

BRETHREN BIOGRAPHIES

by Various (Plymouth Brethren)

Biographical sketches of notable figures in the Plymouth Brethren movement, preserving the testimonies and life stories of men and women who shaped this tradition of simple, scriptural Christianity.

4 Chapters

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Brethren Biographies

Thomas Liddon Sheridan

On October 12, Thomas Liddon Sheridan was called to Glory. He was 82, and had been my husband for 62 years. The previous day, he fell and hit his head, fracturing his skull. This caused internal bleeding into the brain. After a few hours of semi-consciousness, he went into a deep coma and died at 7:30 on Thursday morning. Liddon was born in Jacksonville, FL. When he was 8 months old, his parents moved to Augusta, GA, where his father pastored a large church. He was saved as a young child, but in his mid-teens he dedicated his life completely to the Lord. At that time he was given a great love for the Word of God which never left him. His mother told me of often finding him asleep with his Bible held tightly to his heart. When he was a senior at Bible college, studying for the ministry, we met and were married at the end of that school year. While Liddon was growing up, his father often brought to Augusta well known Bible teachers, such as Harry Ironside and William R. Newell for city-wide conferences. Encouraged by such ministry, he began his life-long practice of in-depth study of the Word of God. He became increasingly concerned about his church position. Since he had never heard of anyone meeting just in the Lord's Name, he continued studying, praying, and dreaming of a meeting based only on the Word without sectarian boundaries. Finally, in 1941, through the influence of his brother-in-law, Virgil Hollingsworth, Jr., he learned that such meetings did exist. He wrote: After years of discussing the will of the Lord for a Christian regarding his church position and wrestling with the decision, and with much prayer, Bro. Hollingsworth and I resigned our denominational connections, and with our wives and one newly saved couple, began breaking bread in his home. This was the birth of what is now Bethany Chapel in Augusta. After about one year, he went through a time of agonizing prayer and searching before the Lord, largely due to the fact that he saw the deep pain that his departure from that church caused his godly parents and others who could not understand his "new" position. Finally, with real sorrow, he knew he had no choice but to obey what he plainly saw in Scripture. He returned to Bethany Chapel, and was back in what he considered his scriptural church position, never to waver again. For the next few years he worked at secular jobs, using all available time for prayer and Bible study. A real scholar, knowing Greek, he was only interested in "what saith the Scriptures." Soon, he was preaching throughout the south most weekends. In 1948, we were commended as missionaries to the work in what was then Belgian Congo. We returned in 1955 due to political unrest. Liddon began an itinerant Bible teaching ministry, and he soon realized that this was God's path for him. He did this for the rest of his life—in the Bahamas, Canada and the US. In 1983, we returned to Nyankunde, our old mission station in Africa, and for six months he preached and taught the Word. We spent quite a bit of time in the "bush." The African Christians fed and housed us in their huts. We walked many miles and had the privilege of visiting many villages far from the beaten track. There were many professions of faith. In the late 1960's, Lawrence Chambers gave Liddon his model of the tabernacle. This richly enhanced his ministry. Several years ago, he turned the model over to Bill Gustafson who uses it in his work. Liddon spent the last four years ministering locally or in easily accessible meetings. At the time of his death, he was teaching a weekly Bible class in a local engineering firm. He loved that class! Also, he was making radio tapes that were aired weekly in Wrens, GA. He had recently preached

a series on “The Glory of the Church and the Churches” locally. There is a great emptiness in our hearts, but not for one moment would we wish him back. At last he is HOME! “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”

Sir Robert Anderson

Then said Great-Heart to Mr. Valiant-for-Truth: "Thou hast worthily behaved thyself. Let me see thy sword." So he showed it to him. When he had taken it in his hand and looked thereon a while, he said, "Ha! it is a right Jerusalem blade." -- The Pilgrim's Progress

Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) was one of the few who could engage in controversy without being contentious. Many wish they could "convince the gainsayer" but, unable to keep a cool head, they instead confirm the gainsayers in their heresies. The homey saying remains true, "If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen." Robert Anderson was one of those rare Christians who did not become blistered under attack.

