

Rev. David Newton

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by James Jackson

Amongst those who have lately changed mortality for life, is the Rev. DAVID NEWTON, superintendent of Rockland St. Peter's circuit. What information we possess of the early life of Mr, Newton, exhibits him in a light which commands our esteem, inasmuch as it foreshadowed aims of a lofty character, and may be regarded as an Index to that career of honour and usefulness In the church of Christ which he subsequently pursued.

When very young, his father took him to the services of the Primitive Methodists, in his native place of Brierley Hill, Staffordshire. Very noted is this place in the history of Primitave Methodism. Many hearts warmed with the love of God, existed in this favoured locality, in Mr. Newton's early days. Here he entered the Sabbath-school, and it was not long before gracious Impressions were made upon his mind. Thus, like Timothy, from a child he knew 'the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Cimst Jesus.'" Very soon he became a teacher in the school, early began to recommend the religion of Jesus to his fellow-creatures, and quickly found his name upon the circuit plan, as a local preacher. Thus, as Obadiah did, he could say, 'I, thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth,'

Having honourably sustained the office of local preacher for a time, he was, at the age of twenty-three, called to discharge still more important duties in the church and the world, by being taken into the regular work of the itinerant ministry. In this new sphere of labour, his first station was Great Yarmouth, where he gave full proof of his ministry for twelve months. He then removed to Aylsham, where for two years he laboured harmoniously and usefully with the present writer. Here he gained the respect of all who knew him, and made the acquaintance of her who now sorrowfully survives him. At the close of his two years' labour at Aylsham, he returned to Great Yarmouth, where he finished his probation in a highly creditable manner. He then married Priscilla Jackson, eldest daughter of the Rev. James Jackson. His next station was Norwich, where he took with him the good will of a large circle of friends. Having completed his labours in this ancient city, he removed to Ipswich circuit, where residing at Dovercourt, on its Essex side, he successfully laboured for three years, finally leaving this station deeply beloved by those to whom he had ministered 'in holy things.'

Pursuing his onward course, he now removed to Docking, a station in which he faithfully served the cause of his Divine Master for three years ; and, on leaving it two years last mid-summer for the Rockland circuit, he left behind him hundreds of persons to whom his name will for many years be 'as ointment poured forth.' As superintendent of the Rockland station, his influence for good was speedily manifested. In labours 'he was more abundant,' while his steady, upright character, and genial disposition, combined with considerable pulpit abilities, endeared him to his associates. He here succeeded, by the blessing of God, in turning many from the 'error of their ways,' and leading them to dedicate themselves 'to Him who died for them, and rose again.'

His industry, from the very commencement of his religious career, must have been unwearied and persevering, and reflects most creditably upon the systematic and conscientious disposal of his time, and the entire consecration of his powers to the service of God; for, in addition to the faithful discharge of the duties imposed on him by the itinerancy, he succeeded in preparing for the press a number of works of more than average merit, namely, 'True to Principle, or the History of John Kent ; 'Rhoda, or a Gipsy Girl's Mission of Love;' 'The Queen of Humanitas;' 'Coster Jack, or No Business done at this Shop on Sundays.' Some of these have already obtained a wide circulation, and it is believed are destined to prove powerful instruments for good, especially to the young. An interesting serial tale, 'Adeline Mayling; or, the

Sister that was Faithful and True,' is now appearing in the monthly numbers of this magazine, the whole of the papers for which were finished by him before it pleased the great Head of the church to lay him aside. Several chapters of another religious tale for the same magazine were written, but the hand employed in their preparation has now lost its cunning, and the story must for ever remain unfinished.

His illness, which commenced in the early part of November last, was not at first considered to be of a dangerous kind. Very speedily, however, it began to present alarming symptoms, and notwithstanding the most assiduous attention and skill of the doctor, and the most tender, devoted, and constant affection of his family, his constitution gave way. Jehovah, the great Lord of all, had signified 'a desire to the work of His hands,' and the sufferer bowed in meek submission. During his affliction, he many times spoke of his joyous experience, the preciousness of Jesus, and his bright prospects of heaven. At one time he remarked, 'I see Jesus standing with open arms to receive me, I am on the threshold of heaven; I am almost over, I shall soon be in,' 'Jesus is my "Rock," my "Fortress," my "Tower," my "Foundation;" all is gliding sand beside.' With great fervour he repeated the following lines—

'My Jesus to know,
And feel His blood flow,
'Tis life (life!) everlasting,
'Tis Heaven below.'

To a friend who was taking his work on the circuit, he said, 'John, I am going to leave you, but tell the people, I am on the Rock, all is well.' The last morning he saw daylight dawn, he arose in bed exclaiming, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.' As death drew near, heavenly rapture filled his soul, and expressions of firm trust, holy joy, and heavenly anticipations were constantly falling from his lips. To his young and sorrow-stricken wife, he expressed his unshaken confidence in the promise, 'I will be a husband to the widow;' and to his heavenly Father's care and protection he committed her.

Thus, on January 7, 1879, at the age of thirty-seven years, he fell asleep in Jesus; leaving to the young heart of his sorrowing wife, to the hearts of numerous relatives, deeply attached ministerial brethren and friends, the sweet and consoling thought that he 'rests from his labours and his works do follow him,'—that he has gone to reap his eternal reward in the presence of God and the Lamb, world without end. Hundreds of sorrowing and sympathizing friends followed his remains to the tomb. The procession was headed by ministerial and lay brethren, the corpse borne by eight office-bearers of the church, followed by his widow, her father, and other relatives. Both chapel and school-room were filled by the large assembly. By his own request the interment took place in front of the chapel, this being the first in that place. At the conclusion of the service, which was conducted by the Revs. G. Seaman, J. Kemish, A.C. Hall, and P.H. Davies (Congregationalist), the friends left the grave expressing their sorrow for the widow and relatives, and the great loss sustained by the church and world by the death of one who was trusted and loved by all who knew him. The members and friends of the circuit are erecting a memorial stone to his memory, as a mark of their esteem and love. His death was improved in the Rockland chapel, February 2, by the Rev. H.S. Shields of Norwich, the text being, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.' He has fallen in the midst of life, just as his usefulness began to be extensively felt: but his memory, his influence, and his writings, are with us; and will doubtless prove a power for good. He lived for Christ, he died in Christ, and he is now with Christ.

References

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