled convictions. He was a man of deep sensibility and deep thought; so that his feelings as well as his thinking entered into and gave shape and color to his beliefs and his doctrines. With the natural daring ambition of a Titanic intellect, conscious of its almost god-like powers, he fretted under the restraints which Revelation imposes upon Reason. Ignoring the fact that in the task of the human soul is not so much to make new discoveries accordant with our own preferences, as to accept with child-like humility the plain and sometimes stern declarations of Him who speaks to us from heaven, addressing our faith and not our finite understandings, Beecher sifted the divine utterances of Holy Writ through the sieve of his human judgment and taste, accepting and rejecting as suited his feelings and fancy; and so his system of divinity was drawn partly from the Bible and partly from his reason as swayed by his sensibilities. For instance, as no human reason, but only the All-Holy, whom it offends, can understand the full enormity of sin and its adequate penalty, Beecher rejected the doctrine of eternal punishment because he could not comprehend its justice, and it shocked his feelings. He did not like the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, as set forth in the Scriptures; the expression as to the sinner being "washed and cleansed in the blood" of the Redeemer offended his taste. And so I might go on and make other specifications of his heterodoxy, his loose notions about natural human depravity, his vagaries about human perfectibility, his intimations concerning a new and broader theology to be formulated by growing human wisdom to supersede not merely the hide-bound creeds of narrow and bigoted sectarians, but the plain fundamental truths of Christianity as substantially embodied in the creeds of all evangelical christians.

There is an aesthetic as well as a spiritual side to Christianity, and Beecher was a devotee of the former. He admired Jesus Christ as a grand and perfect character, worthy of all honor, reverence, worship, and imitation; the God-man well fitted to be our leader and exemplar; but if he preached Christ as our sacrifice, the victim "through whose stripes we are healed," "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," then I need fuller information on the drift of his teachings. In like manner his aesthetic tastes were delighted with the grandeur of the Bible; and all the fibres of his finely attuned nature were thrilled by its sublime treatment of transcendently noble themes, and he could discourse gloriously of such of them as were in unison with his feelings. It was a wonderful Book to him, for its poetry, eloquence, morality, benevolence, its humanizing, civilizing, elevated spirit and sentiments. But if he received it and taught others to receive it as the simple inspired Word of God, the only and infallible beacon light to guide us safely over life's uncertain sea to a happy haven, the faithful Mentor whose every hint is to be heeded with trusting faith, such as a child reposes in its father's words, then again I need to be better informed.

Herein rests one of the great errors of Beecher, as looked at (I venture to say) by the readers of the *ADVOCATE*. In this age when self-sufficient human intellect, proud of its achievements in exploring and utilizing the truths of natural science, is rebelling against and seeking to overthrow the simple, but sublime, unexplained and unexplainable truths of divine Revelation, too high and glorious for human reason to compass; Beecher, in the character of a conspicuous christian oracle, if he was not a leader in that rebellion, gave aid and comfort to the enemy by his dubious utterances on many of the very fundamentals of christian faith and doctrine. He was a great preacher, but the gospel he preached was the power of Beecher and not "the power of God and the wisdom of God." The old simple story of Christ crucified, the only hope of lost sinners, has become "foolishness to the Greeks" of Plymouth Church under his training; and so now they are scouring two continents to find a substitute for Beecher, who shall be able to speak to them as he did "with the enticing words of man's wisdom;" their ears itching for eloquence in the messenger more than their hearts burn for the message whose sublimity is able to glorify its humblest prophet.

