

Rev. William Robotham

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Thomas Morgan

MEMOIR OF WILLIAM ROBOTHAM, *Primitive Methodist Preacher in the P. M. Connexion.*

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”—

Rev. xiv. 13.

Blessed truth! and blessed thought! that our dear and much beloved brother, and fellow-labourer, William Robotham, is now in possession of its full fruition! May I be faithful unto death, and then, like him, receive a crown of life. Amen,

Before our Brother's departure he put into my hands a number of papers, among which are some sketches of his life and experience, written by himself. In addition to these, I have been favoured with an outline of his life, written by his brother, Samuel Low Robotham, a local preacher in the Ramsor circuit. And these sources have chiefly supplied the materials of this memoir.

William Robotham was born August 11, 1805, at Doglane farm, near Calton, in Staffordshire. “I lived,” says he, “according to the course of this world, until I was between sixteen and seventeen; when my younger brother, Charles, who was in an awakened state, often reproved me for my wickedness. His reproofs made me think about my soul. And as he went to the means of grace, I thought I would go too. I was soon greatly troubled about my soul, and joined the old Methodists; the Primitive Methodists were not then come; but I could not say God had pardoned my sins.

“After this, William Oakden, of Waterhouses, was convinced and converted in a wonderful manner. An intimacy grew up between him and me; and he, one day, told me of having been at a Camp meeting at Epstones, and that he had got much good there. I then thought I should like to go to one, and accordingly I did go. But when I was aware they were not the people I had joined with, I was much prejudiced against them. But before night my prejudice was overcome, and I could join them in singing. And from this time I became attached to the Primitive Methodists.

“Wm, Oakden opened his house for preaching, and R. Weston, Sarah Mace, and others, preached; but I did not as yet believe that God had pardoned my sins. But in coming over a Moor, from Swinsco Camp meeting, I was under mighty trouble and sorrow about my soul, and my distress was very great, but this night I believed and God pardoned all my sins. I did never fully believe before, although, at times I had been comforted. And finding that I got the most good amongst the Primitive Methodists, and having obtained leave of my old class leader, I joined them.” This was in 1820.

About this time Bro. Robotham met with some opposition, and endured great conflicts in his own mind about preaching the gospel. But he overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and stood, and walked by faith. His brother says:—

“At our quarter-day meeting, at Rocester, December, 1823, his name was put on the Ramsor circuit plan. His two first appointments were at Waterfall and Waterhouses, Feb. 1. 1824. And from this time, he laboured with success as local preacher, and was well received.

"In August, 1827, Ramsor circuit took him out to travel. And when he had travelled here for some time, he was removed to Winster by way of circuit exchange. And in 1828, Ramsor circuit pledged him at the district meeting and Conference, and he was stationed in Wrockwardine Wood circuit. But not long after Midsummer, Ramsor circuit were called upon to redeem their pledge, William being thought by some, not qualified for a travelling preacher; and he returned home.

"On this occasion he was somewhat tried. But he bore all with patience and resignation to the will of God. Nor did I ever hear him speak evil of that circuit, nor of any person in it. He often said, when speaking in reference to his being sent home, "Bless the men, I believe they acted from a pure motive, and to the best of their judgment."

"At Midsummer, 1829, he was again taken out to travel, by Prees circuit, in which he laboured upwards of two years and six mouths, with great success."

This account is given by his brother S.L. Robotham.

I shall now observe that the conference of 1831, stationed me in the Prees circuit, and I had the satisfaction to travel with him among those lively, primitive people. But as he was travelling in the Oswestry branch, (now Oswestry circuit,) I did not see him of some weeks. But my journal says:—
Saturday, August 18, 1831, Spent a part of this day in company with Brother Robotham. He is a good young man, has much simplicity and is well acquainted with the mystery of faith."

From this time I felt my soul knit to him, and edified in his company. But I little thought of so soon witnessing the truth of a remark he then made; he said, "I do not believe (that) I shall live long." This was about ten months before his death.

About Christmas, the same year, he took cold, and was soon much indisposed. The friends wished him to rest a little, and try medical aid. But no persuasions could more him to desist from active labour; neither would he rest until, in going to one appointment, his strength so failed that he could not reach his journey's end. Whether in this he acted prudently or not, is not for me to say; "For who knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him." He was soon confined to his room, and exhibited every mark of a pulmonary consumption. Medical aid was tried, but in vain; the disease carried him rapidly on towards the "house appointed for all living."

He continued some time at Mrs. Edge's, at Oswestry, where he had every attendance and kindness his heart could wish. And the friends at Oswestry, and from St. Martin's Moor, and from most parts of the branch constantly visited him, and were exceedingly kind. And several who were members of other communities, testified their respect to our Brother, by visiting him. He had himself been a diligent visiter of others while he was in health; and the Lord returned it in his own bosom, by moving others to visit him when he was sick.

