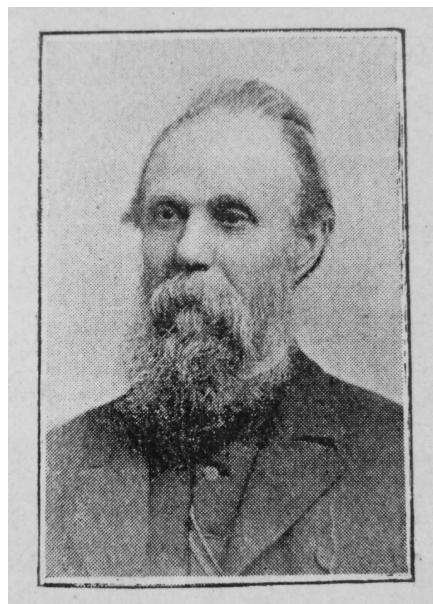


Rev. John George Smith (1)

Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Theo. Parr

On May 29th, 1904, promotion to the higher ministry of heaven was granted to John George Smith after a life on earth of nearly seventy years over fifty of which were spent in faithful service to the Lord Jesus Christ. His father was one of our early ministers, a man of God mighty in spiritual power. We have seen a little book which gave a modest record of some of the most striking events in one of the revivals that accompanied his ministry. Some of the conversions were so remarkable and accompanied by such special circumstances that the common people called them "miracles." The Lord did wondrous indeed.

His mother was an intelligent earnest Christian woman who proved herself a fitting helpmeet in the Lord's work. No wonder that their son in early life was brought to a decision for Christ.



Having received a good education and now impelled by the constraining love of Christ he soon showed promise of great usefulness. In zeal for God he was his fathers son. Such "signs followed" his preaching of the Word that very soon the call came to the wider sphere of the ministry.

He travelled at Grantham twice, Sheffield three times, Boston twice, Melton Mowbray, Leicester, Nottingham, Rotherham, Derby, Gloucester, Wirksworth, Cross Keys, and Newport.

He married Miss Hartley, of Sheffield, who by her Christian courtesy won for herself friends in every station where they laboured. The main feature of his preaching was its mighty spiritual power. In the introduction and explanation of his subject his clear and logical exposition carried the minds of his hearers with him, then at the close he pressed the application home to their consciences with a Divine fervour that laid hold of men. He never rested without conversions to seal his ministry. In the prayer meeting he was at his best to make conversion easy, and in mighty faith he wrestled for souls.

Naturally dignified and gentlemanly in demeanour, yet never forgetting his sacred calling, his pastoral visitations were no frivolous society "call," but a definite effort to do good. His was not a temperament of "hail fellow well met" to every one, but those who were privileged to win admission to the inner circle of his friendship found him true as steel.

With sanctified business instinct he saw the importance of the successful financing of the trust estates of his Circuits, and readily, first of all, he led the way himself in practical beneficence. Possessed by his marriage of a little private means he was able to lead off a special effort by a £5

donation, and the laymen could do no other than follow. Then he determinately set aside his natural diffidence, and set forth to canvass the town, and district for subscriptions. It was weary work, and the discouragements many, but in the strength of God he persevered and succeeded. Moved by the same zeal for God he found a joy in open-air services. We remember well a camp meeting in a circuit town. The weather was somewhat unfavourable, threatening rain. At the appointed rendezvous for the Sunday morning procession there were only Mr. Smith and his colleague. They waited a little while, but no one else coming up, after a brief prayer they commenced to sing, and so processioned two or three streets. He quietly said to his colleague after one of the addresses to the people, "The devil is telling me that we are two fools to go on like this, but it is only the devil and we won't heed him." Ere long some of the officials and workers joined them, and by the time they reached the last street the demonstration was a little more imposing. The camp meeting turned out a great success.

Having a week night at liberty he commenced open air services in the streets, and continued them right into the winter, using the light from the street lamps to see their hymn book and Bible. The attention of the people who listened was gratifying, but the joy was intensified when at the next quarterly renewing of tickets it was found that a family had taken sittings and joined the church. They had for years kept their shop open on Sundays, but having heard the gospel at the street services they had commenced to honour the Sabbath by closing the shop. They had come to church and then to the class meeting, where they bore witness to the grace of God. An invalid member of the family had listened through the open window of the bedroom, and had also found the Lord. This is but one of the many instances of the blessed results of our brother's ministry.

At one time his life was in serious danger from a malignant throat affection. The medical attendant anticipated the worst. For some days he lay in a state of semi-consciousness unable to speak. The application of a homely remedy gave him the turn for the better, and he gradually was brought back from the gates of death to convalescence.

A sympathetic friend asked him what was his experience when on the verge of the spirit world, did he pray? He answered, "I couldn't fix my thoughts sufficiently to pray, but I had done my praying while I was well, and I could trust myself in my Father's hands whatever might happen."

Possessed of a highly-strung nervous temperament he suffered much from those occasional misunderstandings incidental to the proceedings of Connexional business meetings. After one of these it would require some time of solitary communing with God to restore his equanimity. The opinion of his brethren was manifest by his appointment as delegate to Conference.

He had no craving for Connexional position, to be a successful circuit minister was his highest joy. His sterling worth was best realised by those who knew him best.

After a life of strenuous and successful service, he superannuated at the Bristol Conference. On the granting of his application, testimony was borne to the value of his work.

He continued to take appointments as far as he was able, but at length increasing infirmity compelled him to be still. The enforced quietness was a great trial to his soul that had lost none of his earnestness and zeal for the work, but he bore it with meek submission to his Father's will.

It matters not to record his last words. His life was the best testimony of his faith in God. On Sunday evening, May 29th, 1904, the Lord gave him deliverance from the pains of mortal life, and admission to the wider sphere of service. His memory is a legacy of blessing to his family and his faithful friends who loved him much.

References

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