

Rev. Atkinson Smith

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by C Kendall

ATKINSON SMITH, Primitive Methodist minister, was born at Scotterthorpe, in Lincolnshire, October 16th, 1800. When he was sixteen years of age, he was visited by powerful strivings of the Holy Ghost, but he unhappily resisted them. At the age of nineteen he was again awakened under the ministry of the Primitive Methodists, and became a member of their society in 1821. It is presumed that from this time he enjoyed a measure of true piety; but it was not till nine years afterwards that he obtained what he used to call "the power of godliness," importing, we judge, a deeper baptism of the Holy Spirit which greatly improved his religious character. "Immediately after receiving this blessing," he says, "I had an impression that I should have to preach the gospel. It was so deep, that I disentangled myself from every thing that might prove a hindrance, and I had reason to believe that God had accepted me. In the spring of 1830, my name appeared on the plan, and at midsummer of the same year I was taken out to travel: so I never had the honour of being a local preacher."

His first station was the home branch of Scotter circuit, where he spent a year, and subsequently he laboured in Leeds two years; Hull home branch one year; Driffield branch two years; Barton branch nine months; Patrington branch three months; Bradford circuit two years; Patrington branch two years; Hull home branch two years; York circuit one year; Gainsborough branch two years: and Driffield home branch three years. In each of these stations he laboured with acceptance; the seals to his ministry were numerous, and the number of members added to the stations while he travelled in them was 1,204. His journal is rich as a record of gospel triumphs and deep Christian experience, and many parts of it merit publication.

There were two traits very prominent in Mr. Smith's Christian character. The first was *prayerfulness*. Much of his work was effected on his knees. He literally *wrestled* in prayer, and the influence which he commanded in his public intercessions caused hundreds to tremble, and many to ask, "What must we do to be saved?" A person well able to judge, says, in reference to the power which he possessed in prayer, "Unquestionably he and his brother Edward were two of the mightiest men that have been raised up in these parts." To prayer he added fasting to a considerable extent. He seemed in a constant flame of zeal for the salvation of souls and the glory of God. Wherever he was he appeared to be conscious of the presence of God, and manifested a dignified seriousness which highly befitted him as a minister of the gospel.

The other trait so prominent in him was *strong faith* in God, Doubtless the spirit of prayer is always associated with faith; but there are some who pray much, and yet are dull in learning the art of simple confidence in the Divine promises, Mr. Smith appeared in his prayers to expect the things which he desired. Thousands in our Zion have felt the descent of the power of God while he has been exclaiming, after pleading for a thing, "He does it; he does it *now—just now.*" A present salvation was what he continually insisted upon

As a preacher he was generally acceptable. There was not a great diversity in his ministrations. He dealt exclusively in great and saving truths. It was more difficult to guess what would be his text than what would be his sermons. Many of his brethren were more eloquent than he, but few were more earnest or more successful. He had an unqualified faith in the gospel as the power of God unto salvation, and he invariably urged his hearers to believe then and be saved. He was always for having penitents brought at once into the possession of pardon, or believers sanctified wholly; he was emphatically a present salvation man.

It should be added, that he remembered the poor; his disinterested liberality towards them was manifested. At the district meeting of 1849, he had been for a considerable time unable to sustain the labours of the regular ministry, which led him to contemplate location. With reluctance he quitted the itinerancy, notwithstanding its toils and anxieties; but his physical frame, constitutionally not robust, was unable any longer to endure the arduous exercises of the ministry.

He retired to the pleasant and salubrious village of Goxhill, Barton circuit; but still continued to labour in word and doctrine as his strength would permit. A few weeks prior to his death he was stricken with paralysis, which greatly beclouded his reasoning powers. Yet at intervals he gave many indications of his happiness, and his firm faith in God. When prayer was proposed he always appeared pleased, and would audibly respond. He ceased to breathe, January 23rd, 1853, in the fifty-third year of his age. A widow and three children survive him to deplore their loss.

N.B. A life of Mr. Smith is in course of preparation.

References

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