

Articles on the Death of Mr. John Foreman

THOUGHTS OVER THE GRAVE OF MR. FOREMAN. BY THE EDITOR (Walter Banks)

“DEVOUT men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.” Devout men carried John Foreman to his burial; but there was no great lamentation made over him. Why not? Because he had finished his course; he had done his work; he had been carefully laid down to die. He was not sufficient for further service here; therefore, the same merciful God who called him by his grace at first; the same wise God who revealed in him the truth as it is in Jesus; the same powerful God who held him in safety, in usefulness, and honor for the long period of sixty years; the same compassionate God made all his bed in his sickness; laid underneath him his everlasting arms; and enabled him to testify with his dying breath that all was “well” well every way. “Well,” because he was COMPLETE IN CHRIST; “well,” because he had endured unto the end in the “One Lord, one faith, one baptism;” and “well” in the prospect of the soon-to-be-realized promise: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.” There was no real cause, then, why any great lamentation should be made over the grave of the deceased pastor of Mount Zion Church, in Hill Street, Dorset Square.

But in the case of Stephen, the cruel persecution to which he was subjected, and which took from the infant church a young and useful man of God, there was much cause for lamentation and sorrow. So, where a young man like John Pells is early taken out of a field of usefulness; or, where a powerful minister like our brother James Wells is laid down in pain and lengthened affliction, there is cause for lamentation, and for deep humiliation too. God's manner of dealing with the choicest of his servants is so varied, so sovereign, often so far beyond our comprehension, that it becomes us, like Aaron, to hold our peace, or like Eli, to exclaim, “It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth him good.”

Every man's life, especially every minister's life, is a great study. Some men, like David, wade through seas of sorrows, hunted by persecution, and harassed by temptation all their life long. Like Heman, and Asaph, many often fear that in their case the promise of the Lord will fail for ever more! While other men seem to have all the promises of God, as a body-guard, preserving them; the presence of God cheering them; the providences of God prospering them, all their days, (as was John Foreman's happy lot,) so that when we come to stand around his grave, the Holy Spirit speaks, as it were, most distinctly, and says, “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.” The same will, no doubt, be true of the three venerable men who officiated at the funeral of this great man, Messrs. Philip Dickerson, Samuel Milner, and Samuel Collins: these are, all of them, of that perfect and upright class and character, as to render them the most qualified for the services they had to perform of any men on the face of the earth. And, if all ministers were as permanently perfect and as upright as the Foreman's, the Dickerson's, the

Milner's, and the Collins's, that ugly thing called Antinomianism would soon cease to be heard of; but, alas, it is not so.

Nevertheless, if our churches have lost the great originals, of whom, during the last half-century, the Lord has given so many to his Church; if they are gone, numbers have been raised up, who, for devotion to the truth, and for integrity of character and purpose, are equal to any of those whose loss the Church laments; let us be thankful we had them, and remember it is the Lord who puts down, and raises up whom he will. A second William Huntington never has, and never will be found: a second William Gadsby, another Joseph Lions, never may be seen in our time. The New Surrey Tabernacle, the Mount Zion Pulpit, may never expect such another pair as James, the afflicted, or John, the departed, have been. But has not the same Lord given his churches the Andersons, the Aldersons, the Wilkins's, the Hazelton's, the Flacks, the Vinall's, the Hankse's, the Griffithses, the Hyersons, and hosts of men both good, and great, and true in service? Certainly, he has. From the silent graves where our fathers rest we turn with tears of affection; and, as we look at, and listen to, the sons who succeed them, we take our harps from the willows, and sing,

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

[We were happily led to take advantage of Mr. Foreman's death to notice that crowning promise Eliphaz gave to Job: “Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.” “The full age,” and “the shock of corn,” are sweet metaphors fully realized in some cases; but not manifestly so in all.]

THE LATE JOHN FOREMAN'S ACCOUNT OF HIS REGENERATION. WRITTEN BY HIMSELF, MARCH 10TH, 1826.

“WHEN going on in an openly profane course, the Lord suddenly stopped me with deep conviction of the wickedness of my practice, and the woefulness of my condition as a sinner before God my Maker, in the afternoon of a Lord's-day, in the close of July, 1812, at the age of little upwards of twenty-one years. I had attended but little at any place of worship for five years, and at no place for some time. I had no religious relation, and had no connection with professors, and therefore, I knew nothing about the various sentiments of religion there were in the world. Under my conviction, with bitter reflection, dread of the Almighty, alarm of death, and horror-struck with expectation that I should perish in hell, I was almost driven to madness for some days and nights. I went to hear an evening sermon. What the man preached I now know not, for the text itself took up all my time: ‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.’ Luke 4:18, 19.

