

Rev. Thomas Morgan

Transcription of Obituary

THOMAS MORGAN. - To sketch the life of our deceased brother is not an easy task, for he was not an ordinary man; and the difficulty is increased by the scantiness of the materials supplied of him, as well as by the fact that he was unknown to the writer until the year 1836. It is hoped, however, that the following account, imperfect as it is, will be acceptable to thousands of our readers.

The deceased, son of Francis and Jane Morgan, was born on Leamoor Common, near Wistanstow, Shropshire, on June 16th, 1804. His parents gave him rather more education than generally falls to the lot of children in his walk of life, endeavoured to teach him the fear of the Lord, and caused him to attend a Sunday-school for a long time; and on these accounts he felt much indebted to them in manhood. At the age of eight or nine years he had a considerable degree of the fear of God, often trembling about the judgment-day and the doom of the wicked. In the few lines left by him concerning his history we have the following: "One morning, long before day, the chimney of a neighbouring house took fire, which caused a great and unexpected light to flash into his room; and, being much terrified, he fell upon his knees to pray, supposing that the end of the world was come." His religious impressions were strengthened by the care and instructions of Mr. Johnson, the godly rector of Wistanstow, - by the pious conversation of his sister Charlotte, who occasionally took him with her to the Methodist meetings, - and by reading accounts of the happy deaths of some children. At this time he was not far from the kingdom of God; but, alas! misimproving his gracious visitations, the enemy destroyed the seeds of grace ere they could take root, and his life was afterwards stained with awful crime. He left the paternal abode, to enter upon a course of servitude; and sufficient care not being taken in the selection of the family with whom he had to live, his religious inclinations were weakened by the converse and example of wicked associates. Gradually he steeled his heart against God and his truth, until the voice of conscience was heard in feeble tones, and then its whispers utterly dis-regarded. The energy of his character now began to display itself: he broke through all restraints, and plunged into a career of vice, which gave him prominence among his companions. Swearing, wrestling, fighting, and sabbath-breaking were vices in which he wallowed, to the terror of his neighbours; nor was his progress arrested until he had completed the twentieth year of his age. Then it pleased God to send certain Primitive Methodist missionaries into the neighbourhood where he resided, and the circumstance which led him to hear them preach for the first time is remarkable. He and a young man had been in the habit of meeting on Sunday and week-day evenings to exercise themselves in wrestling and the use of boxing-muffs; and, one evening, in the month of June, 1824, he was going to meet his friend, to try their skill and power in their favourite arts; but while passing over a river, the sound of a loud voice or voices, proceeding from a village, three-quarters of a mile distant, reached his ears; and supposing this sound to proceed from a battle ring, he altered his course, and ran to the village with all possible speed. When he approached the place, he found, to his astonishment and confusion, that a Primitive Methodist preacher* was standing upon a chair, and loudly proclaiming the gospel in the open air. Perceiving several sons of Belial standing at a distance, he went to them, and joined them in ridiculing the service. Howbeit, the word of God went with such power to his heart, that he was compelled to remove to an increased distance from the preacher, and laugh hard, to prevent the tears rolling down his cheeks; and at the close of the service he returned home, determined not to yield to the strivings of the Spirit. However, in a short time he was led by curiosity to see another of "the open-air preachings;" and after persecuting the servants of God for awhile, he stood still to hear, and was so powerfully impressed with divine truth, that he went home, as he afterwards observed, rather "crest-fallen." Still he proceeded in his rebellious course, until he heard Edward Vaughan again; then his heart was broken, and he returned home

weeping, and reflecting about his lost condition. Afterwards, he began to read his neglected Bible, and attend the preaching-services; and the recollection of the instructions which he had received when a child, of the early strivings of God's Spirit, and of his folly and guilt, filled him with unutterable anguish: nor could he relieve himself by asking the counsel of a pious soul, as he knew not where such a one resided. For nine months, "the arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in him, and he roared by reason of the disquietness of his heart;" and during this period he was often tempted by Satan to lay violent hands upon himself. Some of his friends said that he was losing his reason, and they used various means to prevent him from attending the means of grace; but he earnestly sought the "pearl of great price," and happily found it in a prayer-meeting: then was his "sorrow exchanged for joy, and his weeping for laughter." He received the witness of the Holy Spirit that he had passed from death unto life, and was not backward to confess his obligation to Christ for the change he had experienced. Marshalled under the banner of the cross, and loving much, because much was forgiven him, his indomitable energy prompted him to untiring, zealous, and successful efforts to promote the glory of God.