Mr. Taylor will pardon me for suggesting that, perhaps, the glamor of Beecher's genius and imposing personality may have rendered those who dwell in the immediate presence and under the overpowering influence of the great luminary as unfit to judge of him impartially as we are who view him from a greater distance. His excessive brilliancy blinded them. We can see other objects. Those who speak to us from out of that glare (even our New York friend himself, if he will pardon me for saying so) seem infected with a strange spirit and speak in a tongue unknown to us old-fashioned readers of the *ADVOCATE*. We can join heartily in reprobation of mere narrow sectarianism, and rejoice that the christian world is outgrowing it; not, however, by changing its beliefs,

but by enlarging its heart. We can partly sympathize with our friend's unfavorable hints about creeds; with this important reservation, however, that all the various evangelical creeds contain an abundant kernel of precious gospel truth amply sufficient to save the honest soul that accepts and lives by it, and which kernel is substantially the same in them all, though it is generally enclosed in a husk of mere human inferences; and we cannot see why a man of Beecher's genius, if he relished the kernel, could not have managed to separate and distinguish it from the husk in most of them, instead of spurning all for one of his own with a thicker husk of human inferences and guess-work than any. Too big for any creed, indeed! When a man becomes so uncomfortably great as that, it is a pity he don't fall back on even some scraps of pure Bible like the sermon on the Mount, the speech to Nicodemus, and the Epistle to the Romans; even Beecher's or Emerson's great intellects might find room enough in these without incurring suspicious of skepticism for the breadth of their faith. We, readers of the *ADVOCATE*, must demur altogether to our friend Taylor's invectives against the different christian denominations, their dignity and importance, and his eulogy of human genius at their expense. We think of them as the mightiest agencies for good on the face of the earth; as glorious regiments in the hosts of the Lord going forth to battle against the armies of the aliens; as we have observed that the free-lancers, too grand and independent to drill with the regular battalions, generally do little execution on the enemy, struggle badly, and often desert. We, too, like Mr. Taylor, revere genius and glory in its wonderful achievements, but we do not idolize it, for we know there is something grander still. "Among them that are born of woman there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; yet he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." We admire Goethe, but would have been glad to hear of his being immersed; he needed it badly. We adore Shakespeare, but would think no less of him if he recored told us that, besides poaching deer and writing immortal dramas he had sobered off and become a *Methodist* Presbyterian or sanctifying Methodist, as he might have done had he lived a century or two later. It would not have cramped his genius. A little genuine religion, even of the rigid Puritanical sort, did not quench the inspiration of John Milton, or mar the glory of Oliver Cromwell; it gave to one a seer's vision, and to the other a lion's heart. And so it has always been and will be; the man who would say, with Paul, "I have fought a good fight," must be able to add, "I have kept the faith."

And thus at much greater length than I had meant to do, I have set down my own opinions of Henry Ward Beecher and what I imagine are the opinions of most of the readers of the *ADVOCATE*; and I have done so "with malice towards none and charity for all." I sincerely trust that I may have misjudged him. If so, I will take it as a favor to be set right by such as knew him more intimately than I did. Let them do so by quotations of his extraordinary greatness, for this is admitted to the fullest extent, but by showing from his writings, and otherwise his real attitude towards the sacred cause of true Evangelism. Until this is done he must continue to be regarded by some of us as a large-hearted, giant-minded, golden-tongued, nominally-christian rationalist.

Statesville, May 7th, 1887.

For the Advocate.

Our Hymns—Reading.

Your Correspondent, Rev. E. J. Perkins, in the *ADVOCATE* of April 27th, has set forth some very judicious remarks on the subject of Hymn reading, which deserve the serious thought of both preachers and their congregations. This is a matter of great interest to me; one to which I have given very earnest attention. During my whole ministry I have been impressed with the importance of rightly reading the hymns in public worship, and prayer meeting. Yet I confess that though I have generally not only selected my hymns before hand, but studied them, I have, not even to this day, attained my ideal in the act of Hymn Reading. Dr. Perkins remarks truly, "There are but few good hymn readers in the world even among educated men." The great Dr. Sumners, the main compiler of our Hymn Book, himself a composer of hymns, was by no means a first class hymn reader. But while few comparatively excel in this act, I am persuaded that all may attain some degree of excellence; and very many so as to engage attention and inspire devotion; putting the sentiments of the hymn into the minds and hearts of the people. Just here allow me to remark that the custom of reading the hymns would be better in the breach than the observance; particularly as there are so few persons who can read a hymn well. Dr. Young, in one of his letters from Europe, says that he has never seen but *one* man that could read a hymn as it ought to be read. That man lives in Florida. The difficulty or deficiency in this regard may account for the fact he states, that neither in England, nor on the Continent, are the hymns ever read in church worship. They are simply announced by number; then all join in the singing. Much time is lost in the custom that prevails very generally of

