

Rev. George Stout

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

THE Rev. G. STOUT finished his course and entered into rest on Tuesday, August 9th, 1892. He was born at Garrigill, Cumberland, January 29th, 1820. In the days of his childhood he attended the Congregational Sunday-school, to which church his parents, though not members, were attached. Unlike some of our early ministers he enjoyed the advantages of a moderately good elementary education, which he continued to improve after leaving school by private study and attendance at a night-school. A kindly-disposed clergyman also took great interest in him and gratuitously rendered him valuable assistance in some higher branches of study with a view to his becoming a school-master. God was, however, shaping him for other and still higher work.

He was converted at the age of fifteen during a revival amongst the Primitive Methodists in the neighbourhood where he lived, and the spirit he caught in that revival never left him. He soon became an earnest worker in the church, and his fitness for the work of the ministry being recognised, he was called upon by his native circuit, in 1844, to take the work of one of the travelling preachers who was laid aside by sickness. The following year he entered upon the regular work of the ministry in Carlisle circuit, and afterwards travelled in Ripon, Middleham, Thirsk, Leeds, Pickering, Bradford, Halifax, Easingwold, Colne, Wakefield, Huddersfield, and Middleham (second time).

In these circuits our brother laboured hard and realised much spiritual success. During his second term in Middleham, which extended to four years, the circuit was visited by a gracious wave of spiritual power and great numbers were converted, a goodly number of whom are still connected with the Church on earth, while many others have entered the higher and fuller life of heaven. Letters from survivors amongst those converted in that revival, and also from others who were associated with him in the work, as well as his own diary, tell how assiduously and whole-heartedly he toiled during that period, until his strength gave way and his health completely broke down. He never fully rallied, and was superannuated by the Conference of 1870, after having travelled twenty-five years.

As a preacher Mr. Stout's aim was simple and direct; he laboured to bring men to God; he endeavoured to present the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel, as he apprehended them, in definite and forceful fashion, so as to arouse the consciences of his hearers and bring them to immediate decision for Christ. Nor was he satisfied with anything short of this. But the two features in Mr. Stout's ministry that seem to have struck many of those who knew him in the days of his prime were—his power in prayer, and his aptitude for, and devotion to family visitation. Many testify that his prayers, even more than his earnest preaching, took hold of the unconverted in the public services, while his deep-toned piety, and his spiritual conversation outside the pulpit made everyone feel that he was indeed a sincere man of God. His influence on some of his younger brethren in the ministry was very salutary. We quote from the following:—

Rev. E. Dalton writes:— "I first formed Mr. Stout's acquaintance when I travelled in the Ripon circuit twenty-five years ago. He was then stationed at Middleham, the adjoining circuit. I heard the people speak of him in the most eulogistic terms, and when I was introduced to him I was convinced that his most ardent admirers had not said one word too many in his praise. His Christian gentlemanliness and courtesy, his kindness of heart, together with his transparent godliness of life, completely captured my affections. As a young minister of the Lord Jesus Christ I was very favourably impressed with his complete and unreserved consecration to the work to which God had called him and to which he had given himself. He regarded no sacrifice too great, no journey too long, and no labour too arduous, if he could thereby promote the cause

of Jesus Christ. To hear him pray was a real means of grace. Very few knew a more direct way to the Throne of Grace, and understood more thoroughly how to wait until the blessing descended. . . .

His very presence in the pulpit made all feel that a man of God was in their midst, and his utterance carried the conviction to the mind of saint and sinner that this man had come direct from God to his work.”

Rev. W.R. Bird writes:— “For none of our senior ministers had I more real respect and reverence than for the Rev. Geo. Stout. His quiet piety, his beautiful life, his absolute devotion to Christ and the interests of His Church, had won a place, not simply in my admiration, but in my affection.”

Rev. A.J. Bull writes:— “I regard it as a great privilege to have known Mr. Stout, and to have been associated with him in the work of the Master. . . . His life was one of continuous consistency. He walked with God from day to day, and this gained for him the respect of all classes of society. I venture to say that no man was more highly esteemed in the city of Ripon than he... Some of those most opposed. to him in religious beliefs — such as the Roman Catholics — treated him with the greatest courtesy and respect. . . . When I was living in Ripon he had a very serious illness and his life was despaired of. One day when I was about to leave him, after having talked and prayed with him, he took my hand and said, ‘It’s all right, Brother Bull, I’m on the Rock.’ His life and character and work will be to me a source of inspiration for many years to come.”

