

WILLIAM THOMPSON

William Thompson was born in Old Brompton, Kent in 1853, the son of Thomas Thompson a Grocer.

He trained at Headingly and entered the Wesleyan ministry in 1878. His first appointment was to Maidenhead where he lodged with the family of Arthur Blumfield a journeyman tailor.

He later married Mary Porter Steel in 1885 with whom he had four children: Ida, William, Margaret and Muriel.

Newspaper information on William Thompson is extremely scarce. However in 1904 he had to deal with an unusual religious disturbance:

DISTURBING A RELIGIOUS SERVICE

A PAINFUL CASE

On Monday, a painful case was heard at the Thorpe Petty Session.

The justices present were the Rev. Canon Norman (Chairman), the Rev A Page, Col R P Davis, W Nicholls, H J Grant and J L Corser Esqrs.

John Blowers, a retired grocer, was summoned for disturbing the services at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Little Bentley, on June 5.

Mr Asher Prior, who prosecuted on behalf of the trustees of the chapel, said that on May 30 the defendant sent a letter to the Superintendent Minister of the Circuit (the Rev Thompson of Maningtree), stating that he had posted notices on the chapel door and if he (the minister) had them taken off it would be at his peril. The notices consisted of four verses of scripture. On Sunday, May 29, the defendant disturbed the service to such an extent that the chapel had to be closed. Mr Blowers wrote to Mr Thompson asking him not to send any more Wesleyan Methodists to preach in the chapel adding, "All the ministers that follow the president were wolves in sheep's clothing". In reply to a letter asking for an assurance that such conduct would not occur again in the chapel, the defendant wrote "Do you know whom you sent to take the service? It was one of the devil's own imps How long do you intend to fight against God? Pull off your sheep's skin, that men may see what you are". On Sunday, June 5, defendant again created a disturbance at the service, and had to be ejected by a constable.. Defendant was a very respectable man and his conduct showed a condition of mind that made it a most difficult case to deal with. They did not wish to press the case against him

Defendant: "But I want to press the case against them !".

The Rev Wm Thompson said he was present when the defendant created the disturbance on the last occasion. The defendant walked to the communion rails, made some rambling remarks, and asked witness to read some portion of the Gospel of St John. Defendant went up to Mr Keeble (one of the stewards) and struck him on the shoulder.

Defendant: "Yes, if I had had a whip I should have driven you all out"

Witness (continuing) said defendant declared that he would prevent the service in spite of all the devils in hell or on earth, or the policeman. Mr Blowers then made a noise like a dog - (the defendant): "Yes. I barked like a wolf" - and taking up a violin, violently scraped the strings and danced about in the aisle.

The Clerk asked the defendant, who was interrupting, to keep quiet, and he replied, "I cannot keep quiet; I have got instructions"

The bench adjourned the case for an hour, and directed that the defendant should be medically examined in the meantime. Subsequently Dr Foster informed the bench that the defendant was suffering from religious mania, and had declared that he would prosecute what he had already done to the bitter end. He was quite sane on other points.

The bench adjourned the case, sine dei, and Mr Blowers was subsequently removed to Brentwood

He became superintendent of the Ely circuit

WESLEYAN MISSIONARY MEETING (Soham)

On Sunday and Monday meetings in supprt of foreign missions were held at the Wesleyan Chapel. On Sunday the services were conducted by the Rev W Thompson, superintendent minister. On Monday evening the annual meeting was held, under the presidency of Mr Herber Lemmon of Ely - the Rev W Thompson presented the report.

He stated that the total income of the Wesleyan Foreign Missiions last year was £171, 663 and the expenditure was £187, 314, leaving a deficiency of £315, 651. The Ely Circuit sent £89 11s 1d towards the total, and the contribution from Soham was £3 16s 8d.

In the course of an address, Mr Thompson said he did not think members of Christian Churches had given missionary work the attention they ought to have taken. True, they had done something, but considering the greatness of the subject and the glory of the work, their efforts had been very feeble and very poor. If they wanted to accomplish a great work for Christ, they must put their heart and soul into it. Fortunately there was a revival of the missionary spirit in the Churches, and the commission of Christ was impressing itself more strongly on them than it had ever done before. They must throw themselves still more fully into the work. They were engaged in a cause that was bound to succeed, and the Church was marching to a glorious victory.

(November 1906)

His Obituary notice records:

“Despite much sickness and domestic affliction he fulfilled an active ministry of thirty seven years almost entirely in difficult rural ircuits, where his fine personality and faithful stewardship made him many friends and and promoted the propserity of his circuits. In 1915 he retired from the active work and settled in Hitchin, where he had spent two fruitful terms, and where the friends of his early years welcomed him as a loved pastor and friend”

He died at Hitchin on October 24 1935 aged 82