It was not likely that a person of his character could be long overlooked by the church to which he belonged: accordingly, a place was given him among the local preachers in the Shrewsbury circuit; and he entered upon his work - as he continued in it to the close of his life - with a holy ardour, which knew little of dejection, and nothing of despair.

In December, 1827, he was taken out as a travelling preacher, by the Hopton Bank Circuit; and seldom has a more honourable, devoted, and successful minister been found within any section of the Christian church. The twenty years of his itinerant life may be divided into two periods; the first of which extended through six, and the latter through fourteen years. The first period was spent in Presteign, Haverfordwest, Prees, and Tunstall circuits; where he was a very diligent student, and patient, self-denying, laborious, and successful minister. He read, re-read, studied, and mastered, the works of Wesley and Fletcher, testing every doctrine and argument by the sacred Scriptures; and thereby he stored his mind with a rich fund of theological truth, which in all his subsequent ministry rendered him invaluable service. While in these circuits, as he afterwards observed, he took up his degrees as a Primitive Methodist preacher in two colleges—the college of *Suffering* and that of a *Present Salvation*. In the Haverfordwest circuit he sometimes did not receive five shillings a quarter as salary; while in the Tunstall circuit he lacked nothing, and became acquainted with some of the excellent of the earth. To Mr. H. Bourne, for one, he always felt himself deeply indebted for a knowledge of the nature, exercises, and trial of faith, of travelling in birth for souls, and of the nature and importance of a present salvation. These subjects he understood clearly and experimentally; and they exerted a beneficial influence upon his private and public life. Mr. H.B., in a letter now before me, says that, while in Tunstall circuit, "Brother Morgan pressed the converting work forward so nobly, that I cannot say whether, in this respect, he was not one of the first men in England, if not in the world.

The second and closing period of his ministry was spent in the following circuits of the Nottingham district: Ilkeston, Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, and Sheffield; and I believe my brethren in the ministry will concur with me in saying that he exerted a beneficial influence in the district throughout. Successfully he defended the cause of Christ by his pen, when it was assailed by slanderers in the public prints.

In his public ministry he was respected, acceptable, and highly useful. His sermons displayed great knowledge of human nature and gospel truth, were often profound, and generally "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." From a careful analysis of his labours in this district, I am persuaded that his ministerial efforts, aided by those of his valued colleagues, in the various circuits in which he was

stationed, produced a nett increase of a thousand souls. In addition hereto, it should be observed that every day was filled with stirring incidents, and often with important events which cannot be seen from the face of a Circuit Report, nor in the returns in the General Minutes of Conference.

He had much *intellectual energy*; and his *quickness of conception*, which I have never seen equalled, enabled him to seize every passing event, and use it in the illustration of some important doctrine, or the confirmation of some fact. In public assemblies, in private conversation and in business meetings, nothing seemed to take him by surprise: he was prepared for every proposition, and had a suitable and immediate answer for every question which came before him. He also possessed great *clearness of perception*, seeing truth, however ingeniously it might be covered with the darkness of sophisms and words; and he could arrange a complicated subject with a facility, and speak of it with a perspicuity which tended to inspire general confidence in his decisions. To these traits must be added *comprehensiveness of thought*. He was not contented with partial investigations of subjects, but loved to look at them in all their length, breadth, depth, and height, and to be enabled to judge them without diffidence. He looked out upon the wide world of nations, and was enabled to judge of their position with a precision which often astonished his friends. An example may be given:- At a Missionary meeting, held in the beginning of this year, in the Nottingham South circuit, he spoke freely of France and Ireland, naming their adherence to popery and some of the approaching consequences of it: and although nothing of an unusual character had then transpired in those countries, subsequent events have answered so correctly to those which he portrayed, as to justify the belief that he was remarkably foreseeing. It is, then, not wonderful that, within his own district, his brethren in the ministry should often consult him, and be guided by his counsels, and that his departure is esteemed by them as a great loss.