announcing the number of the hymn, then repeating it; sometimes both the number and the page of the hymn are given; the hymn is read; three, five or seven stanzas; the number and metre are again given, and the first two lines repeated. This makes it *complete* by the consumption of several minutes of time that might be more usefully employed. It may be well enough to read the first hymn, if there has been no *voluntary*, but to pursue this course with the three hymns is hardly to be commended. Nowhere in our rubric is the custom of reading the hymns set forth or enjoined. Little more can be said in favor of it, except that it is the custom. In some country congregations, where hymn books are scarce, it might be tolerated.

THOS. S. CAMPBELL.

Pastoral Visitation.

Pastoral visitation is a duty which no minister can neglect and hope to realize the largest possible results from his labors. A minister must show his interest in his people not only in the pulpit but by visiting them in their homes. In this way, if he acts judiciously, he will acquire an influence over them that he can not acquire in any other way. This is important, for if he secures their good-will and affection, they will take pleasure in attending his ministry, will gladly listen to his gospel message, and will cheerfully co-operate with him in the work of the church. But if he neglects them, shows no special interest in them, and acts toward them as a stranger, it is not likely that they will take much interest in him, or that they will attend with much regularity upon his ministry or co-operate with him in church work; and without this he can not hope to succeed in building up the church. A minister must be more than a preacher; he must be a pastor; he must care for the flock, and, like the Master whom he serves, he must be in deep sympathy with his people. A minister may be very eloquent and learned in the pulpit, but in ordinary congregations how few can appreciate his eloquence and learning! To the great majority he might as well speak in an unknown tongue. But all, whether they can appreciate a learned sermon or not, can appreciate a hearty hand-shake, a few words of pleasant greeting, kind inquiries after their welfare, and, as occasion offers, a brief prayer of christian counsel, or a brief prayer, commending them to the divine favor.

A minister can not spend all his time in his study to advantage. Six or seven hours a day is as much time as can profitably be employed in this way. If more is attempted the mind wears and flags, and but little is really accomplished. A minister has more to study than his books. While he studies the word, he should also study the people that he may learn their spiritual needs and be able to apply the truth to their several conditions. A physician who would spend all his time in studying the properties of his medicines and the remedies which he employs, without at the same time studying the symptoms of disease as presented in his patients, would not be likely to succeed as a practitioner. He must understand the disease as developed in his patients as well as the proper remedy, in order to succeed. So must a minister mingle with his people in order to become acquainted with their true character and condition, that he may be able properly to adapt the truth to their case. If a minister spends his forenoons in his study, and his afternoons in visiting his people, he will be far more likely to succeed than if he gives all his time to his books.

No rules can be laid down to guide a minister in every case in his pastoral visitations. It is presumed that he is somewhat familiar with the habits and circumstances of his people, and that he is a man of ordinary common sense, and can act with propriety in the circumstances in which he may be placed; and, also, that as a minister of the gospel he will avoid everything inconsistent with his profession. A minister must exercise his common sense in his pastoral visitations the same as in all his other intercourse with men. While he avoids trifling on the one hand, he should not indulge in a solemn and forbidding sanctimoniousness on the other. He should act as a sensible man among sensible people, and in a winning way, and often indirectly, commend the religion of Christ to those with whom he thus briefly associates. He should be cheerful without being frivolous, and serious without being cold and repellent.

