

Caledonian Road - London

Transcription of article in the series "Famous Pulpits of our Churches" by Rev. William Mincher

THIS series of articles is dealing with pulpits, not pews; with preachers, and not properties; however, the two cannot be wholly separated. The fact of a pulpit predicates a church, a congregation, and a place of assembly. And the place which contains the pulpit may enshrine an enormous wealth of memories. It is so with respect to our Caledonian Road Church, which is one of the choice fruits of the missioning spirit characterising our early days.

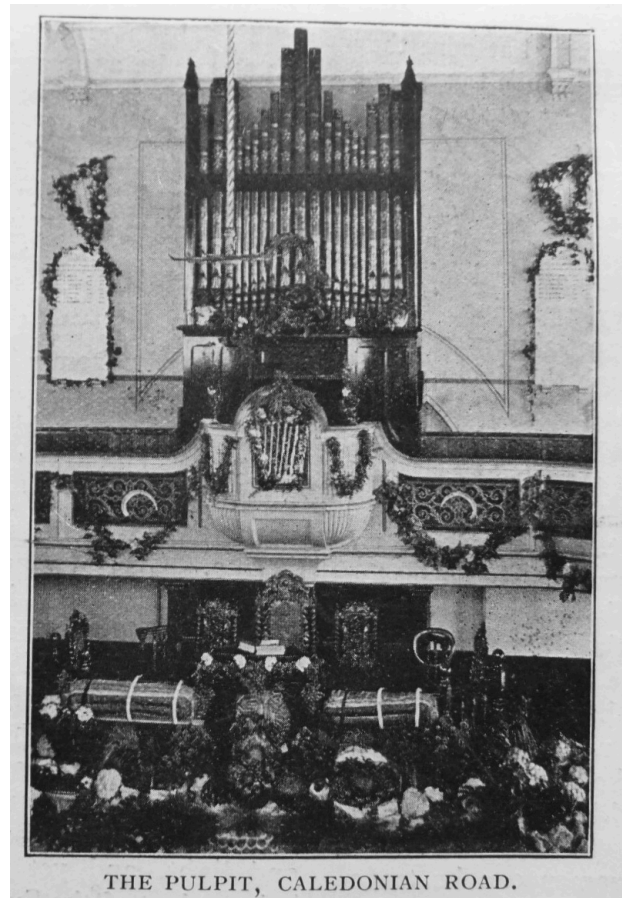
When from 1850 to 1860 our work in London was administered in a most remarkable manner, this part of the Metropolis was marked out for invasion. The open-air services resulted in the securing of a rented hall in the neighbourhood of the Cattle Market, and in such conditions the devoted and dauntless band worshipped and spread the saving influences.

In the year 1870, a commanding site was obtained, and the present sanctuary, erected in one of the busiest and most populous districts of our great city, and has been for forty 'years one of the greatest centres of our Denominational life and influence.

The ministry of this church has been for fifty years one of immense variety and power. It was during the ministry of Thomas Penrose, 1859-1861, that the locality was missioned, and the first society was formed. He was a man of large physique, and of equally large heartedness. His enthusiasm was almost unbounded. His devotion was unwearied, and his love to God and his Church supreme, and dominating.

In 1861, George Lamb was appointed. He was a master hand in administration, and of mighty pulpit power. He has little record as a chapel builder; but he was consummate in his skill in managing men. He was mighty in the Scriptures, and his record is mainly in the hearts and lives he influenced.

In 1864 John Phillips was stationed. He was a man of many parts: careful and precise, even sometimes to fastidiousness. Fluent in speech, even often to gaudiness, he yet left a marvellous record, and lasting memorials of work hardly to be matched.



In 1868 Joseph Toulson became minister. He was a man of wonderful resource, untiring patience, and consummate tact. Owing to his forethought and persistent energy the present church was built in 1870, at a cost of £2,600, which was a remarkable feat in those days. He remained on the station till 1873, having set the march of the circuit to a quick step, and a chivalrous note.

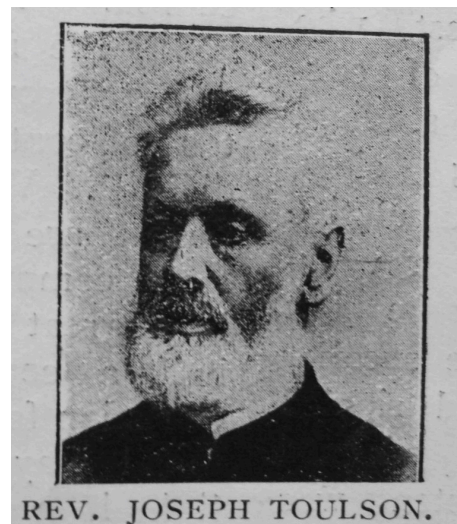
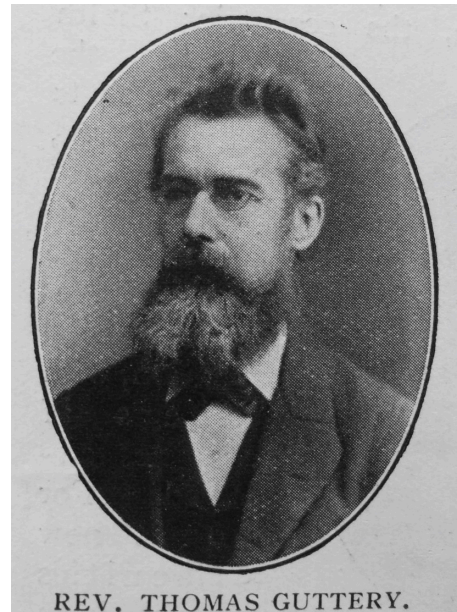
The directing spirits of the following years were successively Charles Jupe, R.R. Connell, Thomas Guttery, George Shapcott, and in more recent years Thomas Meakin, William Welford, and Joseph Dinnick.

