

Rev. Jeremiah Dodsworth

Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Charles Smith

“To live in hearts we leave behind Is not to die.”

ANOTHER distinguished name in our Israel is taken from the roll of living men, and is added to the glorious list of illustrious names which are written in heaven.

“Think not such names ;
Are common sounds; they have music in them |
An odorous recollection, they are part
Of the old glorious past.”

JEREMIAH Dodsworth is the name which we now record with deep and mingled emotions. He has gone from us; the sepulchre has claimed all of him that was mortal for its own. When such a man dies, it is not meet that his honoured dust should be put away out of sight in darkness and in silence without some tribute to his character, without some words of tender feeling and heartfelt sorrow, and some offering of praise to God for the excellent gifts both of head and heart with which he was pleased to endow him; therefore, I will gather a few leaves and flowers, and work them into a chaplet to adorn his memory.

He was the fifth son of John and Elizabeth Dodsworth, of Willerby, a small village near Hull, and was born in December, 1811. His parents were comparatively speaking poor, but they were pious and devoted Christians, and resolved that “they and their house should serve the Lord.” They sought to lead their children to Christ, and had the unspeakable joy before they died of seeing many of them not only converted, but occupying important and honourable stations in the church. The subject of this sketch, when a youth, was lively and interesting; his temper and disposition were amiable. When of sufficient age he was sent to service, and soon began to manifest more than ordinary shrewdness and intelligence, amongst his fellow servants ; he would frequently mount the block on the village green, and harangue his companions; he was the first and foremost at village gatherings, and delighted in the sports and games which characterised village feasts. He was exceedingly fond of card playing, was a good hand at a country dance, and having a fine sonorous voice he was very popular as a singer of songs; in fact, he was the great favourite at all these places of resort. In this way he lived in worldly pleasures and pursuits until he reached the twenty-third year of his age.

About this time a beloved sister, apparently on the bed of death, repeated to him these beautiful lines -

“Let sickness blast, let death devour,
If heaven must recompence our pains;
Perish the grass, and fade the flower,
If firm the Word of God remains.”

They made an impression on his mind which never left him. He went to live in Hull, and was invited by Mr. C. Bowman to meet in his class, which he did on the following Sabbath. In a short time he was brought into company with the late Rev. W. Clowes, and this led to his conversion. Describing that

interview and his conversion, he says, - "It was my happiness to become acquainted with Mr. Clowes about the year 1834, and at our first interview he made an immediate effort to secure my salvation - a circumstance, which illustrated his holy and useful life. Others had warned me of my danger, and I had respected their good intentions, and still rushed on in a career of ruin; but when the stentorian voice of W. Clowes fell upon my ear, crying, 'Stop, poor sinner!' I was arrested and subdued. To this day I remember how, as I approached him, the keen glance of his eye penetrated me, and the moment I came within range of the spiritual artillery of his mighty and sanctified mind, he opened fire on the stronghold of Satan in my heart, and kept up the cannonade until the enemy was dislodged. 'Are you converted?' said he, in a tone, and with an authority not yet forgotten. Thus his first charge was successful. I stood trembling under the influence of a power which shook the very foundations of the works of the devil within me, the sweat oozing from every pore of my body. He then directed me to him who healeth the broken in heart, and who bindeth up their wounds." After a season of deep sorrow and distress, our brother believed in Christ with his heart unto righteousness, and came forth in all the joy and beauty of a new and divine life. He chose for his companions in the kingdom of grace such men as Clowes, Harland, Wallis, Bowman, Sissons, and others of the same spirit, and under their watchful and fatherly care he increased with all the increase of God.

They saw his zeal, they admired the consistency and devotedness of his life, and were convinced that he had mental powers of a highly respectable order; he was soon commissioned by the church, and also by the Head of the church to preach the gospel of salvation to others, and having given proof of his fitness for the ministry, he was called into the itinerancy, and sent to labour in London, which was then a mission station in connection with the Hull circuit. In this sphere he was associated with the late Rev. T. Holliday, and was employed in missioning the densely populated neighbourhoods of Bethnal Green, Bermondsey, Lambeth, Southwark, and other adjacent places. The work was extremely hard, and more than once he was assailed with bricks and stones and eggs and dragged through the streets to prison; but when brought before the city magistrates, he was acquitted. His next station was Bedford, where he laboured two years; he afterwards travelled three years at Barton-on-Humber, two at Halifax, two at Leeds 1st, and three at York, two at Burnley, two at Bradford, two at Keighley, three at Malton, and three at Wakefield, and here his labours ceased. In the above stations, in connection with his colleagues, he was successful in building the various churches, and in turning many to righteousness, so that in each station he had the pleasure of reporting an annual increase.

For a few years his ministerial career was one of extraordinary brilliancy, his services were in great demand; wherever he went he attracted crowded audiences, who listened with attention and delight to the rich evangelical truths which flowed in streams of graceful eloquence from his lips. His sermons were clear in their conception, logical in their arrangement, rich in divine unction, practical in their tendency and abounding in great principles. They were clear and conclusive in their argumentation, and full of Christ. His preaching was most energetic, and having a clear, sweet, pathetic, and tremulous voice, the minds and passions of his congregations were under his control, and at times the effects produced were thrilling and astonishing. We have listened to many discourses from him, which, for the most admirable qualities of the pulpit have seldom been excelled.