As a Christian he was one of the excellent of the earth. He manifested an uprightness of conduct and stability of character which reflected credit on his profession. He abhorred everything mean, low, and grovelling; and while he exhorted others to be steadfast, he took care himself to be always abounding in the work of the Lord. His humility was also conspicuous; for although his deportment might seem somewhat stern or repulsive to persons who did not know him, yet those who knew him the best can testify that he sought not high things for himself, but was humble, gentle, and kind. His addresses to the throne of grace were marked with a depth of feeling, an earnestness of desire, a definiteness of aim, and a vigorous grasp of faith, which usually produced deep solemnity, and brought a hallowing influence upon his congregations. No one could listen to his fervour and holy confidence in prayer without perceiving that he had power with God. Whenever he opened his lips to the Lord, he seemed to feel the full force of the following beautiful thoughts of Wesley:

“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, It shall be done!”

In attachment to our Connexion and zeal for its welfare he was equalled by few, and surpassed by none of his brethren: dearly he loved its doctrines, its discipline, and its general operations. When preaching or conversing, he enforced the doctrine of a present salvation with a power and clearness that gained the belief of most of those who heard him; and his tract, entitled “Present Pardon for the Worst of Sinners,” of which more than 20,000 copies have been sold, contains, in a small compass, more stirring truth and useful matter than is often found in large treatises on that and kindred subjects.

He zealously promoted *open-air* worship; and, not satisfied with the promotion of it in the summer merely, he went into the streets amid the keen blasts of winter to preach "the red hot truths of the gospel," as he called them, to the outcasts of society, in courts, alleys, and the lowest dens of wickedness.

The *camp-meetings* conducted by him were among the most perfect and efficient of their kind. He was particular in making previous arrangements for them, especially for the praying services, which he ever regarded as the chief strength of such meetings.

In *family visiting* he was plain, pointed, energetic, and successful; and took great pains to instruct his colleagues and brethren in the best method of attending to it with beneficial effect.

He disliked long prayers, drawling singing, and preachments which aimed not at the immediate salvation of souls. He never employed himself, nor sanctioned others, in blowing the trumpets, breaking open the seals, and pouring out the vials of the book of Revelations; and his influence in this respect has been of service to the district.

The *Temperance system* had his hearty sanction and his efficient support as an occasional advocate, for he believed that it uprooted hindrances to the stability of professors and the progress of the gospel; and in this, as in all other things, he was devoted and conscientious.

He well understood the discipline of the Connexion; and believing its main features to be scriptural, he upheld it with such vigour and decision, that but few persons attempted to tamper with it in his stations: indeed, he brought the spread of religion so forcibly before the officials of his several circuits, and so arranged for them to carry out various plans of usefulness, that very few of them had either leisure or desire to reform anything but sinners from the errors of their ways. He was painfully affected when there appeared any retrograde movement in the Connexion, and was disposed to lay the whole blame of it upon the ministry. He did not believe that Puseyism or persecution, poverty or Sunday Chartism, infidelity or Barkerism, could successfully resist the onward movements of the Connexion, where its doctrines, discipline, and usages were devoutly and unflinchingly carried out. The following extract from one of his letters to me, on this subject, deserves notice, as it not only expresses his views, but is strikingly characteristic of the man:—"Luther says, 'Temptation and prayer make a preacher.' In former years we had plenty of the one, and were obliged to do much of the other; then many of us could not get sufficient food; but now beefsteaks and water will not suffice - we must have intoxicating liquor too. Alas! alas! I remember living chiefly on potatoes, buttermilk, &c., and *fasting* often too, sometimes voluntarily, and often for a stronger reason - having nothing to eat. May God give us something like our former self-denial and power! Amen. The matter is very serious; and I wish some of the older preachers would unite in a sort of secret band, to help each other to get in to God as in former times. What simple-hearted, single-eyed, self-denying, hard-working, soul-converting, Heaven-moving, *fire-carrying*, *hell-thrashing* men we were years ago. We have not the same amount of glory now. The Lord put us right again!" In the last conversation I had my deceased friend, he said, "The Connexion has been passing through a fainting-fit, and is down; but she will rise again in all her glory. Borrowing an illustration from the human frame, he said, "In a fainting-fit, Nature throws the patient upon the ground, because it is easier to propel the blood on a straight or level line than to propel it up-hill. Many would say, 'Lift the patient up.' I say, No; let her lie there awhile. So with the Connexion: she is down; let her lie there awhile, in deep prostration and earnest supplication, and she will rise again in renewed strength, and go forth to new and greater conquests." Though the writer believes that the deceased had but few equals in the religious world, yet he hopes what has been said will be accepted as an outline of the character of one whose lamented death he hastens to sketch.

