

**MEMOIR OF JOHN WOOLLEY,  
PRIMITIVE METHODIST ITINERANT PREACHER.**

DEAR BRETHREN,—It is no small recommendation of the biographical department of our Magazine, that so many pages of sacred writ are replete with the same interesting subject, and present to our view a host of true Believers, who, through the power of FAITH, wrought righteousness, subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, and are now inheriting the promises. The history of their lives is natural, probable, and bears all the characteristics of veracity, while inspiration stamps undeniable ruath upon it; and whatever deference we may be inclined to pay to the opinion of a learned commentator, that “the Biography of the present day records virtuous acts that were never performed,—voluntary privations that were never borne,—piety, which was never felt,—and, in a word, lives which were never lived;” yet we do hope that your numerous correspondents on this subject, write, not to panegyryze the dead, but to edify the living, by such details as are marked with veracity. Conscious we are, that

“The death-bed of the just is yet undrawn  
By mortal hand; it merits a divine;—  
Angels should paint it,—angels ever there,—  
There, on a post of honour and of joy.”

With regard to the present memoir, we are aware that it must necessarily be defective, through want of proper materials for its compilation, and our imperfect knowledge of its worthy subject; but as no other person has furnished any account of him, we send you the following, acknowledging that we have done what we can: and are, dear Brethren,

Yours cordially,  
J. Thompson & J. Brownson.

Loughborough, Oct. 16, 1854.

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John Woolley was born at Hathern, near Loughborough, in the county of Leicester, on Thursday, July 12, 1798 ; and as soon as his age would permit, was sent to the Sunday school connected with the established church in that village. The instruction he there received made a deep impression on his mind, and put a restraint on his evil passions. He was naturally a very thoughtful person, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit; avoided those open acts of profligacy which are so prevalent amongst young persons; indeed, there is reason to believe, that at an early age he was converted to God.

But, leaving Hathern, and entering upon a course of servitude, his religious impressions, by degrees, became greatly defaced, his desires after God languid and weak, and his soul barren and unfruitful; although he still was moral in his general conduct. In this “poor dying state” he continued until January 18, 1818, when he heard a Primitive Methodist preacher at Syston, near Leicester, at which place he then resided, and he was fully convinced of the heinous nature of sin, and the necessity of obtaining pardon through the great ATONEMENT. He determined to yield his heart to God, and be numbered with the visible church of Christ upon earth; and soon after united with that body of which he was so useful a member to the day of his death. And, while labouring in the field at his employment, he was in great distress of soul; he wept, he prayed, he struggled, and at length dared to believe that Jesus died for him. Instantly his chains fell off, and he experienced the pardoning love of God. From this period his religion was vital and flourishing. He appeared like a tree planted by the rivers of water; his prayers were fervent, his attention to the scriptures serious and consistent, and his love to God and man constant.

At the December Quarterly Meeting, 1819, being settled at Hathern, the brethren thought him an eligible person to appear on the local preachers’ plan, and therefore gave him some appointments which he filled up to the satisfaction of his hearers; and in the office of a local preacher he was not only acceptable, but useful in the conversion of sinners to God. And after faithfully discharging the duties devolving upon him as a local preacher for the space of two years and a half, (viz. until July, 1822), he was taken out to be a travelling preacher in the Loughborough circuit, which at that time included what is now called Loughborough, Leicester, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and Welton circuits. Here he laboured two years with credit to himself and profit to the circuit.

At the Conference of 1824, he was appointed to Welton, which had previously been formed into a circuit, and where his labours were owned by the great Head of the Church, in the conversion of sinners, and edification of believers. At the following Conference he was appointed to superintend the Belper circuit, an office for which he was eminently qualified. The circuit rose under his management, and scores of sinners were brought to God. After having spent two years there, he was removed to Chesterfield, where he laboured with much acceptability and general usefulness, until the Conference of 1829, which stationed him for Barnsley circuit; where, owing to the great distress which prevailed amongst the working classes, there were frequent riots and tumultuous mobs. And these things were injurious to the cause of religion in general. Having spent one year there, he was appointed to Burton-upon-Trent circuit, where he laboured for three years, and was highly respected as a man, a Christian, and a minister.

The last appointment he received was to Fulbeck. In this circuit he entered upon his labours July 6, 1833, and took one week's appointments; at the close of which he returned home very ill. Medical aid was called in, but his disease baffled the skill of the faculty, and terminated only with his earthly existence. He was patient under his affliction, had a blessed hope of glorious immortality, and frequently repeated those two admirable lines of the poet,—

“Preach him to all that cry in death,  
Behold!—Behold the Lamb!”

His mind appeared to be at perfect peace ; and, after having been afflicted seven days, the weary wheels of life stood still, and his spirit winged its way to the paradise of God, on Saturday morning, July 20, 1833, in the thirty-sixth year of his age, and twelfth of his itinerant ministry.

(Approved by the Circuit Committee. )

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## ACCOUNT OF J. WOOLLEY

(From the Minutes of the Conference held at Birmingham, May 20—30, 1834:)

Q.. What travelling preachers have died this year?

A. 1. John Woolley. He was born at Hathorn, near Loughborough, in Leicestershire, on Thursday, July 12, 1798, and brought up to the farming business. From a child he was taught the knowledge of the scriptures, and at ten years of age experienced the pardoning love of God. When about twelve years and a half old, he removed to Erdington, near Birmingham, to live with a brother and sister, who held a farm there; and here he became as a withered plant.

But on Sunday, January 18, 1818, he, for the first time, heard a Primitive Methodist preacher, at Syston, near Leicester, and received a fresh determination to seek the salvation of his soul, and to join with the people. But deferred this duty until Sunday, September 12, 1819, when he first met in class, received a ticket, and became a member. On the Tuesday following, at half-past ten in the forenoon, after much prayer, and a sharp conflict, he again experienced God's pardoning love; and the same night he began to preach; and in December, the same year, he was taken on the preachers' plan. And on Tuesday, July 29, 1822, he was taken out by the Loughborough circuit, to labour as an itinerant preacher.

The Burton circuit report, under date of March 4, 1833, states to this effect: —

‘Brother John Woolley is a married man, has no children; will be thirty-five years of age next July; in which month he will have travelled eleven years, one in Loughborough circuit, two in Welton, two in Belper, two in Chesterfield, one in Barnsley, and three with us. He has been a superintendant eight years, and we consider him very capable of the office. In all his engagements he is punctual, and a strict observer of discipline, He is a peaceable man, and is well received throughout the circuit. And his deportment and behaviour in his public calling gain him esteem and respect from all. He preaches a free, full, and present salvation, and has been made useful in the conversion of sinners to God.’

Brother Woolley possessed good talents, was of a kind and affable disposition, his piety was of a high order, and his conduct remarkably correct. He was well acquainted with the mystery of faith

and a present salvation; and was a good labourer with souls when in distress; and he was a good family visitor. The loss of such a man is felt in our connexion. But the residue of the Spirit is with the Lord.

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#### References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1835/46; 1835/48