

## **Rev Joseph Warner**

### **Transcription of Obituary In the Primitive Methodist Magazine by J.H. Best**

THE Rev. Joseph Warner was born in the village of Newton Longville, in the county of Bucks, March 17, 1833. He was of humble parentage, and when ten years old, lost his father by death. Thus in his early life he had an experience of toil and struggle, and suffered the lack of educational advantages. He lived the life of an ordinary village lad until, soon after he had entered his teens, the Primitive Methodists missioned his native village. This was an event which turned the current of his history. He was attracted to the services, and became one of the first-fruits of the mission. "His eyes were opened, and he was turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Conversion was to him an intellectual as well as a spiritual awakening. He gave himself to reading and study, and developed such gifts and graces that he was soon called to labour as a local preacher, and when nineteen years of age was sent out into the wider field of the Christian ministry.

His first appointment was to St. Austell, in Cornwall. Thither he came in August, 1852, and laboured until the following July, when he removed to the Donaghmore and Portadown Mission in Ireland, and subsequently to the Middleham, Richmond (Yorks.), and Lancaster Stations. While in Lancaster he was united in marriage to Miss Parnell, of St. Austell, who for upwards of forty-two years was his devoted companion and helpmeet, and who is now left in lonely widowhood. Soon after his marriage he received a call from the

General Missionary Committee to enter the Colonial mission field, and in 1858 sailed to South Australia, where for nearly sixteen years he laboured in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and for Primitive Methodism. Much might be said about the work of these years, but the following extract taken from a testimonial presented to him on his return to the home-land in 1874 will suffice:—

"We, the ministers and members of this District (South Australia), cannot allow you to leave our shores for the home of our fathers without expressing in some tangible form our high esteem of your moral character, your faithful pulpit ministrations, your business habits, your love for the Connexion's honour, and your pleasing demeanour, evinced during the fifteen years you have laboured in our midst. We beg you to accept this address with the other small presents as tokens of our best wishes for your highest good. When in the sunshine of home society, and when engaged in the battles of life, let them remind you that you still live in the grateful remembrance of a host of friends in this far-off province of the British crown."

On his return to England he laboured successively at Portsmouth, Plymouth, Kingston-on-Thames, Douglas (Isle of Man), Knowlwood, Yeovil, and St. Austell. His appointment to the last-named station was of a special character, and was made with a view to his dealing with a critical condition of things that had arisen. The difficulties that confronted him were great, and it was a time of great stress and strain, but he brought to his task a strong personality, a sound judgment, a clear and straightforward method of procedure, and withal, an earnest Christian devotion, before which the difficulties gradually gave way, and peace and prosperity were restored.

In 1893, after more than forty years' strenuous labour in this country and Australia, he was compelled by failing health to seek retirement from the full work of the ministry, and was placed on the superannuated list. But he did not cease from Christian service: in many ways he continued serving the great Master and His Church. For several years he was President of the St. Austell Nonconformist Council. He was also in great request as an occasional preacher in sister Churches,

while, for his own Church - the Church he had served from his youth, and to which he was most ardently attached - he never ceased to think and work and pray. He located, as a supernumerary, in the circuit to which he had his first and his last ministerial appointment, and in its well-being he felt the deepest interest, and served it in every way he could.

For a long time Mr. Warner was in declining health, and it was evident that some physical ailment was undermining his constitution. Still he maintained a cheerful disposition, and as far as possible kept at work. The spring of 1900, however, found him getting much feebler. The best medical skill was tried, but it was of no avail, and gradually he sank into a state of complete prostration. His firm, unshaken faith in Christ was strikingly manifest. "I'm redeemed," he said to a friend not long before his death. As the end drew near he said, "He knows what is best; He doeth all things well," and in this faith he finished his earthly course, June 20, 1900, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

On the following Sunday morning his remains were interred in the St. Austell Cemetery, when, notwithstanding inclement weather, a large number gathered, including ministers and representatives of all the Nonconformist Churches in the town, to show respect for one who, having served his own generation by the will of God, had fallen asleep.

We close this brief memoir with the following testimony from the Rev. W. Sawyer, an old colleague and friend of the deceased.

"DEAR MR. BEST,

"I am grateful to you for the opportunity to say a word about our late brother, the Rev. Joseph Warner. I first met him in Plymouth in 1881, where I joined him as his junior colleague. I found him a big man in more senses than one, but never in an unworthy sense. To my regret we were together only one year, but that was long enough to enrich my life at the fount of his practical wisdom, and great good sense. Life has been easier for me to live during the years that have intervened because of the lessons I learnt during those twelve months. There are many men with more dash than he had, but few with deeper devotion to the Master's work. He had rare gifts of silence, as well as considerable powers of speech. He never magnified his difficulties or trials. His consciousness of the unseen was so real and vivid that it gave him a due sense of proportion, thus he was kept from thinking pin-pricks were sword thrusts. Peace prevailed in himself, and therefore all around him. Most of all did he impress me with his deep humility and spiritual earnestness. Anything that promised progress in the Christian life of his people, or in bringing men to Christ was eagerly seized upon by him, no matter who suggested it. He was careful to be an example to his people, and perhaps a more consistent man never lived. Had he been favoured with more robust health, a touch of brilliance, and a dash of pushfulness, he would have easily reached a position in the front rank of our Connexional life, and have become known to numbers, as he deserved to be, to whom he is now only a name."

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them."

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## References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1901/145