

## Rev. John Healey

### Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Charles Temperton

THE REV. JOHN HEALEY was the second son of Jacob and Grace Healey, of Middlestown, in the Barnsley circuit, and was born September 17th, 1822. His parents were members of the Wesleyan denomination, and he had the advantage of an early religious training, and was regularly taken with the rest of the family three times every Sunday to the Wesleyan chapel, there being no other place of worship at that time in the village. John grew up a steady, industrious young man, and followed his father's occupation as a farmer.

When he was about twenty years of age, the Primitive Methodists erected a neat little chapel in the village, which he occasionally attended. He soon became much attached to our people, and in 1845 was awakened to a sense of his sinful condition. He earnestly sought, and through Christ's atonement found, the forgiveness of his sins. His change was genuine, and for some time after he enjoyed such a sweet sense of the Spirit's refreshing influence that he could scarcely rest in bed at nights, but often rose to pray and sing praises to God. He became an earnest labourer in the cause of Christ, and was very useful, and much respected by all who knew him. He had not long been a member in the society before he received a note from the quarterly meeting, authorising him to go out as an exhorter in the vineyard of Christ. On his way to his first appointment, he was so much tempted by the enemy of souls, that he often thought he should have to return home ere he arrived at the place of worship. He by the grace of God persevered, and triumphed over the enemy, had a blessed season, and returned home rejoicing. While an exhorter he had many precious seasons, and was made a great blessing to many immortal souls.

About this time one of the circuit ministers, the Rev. J. Verity, was taken very ill, and was laid aside from his labours. During Mr. V.'s sickness John was engaged as a hired local preacher to take his work. This important calling cost him many prayers, tears, and sleepless hours, as he had only just commenced preaching, and of course he had to study and labour hard to make his way and meet all his appointments. But the Lord was with him, and crowned his humble efforts with success. Mr. Verity left the station, and went to Chesterfield circuit, and while there he was taken ill again, and again John was sent for to supply for him.

In September or October, 1847, he left home for his new sphere of usefulness, expecting to return as soon as Mr. V. could take his work or procure a more suitable substitute. However, his lot was to remain, and the Lord made him a blessing to the station. While here he received a call to go out as a regular travelling preacher, but again was strongly tempted to return home. He wrote to Mr. Verity for advice, and received a very kind and encouraging reply, from which the following sentences are taken:— "Get into your closet, and on your knees beg, pray, and patiently wait for God's directions. Keep to your work, and leave the consequences to God, and he will be your Guide: you did so at Chesterfield, and he was with you, and sinners were slain on every hand."

At the following Conference, 1849, John was pledged, and stationed for the Newtown and Welshpool mission. Subsequently he travelled on the Belfast, Isle of Wight, Deal and Dover, Alderney, Jersey, Portsmouth, Maidstone, Hammersmith, and Exeter and Exmouth stations. On each station he was well received, highly esteemed, and the work of the Lord prospered in his hands.

On August 22nd, 1853, he was united in marriage to her who is left to lament his departure. To delineate his character, we may say that as a Christian he drank deeply and freely of the wells of salvation. There were no irregularities in his religious experience, but a gradual progressing "towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He was a Bible Christian; God's word was his especial delight. Mr,

Emberly, a local preacher near Exmouth, says, "As a Christian he was exemplary, being a living witness of the grace of God. In labour he was earnest and indefatigable; in his deportment he was consistent. As a friend he was not only agreeable, but profitable, being ever ready for instructive and spiritual conversation." As a preacher he was original, plain, sound, and practical. His sermons were faithful, scriptural, and effectual, being calculated to convince the sinner and console the Christian. The conversion of sinners appeared to be his chief object, and several persons since his death have written to his bereaved wife acknowledging their conversion through his agency. He was a thorough Primitive Methodist, firmly attached to the rules and doctrines of the connexion, ever taking a lively interest in its welfare. He would often say, "I love Primitive Methodism, I owe all I am to the connexion." As a colleague he was kind and peaceable, always pleased to hear of the prosperity of his colleagues, and was willing to do everything in his power to increase their happiness and success,

The Rev. J. Stroud, with whom brother Healey travelled in 1852 and '53, writes:— "The Rev. J. Healey travelled with me on the Deal and Dover station, and I never had a more agreeable colleague. Being kind and obliging, and very attentive to all his ministerial duties, he was much beloved, and he was honoured by the Lord with success in the conversion of souls."

As a superintendent he was firm and discreet. His wife says:— "I remember once while in the Hammersmith mission there was a very painful circumstance in hand, which greatly affected the whole station. I said to him, 'John, I think you are acting too severely.' His reply was, 'Charlotte, I must do my duty to the connexion; I am not sent here as a man pleaser.' He did his duty, and God approved of it." He was a kind husband and an affectionate father.

The affliction which terminated his earthly career was a protracted one. While he was on the Hammersmith mission his health began to fail. Returning from Brentford on Christmas eve, 1861, the sharp wind struck one side of his face, causing palsy of the face, which for a time distorted his features and affected his speech. He partially recovered, and took his work until the following June, when he was again laid aside, but in two or three weeks afterwards he was able to resume his labours. In the following winter he went as missionary deputation to another mission; and one evening, after walking several miles in the rain, was unfortunately put into a damp bed, which so seriously affected him, that it was with great difficulty he reached his home. A violent cold settled in his back, so that for some time he was not able to walk upright. From that period he gradually got weaker, but continued with much difficulty to take his appointments. In January, 1864, he was removed to the Exeter and Exmouth station, with a hope that the change of air would tend to his recovery. For some time he appeared better, and thought the danger was past; but in June the old symptoms returned, attended with a violent cough and excruciating pains, As he continued to get worse, the General Missionary Committee favoured him with a young man to take his work.

The last twelve months of his life he suffered acutely, but still his confidence in God never failed, nor did a murmur escape his lips. At times he would say, "The Lord knows best; if I cannot work for him, I wish to suffer his will." As his end approached his sufferings increased. To a friend he said, "I have not known what it is to be without pain for the last six months, but it is all right." In conversation with his wife about his soul and hope of heaven, he said, "I have been converted twenty years, and from the time the Lord first spoke peace to my soul I have never known what it is to have a doubt." To the last his mind was kept in perfect peace, and his language was, "I know in whom I have believed." He only kept his bed one day, and that was the Sabbath and the day previous to his death. It being a wet day, he said, "As I shall not be able to get out, I will stay in bed all the day." During the day he conversed cheerfully and prayed for the blessing of God to rest upon the various religious services. In the evening he wished his wife to read him a portion of "Sturm's Sufferings of Christ." She complied, and his soul was refreshed. At night he desired the family to retire to

bed as usual, but perceiving him to be worse they wished to remain up. About midnight he became very restless and his breathing difficult. His wife raised him, and said, "It seems mysterious to us that you should suffer so." He answered, "Yes, but it is all right." About four o'clock in the morning he complained of the candles giving a dim light. He said to his wife, "Take my hand." She did so, and pointing to the window he faintly gasped, "Air." The window was opened, but soon a change came over his countenance, and his eyes were firmly fixed. His sorrowing wife immediately grasped his hand, when he turned his face and kissed her, and without a struggle his soul passed away to the realms of eternal bliss. Thus departed my brother-in-law on October 23rd, 1865, and on the 28th he was interred in St. John's churchyard, near Exmouth, in the presence of a great number of preachers, members, and other friends, who had come from various parts of the station to follow his body to its last earthly resting-place. May his bereaved widow and five fatherless children meet him in the Eden above.

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#### References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1866/95