

## **Rev. William Gwillim**

### **Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by John Webster**

WILLIAM GWILLIM, Primitive Methodist minister, was the second son of John and Mary Gwillim, and was born at Goytree farm, in the parish of Llancillo, in the county of Hereford, on the 14th of March, 1817. In the year 1826 the family removed to a farm called the Wain, their own property, in the Cwm circuit, and resided there for many years. The mother was the daughter of the Rev. John Rogers, vicar of Cloddock. Honourable mention is made of brother Gwillim's ancestors in our Connexional History. On page 225, we read,— "In the parish of Cloddock, in which Cwm is situated, Mr. Rogers, the vicar, delivered evangelical discourses, and was favourable to the Methodists." On page 228, we read,—We may here just state that Mr. Gwillim, of the Wain, a man of property and intelligence, and son-in-law of Mr. Rogers the vicar of Longtown,\* early became identified with the cause, and his son, Mr. W. Gwillim, is now superintendent of Cwm circuit."

Mr. and Mrs. Gwillim were very strict church people, and caused their children to attend the parish church every Sabbath, and trained them up strictly moral. Sabbath-breaking, foot-ball kicking, wrestling and fighting at country wakes, prevailed in the neighbourhood, but the Gwillims' children were not allowed to indulge in these things; but they had to learn the collects, epistles, and the gospels of day; and to read the Bible and other good books

About the year 1830 or 1831, Mr. Gwillim allowed the Primitive Methodists to preach in his house. This privilege is still permitted by his widow, who continues to make a home for the itinerant and local preachers. Some of the family obtained salvation; and the oldest son, Mr. John Gwillim, is a superior local preacher, and a valuable and an influential official in Cwm circuit.

The subject of the present sketch was convinced of sin under a sermon preached in his father's house by the Rev. Edward Bishop; though he did not then yield to the Spirit, but continued sinning and repenting for a few years, and occasionally attending the preaching services, and sometimes the class meetings. At this time he was kind in his disposition, cheerful in conversation, pleasing in his manners, and moral in his outward outward deportment.

His conversion took place on May 1838 in a prayer meeting, held in Cherry Street chapel, Birmingham; he then resided in Birmingham. Soon after this happy event he returned home, and became a useful member in the Primitive Methodist Connexion. Being a good singer, and attentive to prayer meetings, and other religious duties, the authorities of the circuit came to the conclusion that he was well adapted for taking Sabbath appointments. He was accordingly put on the preachers' plan; and in the capacity of a local preacher he was made so abundantly useful in the conversion of sinners. Not long after his name appeared on the plan it was thought by many that he ought to be sent out as a travelling preacher. Accordingly his own circuit gave him a call to our ministry, which, after much prayer and consultation with his friends, he accepted; and entered

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\* Longtown was the residence of Mr. Rogers, but the name of the parish is Cloddock,

upon this important work in October, 1843, on what was then the Weobly branch of Cwm circuit. He afterwards travelled on the following stations:—Bishop's Castle, one year; Wrockwardine Wood, two years; Leominster, one year; Ramsor, two years; Oswestry, two years; Weobly again, one year; Dudley, two years; Cwm, four years; Kidderminster, three years; Presteign, three years; Bishop's Castle, one year.

Mr. Gwillim was married on July 3rd, 1850, to the widow of the late Mr. John Jones, (see his memoir in the large magazine, 1842), who resided at Betchcott farm in the Bishop's Castle circuit, a woman of exemplary piety. In no circumstance of his life did the providential kindness of his heavenly Father more strikingly appear, than in directing him to such a companion. Mrs. Gwillim was eminently qualified for a minister's wife.

Whilst labouring in Presteign circuit his health began to fail. In the summer of 1865, he was unable to take his work for the space of five months; after which he resumed his labours, and continued in active work with slight interruptions until the end of last June, when he had a sudden attack of illness whilst from home at Clun. This laid him aside for two or three weeks. As his restoration to health was somewhat tardy, the circuit authorities gave him liberty to go from home for the benefit of his health. On Monday, August 5th, 1867, in company with his wife he went to Aberystwith. On Thursday, August 15th, he ate a hearty breakfast, but afterwards complained of feeling very unwell, but in company with his step son, Mr. Jones, of Weobly, he bathed in the sea, and afterwards walked abroad, when he complained of violent pain, but rallied two or three times. At the suggestion of his step son, he sat down in a house, a conveyance was sent for to take him to his lodgings, but on the way thither he was observed to fall back in the carriage; medical aid was immediately obtained, but life was found to be extinct. His death was occasioned by ossification of the heart, a disease, the existence of which neither he nor his friends were aware he had. Thus suddenly and unexpectedly passed away the soul of our brother, in the fifty-first year of his age. The news of his unlooked for departure filled many hearts with sorrow, and was received with deep regret by all in every quarter where he was known.

We are indeed surrounded by mysteries which we cannot penetrate, we are beset with problems which we cannot solve, and involved in labyrinths from which we cannot extricate ourselves.

Why should a life fraught with blessings to the church and to the world be so suddenly and so awfully extinguished?

