

Rev Edward Williams

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by James B Knapp

The Rev. EDWARD WILLIAMS was born in a small village near Ellesmere, in Shropshire, March 2, 1805. We cannot say much of the manner of his early life, but from the few written documents to hand we learn that he was brought to a "knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins," through the labours of Primitive Methodist missionaries who visited the neighbourhood of his nativity in 1825. He then united himself with the people of God, and as he gave evidence of spiritual life and zeal, his name was put on the Oswestry circuit plan December 26, 1826.

As a local preacher he took full work for some five or six quarters, after which the quarterly meeting decided not to give him regular appointments, but to leave him unplanned that he might spend his sabbaths in missionary labours in the town of Ellesmere and adjoining villages. In these places Bro. Williams sang our lively hymns, and lifted up Christ Jesus in the open air amid considerable persecution; but the Lord crowned his labours with "signs following;" and two or three of these places still form part of the Oswestry circuit. After giving much promise as a local preacher for three years he was called into the work of the full ministry on the 1st or 2nd of January, 1830.

His first station was Cwm, where he laboured with success for about eighteen months. Here in his work was missionary, breaking up new ground, and the Lord again put his seal of approval upon his efforts; ten or twelve new places were opened, societies formed, and 160 members united in church fellowship, who, we trust, shall be "the crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord." He then removed to Kidderminster, where, in the town, their efforts were very much cramped for want of better chapel accommodation; but through the exertions of Mr. Williams, a chapel was bought and made over to the connexion; the congregation improved, and the society increased from 24 to 60 members. From Kidderminster he removed to Bishop's Castle. At this time there was but one small chapel on this station. But during his stay two chapels were built, and by his singing, visits, kind invitations, and earnest preaching and praying, much good was accomplished.

His next stations were Burland (now Nantwich and Crewe), Dudley, and Presteign. But no records are left as to his success or non-success in these stations. In the Ramsor circuit it appears he was very much at home with the people. They were, and still are, we believe, the old type of Primitive Methodists—men and women of good sterling piety, and very lively in their mode of worship, and our brother was perhaps at this time in the zenith of his power—lively and earnest, and largely endowed with the Holy Spirit's power; but he does not inform us as to the results of his labours in this station. From Ramsor he removed to Newcastle-under-Lyme, and from Newcastle to Cwm a second time, after a lapse of sixteen years. "Up to this time," his journal says, "my general health was good, and my constitution sound." But he had the misfortune to sleep two successive nights in damp beds, which gave him a severe cold, entirely prostrated him, and for some time rendered him unable to take his work.

His medical attendant told him he would not be able to labour again as he had done, and advised him to give up at once. Of this our brother had a dread having known some who had resigned their work, who neither prospered in spiritual nor temporal things. The Lord partially restored him, and he resumed his labours, and left the circuit with an increase of fifty-eight members. In 1846 he was stationed at Macclesfield, where he travelled two years, and left an increase of ninety-three members. He then removed to Burland a second time, and was much pleased to meet his old friends.

Here he was soon laid aside by an attack of typhus fever, and his general health gave way. He was able to take but few appointments, and it was evident that his work as a minister in full orders was completed. His friends advised him to seek superannuation, which advice, after much thought and prayer, he decided to follow; and after travelling with credit and success nearly twenty-two years, he was superannuated by the Conference held at Yarmouth in 1851. As a minister he was a good family visitor, a lively and earnest preacher, and many were the seals to his ministry.

He settled at Clunton, Bishop's Castle circuit, where he preached and laboured as much and as long as health would permit. He loved to be in his Master's work, and his appointments were looked forward to with pleasure. But as time advanced his infirmities increased, until he was obliged to relinquish public work altogether. His strength gradually declined, and for some time he felt the tabernacle giving way, and that his end was near. He died in peace. This event occurred on the 6th of March, 1875, and he was interred at Clunton March 10, in a piece of land given by Mrs. Williams for a burial ground.

He was a good man, a true friend to the cause of Christ, felt a deep interest in the prosperity of the circuit and the connexion, and most liberally supported its funds. He gave £200 towards the minister's new residence, Bishop's Castle; £250 to chapels in this station; £100 to Ludlow chapel ; £350 to the "Itinerant Preachers' Friendly Society;" and in case Mrs. Williams, his widow, outlives her late husband's brother, then £450 will be handed over to the "General Mission Fund," at Mrs. Williams's death.

In the departure of Bro. Williams, Bishop's Castle has lost a true friend. He did a work, in concert with his much and deservedly respected widow, which has endeared him to the station, and perpetuated his memory to generations yet unborn.

But he placed no trust in his liberal deeds for salvation. He discarded all merit but the merit of Christ Jesus. When talking in any way of what he had done, or when reference was made to it, he would almost instantly turn away from that to the blood of Christ as his only trust and hope. We believe our dear brother enjoyed religion, and often felt Jesus to be precious to him. If we had to depend on last words and sentences we have not many to write down. Mr. R. Jones, of Clun, who preached his funeral sermon to a large congregation, says,— "The last time we conversed together, I found him, and left him in a nice state of religious feeling. He wished Brother Davis, his nephew, and myself, to pray with him. Just as we knelt down he commenced singing, as well as strength would allow—

"Then in a nobler, sweeter song," &c.

I felt it was good to be there, and could say—

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven!"

In the "full assurance of hope" he calmly and peacefully passed away to "the place of the holy," where he rests from his labours and his works do follow him." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." May his sorrowing widow be sustained by the consolations of grace and hope till she shall join him in heaven.

References

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