

Rev. Andrew Latimer

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by John Welford

Primitive Methodism has had few ministers who served it with greater devotion and wholeheartedness than Rev. A. Latimer. This was the natural result of the influences that surrounded him in early life. He was born at Mars Farm, Loftus-in-Cleveland, September 2nd, 1838. Born into a Christian home, reared amid the holiest and most gracious influences, he was at the early age of twelve led to a decision for Christ. His parents were Yorkshire Methodists of the very best type, counting it a high privilege to entertain the ministers, and it seemed the natural reward of their beautiful and consistent home piety that one by one their children should yield themselves to Christ and become earnest workers in the Church. For many years his mother was an enthusiastic missionary collector. In due course the box passed to his sister, afterwards to his sister-in-law, and is now energetically worked by his niece.

Young Andrew became a teacher in the Sunday school, and while a mere lad his name appeared on the circuit plan as a local preacher. In this capacity he was favoured with considerable success, and it was soon apparent that he was possessed of gifts that fitted him for a wider sphere of service. He was little more than twenty years of age when he was called into the ministry by the Darlington Station, and subsequently he travelled in Stockton, Sunderland, Shotley Bridge (twice), Stanley, South Shields, Loftus (his native circuit), Darlington (second time), Newcastle-on-Tyne II., Manchester II., and Blaydon, where the state of his health reluctantly compelled him to relinquish the active ministry and superannuate. This was in 1904.

His retirement was spent in the town of Darlington, where his ministry began, and where he had exercised for seven years a second period of faithful ministry. His first superintendent was Rev. J. Spoor, of sainted memory, whose flaming evangelism became an inspiration and example to his youthful colleague and had an abiding influence on his ministry.

In 1867 he was married to Miss Fenwick, of Sunderland. The union was in every way a congenial and happy one. Their home was a hallowed sanctuary where God dwelt and peace and love reigned supreme. They had sorrow and bereavement, but the grace of God was all sufficient. Of the four children born to them, two survive—John Fenwick, solicitor, of Darlington, and Dora, wife of Rev. E.W. Challenger, superintendent of Burnley I. Station.

It will be noticed that his long ministry was spent in few circuits, and it may be recorded that he never left one except of his own accord. He was pre-eminently a circuit man. He served his districts in various official capacities; for a considerable period he was a member of the Probationers' Examining Committee, and he did excellent work on the Students' Examining Committee, but his strength lay, and his real success was achieved, in his circuits. Probably few ministers have enjoyed a larger measure of success, or won more completely the confidence and affection alike of members and officials, than he. He lived for his circuits and his people. To comfort them in trouble, to inspire them with courage and hope, to counsel them in times of stress and difficulty, to help them in any way to a higher and nobler life, he spent himself without measure or stint. No journey was too long, no call too untimely, if it meant helping and comforting others. He had a rich, sympathetic nature that was responsive to every appeal.

He preached to save men, and when saved he led them by his ministry to the higher altitudes of spiritual experience. His preaching was not of a kind that would be popular in some quarters to-day, but it reached the hearts of his hearers and drew them to Christ. He was a church builder in the very best sense. He was a great student of theology, read daily the Scriptures in the original tongues; he thought, he prayed, he meditated, and gave to his people the ripe fruit of a cultivated and well-stored mind.

Rev. G. Parkin, a friend of more than fifty years' standing, says that goodness was one of the outstanding features of his character, and that he was a great family visitor. His prayers were models of simplicity, and went straight from his own heart to the heart of God. He had much of the old Methodist fire in him, and the capacity of kindling it in others. Yet he was not an emotional preacher. He was at times highly rhetorical, but his sermons as a rule were a well-balanced appeal to both intellect and heart. They were ethically strong as they were doctrinally sound.

Some of the circuits in which he travelled were wide and laborious. Long journeys, constant preaching and visiting, at times inconvenient night accommodation, made a heavy demand on a preacher's constitution. Revival meetings, prolonged and exhausting, mostly in mid-winter, tested his power of endurance. Mr. Latimer was not one of the strongest, yet he never spared himself. In a revival meeting his fervour of soul glowed at white heat, and pain and weakness were forgotten. He could not sing—he had no ear for tune—but the overflowing melody in his heart made his eye kindle and his face shine. Oh, the joy of those old days! It was good to be alive and to be associated with him in circuit work. He was a true colleague, a loyal and faithful friend. He was quick to discern the good in others, especially in the young, and quite a number of men have passed into the ministry directly through his influence.

He was not without ambition, but he never sought honours or position. He scorned everything of the nature of self-seeking, and was incapable of a mean-act. He lived a gracious, fruitful life, in all purity and gravity, and was in every sense of the word a good man. The ethical and spiritual held the first place in his scheme of life. And thus the evening of life found him calm and full of hope.

About four years ago he was smitten with paralysis, and though he somewhat recovered, it was evident that the end was not far away. On Friday, July 23rd, he had his usual evening walk, and retired to rest about ten o'clock. During the night he had another seizure, and without regaining consciousness next morning he quietly passed to his eternal home. A large number of ministers and friends gathered to his burial, and thus honoured the man who had most worthily served his Church and generation. Private letters and resolutions of committees bear eloquent testimony to the power and graciousness of his life. He will be missed and mourned, especially in his home, but the God of love will guide and comfort those who remain until the day break.

References

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