

William Wigley

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by J.W. and J.B

WILLIAM WIGLEY, travelling preacher - Brother Wigley was born in 1805, at Sutton's-hill, in the county of Salop. Nothing of an extraordinary or striking character marked his youthful career. His parents were poor, but of decent morals; and he, too, was preserved from that excess of crime into which many run, while his open, affable, and peaceable disposition secured him the esteem and friendship of those who observed him. In 1823 he was led by Divine Providence to hear one of our ministers hold forth the word of life in the open air; and he was thereby convinced of his sin and danger. How long he continued in a mourning state, or how deep was his penitential sorrow, we are unable to determine. Suffice it to say, that while wrestling with God in prayer under a garden hedge he realised the power of God to save, and obtained the assurance of pardoning love. Then the language of his heart was,

"O love—thou bottomless abyss!
My sins are swallow'd up in thee;
Cover'd is my unrighteousness,
Nor spot of guilt remains on me:
While Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy—free, boundless mercy, cries."

His subsequent zeal, piety, and usefulness, in due time led to his being employed as a local-preacher; and in this capacity he laboured more than four years with credit to himself, and with success in the conversion of sinners. In 1833 the Brinkworth circuit called him into the Itinerancy, and he travelled in various circuits with zeal and acceptability for eighteen years. Mr. Bendle, who was intimately acquainted with him, writes, "I first knew brother Wigley in August, 1842) when I was called into the ministry by the Andover circuit. We laboured nearly two years in peace and harmony, and had the satisfaction of seeing the circuit improve both in members and finances. This was peculiarly gratifying, as we had to meet with a powerful tide of opposition. His letters during the three years we were separated breathed the same devotional and pious spirit he manifested while we were together. When the conference of 1847 stationed me to the Wallingford circuit, I had again the privilege of labouring with my friend and brother. In this station our trials were very severe,—arising from deep poverty and other causes; but my colleague was cheerful, patient, and resigned. I never heard him murmur, or complain. God smiled upon our efforts, and the circuit prospered. The conference of 1848 appointed us both to the Aylesbury circuit, where he laboured hard for the salvation of sinners. During his superintendency of this his last circuit, scores of sinners were converted, several chapels built, one rebuilt, several Sabbath-schools were established, and the circuit rapidly advanced in temporal and spiritual prosperity."

The first time we saw him was on a missionary platform in Salisbury, and we distinctly remember being struck with the appearance of his fine robust constitution, and the power with which he prayed. There was fire in his eye, and manly honesty was depicted in his countenance. To acringing servility he had an unspeakable aversion. Once satisfied of the soundness of his principles, he unflinchingly and determinately, despite of friends or foes, carried them out. Some might think him stern: but those who knew him well can testify to the deep affection for his fellow-Christians which dwelt in his heart. In early life his facilities for mental improvement were few, but being of studious habits he acquired a considerable amount of useful knowledge. His preaching was plain, perspicuous, and forcible. He evidently aimed at the heart. He was a son of consolation as well as of thunder. And it was hoped he would long exercise the ministerial office. Perhaps no man in the Brinkworth district appeared more likely to reach old age than he. But the strongest

constitution must give way before the power of disease and death. In May, 1850, our brother experienced a bilious attack, and an affection of the muscles, from which he never fully recovered. In his protracted and excruciating sufferings he loudly extolled and magnified the Lord. To persons who visited him he gave, when sensible, suitable advice. To one he said, "Stick to (trust in) the blood of the Lamb." To another he said, "Stand fast in the faith."

Brother Wright stayed up with him during the last night in which he was sensible, and when he said, "Brother Wigley, do you feel Christ precious?" giving him a look of surprise, the dying man replied, "What! To be sure I do; to be sure I do!" He then threw out his poor attenuated arms, and shouted, "Glory, glory, glory be to God!" In a few hours afterwards the conflict ended. He departed this life on March 15th, 1851. His mortal remains were accompanied to the grave by brothers Pope (from Luton), Turner (from Banbury), Allen (from Chinnor), and four other travelling preachers; the Independent minister, and a host of local-preachers and friends. In the evening brother Pope improved his death by preaching a lucid and powerful discourse to a large audience.

The widow and her seven fatherless children wish to record their gratitude for the kindness which the Aylesbury circuit has manifested in subscribing more than thirty pounds to purchase furniture for their use.

References

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