

John Walls

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by C. Smith

JOHN WALLS was born in the year 1830, at Sutton, near Thirsk, in the North Riding of Yorkshire. His parents moved in the humble walks of life, but were pious, and members of the Independent church in that village; his father for twenty years was a deacon, and honourably sustained that office until his death: this event occurred when the subject of this memoir was fifteen years of age. He was a subject of Divine influences at the age of twelve, and he then rejoiced in Christ, and laboured to promote his glory; he would go with his Bible in his hand to read and pray with the aged and the sick; but being deprived of his Christian father's guardianship, and necessitated to leave home to begin the struggles of life for himself, he yielded to the influences of the world, and his love waxed cold. In this unhappy state he continued for about three years, when, after a season of deep spiritual distress, he was again led to Christ, and on believing in him, he "rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." From that time to his last moment on earth, the name and love of Jesus were his constant theme.

At the time of his restoration to the joys of God's salvation, he was living with the late Lady Johnson, of York, and having a good deal of leisure, he devoted himself to prayer, reading, and study. For a few months he was connected with the Wesleyans, but our system of Church polity was more in accordance with his views, and hence he became a Primitive Methodist. Being endowed with good natural abilities, and exhibiting in his life the lustre of moral virtues, and the graces of the Holy Spirit, he was placed on the circuit's plan; and as a local preacher he soon became popular and useful.

In the twenty-third year of his age he was called to the regular ministry, a work in which his soul delighted, and for which he was eminently adapted; he travelled nearly three years in the Scarborough, Scotter, and Doncaster circuits with great acceptability and usefulness. He had a heart quick to feel both the joys and sorrows of others, and as a minister, "he studied to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." His mind was distinguished by clearness of perception, soundness of judgment, and a correct taste; so that his sermons were carefully and methodically arranged, and delivered with such simplicity and perspicuity as to be enjoyable by all who heard him. Christ, in all the riches of his grace and glory, was his constant theme.

His health failing, he was compelled to retire from the Itinerancy. This was the trial of his life: he had looked forward to many years of labour and usefulness; but now his bright prospects were cut off; but he bowed in meek submission to the will of God. He located in the city of York, and after a while, his health having improved, he entered the marriage state, and commenced the business of a grocer, and amidst great physical debility he struggled hard in his calling.

After his return to York he resumed his place on the plan, as a local preacher, and laboured to the extent of his ability, and his labours were successful and highly appreciated, and will long be remembered. He took a deep interest also in the Sabbath-school; he was one of its superintendents, and its treasurer. In the spring of 1862, consumption manifested itself in an unmistakable form, and his friends saw with deep sorrow that his days were numbered, and that his end was nigh. At first he had a strong desire to live, not because he feared death or was unprepared for the future; but because of her whose earthly happiness he knew was bound up in his life; but Divine grace was sufficient for him in this hour of trial, and he was enabled to give her into the Lord's hand. He had been praying and waiting some time for his partner to be enabled to give him up, and never will they who witnessed the scene when she said, "Thy will, O God, and not mine be

done," forget the unearthly brightness of his countenance, and the way in which he blessed God and shouted glory. He said, "How happy I am; I am unspeakably happy; I wish I could shout glory louder, but my voice is gone; I will shout it louder when I get to heaven. Oh! to be with Jesus in heaven! the thought of it brings heaven into my soul already." He would lie motionless and be engaged in silent prayer; and then exclaim in rapture,

"Yes, thou art precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust."

Dr. Williams, his physician, said to him a few hours before his death, "What a pleasure will it be when thou gets to heaven to meet those who have got there through thy instrumentality." "Yes, it will," he answered, "but my first and greatest pleasure will be to go straight to Jesus, and thank him for saving me and bringing me there."

His last struggle came on rather suddenly, but he was found watching; he was ready for the coming of his Lord, the rock on which he had rested for so many years did not fail him now, he felt that it was firm and strong; and he calmly committed himself into the hands of his Redeemer, repeating those sweet lines—

"Jesu, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."

His dear wife in a soft, subdued and affectionate tone whispered in his ear those lines—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Ah, that is it," he said, "that is it, Christ is precious to my soul; I shalt soon be there—Jesus help me!" Then with his last dying breath he breathed out the name of Jesus, and his ransomed spirit, freed from the fetters that had bound it, rose to realise the fulness and brightness of that glory about which he delighted to preach, and read, and sing; this was on Lord's day, June 21st, 1863. On the Thursday following, his mortal remains were carried by local preachers to the grave in the York cemetery. A large number of friends assembled to pay their last tribute of respect to the departed. The Rev. J. Rumfitt offered an affecting and appropriate prayer, the writer read the funeral service, and gave a short address at the grave, and the dear departed one was left to sleep until the resurrection of the just.

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1864/171