

## Henry James Huffman

### Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Rev. William Rowe

THE REV. HENRY JAS. HUFFMAN, son of Henry James and Prudence Huffman, of Preston, was born January 21st, 1837. His youth was characterised by strict morality. He was a scholar in our Sunday-school, to which he attributed his earliest impressions and convictions on religious subjects. His father had wisely given him a moderately good education, which with his good natural ability, made him a youth of promise.

He was converted to God in July, 1851, at the lovefeast following the annual camp-meeting in Preston, when in his fifteenth year. The change was real; he then passed from death to life, he then commenced to live for both worlds. "Like loves its like." Himself a Christian, he wanted the company of Christians, and at once joined our society in Saul Street, where he found a nursery for his piety, a training school for his youthful talents, a holy brotherhood for his social and spiritual nature, an open way into fields of labour, benevolence, and usefulness. With tens of thousands he loved the class-meeting, believed in its Divine origin, experienced its utility, and recommended its use.

As earnest piety is ingenious, and genuine religion generates love to God and man, our young friend soon began to labour to do good. He greatly desired to honour the Lord and save souls. Signs of ability for usefulness were soon manifest, and he was encouraged and advised to give exhortations in cottage meetings. The first record in his journal is— "March 6th, 1853.—Went to Longton, and spoke from Eph. vi., latter part of 18th verse, 'The Lord was with me.' "

On April 2nd, 1853, he received authority from the quarterly meeting of the circuit to supply appointments as an exhorter. At this time he enjoyed great peace, and longed for still closer communion with God. He studied hard, read and prayed much; he thirsted for knowledge and holiness. He aimed to stand right with God and to be a workman in the Church that needed not to be ashamed. In his journal he wrote "September 12th, 1853.— For a considerable time my mind has been employed in composing a sermon from Isaiah lii. 3. During this time the Lord has often blessed my soul. It takes me a long time to compose a sermon. May the Lord bless me. Amen." He was but a youth, but then and ever afterwards did not serve in the sanctuary with unbeaten oil, nor offer to others that which cost him nothing. He was a diligent merchantman who sought for goodly pearls, a scribe who aimed to have a rich treasure of knowledge and wisdom to enrich others. Six days later his journal has his report of the service where he preached the sermon which had cost him so much labour—"September 18th, 1853.—I felt the Lord bless me while I was preaching, and I have reason to believe the children of God felt the same, for some of them shed many tears."

Shortly after he was sorely tempted on the subject of preaching. He saw his littleness, felt his need of more knowledge and deeper piety, looked at the qualifications necessary for a minister, and the importance and responsibility of the ministerial office. He trembled, hesitated to proceed, and was sorely perplexed; but his motive was pure, his heart was right, and the Lord helped him. His way opened before him, and he wrote: "I feel the religion of Jesus Christ is the one thing needful. It constitutes my soul happy. I would not part with it for the value of the world. It brings with it solid peace. I may possess more of it."

Our young brother was often severe with himself on personal religion. He recorded in his journal— "September 25th, 1853.—After much self-examination I find I am not making any progress in the Divine life. I do not attend and enjoy the means of grace as I once did. I do not feel that amount of zeal for the salvation

of my fellow creatures I once did. There is great cause for humility. I feel humbled beneath God's mighty hand. I know that it is my own fault. A lukewarm path is very dangerous. I am determined to tread it no longer. I will pray more, and be more watchful and useful."

In September, 1853, his name was put on the preachers' plan. For a time he hesitated what to do: he was very young, too young for the amount of mental and physical work he did. He often speaks in his journal of his weariness after having walked fourteen or sixteen miles to his appointments. But he was greatly beloved and often asked for. About the same time he was elected and appointed assistant to his class-leader. He objected on account of his youth and inexperience, but writes, "I love my class, and often receive much good in it. I believe class-meetings are calculated to do much service to the Christian Church."

Of his first appointment on the preachers' plan he writes: "November 13th, 1853.—I felt humbled, and in the latter part of the service particularly happy. I am determined to go on to preach the everlasting Gospel of Jesus to perishing sinners. I am thankful my name was put on the plan. I did not think there was such a pleasure in labouring in God's vineyard. While I try to water other souls, the Lord abundantly waters mine." He afterwards wrote: "Preaching is my delight." To all it was evident that he was studious, diligent, sincere, and that he made progress. He lived for others. In his journal is written: "April 27th, 1854.—Before thee, O Lord, on my bended knees I make the following resolutions. Lord, help me to keep them. 1. I will labour more earnestly for the welfare of my fellow creatures with respect to preaching the Gospel. 2. I will give up everything which I consider is a hindrance to my progress and usefulness. 3. I will study more in order to promote thy glory in the welfare of men. 4. I will endeavour to keep a holy intercourse open between thee and myself, that I may be more holy, that I may increase in holiness every day. O thou covenant keeping God, assist, help, and bless me. Amen." How wise for a youth only seventeen! Here we see his piety and aim.

