

Rev. Francis J. Morgan

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Joseph Maland

In the promotion of Francis J. Morgan to higher service, our earthly workshop has lost one of its most diligent and efficient toilers. None ever worked for humanity and Christ more conscientiously or helpfully. He was one who did great credit to the lofty ideals and noble achievements of the Christian ministry, and throughout his long and fruitful ministry he adorned the Gospel of Christ our Saviour in precept and practice.

Born in a Primitive Methodist manse at Derby in 1844, baptised by William Clowes, from morn till eve, he was an ardent lover and enthusiastic servant of the Church of his nativity. To his sweet, pure, home life he owed much, especially to the gracious example and self-denying service of his devoted mother, who, bereft of her husband in the prime of his years, had to care for six fatherless children in straightened circumstances. Mother and children striving together, many difficulties were overcome, and the family maintained comfortably and prosperously.

Francis early in life felt the constraining influence of things religious, and cheerfully and wholeheartedly dedicated his life to Christ and His Church. He was always keen on mental culture, and was quick to seize opportunities for self-improvement. He attended, with much profit, an institute for intellectual and spiritual culture in Sheffield associated with the Presbyterian Church. His intellectual keenness, his cheerful, Christian spirit, his aptness at self-expression so impressed the officials that overtures were made to him to enter the Presbyterian ministry, with the alluring bait of a free college course of three or four years. The temptation to accept was great, but loyalty to his own Church led him to refuse.

Meanwhile, he was becoming most useful in our Church, and a very acceptable local preacher, and such was the promise of wider usefulness that he was urged to enter the ministry that his father had so conspicuously honoured and served. Francis had now conquered most of his first difficulties in business, and was rapidly gaining a lucrative position in the commercial world with magnificent material prospects. But he did not hesitate to yield these in order to respond to the call of his Church, which he took to be the call of Christ, to a life of poverty—so far as worldly things go—but to the highest, holiest calling a man can enter, which brings heavenly treasure to him, and through him spiritual enrichment to countless others.

In 1866 we find him among the first batch of ministerial students at Elmfield College, under the professional guidance of the devout and scholarly John Petty, and in 1867 commencing his ministry on the wide-stretching Horncastle station, under the superintendency of the Rev. Thomas Baron.

When he retired from his active ministry in 1908, he had to his credit forty-one years of noble, fruitful service on the Horncastle, Sleaford, Belper, Mansfield, Leicester I., Wriston, Sheffield (Petre Street), Hinckley, Bury St. Edmunds, Banbury, Donnington, Swinefleet, Barton-on-Humber, Alford, Howden, Castletown, Isle of Man, and Market Drayton Circuits. He built chapels on the Swinefleet, Alford, Howden and Castletown Circuits, which did him and his people great credit, and left no crushing burdens of debt, and —what was more important—he built up men and women, and youths and maidens in Christian character, and won many to the service of Christ.

Francis Morgan was known everywhere as a man of marked individuality, and recognised as one who was ever striving to be true to himself, and as a consequence, he was always true to others. He had a happy habit of always seeing the best in people, and drawing forth whatever was good in them. He possessed in a

rare degree the power of helping people to be what he expected them to be—this was especially true of his tender, stimulating relationship with his young people, troops of whom looked to him as counsellor and friend. All his work was done quietly, unobtrusively, without noise or parade, and all was done with *care*—as a duty from God to be done in harmony with His will and purpose, for in all his service he saw the hand divine. He always left his circuits better than he found them, and was held in high esteem by all who could appreciate faithful, loving, humble service for the Master, done in simplicity and singleness of heart.

Our friend had a lofty ideal of ministerial fitness and intellectual culture. He was reading his Greek New Testament to the last. He greatly rejoiced in the fellowship and educative influence of our ministerial associations, and was a wide and discerning reader. He read poetry, science, biography and travel, as well as theology and philosophy, and thus avoided that cramping of the mind and narrowness of sympathy that too often mark a too exclusive adherence to one or two classes of books, and kept his view of men and things broad and tolerant. Of John Richard-Green it is recorded, “He died reading.” Even so might it be written of Francis J. Morgan.

My last memory of him is exceedingly beautiful. A fortnight before he died, he came to see me, and wanted a good, live book. I took from my shelves Dr. Barber’s “The Unfolding Life,” and Robertson’s “The Pilgrimage of Jesus.” I see him now going briskly down my garden path with his books tucked lovingly under his arm, going home, as eager to read his new possessions as any schoolboy to dip into his new book of adventures.

On retiring from the active ministry, he settled at Rotherham, and we were richly favoured with his ministry and friendship at Wellgate, and throughout the Rotherham I. Circuit, where he was ever welcome in our pulpits and homes. He was greatly esteemed in the town, and particularly for his eight years of splendid service in connection with Rotherham General Hospital. Although it was manifest to us that he was breaking up, the end came with startling suddenness. He was out on the Monday, taken ill on Tuesday, and on the evening of Friday, January 16th, 1920, he passed peacefully away.

An impressive service was held on the day of the interment in Wellgate Church, conducted by the writer, who paid an affectionate and appreciative tribute to his noble colleague’s life and work; and the Revs. J.W. Dickson, C. Higgins, B. Arnfield, and H. Dixon took part in the service. Our sorrow was transfigured with thanksgiving for so good a man and so long and gracious a ministry. Our loving sympathy went out to his bereaved widow and children.

References

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