

John Bailey (1872-1895)

Transcription of obituary published in the Minutes of Conference by Josphe Ferguson

JOHN BAILEY (2) was a young man of much promise. His literary and ministerial success during his probation was to us a prophecy of future power and Christian usefulness. He was born April 13th, 1872, and fourteen days afterwards became a resident of Bishop's Castle, Shropshire. Happily he was born into Christian influences, and early heard the voice of invocation and praise. But, like others, he soon discovered that in this world, so morally fallen, evil comes into conflict with good, and finds in all, however well defended, some response and weakness. During his child-life he was carried by his mother to the Primitive Methodist Church, and subsequently taken to the Sunday School. It was here his love of the good was conserved and nurtured, and upon his young heart came the Divine dew that quickened his liferoots. In December, 1883, when only twelve years of age, through faithful Sunday School teachers, he gave himself to God, and like Christ was found in His temple doing His business.

Like many others born into a sacred home, he could not remember a time when he was not deeply impressed by holy worship and work. To him the house of God was lovely, and his daily experience was blessed. But in a short time the light lessened and the glory largely departed. As a lad he was healthy and strong, and he possessed an overflow of animal spirits. Naturally, the sportive and the comical were attractive to him. Like a lamb, he needed a careful and watchful shepherd. He did not so much leave the fold as longingly look over the fence into forbidden pastures. He did not neglect the worship of God. Doubts, like demons, tormented him. He lost the assurance of faith - the witness within himself. But the Good Shepherd did not leave the wounded lamb. He wooed him by His Holy Spirit, and as he says, 'I gained fresh hold of God and felt that my sins were all forgiven.' It was now, at the age of fourteen, that his face turned fully to the light, a light in which he walked with daily joy. He now felt, amid the chance and change of life, 'that every step he took was important,' and demanded watchful care and earnest prayer. At this time he was the subject of a serious accident, which led to much personal scrutiny, and personal and special consecration of himself to God. He promised the Lord that upon each week a record should be written to His glory.

The Lord accepted his vow and soon the young man was glorying in strength renewed. Like all young men of his physical type and mental character, he had to fight hard to conquer. As he plaintively says in his notes, 'My feet well-nigh slipped.' 'It was in a prayer-meeting that I entered into liberty,' and so became the servant of the eternal Sovereign. While they sang, 'Oh the blood of Jesus,' the needful power and cleansing came. His salvation lay, instrumentally, in Christian work. He therefore entered the Sunday School - that training college - as a teacher, and soon his various gifts led the church to call him to a wider sphere.

At the beginning of his local preachership he was nervous and felt much his insufficiency, but at his first public effort two men came out for salvation - these were the first fruits of a larger harvest. He soon heard the call of God and of His church to the full ministry of Christ's gospel; the responsibilities, however, and the difficulties caused him to hesitate and to struggle, and anxiously to ask, 'Is the voice I hear, verily the voice of God?' The counsel of the Rev. W. Jones Davies was helpful and deciding. In 1889, when seventeen years of age, he passed the Ministerial Candidates' Examination, and hope to enter college for needful training. In this he was disappointed. But early in

the connexional year he was called to labour with the Rev. W. Wright, then of Church Gresley circuit, as a hired local preacher, in which capacity he led some souls to Christ.

In 1890 he was stationed to the Bloxwich and Cannock circuit, as a regular minister. In this he spent the whole of his probation, which was the whole of his earthly ministry. At his induction among the miners of Cannock and the district, he was healthy and vigorous, and as an evangelist especially successful. In church after church, in nearly the whole of this large circuit, he held protracted meetings, to the great profit of the goldy and the salvation of the ungodly. He won many souls for Christ. But in these services, so taxing and continuous, he weakened his constitution, and rendered himself an easy prey to those diseases that hastened his end. He had a splendid brain, as evidenced by his brilliant examinations. His heart was humble and trustful. He was liberal to a weakness, and especially to the one who had secured his love in younger days. His pocket-book is a financial revelation and a study. He was orderly and specially systematic. He was chronologically precise, and his financial accounts were accurately entered. It was a mournful pleasure to read his varied memoranda.

His last illness was serious and sad. His mind, which had been weakened by terrific pain, wandered about his work, and worried concerning his condition and relationships. He was under a shadow, made more dense by a disappointed life. It was our joy to see him during prayer come out of his unconscious condition - a condition in which he had been for some considerable time. He first felt our hand, and before long his arms were around our neck, and he kissed us again and again, and bedewed our face with his tears. In prospect of death, young as he was, he rejoiced in faith, and said again and again, 'All is well,' and other ejaculations that will long live in the memory of his friends. Only two months before, it had been our pleasure to address him and three others who had passed on to the approved list of ministers, and to anticipate for him, as well as for the others, a future of useful work and many spiritual conquests.

He was buried at Cannock in the presence of many ministers and friends, and his departure was improved at the same place by the writer.

References

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