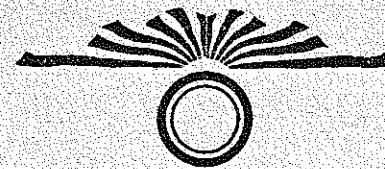


Western North Carolina
Annual Conference



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Journal of the Eighteenth Session
1907



Held in Salisbury, North Carolina
Methodist Episcopal Church,
South

to live in that higher, broader and happier realm. For we do not like to think of Brother Groome or our other deceased brethren as being dead, but as having entered upon the real life.

REV. R. H. PARKER.

BY REV. A. W. PLYLER.

Robert Humphrey Parker was born in Dinwiddie County, Va., September 6, 1839, and died in Asheville, N. C., September 23, 1907. His ancestors were North Carolinians and he, while proud of Virginia and her history, regarded himself a North Carolinian.

On September 20, 1871, he married Miss Bettie Newman, of Wytheville, Va. Through all these years this good woman shared his joys and sorrows and proved a true companion. His final utterance on earth was an expression of devotion to her who ministered so tenderly to him through the last weary weeks of suffering. The two children are Rev. William Parker, of Philadelphia, and Mrs. G. A. Greer, of Asheville.

In 1857, at the age of eighteen, he entered Emory and Henry College and pursued his studies there till one month before graduation in 1861. At that time the chivalry of the South was hurrying away to war and young Parker without waiting for his diploma, received it later, turned from books and college halls to enlist in an Alabama regiment for service on the battlefield. During the four years as a Confederate soldier he fought in twenty-nine battles. He was at Gettysburg and was one of Lee's seasoned veterans that campaigned around Richmond. He came out with a captain's commission, but what was infinitely more, with a record for courage and loyalty equal to any who wore the gray. Jackson and Gordon had no truer or better soldier than this youthful student of old Emory and Henry.

When the war was over R. H. Parker was among those ragged heroes who had laid down their arms in defeat, but had surrendered none of the essential virtues of their splendid manhood, and when the sword was beaten into a plow-share and the war-horse turned to the furrow, our young hero gave himself to the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. While others toiled to restore the industrial life of a land ravaged by war, he was one among those faithful men of God who labored night and day to build the broken walls of our Zion. And where in all the thrilling chapters of Methodist history is there one to surpass the record of the Southern Methodist preachers, who battled with dire poverty, and foes within and without, during those terrible years following the Civil War?

Brother Parker joined the Holston Conference at Cleveland, Tenn., in 1867, and was an itinerant Methodist preacher for forty consecutive years. Of these, nineteen were spent in the Holston Conference, seven in the Los Angeles and fourteen in the Western North Carolina. He served some of the most important charges in these Conferences. Thirteen years were given to district work, two years on the Abingdon district, four on the Los Angeles, two on the Santa Barbara, one on the Franklin, four on the Asheville.

Whatever his Church commissioned him to do those orders he

obeyed to the letter. And a man of more marked loyalty to his Lord, to his Church and to his appointed task was never numbered in the itinerant ranks. He never sought to shun hard work. And he labored just as faithfully on a little circuit as in a city station, or upon an important district. And he went over the roughest mountain roads through the coldest weather to his appointments just as surely and as gladly as along macadam roads in sunny June.

His sermons, as is the case with every sincere preacher, were a reflection of his character and practice. He did not practice what he preached, but he preached what he practiced. They were carefully prepared and were of a high order from both an intellectual and homiletical viewpoint. He had no hobbies and his preaching took a wide range of gospel truth, but, as was to be expected, his most frequent appeals were to conscience and strong emphasis was laid upon faithful service. He was a strong, instructive gospel preacher.

In the good providence of God he was taken from the active ministry directly to that larger life and higher service in his eternal dwelling place. And this was well. For the very thought of superannuation caused his whole being to revolt. It is hard for the man born and trained for war, whose breath is the breath of battle, to lie by while the army is in action. The heavy sound of marching footsteps and the clatter of the hoofs of the war horse come to him like the shrill notes of the bugle call. He must be up and on to the battle. So it was with this gray-haired veteran. He, who had followed Jackson through the Valley of Virginia, before he mounted a horse as circuit rider, had for forty years belonged to Wesley's legions and had proven himself one of the most heroic Knights of the Cross. He won his spurs amid the Holston hills during reconstruction days; he had seen service in the far West; he had marched with the vanguard in Western North Carolina; he knew anything better than how to beat a retreat. It was a manifestation of that spirit which has so largely characterized our itinerant ministry—that spirit which knew not how to surrender.

In Riverside cemetery, Asheville, N. C., with the simple burial rites of the Church he served so long and well, another weary and worn itinerant was laid to rest. "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

REV. ZEBEDEE RUSH.

BY REV. J. C. ROWE, D. D.

Rev. Zebedee Rush was born in Randolph County, N. C., January 8, 1821, and died September 7, 1907, at the home of his son-in-law, C. W. Wooley, near Mount Gilead, in Montgomery county. His body was buried in the family plot in the cemetery of Mount Pleasant, in Cabarrus county, N. C., beside the bodies of his wife and daughter.

He was married to Miss Tabitha J. Ewing, daughter of Dr. Ewing, of Montgomery county, in 1856. Mrs. Rush died at Albemarle May 12, 1886.

