

## **Rev Thomas Meredith**

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

“Lover and friend hast thou put far from me.”

“Friend after friend departs;

Who hath not lost a friend?”

THOMAS MEREDITH was born at Leintwardine, December 30th, 1833, and died at Bradwell, June 29th, 1869, in the thirty-sixth year of his age, the twenty-first of his membership, and the twelfth of his ministry.

When a boy he attended the Episcopalian Sunday-school. His natural disposition was kind and peaceable. He was convinced of sin under a sermon preached by Mr. W. Plant, one of our local preachers, on the 21st of January, 1849; and he obtained peace the following evening in Mr. Allen's class; and immediately joined our society at his native place. “The truthfulness of his conversion,” says his leader, “was demonstrated by his holy and consistent life, which was characterised by humility, patience, and evenness, evident to all.” He laboured successfully as a Sunday-school teacher, prayer leader, and local preacher.

Towards the end of 1856 he was called into the regular ministry by Preston Circuit, but his name did not appear on the stations until the Conference of 1858. This event is thus recorded by himself. “Came to Preston on Friday, December 26th, 1856; attended preaching service in the evening. Mr. Oscroft preached.” “Sunday, 28th, preached afternoon and evening in Green Bank Chapel, and God was my helper. The congregations were good, the power of God was felt, and several were in tears. Praise God. Oh, that they all may be saved.”

His first Conference appointment was to Manchester first circuit, where, says Mr. W.E. Parker, “with a short intermission, he continued his labours over three years. He was generally esteemed as a good and useful minister of Jesus Christ. His deportment was marked by great purity and circumspection. No word of complaint was ever heard against his moral conduct. His bearing towards the people among whom he laboured was kind and dignified. His preaching was pointed and useful; and he did not labour in vain. Under God, he was instrumental in the conversion of several persons who now occupy official positions in the Church, and are among its most useful and laborious servants.

“Associated with his name, will ever be the remembrance of kind words and kind deeds, of arduous and successful labours in the Vineyard of the Lord. He has gone from the scene of his toils, but his works remain. He lives long who lives well. Life must be measured by deeds, not days.”

He next laboured with success and general acceptance in Manchester third circuit two years. At the close of his first year here, he creditably finished his probation; and at the end of his second year he entered into the married state with Miss Chubo, daughter of the Rev. W. Chubb, Primitive Methodist minister; and the union, though short, was a very happy one. The Rev. W. Rowe, who had now been Mr. Meredith's superintendent for nearly five years, bears the following testimony to his worth:—

“From my first acquaintance, I greatly respected him. I always regarded him as a good man. He was a steady, prudent, and plodding minister. But how soon his day is ended! How admonitory to us who live! He has entered the city before us, has exchanged the sword for the palm, the wilderness for the ‘better country,’ the storm-agitated ocean for the desired haven, the cares, anxieties, and labours of life, for the hallowed,

undisturbed and eternal rest of heaven. He has fought the good fight, and is crowned. For him to die was gain; but by his death his wife is made a widow, and has lost the object of her early affection, the companion of her life, and the father of her babes; his children have lost their earthly head, the Church has lost a faithful minister, and the world a pure benefactor. May we so live as to meet him beyond the river."

From Manchester third, he removed to Manchester second circuit, where he remained two years. The Rev. J. Macpherson, his superintendent, says:—"He evinced, throughout the whole of his continuance on that station, a sincere desire for the prosperity of God's cause, and was always perfectly willing to co-operate in any movement for this end. I believe he was in his very heart truly devoted to the service of Christ. Feeling the responsibility of his position, as a minister of the sanctuary, he was a diligent student of God's word; and, considering the circumstances under which he was placed, his progress herein was highly creditable to him. His labours are now ended in this world: he has entered upon his rest. A very few years span the whole of his ministerial career. What a mysterious Providence! What a solemn lesson! I pray God to administer, as none but he can, consolation and comfort to his young and sorrowing widow, and to provide for the wants of his early bereaved and fatherless children."

His next station was Stockport, for two years. This was one of his happiest and most comfortable appointments. His name here is as "ointment poured forth." He was highly esteemed and greatly beloved by many. The Rev. J. Judson, his superintendent, observes:—"He was a very agreeable colleague; he was ever ready to help his superintendent, and he tried to smooth a brother's way; he had a kind disposition, yet he was firm and faithful; he was a man of feeling for those that were in distress;—and he was the principal means of establishing a fund in Stockport for the relief of the poor and afflicted. He was highly respected at every place in the circuit. Truly he was a good man. The mournful intelligence of his death, I can assure you, threw a gloom over many minds, and caused sorrow to flow to many a heart. Many fall as sudden, not as safe. May his removal from our midst attract us to higher things. And may God comfort his mourning widow, and support his fatherless children."

In July, 1867, he removed from Stockport to Bradwell, his last station. This was the first circuit to which he was appointed as the superintendent, and though he knew it was one of the hardest circuits in the district, that there was considerable financial embarrassment, and other difficulties; yet he went to the station with cheerful and willing feet, determined to do his best, to spend and be spent for God. And there can be no doubt that the toils and anxieties of this circuit materially hastened his end. In truth, the people themselves say, he died a martyr to his work. The following remarks from the circuit steward—Mr. J.B. Darwent—will indicate some of the difficulties with which our departed friend had to contend, the manner which he grappled with them, and the success that attended his efforts. "When Mr. Meredith came to our circuit, two years ago appearances were not promising; our funds were low and embarrassed, and very few men could have grappled with these difficulties as successfully as he did; he gave freely himself, and solicited donations from others until he had accomplished wonders; he did more than most people thought could be done in this station. During the two years he was in our circuit we never saw his temper ruffled, though there was plenty to ruffle it. He was an excellent visitor. His name is revered by people beyond the pale of our Connexion, who have been favoured with his visits and blessed by his prayers. We promised ourselves another year of his counsel and company, and we should have been glad to have had it, for he was well accepted throughout the station, and in many places a great favourite. After the abrupt termination of a life so useful, laborious, and full of purpose, we have at least this consolation, that he rests from his labours, and that his works will follow him."