These visits should not be too frequent nor too protracted, so as to become burdensome to the people. There are extremes to be avoided in both these respects. A pastor should not forsake his home to board among his members. This would be carrying matters too far, and would be worse than no visitation at all. In such cases he may be treated politely, and his presence tolerated, but it is not desired. Indeed, his visits are likely to be attributed to unworthy motives. It is not the love of self but the love of souls that should induce a minister to go from house to house, looking after the members of his flock, and endeavoring to bring them nearer to the Savior; and in this work he should be careful to act with the greatest prudence. He needs to be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. He must not become a gossip, retailing the neighborhood news from house to house. He will perhaps often hear much that it would not be

proper for him to repeat. This may serve for his own enlightenment and guidance, but it should not be repeated to others.

A minister should, so far as possible, be impartial in his pastoral visitations. None of his members should be slighted or overlooked. Especially should the poor and afflicted receive his attention, because they most need it, and will most highly appreciate it. A pastor who bestows his principal attentions on the rich and neglects the poor, will soon lose his hold upon the general community, and will find his way thoroughly hedged up. One of the chief glories of our holy religion is, that the poor have the gospel preached unto them. That pastor who neglects the poor will soon find himself neglected by the rich. He is pastor of the whole church, and in his pastoral and ministerial duties he must ignore class distinctions and labor for the good of all alike.

If you are a pastor, and wish to secure the largest fruits from your labors, you must visit your people, form their acquaintance, enter into their sympathies, become acquainted with their circumstances and spiritual needs, and gain their confidence, so that you may be able, as occasion requires, to counsel, admonish and reprove them, and exert the greatest possible influence over them for good. A pastor should be in the midst of his flock like a father in the midst of his family, familiarly knowing them all, and kindly caring for them all.—*Methodist Recorder*.

For the Advocate.

The Unruly Member.

BY RACHEL DEAN.

"Well, here I am at home again after a day's visiting," said a young lady as she laid aside her hat and gloves. "How did you enjoy yourself?" was the enquiry made by a member of the family. "I'm sorry to say not particularly well" was the dejected reply.

"Why, what was the matter? Were you not feeling well?" "Oh yes, as well as usual, but everybody talked too much, and although I left home with the intention of being discreet in my speech (knowing my failure,) the first thing I knew I was led into saying many foolish, unnecessary things. It really provokes me to think about it now, and I have to look back upon an otherwise agreeable day with keen regret. I only hope that some of my remarks may not be repeated. If they are, I'll be certain to lose the good will and friendship of several persons with whom I've always been on the most friendly terms.

"Then, besides, how can I ever face them again with the same frankness, when I've been talking so glibly of their faults and mistakes behind their backs? I don't care how common this practice is—something tells me that it is unjust.

"I know it is not edifying; and I'm rather inclined to think it must be really wrong, for somehow I always feel strangely uncomfortable after indulging in such free talk. Well, I shall be more careful hereafter, for I want my visits to friends and neighbors to be both pleasant and profitable."

Opinions in Brief.

Bishop W. W. Duncan:

"I like benevolence—it is a good thing; but I like beneficence better. Benevolence is wishing well, but beneficence is doing well."

The Christian Guardian:

"The great need of the Church today is that the membership become intelligent in our history, polity and practice. The church paper will help to this knowledge better than any other means. The church that has the most readers of its denominational literature will be most prosperous in every way."

The Nashville Advocate:

"Talk of our missionary debt! The unnoticed waste of a single day among the people called Methodists would pay every dollar of it, and leave enough besides to put a score of new missionaries into the field."

The Biblical Recorder:

"If the people of North Carolina would dispense with the use of whiskey, snuff and tobacco for one year, and make their home supplies in meat and flour on the farms, we would be clean of debt, independent and happy."

The Texas Advocate:

"The Texas Advocate does not seek the subscription of any Methodist outside of its territory who does not take first, his conference organ; and, secondly, the general organ. It matters not upon what pretext the editors or publishers of other papers seek to infringe upon territory not their own, the Texas Advocate will always refuse to increase its subscription list by any such questionable method."

The Danville Register:

"There is one noticeable feature, however, in all the quarrels between Northern and Southern Methodists, which is, that they invariably take place in southern territory. This is significant. From daily reports it would seem that no finer field could be found in the whole country for fighting the hosts of Satan than that thickly inhabited portion of country situated north of Mason and Dixon's line."