He called himself "an anglicized Irishman of Scottish extraction." Born in Dublin, Anderson, as a youth, learned that no one who has not been converted can be a child of God. He wrote, "As time went by, my conviction deepened that I had not been 'converted.' But owing to my early experience and to the restraints of a Christian home, I continued to lead 'a religious life.'"

The year 1860 saw sweeping revival in Northern Ireland. New spiritual longings were awakened by the conversion of one of his sisters through attending meetings which J. Denham Smith was holding in Dublin. "The fact of my sister's conversion still held me, and I cherished the thought that the next Sunday services in the kirk might bring me blessing. But the morning service left me more discouraged than ever; and I made up my mind that if the evening one brought no relief I would give up the quest, and seek to enjoy life again as best I could.

"The evening preacher was John Hall. He boldly proclaimed forgiveness of sins and eternal life as God's gift in grace, unconditional, to be received as we sat in the pews. His sermon thrilled me. Yet I deemed his doctrine unscriptural, so I waylaid him as he left the vestry and on our homeward walk tackled him about his 'heresies.'"

Hall met Anderson's challenges by quoting Scripture. Having answered every question, he faced Anderson on the pavement and solemnly repeated his appeal: "I tell you as a minister of Christ and in His Name that there is life for you here and now if you will accept Him. Will you accept Christ or will you reject Him?" Anderson later said, "After a pause, I exclaimed, 'In God's Name I will accept Christ.' Not another word passed between us, but after another pause he wrung my hand and left me. And I turned homeward with the peace of God filling my heart."

Anderson was soon preaching the Gospel himself. The revival spread to Sligo, and when George Trench went there to carry on the work, he asked Anderson to join him. The clergy were unsympathetic and the evangelists were treated to a crusade of ridicule in a local newspaper which accused them of being impostors, preaching for filthy lucre's sake and getting their salaries from a committee in London. One issue published a letter (said to have been picked up on the road), in which they were taken to task for embezzling the contents of their money boxes! Worse still, there appeared a seemingly genuine account of their getting drunk at a picnic! When Trench had to return home owing to ill health, some doggerel verses described the quarrel which led "the

Trencher" to desert his pal, "Handy Andy." The attacks only advertised the meetings. Many attended out of curiosity or looking for amusement, and spiritual power was continually manifested in conversions.

Around this time, Anderson was called to the Irish Bar but was soon redirected into secret service work in connection with the "Fenian" terrorists. This led to his crossing to England. First in the Home Office, then at Scotland Yard, and finally in retirement, he remained a Londoner for the rest of his life.

Duty made him a relentless tracker of criminals. But "the dynamiters" would have been more than surprised had they known that the man who hunted them down was author of many books on the Bible and the Christian life. No less amazed would have been many a burglar had he come upon the Central Intelligence Department (CID) Chief giving a Gospel appeal in some mission.

Anderson became the director of Scotland Yard just as the "Jack the Ripper" murders were taking place. Sir John Moylan in his Scotland Yard and the Metropolitan Police states that "the period 1890 to 1900 proved to be one during which there was an almost continuous decrease in crime . . . By signal successes in sensational murder cases such as that of Neil Cream, the poisoner, and Milsom and Fowler, the Muswell Hill murderers, and by steady achievement in the less advertised, everyday business of dealing with rogues in general, the CID built up in the 'nineties' a world-wide reputation for efficiency in crime detection . . . Crime reached a low watermark in 1899." The period of Sir Robert Anderson's service as Chief of the CID was 1888 to 1901.

Anderson was deeply concerned about prison evangelism, and was considered an authority on prison reform. Up to that time, most prisons followed the dungeon pattern -- thick, iron bars, slits of windows, faulty ventilation and semi-darkness in the cells. As is still true, the prisons created far more criminals than they cured. One bit of Anderson's sage advise was this: "The restitution of stolen property ought to be insisted on. A burglar should not be set at liberty until he had disclosed what he had done with his booty. This would go far to abolish the market for stolen property and even put an end to stealing. If necessary, the thief should compensate the individual robbed by work done and paid for in prison."