He was great on the platform, especially when pleading the cause of missions. There he poured forth his eloquence, and put forth all his distinguished and commanding power. Many of his addresses were rich, powerful, and beautiful, and produced surprising effects. To say that his sermons and speeches always produced equal effects would be saying too much, but his hearers were seldom disappointed. As an author he is favourably known, and occupies a respectable position. The "Better Land," the "Eden Family," and "Messiah's Many Crowns," are works written by his pen, and have met with an extensive sale and a large circulation. Few authors amongst us have developed greater power, or shone with a holier or brighter lustre. His grasp of mind was vigorous, his understanding was marked by clearness, and at times there is splendid imagination, exquisite imagery, and brilliancy of style in his compositions. We are glad to place it on record, that his writings have been the means of comforting many disconsolate hearts, of bringing many to the Saviour; and, by them "he yet speaketh," and will speak to coming generations; they are a precious legacy to the church.

In social life he had all the essential qualities for the closest friendship; he was warm-hearted, and sensitive to the least act of kindness done to him; generally he was the life of the social circle, and threw a bright sunshine over it. Hundreds of kind families in our Zion who have been favoured with his visits, will bear willing and cheerful testimony to this fact.

In the family circle he shone with unwonted lustre; never, perhaps, have the relative obligations of husband and parent been more deeply felt or more happily illustrated. He shed a mild radiance around the family scene. One whom he has now met in heaven could bear witness to the fact that never was husband more tender, more gentle, or more considerately kind. His children hung upon his smile, and as they grew up into life, were bound to him in filial admiration and love. Never can any one in his family forget the unwearied affection with which he watched over her who had been the wife of his youth and the mother of his children during the protracted scenes of bodily sufferings through which she was called to pass, and at a time when he himself was the subject of great infirmity.

Though we have thus written concerning our dear departed brother, yet like every other specimen of sanctified humanity in the present life (Christ excepted), he had his imperfections, infirmities and peculiarities, but these shall not be recorded by my pen. "For he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people were added unto the Lord."

In July, 1860, whilst stationed in Malton, he had a severe attack of typhus fever, and was laid aside from all ministerial duties until the following October; he never fully regained his strength. On the 14th of February, 1861, at four o'clock in the morning, he awoke in the midst of a severe attack of vertigo - this was at Coneythorpe; whence he had to be taken home in a cab. He suffered many weeks of great nervous excitement and general debility, so much so that he was not able to resume his labours in the station. Here we think his itinerancy ought to have ended; but his health being a little improved, the district meeting of 1861 stationed him to the Wakefield circuit, where he continued three years. When he got there he was so weak that he could not commence his labours until the latter end of August. Here, besides attending to his ordinary labours when health permitted, he built three chapels; but this work was too much for his shattered system to sustain. In the midst of it he had several attacks of his old complaint, being sometimes seized in the pulpit. His medical adviser assured him, that if he did not give up preaching he would drop dead in the pulpit or

on the road. He was compelled to relinquish his labours, this was on the 2nd of May, 1863, and he remained an invalid on the station until July, 1864, when being superannuated, he took a house in Wakefield, and continued his residence there, chiefly for the accommodation of his son Jeremiah, who was appointed to travel in that station, and for two years he and his wife, with their two sons Jeremiah and Jesse, dwelt in peace, in that home of love and domestic happiness. In June, 1865, Mrs. Dodsworth was brought very near to the grave by a painful disease. After weeks and months of severe suffering, which were borne with Christian fortitude and patience, she died in Christ, and went to her purchased and promised rest. After her death Mr. Dodsworth left Wakefield, and took up his abode with his daughter and son-in-law, the Rev. L.F. Armitage, at Bishop Auckland, in Durham, where he resided until his death. About Christmas last he began to fail very much in his eye sight, and he became totally blind; his memory also was greatly impaired. Though, in reference to many things of the past he was oblivious, yet it was amazing to hear his quotations from the Scriptures, and his allusions to Dr. Payson's and Chalmer's works, also to those of J. Wesley, A. Clarke, and other mighty men of the past, with whose kindred spirits he had brought himself into association through the medium of their immortal writings. His confidence in God and in the atonement of Christ was strong and unshaken.

His son Jeremiah, says, "I sat with him one day in the week before he died, and heard him conversing with his Master, unaware of the presence of any person in the room, he said amongst many other things, 'Lord, thou searchest the hearts and triest the reins of the children of men, and thou knowest, yes, thou knowest that I have not wickedly departed from thy ways, or knowingly connived at sin for the last thirty years; yet, through my manifold imperfections I am compelled to crave an interest in the riches of thy grace in Christ Jesus.' "

His favourite hymn on his death-bed was,

"And this I shall find,
He is faithful and kind;
He'll not be in glory
And leave me behind."

Passage after passage of Scripture, line after line of Wesley, Watts, and Young would come from his lips with that tremulous tone of voice and manner that usually characterised his speech, and which made all hearts soften under its remarkable influence. He died quietly and calmly on the 11th of February, 1867, at twenty minutes past eight in the morning. On the 13th his remains were conveyed by train to Wakefield, and laid in the grave which contained the precious dust of his wife and his son Joshua, where they will sleep until the morning of the resurrection.

References

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