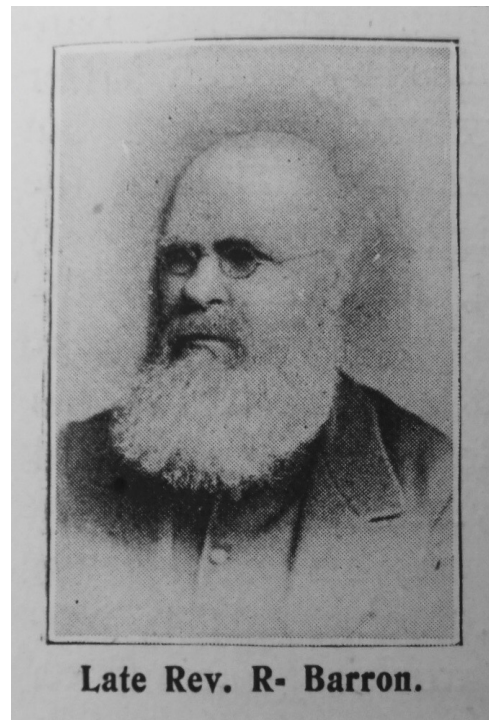


Rev. Reuben Barron

Transcription of Obituary In the Primitive Methodist Magazine by S.A.B. (Sydney Archibald Barron)

The sudden death of the Rev. R. Barron has removed one of whom it was truly said that "never had our ministry a more faithful man." He was born of Wesleyan parents on April 6th, 1835, in the neighbourhood of Scotter, Lincolnshire, a circuit that has given not a few worthy ministers to the Connexion. Change and deprivation came early into his life. Few men have risen to position and usefulness from a less favourable beginning, and in spite of greater disadvantage and difficulty. Before he was three years of age he had lost both his parents. His upbringing was with friends, who treated him kindly, but could not give to him that intellectual guidance and moral training which would have been afforded to him had his father, a schoolmaster and a man of some local distinction, been spared. His educational opportunities were few. He, however, became early illumined with the higher wisdom, for he gave himself to God while yet in his teens, and thenceforward sought to "grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Village tradition speaks still of his reading his Bible under a hedge, amidst the banter of youths less seriously disposed. From the simple, serious village lad reading his Bible, to the final earthly scene, when amid the tears of churches and the tributes of brethren, and the tender and beautiful words of the President of the Conference, the beloved and honoured minister was borne to his rest, what an ascent it was — in knowledge, wisdom, manhood! And yet the boy's feet were on the pathway of which this was the summit. The Bible, the Church, the ministry, Heaven! "I will set him on high, because he hath known My name." "In Thee the fatherless find mercy." Amongst the compensatory blessings vouchsafed to the orphan boy were the influence and kindly interest of the ministers of the Connexion. Their example and words were the principal moral inspirations of his early days. Of the Rev. W. Sanderson, Mr. Barron ever spoke in terms of affectionate veneration, telling of the deep and lasting impression made upon his young mind When, one day, Mr. Sanderson placed his hands upon his head and invoked the blessing of God upon him. He was also influenced for good by the Rev. Hugh Campbell, a man whose deep spirituality, intense earnestness, and sound judgment made up for a somewhat unattractive pulpit delivery. The Rev. C. Kendall, whose name he honoured, placed him on the plan. His success as a local preacher indicating designation for fuller service, he was recommended by Mr. Sanderson to the Scarborough Circuit, then seeking a suitable local preacher. Here he was brought into contact with the Rev. John Flesher, whose attitude to him was most sympathetic and kind, and from whom he received much valuable guidance and counsel. During this preliminary period also, in various circuits in the Hull District, he had the privilege of association with men like the Revs. W. Harland and J. Bywater. He was pledged by the London District and remained in it through his probation. Two very happy years in the London Second Circuit, marked by the affection and kindness of the people, and by much spiritual power and success, he ever afterwards recalled with grateful pleasure. In his