Mr. Sabine, a pious and respectable solicitor, a member of the Independants, visited him with all that warmth of christian feeling, he could have done had our Brother been one of their own ministers. May God reward him for good.

Br. Robotham was afterward removed to Market Drayton, to be under the care of the judicious Mr. Swinnerton, who formerly practised under Dr. Warburton, of Betley; both of whom, have rendered efficient help to several of our preachers; and appear to be well skilled in the complaints to which preachers are

liable, as well as being men who fear God. As soon as Mr. Swinnerton saw him, he said, "It is too late." so nothing remained to William, but death and heaven.

At Drayton he was at Br. Pidgeon's, where he had the same kindness manifested to him as at Oswestry, and Sister Pidgeon wept over him like Jesus at the grave of Lazarus.

After this, on Br. Robotham's intimating a wish to die at the place of his nativity, his Bro. Samuel brought a covered carriage, and conveyed him home. This was on May 8. 1832, And his Brother says:—

"On that day he appeared much better, and bore the Journey pretty well. On the 9th, one of our Ramsor circuit local preachers came to see him; and while he was praying, William shouted, "Glory, glory to God!" several times, as loud as his strength would admit.

"He now seemed to have accomplished all he wished in this lower world. He informed his relations he was glad to see them; and when any asked him how he was, he answered, "I am going to heaven."

"In the evening he had a conflict with the enemy, but overcame through Christ. In the night he began to grow worse, and in the morning there was evidently a change for death. He now spoke little, but smiled, and seemed very happy. About half-past ten, in the forenoon, May 10. 1832, aged twenty-six, without a groan or sigh, his vigorous soul quitted the body, to be with the Lord. He died in his mother's arms, in the very room and place in which he was born."

Thus far is his brother's account. And we may ask, where is he now? I would answer from Rev. vii. 9. 10.

"After this I beheld, and, lo a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with aloud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Ah! William, thou there seest the Saviour's face,

"Long as eternal ages roll."

It now remains to make a few remarks concerning him, as a christian and a preacher.

As a christian he was a man of great piety; he drank deep into the eternal Spirit, and his consolations were not small. I visited him in his illness, and he unbosomed his whole soul; and, among other things, said, "At the commencement of my illness, I had great temptations; the enemy thrust sore at me. But I fled to God, and took hold of his strength; the temptations fled, and I now feel willing to live or to die at God's pleasure. 'Thy will be done.' "

A short time before his death, Bro. Walford, his old friend, came to see him; and after some conversation on the goodness of God, and the prosperity of the Connexion, Bro. W. and I, kneeled down by his bed side, and supplicated the Most High. The grace of God mightily deascended, and Bro. Robotham shouted Glory, for some time, with all his might. Truly it was the verge of heaven.

He would, at times, awake at midnight, and shout Glory, for a length of time; and he has spoken to me often about his room being full of angels. His was a religion that could be felt, and that made him joyful in the fires of affliction, And it had an equal bearing on his outward conduct. He was remarkably prudent, firm to his post, courageous in danger, cheerful in company, and warm in his friendships.

An extract or two from his letters, will illustrate this, as well as show his intense love to souls, To Bro, Walford he writes, "Many. souls have been converted, and some sanctified wholly; and I trust God will still

work powerfully and save souls, I hope you still aim at having souls. The people at the Row rejoice to hear that your labours are blessed, and would be glad to see you again." W.R.

To Bro. S. West, he writes, "But, thank God, my Brother West, while we are tempted, tried, and inwardly afflicted, it brightens our crown of glory, and prepares us for our eternal rest. O let us shun every appearance of evil, and live a life of prayer, faith, watchfulness; having our conversation in heaven, and our souls enjoying the whole image of God. I am going on well for glory, but want to go on better. I am stationed again in Prees circuit, and I feel determined to live to God. And I hope God will save many souls. Farewell. W. ROBOTHAM."

As a preacher he knew perhaps little of what is called school eloquence. But he had a heavenly flame, burning continually in his soul, like the fire on the altar. He had on that armour which is not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds. He visited from house to house; he travailed in birth, and endured strong conflicts. He wrestled, believed, took hold of Jehovah, and scattered the armies of aliens. He preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and laboured with energy divine, for God and sinners to meet in Christ, now, Now, NOW! And did he labour in vain? No! the trumpet in his mouth gave no uncertain sound. And he did not beat the air, for sinners fell before him, sometimes like men slain in battle. And many are the crown of his rejoicing.

As to his failings I have neither time nor inclination to detail them. Blessed God, call when thou wilt,

"Oh that without a lingering groan,
I may the welcome word receive,
My body with my charge lay down;
And cease at once to work and live."

THOS. MORGAN, P. M. P.

References

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