The former named would own their indebtedness to their colleagues, among whom we may mention William Powell, W.H. Allen, Josiah Turley, Peter Coates, J.P. Langham, John Bailey, T.J. Gladwin, H.J. Taylor, W. D. Judson, and H.W. Shirtcliffe, all of whom rendered invaluable service, and some since have attained Connexional distinction.

Few churches have been blessed with a greater variety of ministers, both with regard to number and diversity of gifts and versatility of style. It seems invidious to specify. However, some of these men were markedly distinguished for business sagacity, energy, and enterprise, while others shone to more advantage in the pulpit. And in a church like ours who will dare to extol the one kind of gifts to the disparagement of the others?

We may be forgiven a classification. Perhaps John Phillips, Joseph Toulson, Richard R. Connell, and George Shapcott may be given the premier place among the men who laid hands upon the helm of this church's activities. And this is not even hinting that they were impotent in the pulpit; but they were pre-eminently men who grasped the situation. Perceiving what required to be done they did it.

And, perhaps, the men who have left their impress, and will be best remembered for their preaching gifts are George Lamb, Charles Jupe, Thomas Guttery, and Thomas Meakin. And in saying this we do not mean that they were deficient in business aptitude; but that their best work was done in the pulpit.



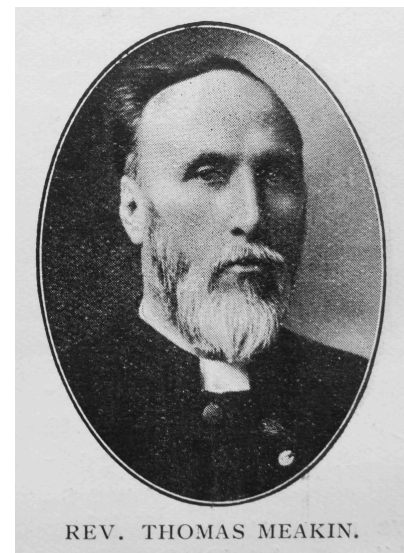
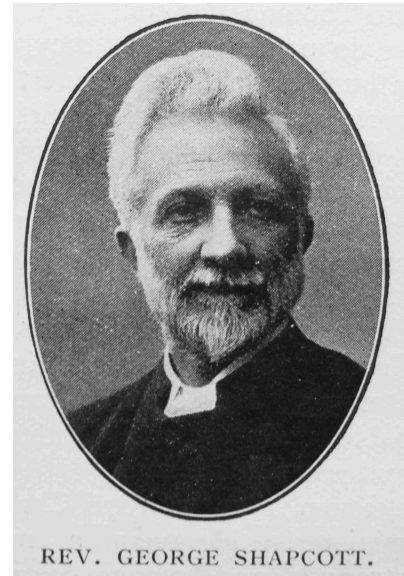
From 1861 to 1864 George Lamb was minister. He possessed no striking appearance, no musical voice, and no oratorical graces. He was a man of tremendous passion, and of enthusiastic abandon. His aim was transparent. Truth poured from his lips in burning streams. He captured men by his palpable realness, whiteheated convictions, and seraphic glow

From 1873 to 1876 Charles Jupe was minister. He was a man of giant strength, and he spent it prodigally. He had great intellectual gifts. There was a vein of genius in him, and something of a Miltonic aspect in his mentality. Original, erratic, vivid, sometimes extravagant, even grotesque. Fiery as a volcano, his preaching often was like a torrent rushing down a gorge, or a storm-cloud in a whirlwind. All his untamed passion, vigour of thinking, and intensity of emotion would be let loose in the pulpit.

From 1884 to 1890 Thomas Guttery was minister. He was a man of many charms. Tender, sympathetic, social and human. He was not only a talker, he was a thinker: well read, keen and cultured. His eloquence was not of the showy and tawdry type, it was winsome, pictorial, and captivating. It was truly marvellous how much power resided in that spare frame of his. Few men could find a quicker way to the heart of a congregation than he. He was no mere memoriter, but he knew his subject well. He had a grace of delivery, a fund of knowledge, an insight and outlook, and he spoke like a charmer.

From 1893 to 1903 Thomas Meakin was minister, and he was no unworthy successor of the best who had preceded him: a man of considerable culture, of wide reading, and of intellectual interests; slow, measured, unfolding and cumulative in style; beginning almost in a whisper; appearing at first to be but thinking aloud. Then, as the speaker warmed, the truth melted and rippled as a meadow stream, and widened as a great river. To listen was to see how much careful preparation lay behind, and was to share in the fruit of the preacher's experience, knowledge and message.

This church has participated in the labours, also, of a distinguished and numerous band of lay-preachers. Among this galaxy of worthies it will hardly be questioned that Thomas Church, the eccentric; Smith Weir, the eloquent; David Berry, the fervent; J.S. Parkman, the practical, deserve special mention, with others if space allowed.



For years now difficulties have been accumulating around this church. The change of the neighbourhood, the removal of prodigal workers and generous givers, have rendered the task of continuing the work tenfold more difficult. William Roberts and his heroic people are facing the situation with a most commendable devotion. The past is a great record.

Here has been for half a century a mighty centre of Christian force; and thousands will pray that it may remain many, many years, a light in a dark place, and a witness for God amid the swirling indifference and Godlessness surrounding it.

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1910/792