

## **Rev. Jonathan Wiliam Smith**

### **Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by R. Smith**

J. WILLIAM SMITH, eldest son of the present Governor of Elmfield College, was born at Otley, Yorkshire, October 6, 1850, and departed this life at Meadvale, Reigate, January 22, 1880. He was a most loving, patient, and forgiving child. He possessed many of those rare unselfish qualities indicated in the character and conduct of his eminent namesake, Jonathan, the grandson of Kish. He had a large and benevolent heart, and more than an average share of intellectual power. In early life he gathered up a considerable breadth of general and useful knowledge. He had a fine baritone voice, which gave a charm to his delivery, and enabled him to sing sacred songs with much feeling and effect. He had much influence with the young, and was very useful in Sunday-school work.

He was an Elmfield scholar in the earlier days of the sainted John Petty; and derived much benefit, both educational and religious, from being at this important Connexional institution. From earliest life he had a desire to be good, and not unfrequently in the days of his childhood said, 'Oh, mother, pray with us.' He also early became acquainted with the divine plan of saving sinners. One day, when eleven years of age, being with his father in his study, conning over the pages of the New Testament, he said, 'Father, if the Lord Jesus Christ had not died for us, we should not have been redeemed.' He attributed his conversion under God to his parents, but chiefly to his mother, whom he intensely loved, and who was skilled in leading a penitent to the foot of the cross, and to obtain 'peace and joy through believing.' Of her it was said by a young man after he had entered our ministry, 'She produced a remarkable and indelible impression on my mind at a momentous period of my life. Her tears, her prayers, her advice, will live in my memory for ever. When I "would see Jesus," she was one of the greatest agents used by God in helping me to find Him.'

In December 1873, he began ministerial life on the Sheerness mission, where, as elsewhere, his labours were owned by God. The Rev. J. Peck, his first superintendent, says, 'Jonathan did not live in vain. Under his zealous labours during the brief period that he spent with me, I believe much good was done.' On his second station, Kingston-on-Thames, he lived to make himself esteemed and beloved on account of his affectionate heart and edifying ministry. One of his colleagues at that time says, 'He was a genuine Christian—true in word and tried in deed. His amiable disposition and his love for truth and right, won my deepest respect.'

He spent three years, nearly one half of his ministerial life, on the Ramsgate circuit, where, amid many serious difficulties, he toiled hard and rendered good service to the cause of God. A telegram from Ramsgate to his bereaved parents, said, 'Accept our deep sympathy. You have lost a loving son, and we a faithful friend.' The parties who sent the telegram say, 'He has been a subject for many ministers. Last Sunday eve, in one of the Baptist churches, the minister in speaking of him quite broke down. We are thankful to have known him, and would have given a great deal, if we had been permitted, to nurse him.'

The Rev. James A. Cheeseman, his successor at Ramagate, says: 'I had learnt to love him as a friend; and he will ever be remembered by me with feelings of love and respect. Of course you are aware how greatly respected and loved he was in this neighbourhood. Everyone loved him, and now mourns his loss.'

Mr. Hunter of Minster, where he dwelt, said, 'It was with feelings of great sorrow that we received the news of the death of your son, and of our dear friend and brother. There was quite a gloom over the services yesterday, more so in the Sunday-school in which he took such a lively interest. I quite felt for the poor children, they seemed so cut up.'

The *Kent Argus* of January 24, 1880, said, 'We are sorry to have to inform our readers of the death of the Rev. J. W. Smith, who was recently one of the Primitive Methodist ministers in connection with the Ramsgate circuit. It appears that a short time ago, he caught a severe cold, which produced erysipelas and caused his death. He was very energetic in all departments of church work. He was also an ardent temperance worker, and took great and special interest in the welfare of the Bands of Hope. He was exceedingly fond of singing and spent many hours of his time in teaching the children to sing; indeed he never seemed so happy as when surrounded by smiling children, whom he was teaching to sing for some Band of Hope festival or school anniversary. Mr. Smith visited Ramsgate at Christmas, preached at two chapels, and delivered an address at Minster on Boxing night. Some of the people there remarked "how well he looked." As a minister he was greatly beloved in the town and neighbourhood, and doubtless many will mourn his loss.'

The Rev. E.C. Pritchard says: 'As you know, he was my colleague on the Ramsgate circuit, from July 1876, till I removed from the circuit. I never had a more agreeable colleague. I ever found him obliging, faithful, and thoroughly trustworthy. He was devoted to his work, and punctual and business-like in his habits. I could always feel sure that any matter left in his hands would be well attended to. His work was his delight, and all his energies were consecrated to the promotion of man's weal. He was a devoted and successful advocate of total abstinence principles. He was the especial friend of the young. The Sabbath-school, the Band of Hope, the Juvenile singing class, were places of peculiar delight to him. During his residence in the Ramsgate circuit, he won the esteem, not only of our own societies and congregations, but also of very many beyond the pale of our church; and his removal after three years of successful labour was deeply regretted. In his decease you have lost a loving son, the church has lost a devoted and very promising young minister, I have lost a faithful and much esteemed friend.' The Rev. S. J. Wallis, his other superintendent at Ramsgate, says: 'He was the kindest and best colleague I ever had.'

In July 1879, he removed to Redhill, and though but six short months intervened between his going there and his death, he was long enough in the station to make himself beloved and esteemed by the ministers and members of the church of God. The Rev. Albert Bishop, superintendent of the Wesleyan Redhill circuit, in a letter of condolence to the bereaved, says, 'Your son's removal is felt by us to be a loss to the neighbourhood. He was so buoyant with hope, so full of plans for usefulness, so evidently conscientious and devout in spirit, so earnest and zealous, and liberal in toil, that one felt that his influence and work must in time tell.' He died in harness. He conducted service, and preached in the evening of January 14, from 'Having on the breastplate of righteousness.' On the morning of the 15th, the doctor was called in. He suffered much, but with great patience. On the morning of the 22nd, he literally 'fell on sleep,' and died without a struggle or a murmur. 'He was not, for God took him.'

When his remains were removed from Meadvale, the ministers of the several denominations and friends from all parts of the station, some travelling a distance of twelve miles, met and held a service in the chapel, and wept over him 'with a great weeping.' His family circle, by all of whom he was greatly beloved, are much comforted by the facts that he was loved and esteemed by the wise and the good, and that he did not injure the world but in some degree made it better by living therein. He was buried in the city of York cemetery on Tuesday, January 27, 1880. 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'

---

#### References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1880/694