

Robert Hilton

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by J.B.

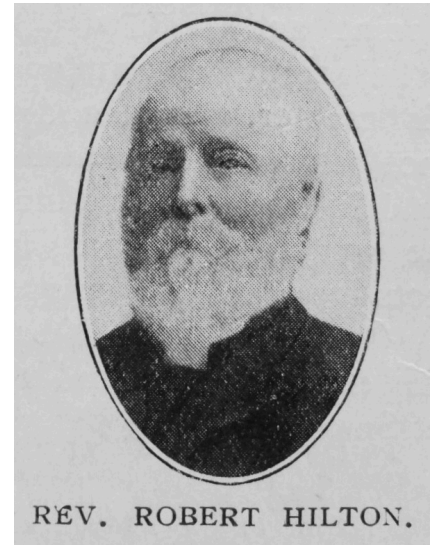
Over half a century ago the subject of this sketch entered the active ministry of our church, and on August 22nd, 1913, he was translated to the more enduring service of the Church triumphant. A product of the rugged Peakland of Derbyshire, he seems to have acquired a taste for the quieter, though not less strenuous, walks of life and spheres of toil.

Converted at twenty years of age in his native picturesque town of Bradwell, he gave himself earnestly to Sunday School work and sick visitation. Having been called two years later to be a local preacher, he qualified in that hilly district for the demands of the itinerant ministry, which he entered in 1860.

For forty-two years he gave full proof of his divine call, labouring with acceptance on the following circuits:—

Lancaster, Blackburn and Darwen, Fleetwood, Castletown

twice, Chester Second, and on several Home Mission stations. Ireland had a fair share of his labours, and a fascinating story could be told of the trials and discouragements heroically endured by our friend as he toiled among the priest-ridden folk of Lisburn, Belfast, and Dublin.



Eleven years ago he superannuated, locating at Fleetwood, where he rendered invaluable help to the Church, continuing to preach, lead a society class, and visit the sick and troubled. This work was greatly appreciated, and Mr. Hilton was looked up to with affectionate regard by those he had thus helped in the time of sorrow. Only those who broke through a brusqueness, which was natural to him, knew his real value, and the deep love of the best things that ever dwelt in his soul. That fell disease, cancer, was the agency employed to weaken the casket and liberate the spirit to return to its Maker. Under this affliction he was courageous and patient. He made a brave fight to remain with his loved ones, continuing to go about till within a few days of his translation, and only spent one day in bed. As at the ripe age of eighty-one he entered the valley so dreaded by mortals. There was evidently "light in the valley," and when too weak to speak he raised his hand in token of the victory gained through the Man of Nazareth.

Rev. Edward Mather writes of the deceased:— "I have known him for over thirty years, and for the last ten years intimately. He always impressed me as a good man, a hard worker, and a devoted minister of Jesus Christ. Modest, unambitious, and thoroughly conscientious in all his dealings. The more I knew of him the more I was impressed with his sterling piety, his desire to win souls for Christ, his intense love for God's cause, and his great spirit of sacrifice in the Master's service. He had a passionate love of preaching the Gospel, and this love burned in him to the very last. He was a constant visitor of the sick, and his prayers, his Christian counsel and wise words made his visits helpful and left a benediction behind. I was deeply impressed by the spirit he manifested during his last illness. Not only was there no word of complaint, no doubt or mistrust, but he believed his affliction was for some wise end, and he rejoiced that God had given him special grace to bear his trial; he felt it was for his own good and for the glory of God. His patience, his resignation, his faith and joy in God were a benediction to my own soul, and made me feel how bright and glorious is the Christian hope."

The interment took place in the Fleetwood cemetery on August 25th, the ministers taking part being Revs. Jas. Burton, J. Swales, W.J. Houlgate (Congregational), and John Bradbury. The latter represented the General Committee, and spoke beautiful words of hope and sympathy. A memorial service was conducted the following Sunday by the writer.

Mrs. Hilton had predeceased her husband, having been laid to rest at Glastonbury twenty-one years ago. Five sons and three daughters still remain to live for a blessed re-union where all the broken ties of earth will be joined together never more to be separated.

References

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