

## Rev. William Rudderham

### Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Richard S Blair

GENERALS who have distinguished themselves on the field of battle, statesmen who have played an important part in the affairs of their country, poets who have touched by melodious stanzas thousands of human hearts, have often had their names engraved in brass, chiselled in marble, and emblazoned on the pages of history. Heaven's highest encomiums are not, however, lavished upon generals, statesmen, and poets, irrespective of their moral character, but they are given to the just, whose memory is blessed; to the righteous, who are had in everlasting remembrance; to the faithful dead, who, realizing their union with Christ, lived to him, and died in him. As the responses of earth should be in harmony with the utterances of heaven, it is proper (and we hope may be profitable) to rescue from oblivion the memory of the Rev. W. Rudderham, who faithfully served his generation according to the will of God ere he "fell asleep."

The place of his nativity was Saham, a small village in Norfolk; the time, Oct. 22nd, 1835. Both his parents were Primitive Methodists and decided Christians, proving the genuineness of their faith by the character of their works, amongst which may be named the fact of their entertaining the Primitive Methodist ministers under their hospitable roof. The reflex influence was, however, much more important to them and their family, than was the social repast furnished, for the deportment, conversation, and prayers of the ministers during their temporary sojourns, awakened aspirations in young William's mind of no mean order— aspirations to tread in their steps, and engage in their work. Happily for him these aspirations were not quenched, nor even chilled by the icy indifference of his parents. Though these early surroundings were so favourable, and eminently adapted to lead him, as soon as reason dawned and conscience assumed her supremacy, to the service of Christ, yet he failed to engage in that service until 1852.

He was brought to decision under the ministry of the Rev. James Jackson during some revival services held in the winter of the above named year. For many months prior to his conversion, he had attended every prayer meeting and other means of grace, anxious to find the pearl of great price. 'One soweth and another reapeth.' In the world to come, when we are incapable of spiritual pride, Christian workers will have a more correct and comprehensive knowledge of the extent of their usefulness, than would be profitable for them in this life. Having experienced a change of heart, he put forth efforts corresponding with the vigour and vitality of his new life to save others, Sometimes he sent anonymous letters to his acquaintances for whose salvation he longed. He became a distributor of religious tracts, and forgot not the fact that success in any work upon earth depends upon importunate pleading with heaven. After witnessing for some time a good confession before the church and the world, he was urged to engage in public work, but with becoming diffidence modestly declined. In September, 1854, the Watton circuit quarterly meeting authorized him to take appointments, and while he trembled under the responsibility of such a work, he in faith rose superior to his natural diffidence, by seizing upon and appropriating divine strength, and began to warn men to flee from the wrath to come. In 1856 he was desired by the Thetford branch to enter the work of the ministry, but after much consideration and prayer he decided otherwise.

In 1857 some of the barriers were removed that prevented his entering into the work the previous year, and being informed that Ely station wanted a preacher, he decided to go there. He entered upon his labours in November, and enjoyed a tolerable share of success in that station, and in all his subsequent ones. A few days before he died he remarked to the writer, "All the learning I got in my youth was at a village school, and though I have had to struggle against serious disadvantages, I have seen, — praised be God, souls converted on every station." He laboured on the Bury, Yarmouth, Lynn, Swaffham, St. Ives, Colchester, and Bury (second time) stations with general acceptance amongst the people, and was also greatly beloved by

his colleagues. The following estimates of his character by his ministerial acquaintances will be appreciated by his sorrowing friends.

The Rev. Jonathan Scott says: "I remember him well when he was a local preacher in his native circuit, and how that for miles around his home he was loved for his simple earnest piety, which was influential and beneficial to others, especially to the young. I remember too with what modesty he presented himself for examination to the committee appointed for that purpose by the district meeting on his being a candidate for the itinerancy, and how satisfied the examiners were with his replies to questions upon repentance, justification by faith, and sanctification. 'I felt it and feel it now,' he replied with great fervour in relation to sanctification. We laboured together for two years at Lynn, where he had many friends; he was a diligent, conscientious plodding labourer, and his greatest grief was that he did not see more fruit as the result of his toil. He was quiet, unassuming, and affectionate; he was no pompous declaimer; he did not blaze away like a summer sun, but was like the gentle star at eventide. Of his moral worth I have the highest opinion; he was a man of integrity—a true man; no shuffling and trimming marked his conduct, he so lived that his life was worship. He was a diligent, honest, upright, devoted, good man, a true friend, and a *'good minister of the Lord Jesus.'*"

The Rev. A. F. Barfield, pastor of the church of Pilgrim fathers, Southwark, after referring to twelve years' acquaintanceship, remarks: "Our friendship remained unbroken till his death. We regularly corresponded with each other, and many of his letters are full of the fervour of his earnest, loving heart. As a friend he was truthful and affectionate—constant as the needle to the pole. As a minister he was thoroughly evangelical—delighting most of all in the fulness of Christ's great salvation."

