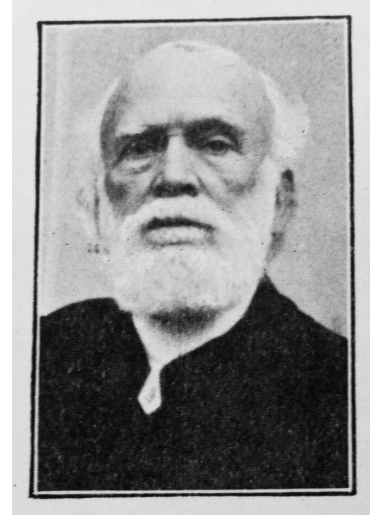


Rev. William Forth

Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Joseph Shenton

William Forth was born in the town of Hull in the year 1834. His parents were members of the Congregational Church, and he enjoyed the advantages of being brought up in a Christian home. He received a good education, and was apprenticed to a firm of drapers in Birmingham. We have no information respecting his conversion, but for a number of years he attended the Congregational Church and Sunday School in Steelhouse Lane. In 1852 Mr. Forth made the acquaintance of Mr. Edward Cross. They lodged together with a personal friend. For several years they rendered assistance to a mission church at Marston Green. In 1858 Mr. Cross, who was a member of our Church at Walsall, decided to settle at Birmingham, and both of them joined the Gooch Street Church. They became teachers in the



Sunday School, and in a short time were put on the plan as local preachers. Those were days of evangelistic zeal and enterprise, and Mr. Forth entered into the work with great zest. His natural abilities, his Christian character, his earnestness, were regarded as an indication that he was fitted for a wider sphere of labour, and at the March Quarter day of 1859 he was recommended for the work of the ministry.

He was pledged by the Tunstall Circuit, and continued in active work for the long period of forty-seven years. His life-task was wrought out on the following circuits: Tunstall, Coventry, Redditch, Cwm, Stratford-on-Avon, Ramsor (twice), Oswestry, Prees Green, Winsford and Tarporley, Congleton, Burton-on-Trent, Rhosymedre, Birmingham Second (twice), Cradley Heath, Birmingham Third, Blaenavon, Oakengates, and Wellington.

He was an indefatigable worker on his circuits, and won the confidence and co-operation of the officials and members. He always considered that he was specially favoured in being placed under the superintendency of the late Philip Pugh during the two first years of his probation. Mr. Pugh was a painstaking student himself, and attained to the highest rank in our Church, as a cultured and successful minister. He took a fatherly interest in his young men, and showed them both by precept and example how to attain efficiency in pulpit and pastoral work.

On finishing his probation, Mr. Forth was married to Miss Darby of Brierley Hill, and in her he found a true help-meet. She was an evangelist of remarkable abilities, and deservedly attained considerable popularity in the Midlands. She was his co-worker, and shared his joys and sorrows, until March, 1898, when she was called to the higher service of heaven.

The most striking traits in the character of Mr. Forth were his unswerving loyalty to Christ, and his devotedness to his ministerial duties. He had a personal realisation of the great verities of the Gospel through the indwelling Spirit, and he was ever seeking a closer walk with God. He gave himself with great ardour to the work of the ministry, and he found his chief joy in winning men to

Christ. The marked features of his preaching were his apt use of Scripture, his plainness, and practicalness, and fervour, and the indescribable unction that attended the Word.

The end come with startling suddenness. Owing to recent illness and to the increasing infirmities of age, he applied to the Conference of 1906 for superannuation. He had arranged with the Society at Selly Oak to take partial ministerial duty in connection with that Church. A reception service was held, and he had hopes of spending the evening of life in leisurely toil and quiet preparation for his home going. Within a week he was called to his reward. On Friday, August 3rd, about half past seven, he went out to visit some friends in Slade Road. He was returning on the tram, and the conductor noticed that he was holding his hand on his heart, as though he was in great pain. The tram was stopped over against the General Hospital. He was carried inside, and in ten minutes he was gone. Dr. Mackie said the cause of death was heart failure.

His remains were interred in the Witton Cemetery, on Thursday, August 9th. A service was held in Lord Street Church, the Revs. M.P. Pearse, W. Sawyer, D. Sheen, and C. L. Tack taking part. An address was delivered by Rev. J. Jopling. At the grave the Rev. G.E. Rudram read the committal sentences. Prayer was offered by Rev. T. Parr, M.A., and Rev. W. Overton pronounced the benediction. Memorial services were conducted at Hockley Church and Regent Street Church by Rev. J. Shenton, at Bournbrook Church and Selly Oak Church by Rev. G. Jones, and at Oakengates Church by Rev. C. Ball.

The Rev. Charles Dudley writes: "I always regarded him as an agreeable and lovable brother, and one that I could trust."

The Rev. W.S. Howlett writes: "He was an earnest, devoted, evangelical preacher of the Gospel of the grace of God. In doctrine he was Scriptural, in style cogent and clear, and his discourses, delivered as they were with much fervour, and accompanied by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, produced on his hearers deep and lasting impressions. Connexionally, he was one of the best business men with whom it has been our privilege to be acquainted."

Perhaps, if opportunity to speak had been given to him when he saw the near approach of death, he would have spoken of his faith in Christ, and of his hope of immortality, and his words would have been treasured as a precious memory. But in his case no such dying testimony was needed. We know he held with a firm heart-grip the vital truths of the Gospel. He passed in silence beyond the shadows of this life to the Home Eternal; the silver cord was snapped asunder, and he was with the white-robed multitude which no man can number, before the throne.

References

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