The story of Mr, Meredith's end is soon told. His widow says:— "Having taken a severe cold, he was seized with typhoid fever, which in a few weeks terminated in death. For about nine days before he died he was more or less insensible, but his time was mostly spent in prayer, preaching, and transacting the business of his station. His prayers for the welfare of his family, the neighbourhood, and the Connexion were very fervent. For some time before he was taken ill, he appeared to be ripening for heaven. He was more drawn out in prayer, and his conversation was more upon Divine things. I have felt it deeply, that he was not able at the last to tell me the state of his mind, but I feel assured we needed no dying testimony to convince us that all was well. The last time he appeared to know me so as to be able to speak to me was the Thursday afternoon before his death. I think then he had an idea that he should not recover, for tears were in his eyes as he tenderly grasped my hand and said, 'Be faithful!' Little did I think these were to be his last words, but so it proved. By this afflictive dispensation of Divine Providence, I am bereft of a most tender husband, my little ones of a most devoted father, the people amongst whom he laboured of one who felt deeply anxious for their salvation; and the church with which he was connected of a minister whose greatest desire was to promote its prosperity. May we all meet him at last in that happy land. Amen."

He was interred in our Bradwell Chapel yard at noon on Tuesday, June 29th, 1869, in the presence of a large and mournful assembly. The solemn service was conducted by the writer, and the Revs. J. Shipman, H.M. Ratcliffe (Wesleyan), T.S. Bateman, S. Kelley; J.L. Buckley, Esq., and Mr. Penny, took part in it. Truly, it was solemnising to be there.

His death was improved on the following Sabbath at Bradwell and Tideswell, to overflowing and deeply affected congregations, by the Revs. J. Slater and J. Shipman, of Manchester. And we hope good was done.

Among the excellences we noticed in his character, mention may be made of the following :—

1. His piety.—This was sound and deep. He loved God sincerely and fully, with all his heart. His devotion to God was above the average, "he feared God above many." Nor was there anything sour and gloomy about him. He was cheerful and happy. His countenance beamed with a heavenly radiance; and as he advanced in years he "grew in grace."

2. He was a man of much prayer.—His closet was a favourite retreat, and could it speak it would tell of wondrous struggles and glorious victories, of foes vanquished, and battles won. He went from his closet to the means of grace, and carried with him an unction that proved "he had been with Jesus." Three times a day the family altar was reared, and morning, noon, and night, the voice of praise and prayer went up to heaven. The social means of grace, the class, band, and prayer meetings were well supported by him.

3. He was an excellent preacher.—He was not a popular preacher, in the general sense of that term, but he was a useful one; his aim was the instruction, salvation, and edification of his hearers, and how far he succeeded eternity alone will declare. He did not preach to tickle the ear and please the fancy, but to enlighten the understanding and affect the heart. His engagements were faithfully and punctually fulfilled.

4, He was a good pastor. —The complaint that the minister is only seen in the pulpit could not justly be urged against him. He looked well to the flock, "over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer." While the sick and dying received special attention, the rest of the people were not neglected. He did not visit simply to meet the requirements of rule; he often visited more than rule required. Nor were his visits confined to members of society, he visited sinners as well as saints, or to his own people. 'His name is revered by people beyond the pale of our Connexion, who were favoured with his visits, and blest by his prayers.'

5. He was attentive to chapel affairs. —In Stockport and Bradwell, but especially in the latter circuit, he exerted himself nobly in the reduction of chapel debts. In one case, where the debt had remained the same for twenty years, he originated a successful movement for its extinction.

6. He was peaceable and kind.—Our acquaintance with him began in 1859. In 1860, and the two following years, we were stationed together. And then our acquaintance ripened into sweetest friendship; and we can truthfully say that we never remember to have received from him a cross word, or an unkind look, during the whole ten years of our intercourse. He was the essence of kindness. He thought no work too laborious, no sacrifice too costly, if he could do a brother a good turn. We always found him to be a wise and faithful counsellor, a toiling and happy colleague, a true and kind friend, and withal he was humble, “n honour preferring” others.

7. He was a total abstainer.—He neither smoked tobacco nor drank intoxicating drinks. He adopted the glorious principles of the Temperance Reformation at an early part of his career, and he never swerved from them to the last.

8. He was liberal.—Notwithstanding his limited income and the wants of a young and comparatively numerous family, it was his practice to devote a tenth of his allowance to charitable and religious purposes; a practice commendable to many who are better circumstanced. Their piety would thereby appear more consistent, their enjoyments would increase, and funds for the highest objects would be thus replenished.

9. He was a good, judicious father, and a loving, considerate husband. We have reasons for saying that he cherished sincere regard for the object of his early choice, and was deeply devoted to her before their marriage; and while she made him a good wife he also made her a good husband, and to their children he was a kind affectionate father. They were a happy pair, a happy family. And though, in the mysterious providence of God, they were called early to part, yet the separation will not be final. They will meet and “know each other” again,

May the young and sorrowing widow, and the four fatherless boys, the writer, and the reader, be prepared, when death appears, with him in heaven to reign:

“His languishing head is at rest,  
Its thinking and aching are o’er ;  
His quiet, immoveable breast;  
Is heaved by affliction no more.”

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#### References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1870/295