The venerable Rev. C. Elvin, Baptist minister, Bury, thus wrote to his sorrowing widow: "Your late beloved and now glorified husband was so universally esteemed as a Christian minister, and an exemplary follower of the divine Master in whose presence he is now rejoicing with 'a joy unspeakable and full of glory,'—not only by the weeping members of his own flock, but by his ministerial brethren of every Christian denomination, that we feel his departure a *public loss*; for though he firmly and consistently maintained his own theological principles, it may be truly said, 'he loved all those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,' and we shall cherish a loving remembrance of his ardent zeal, heavenly love, and holy life during the time of his sojourning among us." Space forbids our transcribing the testimonies of the following brethren: the Revs. R. Howchin, W. Yeadon, R. Church, J.W. Rous, J. Jackson, T. Stow, A. Tyler, W. Hipkin, and other friends. Let it suffice that these testimonies substantially agree with those already given.

His sick chamber was a privileged spot "quite bordering on the verge of heaven." As a faithful minister of Christ he occupied the pulpit as long as he could—much longer than worldly wisdom or cold philosophy would have dictated. In spite of his physical prostration he preached but five weeks prior to his decease, and when confined to his room remarked, "I feel, if it be the Lord's will, I should like to live a little longer, for the sake of my wife and child, the church, the world, and *for Christ.*" Such a clinging to life was not unnatural, improper, nor unscriptural, for his chief wish was to live *for Christ*, and even in this he was acquiescent in the divine will. As I was with him the greater part of the last three days and nights, I had a good opportunity of witnessing the triumph of his faith; and many sentiments escaped his lips during this time which are worthy of being recorded and remembered by his friends, as they not only set forth the state of his mind, but also the sufficiency of religion to support in the last hours of life.

He bore his sufferings with great patience, and manifested his gratitude for acts of kindness to alleviate them, by benignant expressions, and gentle loving words. At times he suffered much from violent coughing.

After one of these paroxysms he remarked, "The waters are deep, but they do not overflow me," then he quoted the well-known lines—

"When passing through the watery deep,  
I ask in faith his promised aid,  
The waves an awful distance keep,  
And shrink from my devoted head;  
Fearless, their violence I dare:  
They cannot harm, for God is there."

At another time, under similar circumstances, he said, "I cannot sink; I cannot sink, I am on the Rock of Ages!" Like all other spiritually-minded men he had learned to connect present sufferings for Christ with future recompense, and on seeing his wife weeping because of his sufferings, he quoted the well-known verse commencing, "O! what are all my sufferings here?" He was always, during the time in question, peaceful and confident, and sometimes his joy was ecstatic. His ecstasy was not occasioned by vivid pictures presented to his mind by friends present. I thought it desirable to refer but rarely to the joy and happiness in prospect, as the thought and prospect were already to him at times almost overwhelming, and his spirit, in its flutterings to be free, seemed occasionally as though it would break the fine net of his body to pieces. The following expressions may be regarded as confirmatory of the above remarks: "I am looking for the Master; waiting for Jesus; I shall see him as he is." "I feel as though I was waiting; waiting for the coming of the angels to carry me home." "I thought I was going; if I had I should have been satisfied; now I am satisfied to remain a little longer."

He was not without sharp attacks from the adversary of souls during the last few days, but he was more than conqueror. A short time before he died, the earthly tabernacle was shaken, and we thought would have fallen to pieces. A few moments afterward he remarked, "Mr. Blair, I cannot understand what all this struggling means," which led us to reply, "The devil has nothing to do with this beyond what he has to do with all suffering. This is simply the struggling of exhausted nature, and of your spirit to be free, reminding one of Pope's well-known words,—

"Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife,  
And let me languish into life."

His parting admonitions to his widowed mother, his sorrowing wife, his little girl, and his affectionate sisters, were worthy of him as a Christian, and indicated what were his views of God's fatherly character and precious promises; of the Son's sacrificial death and mediatorial work; and of the Holy Spirit's prerogatives and power. Turning to me he said, "Preach Christ; preach him always; preach him everywhere; magnify him above all; I wish I had done so more faithfully and nobly." He enjoyed many glimpses of divine glory ere he left the body. On one occasion he looked upon every person in the room, and smiled as none but a Christian in his circumstances and with his prospects could have done. Never has it been our privilege to see a more beautiful illustration of Montgomery's well-known words, "Mark but that radiance of his eye," &c.

The night prior to his decease he said, "I have been thinking this is the *last night*, for there shall be no night there. Already I see the lights glimmering over the hill tops. Earth is growing less and less, and heaven is growing nearer and brighter." As is usual with most consumptive patients, he remained in the full possession of his faculties unto the last. On Wednesday, Sept. 20th, at 2.25 p.m., death touched his heart, and the pulsation ceased; touched his lungs and the breath was gone; but so gentle was the touch that he passed away to his eternal rest without a struggle or a groan.

The following is copied from the Bury Free Press:—"The Rev. William Rudderham, whose death was announced in our obituary last week, was buried at Saham on Monday last. Prior to the departure of the family on their melancholy errand, a large number of friends met at eight o'clock in the chapel, where a religious service was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Christien. A long procession accompanied the hearse and coach beyond the house limits of the town, thereby testifying to the high appreciation which was entertained of the deceased. The whole thing was a spontaneous tribute to a spirit the most amiable and gentle, and to labours most abundant and self-sacrificing "

His death was effectively improved in Bury chapel by his old friend and colleague, the Rev. T. W. Rous, of Cambridge, on Sunday evening, Oct. 1st, 1871. He has exchanged the wilderness for paradise; labour for rest; strife for peace; and the stormy ocean for the peaceful haven, into which we pray all his now sorrowing relatives may enter when the storms of life are o'er.

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#### References

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