Some of his books such as *Criminals and Crime*, *The Lighter Side of My Official Life*, and *Sidelights on the Home Rule Movement* may never be reprinted. But his writing on things eternal continue to bear fruit. C. H. Spurgeon said the book, *Human Destiny*, was "the most valuable contribution on the subject I have seen." This volume deals with denials of the biblical doctrine of eternal punishment, important because currently certain evangelical leaders have adopted these denials.

His book, *The Silence of God*, was a great comfort to perplexed souls, especially during the First World War. *The Coming Prince* contains one of the clearest studies available dealing with the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy. Others of his books are, *In Defence*, *Daniel in the Critics' Den*, *The Hebrews Epistle*, *The Honour of His Name*, *The Bible and Modern Criticism*, *The Entail of the Covenant*, *Misunderstood Texts*, *The Lord from Heaven*, *Forgotten Truths*, and *Redemption Truths*.

He enjoyed warm fellowship with such eminent servants of Christ as Horatius Bonar, James Gray, A. C. Dixon, and C. I. Scofield.

Anderson abhorred irreverence and levity in the things of God. He wrote, "We may come down to our own level, as it were, when reasoning with others about their conduct or their attitude to the dread solemnities of life. But no one of a reverent spirit can fail to be distressed by the flippant language in which 'the glorious Gospel of the blessed God' (2 Cor. 2:17 , Weymouth) is sometimes 'huckstered.'"

A friend described Sir Robert Anderson this way: "On the platform, he appeared warrior-like; in conversation, he was professor-like; in friendly intercourse, brother-like. Throughout his life, he bore the true test of Christian manhood: the better known, the better loved."

Carl A. Armerding

Carl Armerding was born June 16, 1883, in Jersey City, New Jersey, as one of ten children of bi-lingual German-American parents. Early interest in South America and mission work was stimulated during high school years by night school classes in Spanish and reading the magazine *Missionary Gleanings*. He was baptized and became a member of a Plymouth Brethren congregation at age fourteen or fifteen after hearing a sermon preached by George Mackenzie. A Plymouth Brethren member, knowing of his interest in Latin America, offered to finance him to join a senior missionary in Honduras in 1912. When he nearly died from malaria, he was forced to return from Honduras to a different climate, and he was subsequently invited to preach to Plymouth Brethren Assemblies in the British West Indies. This he did with great success for the following two years. He returned a second time for a year-long itinerant ministry in Honduras, but recurrence of malaria required a return to the United States, this time to St. Louis.

While attending a Bible conference in Manitoba, Canada, he met Eva May Taylor. They were married a year and a half later. The Armerdings moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he entered the University of New Mexico. He graduated in 1926. After 10 years of preaching, teaching, and working with Christian groups in New Mexico, some of them Spanish-American, Armerding was invited by President H. A. Ironside to join the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary, then called the Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Because of his experiences with missions, and Spanish-speaking people, and as a resident of Dallas where Central American Mission had its headquarters, he was asked to become a director of the mission in 1943. In 1954 he became president of the mission, continuing in that post until 1970. During this period, he served for ten years on both the extension and resident faculty of Moody Bible Institute, living in Wheaton, Illinois, where his son Hudson was attending Wheaton College. Hudson later became president of the College in 1965. After the death of Moody's President Houghton, Carl Armerding resigned his teaching duties and returned to Dallas Seminary to teach homiletics for a year. In 1945, Dr. Raymond V. Edman, President of Wheaton College, asked him to teach Bible and theology at the College. He became a full professor in 1956, and taught there (with the exception of a leave of absence in 1954-1955) until retirement in 1962. He returned for special appointment in 1969-1970.

Armerding also served on the North American Council of China Inland Mission, sponsored the Spanish Christian Mission with headquarters in Toronto, and was a member of the German Evangelical Society in Dallas. He preached at many conferences in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Europe. Among his written works are *Signs of Christ's Coming*, *Conquest and Victory*, and *Esther*.

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