journal he writes under date May 26th, 1860, "O the power and influence there is in our holy religion. I feel that Christ is my full and complete Saviour." The self-surrender and hallowed experience of these early and blessed days gave the standard and tone to all his subsequent ministry. He was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision," and much of his later spirit and work was evidently the "building of all things according to the pattern shewn him in the mount," at the beginning of his work. Upon the termination of his probation he spent some years in the Missions District. During this time he met and married his first wife, Miss. Mitchell, of Eastchurch, on the Sheerness mission. Her intellectual ability and attainments, combined with intelligent and fervent piety, enabled her to be to him a "help-meet" indeed, and the few years of life he was permitted to spend with her were of lasting advantage to his mental and spiritual development. In 1866 he entered the Nottingham District, being stationed at Sheffield as the colleague of the Revs. J. Dickenson and J. Galr, with whom, as well as with station generally, his relations are exceedingly cordial. This satisfactory appointment lasted only one year, owing to district re-arrangements caused by the death of a minister. His remaining stations have been Mansfield, Bottesford, Nottingham Second, Wirksworth, Ripley, Leicester First, Rugby (twice), Sileby, Kimberley, Claycross, Colebrook, and Tamworth, on which station he was labouring when he died January 19th, 1901. His active ministry which thus only ended with his death, covered a period of over 42 years. On his various stations he made his mark as an earnest and successful worker, and experienced an encouraging amount of success. Societies were consolidated and increased, institutions fostered, and liabilities reduced. He was an acceptable preacher, a diligent pastor, and a capable organiser and administrator. He has "purchased to himself a good degree" before the courts of the Connexion as a plodding, painstaking, successful circuit minister. The regard he won, the valuable and lasting result of his work, to use the phrase of the Rev. J. Odell at his funeral, "his blessed, busy, beautiful life," have made his name and memory fragrant in many churches. He had indeed, especially in the earlier time, his full share of difficulty and hardship. He was not built for combat, and sometimes men who were, sought to take advantage of this. Occasionally also he had reason to believe that "districtism" as a system left room for considerable improvements, a view which, to his advantage and that of others, was practically affirmed by legislative change many years ago. On the whole, however, his ministry brought him much happiness, and his interest and eager satisfaction in it were unabated to the end. The impression he produced in the Nottingham District, in which he served so long, is happily expressed in the resolution of the District Committee; "Single-mindedness, brotherliness, tender feeling, self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice, never-wearying devotion and enterprise in circuit work, saintliness of character, unusual ability and power as a preacher, and great earnestness and success in soul winning and church building, were qualities of our late beloved brother, testified by many brethren." The Sheffield District recorded its "high appreciation of his Christian character, intense purity, and great usefulness"; while the Mission District expressed its "high esteem of his character, and its thankfulness for his long and devoted labours." Numerous official and personal tributes from various parts of the Connexion expressed the same estimate and feeling. His life was chastened at various times by much trial. His Nottingham ministry was saddened by protracted and expensive family affliction, resulting in the death of his two younger boys. At Wirksworth, in 1874, lengthened weakness, which had begun in the sorrowful Nottingham days, terminated in the death of his wife. At Rugby, after a long illness, a beloved step-daughter passed away.

In the Ripley Circuit it was his privilege, in association with the Rev. J.T. Neale, to participate in the remarkable work of grace which broke out in that station some twenty-five years ago, and the fruits

of which are to be seen to this day. Here he married his second wife, a lady who has ably supported the efforts of her husband, and by her amiability of character, endeared herself to a wide circle of friends in various stations. . Mr. Barron never sought or occupied a conspicuous place In the official life of his denomination. His idea was to be a devoted, unobtrusive, useful circuit preacher. Strenuously and faithfully he “pressed towards the mark.” Possibly, had he spared himself more, he might have lived longer. But it was not in him to withhold himself when there was service he could render. Indeed as the days passed and the shadows of life’s evening gathered, his spirit became at once mellow and more intense. As the new century opened, he wrote in his diary, “O that the New Year, and the small portion of the Twentieth Century that I may yet have to live, may be spent far more profitably and usefully than any year I have yet lived. The Master's call found him in the homes of the people, “abounding in the work of the Lord.” A fitting, noble-glorious death! No last words were spoke! his translation was instantaneous. But throughout his life and ministry, he witnessed, “the good confession.” He was interred at on January 24th, 1901. The Rev. J. Odell, President of Conference, an old friend of the family, attended the funeral as the representative of the Missionary Committee and delivered a most beautiful and impressive address. The Revs. T.H. Richards, secretary of the Nottingham District, who has since joined him in the higher life, was also present, together with Revs. J. Burton, J. Bell, J.W. Gregory, W.J. Kirkland and H. Ross, and numerous friends from Rugby, Tamworth, Leicester and other places. For his family his removal has made a gap that cannot be filled, but we are comforted in the thought of his untiring service having reached its consummation in the life where they “serve Him day and night in His temple!”

“We go to find our lost and mourned for,
Safe in Thy sheltering goodness still.
And all that hope and faith foreshadow
Made perfect in Thy holy Will.”

References

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