

Rev. Joseph Harrison

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by John Harvey

The subject of this memoir was born in 1811, at Kirton, in Lincolnshire. The early part of his life was spent in pursuing the vanities and pleasures of this world, and seeking happiness where it could not be found. Nevertheless, he was a subject of serious impressions, and was fully aware that he must experience a change of heart before he could inherit the kingdom of heaven. After many warnings and strivings of the Holy Spirit, he was brought into the liberty of God's children. This happy change took place in the month of April, 1830, through Primitive Methodistic labours. A revival of the work of God took place at Kirton, in the Scotter circuit, under the labours of Brother Saul and his colleagues; and with the novelty of the meetings which were held during this revival, Brother Harrison's attention was attracted, and soon he became an attender at them. He had not attended long before his heart was shaken powerfully by the force of truth. Deep conviction seized his conscience, and he was found among the penitents crying for mercy, and imploring the Divine forgiveness. By urging his suit he found salvation, and was enabled to rejoice abundantly. Soon he joined the Primitive Methodist Society, of which he continued a consistent member till death removed him to the clime where the inhabitants never say that they are sick.

Not long after he had joined the society, he became a prayer leader, but owing to affliction he was unable, for some time, to fulfil his appointments. Having recovered, he entered into the work of turning men from Satan to God, in a local capacity, and after awhile he was called to fill the office of an itinerant preacher in the Scotter circuit.

He entered into the itinerancy on June 23rd, 1835. His call to the ministry was to himself a source of considerable anxiety. He considered it of the greatest importance to have a clear call to the work which he deemed Divine in its origin, important in its nature, laborious in its execution, and glorious in its reward. He had many doubts, especially prior to the commencement of his itinerancy, as to whether he had a clear call or not. He made known the state of his mind to his brethren, and offered prayer to God, and thus secured the surest counsel. His prayer to God was, that, if he had called him to preach the gospel, he would open his way into the vineyard, bless him in the work, and make him a blessing to the souls of his hearers; and if he had not called him, that he would, by some means, prevent him from intruding into an office for which he was unfit. These were his views before he entered wholly into the ministry; and with these he ventured to make a trial. While he was endeavouring to win souls to Christ, he saw his efforts crowned with success, The results encouraged him, and confirmed him in the belief that he was in the order of Providence. His chief desire was to perform the will of God, and promote the happiness of his fellow-creatures.

He laboured in the Scotter circuit three years, eighteen months of which he spent in Epworth branch and Hatfield and Thorne missions. Here the blessing of God attended the labours of himself and his colleagues; for, according to his own statement, (contained in his application to be received into the annual list,) they had an increase of 140 members. He laboured about six months in the home branch of Scotter circuit, with acceptability and usefulness, and then removed to the Jersey mission, where, notwithstanding gloomy prospects and considerable difficulties, he had an increase of ten members during the year. At the conference of 1838 he was removed into the Hull circuit, by which he was stationed in the Brighton mission.

In 1839 he was stationed for Wakefield circuit. During the first three months of the year, his labours were chiefly confined to a mission which had been opened by Brother Luddington, and were so much blessed, that prosperous societies were raised in several of the places. While missioning he had to undergo many inconveniences; but he said that the Lord prepared his mind for his circumstances, and that he had realised

the truth of the promise, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." At the end of the three months he and the other preachers alternately took their rounds in the circuit and the mission. He was generally respected, his preaching was acceptable, and he was successful in the conversion of sinners to God. His sermons, though sometimes long to a fault, were not generally of this character. His preaching abilities were considered by judicious persons to be superior to those of many preachers. His sermons were plain and pointed. He aimed not to amuse his hearers with speculations of remote interest, but to lay hold on their affections, and to affect their hearts. His pulpit labours and his general conduct harmonized with each other; both were good. His prayers in private, and his discourses in public, as well as his reproofs and admonitions, gave unquestionable evidence that the salvation of souls was uppermost in his heart.

In December, 1839, he caught a severe cold, which occasioned typhus fever, by which he was confined to his bed for a considerable time. Various opinions were entertained by medical gentlemen of the highest note as to the cause of his affliction, and the likelihood of its being removed, and various and exceedingly severe operations were performed to effect his restoration; but the skill of physicians was baffled, and the power of medicine failed. He endured the agonies of the furnace for two years and about ten months; and during the last ten months he was chiefly confined to his room and his bed. His sufferings were heavy, but, supported by the grace of God, he bore them with remarkable resignation, and could always say, "The will of the Lord be done." He wished to be passive in the hands of Jesus till death should arrive, and then to go triumphantly to heaven. He sometimes stated to friends who visited him, that his little history appeared to be full of mysteries, but that the Lord, doubtless, had some wise end in view, and that what he knew not then he would know hereafter.

Mr. William Garner and Mr. John Davidson often visited him, and prayed and conversed with him about the state of his mind and his prospects of heaven, and they found him possessing patience and a well-grounded hope of happiness beyond the grave. His mind was at times beclouded, but he never lost his confidence in God. He found Christ to be a friend in the hour of need.

I visited him on the day previous to that on which he died, and asked him the state of his mind: he replied, "I am fast sinking—getting near the brink of Jordan—it is nearly over—I shall soon be at home—Jesus is with me." He reflected on death with delight, and looked to the termination of his earthly sojourn as a happy release from suffering, and a glorious introduction into the society of heaven. On October 27, 1842, in the 31st year of his age, he departed like a Christian hero—like a saint of God, to take possession of the prize for which he had nobly conflicted,

"Borne aloft on angel's golden wings,
He's gained the skies, and views the King of kings.
Hail! happy spirit, in the realms of light,
Who nobly fought, and won the well-fought fight :
Thy war's accomplish'd, and thy struggle's o'er,
And toil and pain shall ne'er afflict thee more."

I improved his death in our chapel at Kirton, on Sunday evening, November 20, 1842, by preaching a sermon to a crowded assembly; and I trust good was done.

(Approved)

References

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