Rev. Z. Rush was converted and joined the Methodist Church at thirteen years of age. He was licensed to exhort in 1847 on Randolph circuit, Rev. John T. St. Clare was preacher in charge. He was licensed to preach in 1848 by the Quarterly Conference of the Randolph circuit. Rev. S. D. Bumpass was presiding elder.

He joined the North Carolina Conference in 1849 at Oxford, N. C., was ordained deacon by Bishop James O. Andrew at Salisbury in 1851, was ordained elder by Bishop Robert Paine at Raleigh in 1853.

The following is the record of his appointments so far as I have been able to secure the list: 1850, Straits; 1851-52, Stanton circuit, in the Danville district, which was then in the North Carolina Conference; 1853-54, Newbern circuit; 1855-56, the Montgomery circuit; 1857, Jonesville circuit; 1858-59, Forsyth circuit; 1860, Uwharrie circuit; 1861-62, Montgomery circuit; 1863-64, Guilford circuit; 1864-65, Randolph circuit; 1866-67, Deep River Mission; 1868-69, Asheboro circuit; 1870, Nash circuit; 1871, South Guilford circuit; 1872-73, Forsyth circuit; 1874-1875, South Guilford circuit; 1876, South Charlotte circuit; 1877-1878, Monroe circuit; 1879-82, Mt. Pleasant circuit; 1883-84, Concord circuit; 1885-86, Stanly circuit; 1887-88, left without appointment, but on the effective list and lived at Trinity College; 1889-90, Connelly Springs circuit; 1891-92, Gold Hill circuit.

At the Conference of 1892, held at Winston, he was granted the superannuated relation. He remained in this well-merited relation till his death. This record may not be perfectly accurate in all of its details, but it is nearly so, as I have been able to obtain the necessary data. There is no incompleteness in Brother Rush's record as he made it in the faithful continuous service he rendered to the Church. He was on the effective list forty-two years. His was a fruitful ministry. He said, so far as he could recount, there were over four thousand souls converted under his ministry.

I am not competent to do more than give a very meager analysis of this man of God. This meagerness will be the more apparent to those who knew him well. His character was so transparent and uniform that long association with him was not necessary in order to know him. He was always the same gentle, quiet and calm Rev. Zebedee Rush. He believed that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and, therefore, never got excited or had any fears that the Church would ever fail to accomplish its divinely appointed and divinely directed mission in the world.

Humility, meekness and patience were some of the graces more readily perceived in his character. His humility was neither self-abasement nor self-diffidence, but it was rather of the quality described by Bishop Taylor: "Humility is like a tree, whose root, when it sets deepest in the earth, rises higher and spreads fairer, and stands surer and lasts longer, and every step of its descent is like a rib of iron."

His meekness was free from melancholy. It was perfect submission to what he conceived to be the divine will. He never asked for favors nor ever complained of hardships. If he ever felt the sting of neglect or slight in his soul he never let another know it. When his appointment was read, he received it

so calmly, one would have thought that that was the very appointment he was expecting to receive.

His patience was not stoical, but the elements of fortitude and perseverance blended together. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible. He persevered as if the distant goal was always within the range of his vision. He had confidence in the Bishops of the Church and it never occurred to him to call into question anything they did or were supposed to do.

He was educated at Union Institute, which afterwards became Trinity College. He read and studied the Bible and the strong doctrinal books of Methodism. He was well informed in the doctrines of Christianity. He was conversant with the standard books of the Methodist Church and as a propagator and defender of Methodist doctrines he could be relied on implicitly. He left quite a number of written sermons and notes and sketches of sermons. His preaching was clear expositions of God's word, delivered often with animation, but never overstrained.

During the fifteen years of his superannuation he spent his time with his two daughters. His life was a benediction to the communities where he lived. Three years ago he was paralyzed. He accepted this as a premonition of death, and said he was ready. He regarded himself as camped on the banks of the dividing stream between time and eternity. He said he was walking up and down the stream looking for the place to cross over. He came to the parting of the waves and crossed over to the other shore.

The esteem in which he was held was demonstrated in the large congregation that came to his burial. They were people who had known him well. He had spent nine years of his active ministry in that and the adjoining communities. Quite a number present at his burial had been converted under his ministry. To others he had been a faithful pastor. They loved him for his work's sake and also because he was worthy. They expect and assuredly hope to meet him in the heavenly world. His funeral was conducted by Rev. T. W. Smith, who had conducted the funeral of Mrs. Rush and daughter, a warm and intimate friendship having existed between Brother Smith and Brother Rush and family many years.

REV. JACOB OSCAR SHELLEY.

BY REV. W. W. BAYS, D. D.

Rev. Jacob Oscar Shelley, son of Col. Jas. T. and Martha J. Shelley, was born near Post Oak Spring, Roane County, Tenn., October 11, 1851, and died in the hospital at Monroe, N. C., November 22, 1906. He was the eldest of five sons, and is survived by an aged mother, four brothers, a wife and seven children.

When but four years old, his parents removed to Kingston, Tenn., where he spent most of his youth until 1864, when he was for a while in the army, though too young in years to be regularly enlisted.

After the war he went to school for a while at Bancroft Institute, near Chattanooga, and also at Lexington, Ky. In early young manhood he followed steamboating for a time, but that