Early in February, 1848, our lamented friend discovered, what he had previously feared, that he was afflicted with the *diabetes*. He engaged medical aid, and was instantly forbidden taking a part in active duties; but neither himself, his friends, nor his medical attendants, apprehended any immediate danger: indeed, the hope was freely cherished that the disease was checked, and that his health was some-what improving. Alas! however, the reverse soon proved to be the case. Throughout his affliction he had strong confidence in God, and was prepared for life or death. Perhaps the following copy of a letter, written to a quarterly meeting of his circuit, three days before his death, may be more satisfactory to the reader than anything which can be said by his biographer:

"1/4 to 2 o'Clock, P.M., Monday, March 20th, 1848.

"VERY DEAR BRETHREN,— Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, with your Societies, and with your families. From eighty-eight to ninety times I have been with you and other brethren on occasions like the one on which you are assembled: and now I am with you in spirit, and hope I shall be to all eternity; yes, with the Sheffield circuit friends to all eternity! Your manner of worship, your straightforwardness, and your kindness have made a deep impression upon my heart. You know that I am not apt to flatter. Meet me in heaven. My doctor talks favourably of a recovery, and says that if one or two of you will wait upon him, he will tell you his views of my case now. I have suffered much - very much, but God has upheld me, and perhaps I am something better than I was; but, with hot baths, medicines, &c., I am very weak. I write these few lines to express my great love to you every one - yes, every one; to say how my heart is present with you in the business. O, that God's great love and peace may fill you! may you all now! ay, and keep you full all the day! Those great truths we were used to teach and hear will do for our support when sick, and in the hour of death; will do to sing about at last,

'When all the ship's company meet,
Who sail'd with the Saviour beneath.'

Brethren, 'We'll praise him again when we pass over Jordan.' I do not know whether I shall sing again with you all *on this side* of the river, but here are my hand and heart to join with you on the *other side* – for I can shake hands with you all in my heart now; and O for one final, eternal, for-ever-continued shake with you on the other side!

_____ 'on the banks of the river,
To sing of salvation for ever and ever!'

Will you meet me there? Yes! I believe. God bless you every one, for ever and ever. So prays your poor, unworthy, and unprofitable servant,

T. MORGAN;

whose foundation is Jesus Christ the Advocate, whose blood
through earth and skies, 'free, boundless mercy cries. I
am nothing; but Jesus died for me. Yes'. yes! Jesus
died FOR ME !"

The progress of the last enemy, though imperceptible for awhile, was irresistible; but, in the true spirit of Christianity, our brother bade adieu to his weeping wife, family, and friends, and, in the final struggle, triumphantly exclaimed, "I BELIEVE!" Thus his warfare ceased, on March 23rd, 1848, in the forty-fourth year of his age; and an affectionate wife, a lovely family of six children, and a weeping district, mourn the loss of a "prince and a great man in our Israel."

His remains were followed to their resting-place, in front of our chapel at Sheffield, by nearly three thousand persons. A tombstone is reared to his memory; and the cost of it and that of the funeral were paid by our Sheffield friends.

JOHN BROWNSON.

*The name of the preacher was Edward Vaughan. This laborious man, after spending a few years in the ministry, finished his course at Boston, in Lincolnshire, in November 1828.

References

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