

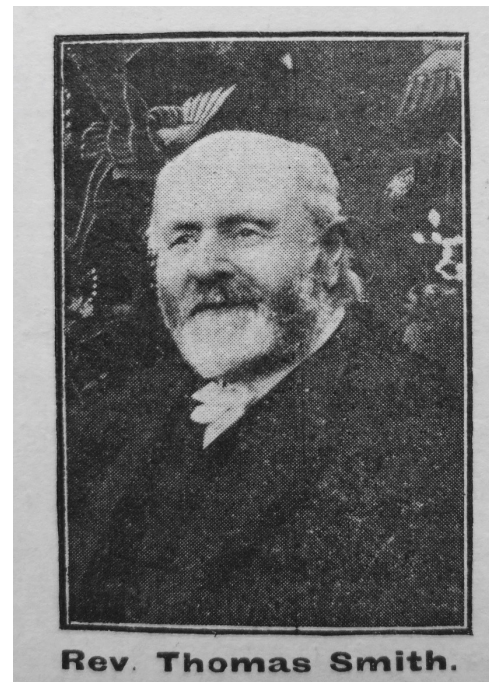
## **Rev. Thomas Smith**

### **Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by John Phillipson**

Thomas Smith (No. 1, superannuated minister, Helmschere, Manchester District), died at his residence, Sunnybank, on September 10th, 1903, in his 76th year.

In the fulness of years, with courage unabated, with eyes but little dimmed, with willing and joyful service, with the wisdom and even the fruit of age and much of the hopefulness of youth, the call which no mortal can disobey came to Mr. Smith, and he left the shadowland of time for the clear light of eternity.

Thomas Smith was born on March 19th, 1828, at Sileby, in Leicestershire. His early home-life was strict and religious. His mother's influence did much in moulding what was best in character in him. His father's occupation was that of a farmer, so that his early years were spent amongst the fields, where the birds sing and the flowers grow, where the seed was sown and the harvests reaped. His opportunities for education at that time were not great, yet there is evidence that, at any rate, he was well grounded in the elements of education. Doubtless the open-air and the daily task would do much to lay the foundation of that splendid physique which endured the stress and strain of life for more than three score years and ten.



He was led, while yet a youth, to give his heart to God. This was the turning-point in his life; its light and inspiration were with him to the end. He was called while only 16 or 17 years of age to be a local preacher, and soon after we find him in a wider field of service, for about 1850 he was engaged as a hired local preacher in the Barnsley Circuit. This work as an evangelist continued in several circuits, until we find him in the ministry at Burnley in 1856. Afterwards he did faithful work in the following Stations: Wakefield, Ripon, Bradford second, Leeds first, Leeds second, Leeds fifth, Bradford second (a second time), Stockport second, Sheffield sixth, and Helmschere; at the latter place he travelled six years and superannuated in 1897, so that he has lived in his last station for 12 years. The beautiful church at Helmschere was built during his ministry, and he had the joy, before his life was ended, of seeing it free from debt.

Amid friends and the comforts of home, he dwelt among the people he had ministered to, taking interest in the Church, in books, in varied aspects of life in the village, as well as Christian fellowship and work. The very Sunday he was overtaken by paralysis he was preparing to go to preach at Hareholme and Crawshawbooth.

Mr. Smith was a man of physical and mental activity. He had a strong will and an active mind, which found its chief joy in the study of the Bible. He brought from its treasury things new and old. He

delighted in its history and biography, and would often show that the same principles that made nations and men in old times, can make nations and men yet. But the great theme of his ministry was God's redemptive love in the gift of His Son.

He was very exact and orderly in his business habits. He seemed to have a place for everything, and everything in its place. All the books and papers of his station were written like copper-plate, and carefully kept. Hence we are not surprised to find him Secretary to the Building Committee in one of the districts he has travelled in, and that he was called to the honourable position of Secretary to the Conference.

His disposition was kindly and social; he made friends and kept them; he liked to carry sunshine with him. His ready wit and genial ways helped to brighten life wherever he went. His life was long and full of good works. At a presentation service held at Helmsshore, when a beautiful writing desk was given him by the circuit on the occasion of his superannuation, he said - If he were commencing to travel again, and had his present knowledge of the Primitive Methodist ministry, he would be a Primitive Methodist minister again. He had slept in places where he could see the stars, and lived where he had had to peel and cook his own potatoes, but he would do it again, for in his difficulties God had not given him leanness of soul, and he had been happy and blessed.

God gave him many gifts, all of which he freely laid on the altar of service. He was a true friend, a ready scribe, a devout man, a faithful and popular minister, who, having served his generation, "has fallen asleep." He is dead, but his work lives, and his memory will long be cherished in the churches where he laboured, and in years to come many an eye will be dim with tears and many a voice will take on a softer tone when the name of Thomas Smith is mentioned.

