

Jonathan Scott

Transcription of Obituary In the [Primitive Methodist Magazine](#)

The Rev. Jonathan Scott finished his course at Norwich on the 7th day of February, 1900, in the seventy-seventh year of his age. If I were requested to describe Mr. Scott in the entirety of his personality by the use of a single word, I should say that he was a *strong* man all round. He was one of those men whom it is impossible to describe by the use of negative terms. The strength of his physical nature is sufficiently attested by the fact that he attained an age of little short of four-score years. His mental strength was evinced by the more than ordinary degree of his self-culture, and the large stores of knowledge which he accumulated. Like most boys of his day and class, he started in his industrial life without any schooling, to say nothing of education. Yet by early insistent efforts which hardened into settled habits of reading and study, he not only acquired a wide range of knowledge and a good degree of sound scholarship, but the power to express his thoughts with ease, felicity, and beauty, especially in the holy exercise of prayer. He was strong in reflection and reason, as well as in courage and aggressive energy. His moral character exactly fitted his physical and mental natures, and was the fine flower of a life deeply rooted in strong and clear Christian convictions and principles. Mr. Scott was equally strong on the social side of his nature. He was a true and faithful friend with whom friendship was both an honour and a joy. Great strength is not always clothed with sweetness, yet in his case it was ever wedded to perfect human sympathy. If sometimes impetuous and impatient, there was beneath all the heart of a little child. He was strongly disposed by nature to debate and argue, and hence could be severely critical, but there was in him a deep well of sincerity and affection for all who could tap it. He possessed a keen wit and a quiet humour which were always refreshing, especially to a company of friends gathered round a cosy fire, or seated at the festive board. He was swift to detect unreality and hypocrisy, and strenuous in his efforts to expose and punish them. The work of the ministry, or any other form of Christian service, was an intense delight to him.

Mr. Scott was born on the 5th day of March, 1823. His parents were members of the Church as by law established, and hence, naturally enough, he was in due course baptised and afterwards confirmed a member of that Church. From all that can be gathered concerning his youth, it is just to conclude that it was marked by habits of steady industry and self-improvement. At about the age of twenty-one, young Scott met with the "Ranters," as our people were then nicknamed by the ignorant and vulgar crowd. He was evidently attracted by the glowing fervour of their singing and preaching, and was soon "brought in." His conversion to Christ, and separation from the legal Church, ex-posed him to sharp persecution, both from his own family and daily associates. But his immortal choice was made, and there could be no retreat. The bitter opposition offered to him on account of his new religious decision so far from appalling or repelling him, simply made indecision impossible. It was really the very best thing that could have happened to him. It tested and settled him once for all.

The new convert must have been full of fine promise, for in about the short space of a year after he was "brought in," the Wisbech Station sent Mr. Scott, as a hired local preacher, to labour at Ramsey, in the Fens of Huntingdonshire. He commenced his work there, according to the record made in his journal, on Sunday, July 6, 1845. He mentions many villages in the neighbourhood of Ramsey where he preached in regular order, but in which we fear we have no congregations to-day. He has

recorded the opening services of a chapel at Buckden, which were of a most remarkable character. The Rev. W. Wainwright preached in the afternoon of Monday, July 14, 1845, and there were the usual tea and public meetings, but the services of the day closed by a prayer meeting; and says Mr. Scott, "We had a mighty breakdown, and nineteen souls were emerged out of nature's darkness into glorious light." Nineteen souls "brought in" at a prayer meeting after a platform meeting on a week-night in connection with the opening of a new chapel! Who expects such a thing to-day?

Mr. Scott entered the regular ministry in the Wisbech Station on July 6, 1846, thence he removed at the end of the year to North Walsham, and two years later he was appointed to Upwell, that being then the head of what is now the Downham Station. During the twenty years following he laboured in succession on the Briston, Docking, Rockland, Hadleigh, Dereham, Kings Lynn, Downham, and Norwich Stations. In the course of his ministry on these stations he met with some difficulties, but he accepted them as a challenge to his powers, and generally conquered them. His name is still fragrant in many homes scattered throughout East Anglia, and his memory is still cherished as an inspiration by many who will be the crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord. Whilst travelling on the Hadleigh Station he received the following letter, which is worth preserving as a memento in the annals of our missionary work, as well as a testimony to the character and work of our deceased brother. The letter shall speak for itself:—

THE GENERAL MISSIONARY COMMITTEE OF THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST CONNEXION.

TO MR. J. SCOTT.

Conference Offices, Sutton Street,  
Commercial Road,  
St. George's East, London.  
January 6th, 1858.

DEAR BRETHREN,

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. You are respectfully informed that the Melbourne Circuit, Victoria, has expressed a wish for a married preacher to be sent to them; your name stands the first of those to be invited, the General Missionary Committee therefore wishes to know if you are willing to go out to Melbourne, according to the wish of that circuit. An early answer will oblige.

Yours truly,

JOHN BYWATER, Secretary.

