

**PROGRESS OF THE CONNEXION.
NOTTINGHAM CIRCUIT.**

Extract of W. Wilbur's Journal, with a short account of his life

I WILLIAM WILDBOUR, was born in the parish of Newport Pagnel, in Buckinghamshire, in the year 1768. But before I was two years old my parents removed to Leicester. In a short time after this, my father was brought to know the Lord; and, glory be to God, he was an ornament to his profession for forty-two years. I never knew one blot in his character. His delight was to bring glory to God in all he did and said, and the best of all was, his end was the end of the righteous.

But notwithstanding the pious example I had set before me, my life for more than twenty years was a rebellious one. But, blessed be God, in answer to the many fervent effectual prayers which my father and friends offered up in my behalf, the Lord brought me to see and feel the awful state and condition I was then in. — About twelve months before this, I had a singular dream. I thought I was upon a lonesome and exceedingly high mountain, and there came one to me, and said: "This day twelve-months you will be heir to an estate." I did not give credit to his words, for part of my friends were poor, and the rest had heirs of their own. He repeated the words a second time, and I rather yielded, though. I could not see how it could be. He then said, the third time, — "This day twelve-months you will be heir to an estate, for you are a Lord's son." About that time twelve months his words came true, — I became heir to an estate in the kingdom of grace, and was a Lord's son, for I was brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and could rejoice in God my Saviour.

A prayer-meeting was usually held at my father's house, and one Sunday evening, while he was praying in the meeting, the Lord so powerfully wrought on my mind, that I was like one fast in the stocks. What to do I knew not. I fled to the bible, and finding, in one of the psalms, a petition suited to my case, I sent it up with all my heart to God. This I continued for some time, and the Lord gave me power to pray, and I found great liberty, and my soul was much blessed. I went from my bible to bed praying, and when I awoke in the morning I was still praying.

About a week after this, my father, according to his usual custom, began to talk with me about the eternal world; and he found, for the first time, that the Lord had begun to work upon my mind. I had before endeavoured to conceal it from him.

I became diligent in the means of grace both in private and public; and in about a fortnight, while praying in my closet, I found the pearl of great price, and was satisfied, that the Lord owned me for his child.

When I had been for some years a member of the Old Methodist Society, I was called to preach the everlasting gospel. And I have reason to praise God that he did not send me into the vineyard for nought; for he hath given me seals to my ministry, and souls for my hire; some of which are now singing praises to God and the Lamb in heaven. But notwithstanding the many favours God showed towards me, I often had to look back, and reflect on my unprofitableness in the service of God.

I was in the Old Methodist Connexion for more than twenty years, and then from some reasons I thought it right to withdraw myself. But I still continued preaching the gospel of Christ in the streets, lanes, highways, and hedges, warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come: and, blessed be God, many came to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

When I had continued preaching thus for about nine months, I heard of the people called Primitive Methodists; and hearing of a camp-meeting; I was anxious to be there, and was soon satisfied that the work was of God. In a short time they came to my house, and were made the instruments of great good to many souls; and many were born of the Lord in my house. The Lord graciously poured out of his Spirit, and we soon raised a class of fifty-five members. We usually held prayer-meetings several times in the week, and the Lord abundantly blessed our souls; and we have had as many as thirty, and we have had forty souls in distress together.

Soon after this I was requested to go out as a travelling preacher in the Loughborough circuit, but I felt a great backwardness from the thoughts of my own inability. I was then requested to go out

in the Nottingham circuit, and I consented to make a trial for six weeks, to see whether it was the will of the Lord or not. I laboured more than nine months in Nottingham circuit, and the Lord made my ministry a blessing to many souls.

In, March, 1819, I was appointed to labour in the Lincoln branch, and while in this (branch) circuit, the Lord gave me many precious seasons. Sinners have been convinced, penitents have been pardoned, and there has been many crying out in the open air while I have been speaking.

I laboured with sister Perry in this part more than six months, and the Lord raised us up many societies. And about this time, the Lord laid his hand upon one of my sons, and took him into a better world. This was grievous to flesh and blood, yet I could rejoice that he was gone to glory. About the same time I was removed from the Lincoln branch, and stationed at Boston; and in that town we met with much opposition, notwithstanding which we soon raised a society: but: several crept in among us, which were as Achan in the camp of Israel, and did us much harm. I visited Wainfleet and Friskney, and the Lord opened a door for us. At this latter place, Charles Bray gave me a remarkable account of a vision which he had seen about twenty-one years before. At that time the Lord had laid his afflicting hand upon him, and he saw as though all the fiends of hell were surrounding him, and ready to tear him in-pieces. An old man, he thought, then came, and said, "If you will stick close to me, none of these fiends shall hurt you." Upon this, when they came at him to devour him, he clung to the old man and was preserved, and in triumph would exclaim, "Ah I thave got your master here!" This, he conceives, was not a dream, but a vision seen with his bodily eyes.

It was in November 1819, I first preached the gospel in Friskney. Charles Bray's wife came to hear me. And the next night she prevailed with her husband to come. He said he knew my voice before he entered the house; and when he came in he knew my face, my clothes, my hair, and my size, and all about me, and said; "This is my old, man whom I saw in a vision, 21 years. ago."

This man was a wicked and notorious character, but he turned to the Lord and joined our society, and is, we trust, become a faithful member.

In this circuit I had many trials and hardships, but, (praise God,) in the month of May he brightened our prospect, and the work so grew and prospered, that in June there was a need of three more travelling preachers, and these were granted by the Quarter day Board.

June 23, 1820. I returned home and found one of my sons labouring under the afflicting hand of God: but, praise God, his soul was growing in a meetness for heaven. One also of my daughters who had been in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, was beginning to seek the Lord. I believe I shall live to see all my children in the way for heaven.

July 1, 1820. Having returned to Lincoln, the Lord renewed my mission afresh, my soul was melted down before him. In the evening I arrived at Boston.

July 2. This morning set out for Horncastle, I felt much of the presence of God, and my soul was drawn out in prayer for the preachers, that the Lord would bless their labours, and I was as if caught up into heaven.

July 3. I returned to Boston, and met with my fellow labourers in the Lord; and our souls were knit together as the heart of one man. On my saying that I had been praying for them, they inquired the time, and at that instant, their souls were like a watered garden, W. WILDBUR.

Reference

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1821/56