The Rev. Geo. Armitage writes:- "Mr. Smith was certainly your Grand Old Man, and Helmsshore feels so I am sure; he has been a bright spirit, and has done a long day's work for the Master. I hope we may have as good a record." The Rev. Enoch Shepherd writes:- "I am sure you will find consolation in the high noble Christian life lived by Mr. Smith, and in the great self-sacrificing service rendered for so many years to God's Church and to the people. He was justly and universally beloved. What a glorious record he has left! I revered and loved him as a Father in Israel "

Mr' Smith had outlived many of his earthly companions in the ministry of our Church The great reaper, Death, had gathered most of them into the heavenly garner. Yet here and there, one or other remained like scattered ears of wheat in a field already reaped. One of these, who is happily yet with us, and whose name stands high on the Church's "Roll of Honour" - the Rev. Thomas Newell - has kindly furnished me with the following estimate of the character and work of Mr. Smith.

"The subject may be said to be a two-fold one, namely, the man and his work; or to put it in other words, his endowments, and the use he made of them during his lengthy and successful ministry in our Church. In dealing with the first part of the question, I may mention his intellectual gifts. We cannot rank him among men of genius, or even with those of high mental culture and training. We may perhaps reckon him a man of more than average powers of mind, which he cultivated in a way suited to his opportunities and the station in life to which he was born. I think it may be said that the emotional element predominated in his nature. Feeling entered somewhat largely into his make-up,

and strikingly characterised his movements in both his public and private life. We may also say that moral integrity, or love of right, was deeply rooted in his being. This won for him the confidence and respect of his fellow-workers, and of those who watched his manner of life, or hoped to share in the benefits of his ministry. Of that ministry I want now to say a few words. There was the preaching of the word of life with a view to saving men. That preaching was marked with clearness, earnestness, unction and power. It cannot be said that there was in it a great deal of what is called originality, but there was a firm grasp of the leading truths of Christianity. There was no discussion of abstruse and recondite questions in German metaphysics, or aimless wanderings among the lens and fogs of what is known as the 'higher criticism.' But there were frequent and emphatic enforcements of the truth that man is a sinner, helpless and undone, and that Jesus Christ is the only, the all-sufficient, and the ever-present Saviour of the lost, and in Whom all the perishing may find pardon, holiness, and Heaven. Another characteristic of his ministry was careful pastoral oversight of those portions of the flock which the Chief Shepherd from time to time placed in his hands. In the homes of the people, amongst the children of our Sunday schools, and in missions to the godless wanderers of our towns and cities, he was ever ready to teach the Gospel of a free, full, and present salvation. I wish to note one other quality which marked our brother as a leader in Primitive Methodism, namely, his careful and judicious administration of church affairs. To manage a Church like ours, which is largely of the people, by the people and for the people so as to secure a reasonable amount of peace and prosperity, a person needs to be possessed of a more than ordinary amount of knowledge of human nature, foresight, tactfulness, love of fair dealing, and firmness of principle. Now I think our brother might fairly lay claim to most of these equipments. A considerable portion of his life was spent in large centres of population, where he would come in contact with people of widely different tastes, opinions, and habits, and we may safely assume that he would find the graces of love, faith, hope, patience, and meekness seriously tested, and feel that he had frequent need to gird up his loins, and bind on the best armour he could find. I believe that at such times he generally proved himself equal to the occasion. That he was able to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and remain faithful till the victory was won, speaks well for the man, and better still for the Lord, whose grace gave him strength to go through the battle, and who crowned him with glory and victory at the end. It was through the indwelling of God's Spirit that our brother was able to live the Christ-life that he did live. He himself has passed away from us, and we shall see his face no more on the battlefield of time. But his works live with us, and we may reckon that some of them, at least, will go down into the coming ages. They are rich in heavenly fragrance, and his name will live when some of the world's heroes will be buried among the dust of forgotten things. May we follow the same Master till we reach the rest that he has found."

On Monday, September 14th, 1903, what was mortal of the Rev. Thomas Smith was interred at Attercliffe Cemetery, in the same grave where his wife had been buried some thirteen years ago." So He giveth His beloved sleep."

"Now the labourer's task is o'er,  
Now the battle day is passed,  
Now upon the further shore  
Lands the traveller at last.  
Father, in Thy gracious keeping,  
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping.

“There the tears of earth are dried,  
There its hidden things are clear,  
There the work of earth is tried  
By a Juster Judge than here.  
Father, in Thy gracious keeping,  
Leave we now Thy servant sleeping.”

---

**References**

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1904/321