For some reason not recorded, the way was not clear for Mr. Scott to comply with this request, and he continued his ministry in his native land. It is somewhat singular, and adds another proof of the character and influence of his ministry, that whilst travelling the Dereham Station, only two years after the invite from Melbourne, Mr. Scott was offered the pastorate of a prosperous church belonging to another denomination in South Africa. This offer he also declined. He was superannuated by the Conference of 1871, after an active and successful ministry of twenty-five years. It is due to his memory to state that although he retained the status of a minister he declined to receive the usual allowances made to superannuates from the Connexional funds. Mr. Scott continued to reside in Norwich, and in April, 1872, was appointed the superintendent attendance officer to the School Board, an office which he held till the day of his death, a period of twenty-eight years. All who are acquainted with the practical working of our educational system know how extremely difficult it is to deal in the matter of education, with the large class of improvident parents

who live on the verge of poverty, and whose children grow up without parental restraint and control. Yet no man was ever more fitted to deal with this factor of the educational problem than our departed Brother Scott. His keen, practical ability, his unwasting fund of mirth and playfulness, his strong common sense and sympathetic spirit, made him an almost ideal worker in the noble cause of national education. No wonder, therefore, that the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Alderman White, a Free Churchman, the Rev. F. C. Davies, an Episcopal clergyman, and Dr. Duckett, a Roman Catholic bishop, should all join hands in paying a tribute to his faithful and efficient work, and the excellent judgment and great zeal with which it was done. The duties of this office naturally grew year by year, and were more than sufficient to fill the hands of even the strongest of men, but to these were added in 1882 the work of the chief agent of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, which he served with energy and love for seventeen years. In announcing Mr. Scott's retirement from this society only a few days before his death, the chairman declared that whatever success had been achieved by that beneficent society was due mainly to the untiring devotion of Mr. Scott. At the Norwich Guildhall on Saturday, February 10, Mr. F.O. Taylor, Chairman of the Bench, said: "He would like to say on behalf of the Bench how much they regretted to hear of the death of Mr. Jonathan Scott. He was a most valued officer, as they all knew. During the many years he had held the post he had been constantly before the Bench, and they could not help noticing the great tact and skill with which he dealt with awkward cases. There was not a man for whom he had greater regard and esteem, and he considered the city had sustained a great loss by his death."

And yet in the midst of all the public duties connected with the congenial work of education and philanthropy, Mr. Scott found both time and energy for the Church he loved so well and served so long. It was mainly through his efforts that the ancient Dutch Church in the city of Norwich was secured in 1876 for religious services by our people. And it was mainly by his devotion and labour that the services were sustained until the Church was acquired by the City Corporation for the use of the citizens. Then by his persistent efforts and influence an eligible site for a new church and school was purchased in Thorpe Hamlet, a suburb of Norwich. Here a school hall was opened in 1892, and here Mr. Scott worked and frequently preached until his last illness. He had a great desire to live long enough to see these premises freed from debt, and when that day came he would be ready to say, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." It is a striking coincidence that the last instalment of the debt was raised at Christmas, 1899, and the very last cheque he signed was to pay off the last penny due. He was too feeble to fill in the cheque, and only signed his name with difficulty. The end came with painful suddenness, but he met it with a beautiful calmness of spirit. "It seemed like Saturday night," he said. And such it really was; for his long week's work was done, and the rest of an eternal Sabbath-keeping - a rest sweeter than sleep and deeper than death was close by. He requested that the hymn beginning, "Lord, let my heart still turn to Thee," etc., might be read to him, and then -

" Like one that wraps the drapery of his couch

About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams," -

So Jonathan Scott, the beloved of the Lord, fell asleep in Jesus.

On February 15th, his mortal remains were committed by the writer to the deep and silent tomb in the Rosary in the presence of a large number of sorrowing friends, who, notwithstanding the severe storm of sleet and snow, assembled to pay their last tribute of esteem. A memorial service was

held in the Queen's Road Chapel on the following Sunday evening, when the writer preached to a large and sympathetic congregation, reviewing the life and work of Mr. Scott, and making reference to the many letters from clergymen, magistrates, business men, and labourers, all expressive of their sincere respect for the character and services of their departed guide and friend and benefactor.

By the death of Mr. Scott another ministerial link - almost the last - is broken between the Primitive Methodism of to-day and that of the early years of the departed century in East Anglia. For Mr. Scott was a true and loyal Primitive Methodist, though not of the fussy and boisterous type, and he has left behind him an example of an earnest evangelical ministry adorned by a manly Christian life. It has been suggested that a memorial chapel should be built on the site in Thorpe Hamlet to perpetuate in visible and useful form the memory of his public life and service. No appreciative tribute could be more worthy of Mr. Scott himself, and none could more fittingly express the generous esteem of the citizens of Norwich for the noble and fruitful life of one of their most faithful public servants. But whether or no any perishable monument shall record his virtues and services, they all live in the imperishable archives, safe from moth and rust and all decay, in the book not written with hands, ineffaceable, eternal.

JOHN SMITH.

Reference

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1901/67