“Here I saw something of mercy; but I neither knew how or yet for whom; but it gave me so much encouragement that I ventured to pray for mercy that night, which I dared not to do before. I found a little relief, but was greatly confused between hope and dread; but for what I know, my soul was in constant prayer for this mercy night and day for two or three days; that I went after my work like one who had lost his senses; I hardly knew what I went after.

“My soul was now increasingly comforted, till a thought struck me, ‘This may be false comfort.’ This distressing thought increased my sorrow till I sunk in grief lest I should not come to heaven at last; and for two or three days I almost left off prayer, as not acceptable to God from my lips; till Thursday, the 14th day of August (the same year), when my distress of mind was to that degree that I neither knew where to go, nor what to do with myself, I got up in a hay-loft, and there, with groans and tears of grief, I prayed to know whether I was loved with that love, and redeemed by that blood that I read of in the Scriptures, or not; and while I was thus begging, I had such a discovery of God’s love to my soul, of my complete redemption, and the pardon of all my sins, that I was entirely overcome, both in body and soul, with the sense of it. I got up off my knees, and walked about the loft as though I must have called out aloud for the joy I felt. And three years and eight months after this, I began publicly to preach what was thus manifested, and my soul thus blest to enjoy; as, according with the word of God, and having obtained help of God, I continue to preach the same things to this day, and by the help of God will, as long as I can preach at all.” *A Reply to Three Letters published by John Coulson, Blacksmith, Swavesey, Cambridgeshire.* By John Foreman, Minister, at Eden Chapel, Cambridge. 12mo, pp. 2 (1. St, Neots: Printed by J. Stanford, 1826.

MR. FOREMAN’S FAREWELL.

MR. EDITOR, On Wednesday, August 4, 1869, I had the pleasure and profit of hearing Mr. John Foreman preach his farewell sermon at Hanover chapel, from Romans 5, 11. It was a sweet, sound, experimental testimony. He took a solemn and sober farewell of all at the close of his sermon; remarking that, at his advanced age, he could not pledge himself to preach for them again, although he had for many years past officiated as one of their supplies for the anniversary. He preached as one upon the confines of eternity, even as a dying man to dying men. His former manner of (to me) being at times rather trifling in the pulpit, upon this occasion entirely disappeared; he grasped his subject in a masterly, yet plain and simple way, and spoke as one who was dealing in matters of eternal moment. For myself, I can say, while hearing him, Christ was precious, self was abased; I went into the vestry and shook hands with him, remarking at the same time, that if we could not, as formerly (on my part), meet at the fountain of water (baptism), yet we could meet and rejoice together at the fountain of blood. (Zech. 13, 1.) To this he very smilingly and in a very friendly way assented, “Yes, sir, blood, even the precious blood of Christ, is the basis of all Christian communion, (not water), hence it is written, “The blood shall be to you for a token, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” (Exodus 7, 5 to 13.) Well might Paul write to the Hebrews (chapter 10, 14 and 15), “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified, whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us.” While the Beloved John said, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”

Salem, Tunbridge Wells.

T. EDWARDS.

MR. JOHN FOREMAN AS AN AUTHOR

IF the letters, essays, and other writings which proceeded from the pen of Mr. John Foreman could be gathered into one volume, with a comprehensive memoir, the churches would have a collection

of spiritual and practical reading more valuable than we can describe. Mr. Foreman's published works were not numerous; but his private letters to friends were very many. One small volume on Believer's Baptism and Communion, &etc., amply proves Mr. Foreman's neat and respectable gift for controversial writing, and for defending, in a Christian and manly spirit, those doctrines and ordinances which he believed to be revealed in God's Word, and to be believed and practiced by all the Lord's people. When we have given our readers the particulars descriptive of the last days and the last offices connected with the going home of this good minister of Jesus Christ, we may then find room for some pithy extracts from his writings. But it is high time that we cease to make any promises as regards the future; having been confined to our bed-room by positive medical injunction, and having painfully realized how soon we may be levelled to the dust, our greatest anxiety is to have grace honestly and confidently to declare, with one of the best of men, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live; yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which, I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."