Rev. John Swales writes:— “I became acquainted with the late Mr. Stout about twenty-seven years ago, during his ministry in the Huddersfield circuit. I was then a hired local preacher in that station, and I have ever considered myself favoured in having for colleague in circuit work a man so fully devoted to the cause of God. Mr. Stout’s ministry was marked by intense earnestness. There was also a beautiful simplicity about his life; he made you feel that he was real. He had a high sense of duty, and plodded many miles to his preaching appointments when out of health, on dark, wet, wintry nights, when men more careful of themselves would have taken rest and enjoyed the comforts of home. Devoted, self-sacrificing and laborious, he did much real and enduring work for the Church and the Master. May such men ever be found in the Christian ministry.”

Rev. J.F. Bailey, Congregational minister, Ripon, testifies to his high appreciation of Mr. Stout’s worth as a Christian and a minister of Christ, and further says:— “On coming to Ripon five years ago, one of the first things I discovered was that our dear brother’s praise was in all the Churches. On becoming personally acquainted with him, I was greatly impressed with his sterling faith in Christ and his enthusiastic interest in all good work.”

Rev. S. Brock says:— “I knew Mr. Stout intimately during the two years I was on Ripon circuit and regarded him as a good man. He loved the cause of God and was sometimes painfully anxious about its welfare—a measure of prosperity gave him pleasure. The remembrance of other days, and the recital of toils and revivals in the Dales would bring to his thin, pale face alternate smiles and tears. I have seen him on Sabbath evenings, when persons have been seeking salvation, pray with amazing vigour, and the sticks on which the old man leaned have often been brought into the engagement, and I have wondered at the energy of mind and body with which he entered into these holy exercises. The frail frame shook while he shouted ‘Glory!’ ere he started for home. He had his peculiarities and failings, some of them incident to his early surroundings and labours, but they are all left behind him now, and ‘accepted in the Beloved,’ he is no doubt before the Throne.”

Mr. Joshua Dawson, of Bedale circuit, writes:— “From my earliest days I have clear recollections of Primitive Methodist Ministers. They were closely associated with my boyhood; my home was their home. Amongst many who came and went, none left a better impression than Rev. Geo. Stout, and the only difference I ever noticed in him was that his influence grew richer and richer. . . . He was an ornament to the Church

because his was a living Christianity. He abhorred sin, and the aspiration of his life was to do good and honour God at any cost.”

Such testimonies as the above,—and they could be supplemented and confirmed by many others,— from men who have known Mr. Stout many years and have been intimately associated with him in his ministerial capacity, as well as in his private life, manifest the genuineness and value of his Christian character, and worth. And there is not a word in any of them that does not harmonise with the writer’s own impression— an impression gained by close acquaintance with him during the last year of his life.

The period of Mr. Stout’s active ministry— twenty-five years—was comparatively brief; it might have been longer had he been less self-forgetful, for without doubt his extraordinary labours shortened his working days.

During his residence of twenty-two years in Ripon as a supernumerary, he took a deep interest not only in the affairs of our own Church, but in all religious and social movements that had as their object the best-being of the people. He held the offices of secretary to the trustees, chapel steward, Sunday-school treasurer, teacher of a senior class of boys, and class-leader; and the various duties connected with these offices were always performed with strict regularity and efficiency. His love of the means of grace was manifest by his presence there whenever possible.

Though crippled with rheumatism to such an extent that, for many years, walking was a most painful and difficult exercise, his body was ever the slave of his spirit, and in all kinds of weather and at all seasons of the year his place was seldom empty. He also rendered invaluable service to the Church by family visiting, and for many years, as one has remarked, “he was one of the most familiar figures moving about in the streets of Ripon, with the aid of his two sticks, on errands of love and holy. service for his Divine Master.”

His death came as a surprise to many; for though unable to leave home for some weeks previously; he was not confined to his bed until the day of his death. To those, however, who had seen him frequently during that period it was evident the end was not far off, and on the morning of the 9th August, while eating his breakfast as he sat up in bed, he was seized with paralysis of the brain. The doctor was called in, who told the family they must be prepared for the worst. He lingered through the day, during which there seemed to be occasional moments of consciousness, when he appeared to be praying, but in the evening apoplexy supervened, and about nine o’clock his freed spirit left its frail earthly abode for “the house not made with hands.”

He was interred in the Ripon Cathedral burying ground on the following Friday, a service being previously held in our own chapel, conducted by Rev. J. Bradley, assisted by Revs. M. Laycock and W. Bennion. Rev. J. Bradley read the service at the grave. A large number of friends belonging to our own and other churches, also many of the principal residents of the city and neighbourhood, manifested their respect for the deceased by attending the funeral. A memorial service was conducted by the writer on Sunday evening, September 11th, which was largely attended.

Our brother has left a widow and three daughters, who are comforted by the hope that they will meet him again beyond the shadows. He would frequently say when exhorting the friends to zealous labour for Christ, “There’ll be plenty of time to rest by-and-by.” For nearly sixty years he rendered ungrudging service for his Divine Master, and now “he rests from his labours and his works follow with him.”

References

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