The Divine response to these questions is, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter,"

Mr. Gwillim was hospitable and benevolent, giving away at least one tenth of his income to charitable and religious objects. As a husband he was affectionate, indulgent, and respectful. He had received from the Lord "a good wife," and he knew how to estimate her worth; he paid great attention to the temporal and spiritual welfare of her who now sorrows because "he is not." As a colleague, he was kind, social, and affectionate; attentive to circuit duties; not contenting himself with a bare fulfilment of his own appointed work, but ready at all times to cooperate with his colleagues and lay brethren, in devising, and carrying out plans of general usefulness.

His piety was thoroughly sincere and evangelical. Religion with him was a vital, vigorous, active principle; it lived and moved in him, and gave a tinge to his whole character and conduct. United to Christ by faith, his life was hid with Christ in God, his fellowship was with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. He nourished and invigorated his piety by habitual prayer, by devout meditation, by intimacy with the holy Scriptures, and by labours in the cause of God. He was a man of decision. When our departed brother had made up his mind on any subject, he failed not to prosecute his object unless new light of sufficient strength convinced his judgment that a halt or change were more in accordance with God's mind.

Mr. Gwillim was a man of rather warm and sanguine temperament, of exuberant spirits, delighting in activity; he was hopeful, lively, bold; consequently admirably fitted for the sphere of labour in which he spent the latter part of his life. He was plain, simple, straightforward, natural, and manly in his bearing. His integrity and love of truth were conspicuous in all his conduct through life. He was anxious not to give offence to the most querulous; but if the faithful discharge of obvious duty was likely to offend, he shook off the fear of man, and left the consequences with God. Frank, honest, and open himself, he despised everything that was low, mean, and selfish in others. There was a nobleness of mind, a generosity of disposition, and an urbanity of manner that threw a charm around his character. Indeed to know him was to love him. Were we to say that he had infirmities of character we should only affirm what is true of the most distinguished men.

As a preacher brother Gwillim was evangelical. His sermons were plain, pointed, practical, and experimental, but not ornamental. He was not a popular preacher. He was not remarkable for clearness in expressing his ideas, nor yet for the utterance of brilliant thoughts, polished sentences, and finely rounded periods, but a very gracious influence frequently accompanied his sermons and prayers; and many were brought to Christ through his labours. His intellectual powers and literary acquirements were not of a high order; but he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost.

As a superintendent he was very successful. It was not in the pulpit or on the platform, that he shone or attracted much attention, but he possessed talents exceedingly valuable for the position he held. He excelled in conducting prayer meetings and leading sinners to Christ. He was a man of unwearied industry, and fruitful in expedients to promote the temporal and spiritual prosperity of his stations. He pressed all the available talent around him into action, and he operated as the mainspring in various movements. His kindness drew around him those who were desirous of promoting the extension and stability of the work of God. He seemed also to give strength and confidence to weaker and more timid minds, and brought into operation powers that would, under other men, have been dormant.

Under Mr. Gwillim's superintendency chapels have been erected at the following places. In Cwm circuit, Kingstone, Lower Maescoed, Urishay, Craswall (rebuilt); and when he removed from this station only £24 debt remained on the above chapels. Mr. T. Powell, of Snodhill, in this circuit says, "I used to say, 'Mr. Gwillim, surely you like begging.' Then he would heave a deep sigh, and say, 'Ah! friend Powell, begging is a trial to me, but the work must be done by some one, and I am here to do it.' His noble deeds will live in the memory of his friends." In Kidderminster circuit, Cookley,

Clowstop, Button Oak. Alveley, and Kidderminster school (rebuilt). When he went to this circuit there were upwards of £40 owing to different tradesmen occasioned by the erection of Stourport chapel, although it had been opened upwards of four years; besides, the trust funds were so embarrassed that the chapel was expected to be sold, but by great exertion he raised £150, including £20 from the General Chapel Fund, this labour greatly relieved the Trustees, although a heavy debt still remains. In Presteign circuit, Noke Lane Head, Coomb Moor and Clanwhimp.

At the time of his death he was engaged in three new chapel movements in Bishop's Castle circuit. Besides, during the year whilst stationed in this circuit, the debt on our Bishop's Castle chapel was reduced £150, thus leaving the trust property in very easy circumstances. No chapel erected under his direction has become a burden to the Trustees. So many chapels, reared under the superintendency of one man in the space of ten years, stamps him as a man of no mean order. To accomplish his noble object, he plodded hard, and laboured long. Like the soldier on the battle field, he was ever alert, ever ready to catch the first notes of the trumpet's call to duty, and ever prompt to obey.

In the death of brother Gwillim the Bishop's Castle circuit has lost a faithful pastor, the Connexion a devoted minister, his wife an affectionate and appreciative husband, the world a burning and shining light, and the writer of this sketch, a very dear and much beloved friend and brother, with whom he had been acquainted for the space of twenty years. JOHN WEBSTER.

[The Editor of this magazine willingly bears his testimony to the truthfulness of this sketch. Brother Gwillim travelled with him two years in Dudley, and he ever found in him all that a colleague should be; and when he became a superintendent the writer of these lines was deeply interested in his successful career, and often glorified God in him. He deeply sympathizes with all his friends in his unexpected removal, especially with his widow. He remembers distinctly July 3rd, 1850, the day of their nuptials, and how happy he was to join so worthy a couple together. But, "All, all on earth is shadow." Yet, this is, blessed be God, not the end, "All beyond is substance." EDITOR. ]

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## References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1868/67