In September, 1854, Preston circuit decided to employ a fourth preacher. Three in the station were nominated as suitable, but our young friend was chosen. The decision greatly affected him. He was overwhelmed; he refused on account of his youth and incompetency, but after a few days' consideration, advice, and prayer, he consented to try for three months as a hired local preacher. "By that time," he said, "I shall know whether I am capable of continuing in that capacity or not." He wrote, "I want to be useful. I want to do the will of God."

He gave himself to the work, and soon saw and felt he had done right. He said, "My mind is now at peace. I will labour to the utmost of my ability. To glorify God in the salvation of men is my object. I will study much and read much, especially the Bible."

In March, 1855, he was pledged, and received into the ministry in the usual way. He was invited to travel his first year in his native station, but in his cautious and prudent way he declined and was stationed for Rochdale.

He now left his home for the first time, and for ever as a resident. He was an only son and dearly beloved; his father's joy, his sister's companion and bosom friend. The adieu was touching. But he found kind friends in his new station, and was useful and happy. He writes, "I was invited to remain in Rochdale a second year, but I declined to do so. I do not think it would be prudent. I am very young."

In July, 1856, he entered the Douglas station, Isle of Man, determined to live well, work hard, and do good; he resolved "to visit at least thirty families every week and pray with them, to be at home by ten o'clock

every evening when possible, to be up before six every morning when I can get to bed before eleven in the evening, to be cautious in my conduct with young women, to discountenance talebearers, to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed: in short to be a man of God. O God, help me to keep these resolutions." On this station he was highly esteemed for his work's sake. When leaving he wrote, "I have seen more success this year than last, and think I have made some progress in knowledge, holiness, and usefulness." Having refused to stay more than one year at Douglas, he was stationed at Knowlwood, where he stayed two years, and was very happy and useful.

In July, 1859, he commenced his labours in Manchester second station, but at the end of nine months was claimed by Stockport circuit to fill the place of one who had resigned. He and the Manchester people greatly felt his removal; but the kindness and unity he saw in Stockport were to him most agreeable. The station prospered: he never was more at home anywhere. He writes, "I believe much piety is possessed by the officials. I have not been in one unpleasant official meeting during the three and a quarter years I have been here."

In July, 1863, he went to Haslingden. His journal shows how he sighed, and prayed, and laboured for a revival of piety and for general prosperity. He saw some saved, but his health failed. He thought the strong air currents of Haslingden and neighbourhood were too strong for him, he said, "Too cold for my constitution." His friends feared consumption was setting in, as it afterwards proved to be. He was a willing workman and a Christian with a very tender conscience, so that never till compelled did he abide in the house. He wrote, "I love the service of the Lord, and hope soon to be well enough for work." But his work was all but done. His last Sabbath for labour was spent in Stockport; the following day he attended a missionary meeting in his own station, and he preached his last sermon at Sunnyside, near home. For weeks and months he steadily declined; his complaint baffled medical skill; his friends feared his sickness was unto death, yet he hoped with confidence to resume his work. He desired to live to labour, and to educate his child. He had great peace; he said, "Thy will be done; I rest upon the atonement."

The District Meeting of 1865 stationed him for Lymm, hoping the situation would be of great service to him. It was his last station on earth. On the 6th of July he went to Lymm, but returned to his sister's house on the same day very ill. He said, "Hope for life is in vain, and only a special interposition of the Lord can save me." For a few days he lingered, had faith in God, claimed the promises, calmly surveyed the past, joyfully looked into the future, was satisfied with the choice he had made; and now, as in the past, found Christ all-sufficient. "There was light in the valley." For him death had no sting. On July 16th, 1865, he exchanged time for eternity—earth for heaven. His body is interred in Preston cemetery, to await "the blast of the trumpet" at the final day.

As a preacher, brother Huffman was a hard student; his discourses were well arranged, instructive, and pointed. He had a good voice, chaste language, a clear expression, and a retentive memory; but he lacked pathos, fire, and touching appeals. Mr. Peet says, "His addresses were marked by thought, and his ideas were judiciously arranged. The cross was not hidden amidst the beauties of composition, but I fear the system of committing his discourses had a tendency to shorten his day, as it taxed his powers too much in one direction." He had a thoughtful and judicious mind, and promised to be an ornament and a blessing to the connexion. There was one trait which for the benefit of young men ought to be noticed. He had the habit of introducing at table any incident of a striking character which he had read or heard, by which method he improved himself in the recital of facts, and enlarged his ability for conversation of a profitable character.

As my son in the Gospel, I dearly loved him. He has reached home first; but with his widow and child we hope to-meet “where adieus and farewells are sounds unknown.”

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#### References

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