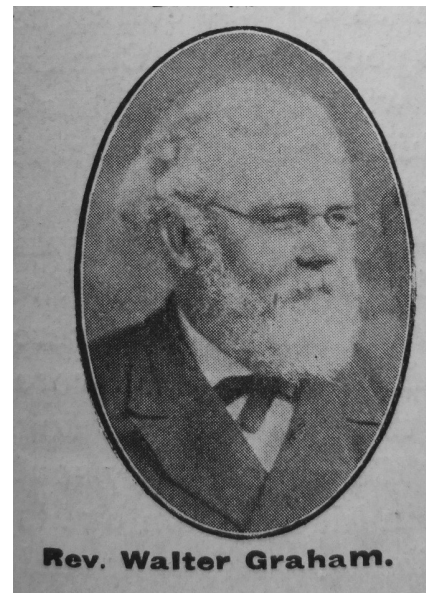


## Rev Walter Graham

### Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by A. Beavan

In the translation from earth to heaven of the Rev. Walter Graham, a well known and much beloved minister disappears from our Connexional ranks. His removal is a loss to our Church generally, but it is in the Manchester and Liverpool Districts, where the whole of his ministerial life was spent; that his decease was most keenly felt and deplored.

It was only at the Conference of 1903 that the name of our friend was placed on the Superannuated List, and his many friends indulged the hope that after the long and strenuous day of toil there would be permitted him a lengthened evening of rest and calm; and that the Church would continue to enjoy the ripened fruit of his wisdom and experience and the gladness of his cheerful and gracious presence. But to him a nobler heritage is given. He has passed to where morning never wears to evening, where rest is perfect, and pleasure without alloy; where all mysteries are solved and every shadow lost in the light and glory in which the "spirits of just men made perfect" for ever dwell. Mr. Graham was a product of Village Methodism, and was a Primitive Methodist of the third generation. His birthplace was Marple, Cheshire, and the date of his birth December 21st, 1841. In the home of his boyhood many of the early preachers of our Church were often entertained. What may have been the thoughts which stirred his soul in these impressionable years of his life, as he came into contact with these fiery evangelists and spiritual heroes, we cannot say, but without doubt it left upon him a permanent impression for good, and together with the influences of a pious home became a potent factor in determining his early choice of Christ, and the consecration of his life to the service of the Church.



While yet in his teens he became a local preacher. And when twenty-two years of age entered upon his life-work as a Primitive Methodist minister, and for the long period of forty years, as preacher, pastor, and superintendent of some of our more important stations, with great ability, devotion and zeal rendered conspicuous and lasting service, and won for himself a place of distinction in the councils of our Church.

Mr. Graham entered the ministry in the year 1863, only three years after the celebration of the Connexion's Jubilee.

How striking the points of contrast in the status and strength of Primitive Methodism then and now! No college existed for the training of our early preachers; circuits were often extensive, journeys long, homes not always congenial, salaries small.

There was therefore far less to attract young men to the ministry at that time than is the case today. All honour therefore to the men whose enthusiasm for God and humanity led them to go forth

amid conditions of stress and toil and difficulty, thinking little or nothing of ease or comfort or emolument, if only they might finish their course with joy and fulfil the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

His first station was St. Helens, where he remained one year. Subsequent spheres of labour were Douglas, Lymm, Preston, Castletown, Bradwell, Woodley, Blackburn, Fleetwood, Liverpool First, Warrington, Lowton, Manchester Third, Manchester Fifth, Dalton-in-Furness, and Bury. Here he completed the fortieth year of his ministry and through serious failure of health was compelled to retire from the active ministry.

As a Circuit superintendent Mr. Graham doubtless excelled. He was well versed in Connexional rule and usage. To a well-informed mind he added the qualities of statesmanship; hence in cases of difficulty his opinion and judgment were often sought, and in District and Connexional courts considerable influence attached to his attitude and view. For some years he held the office of secretary of the Manchester District Committee, and in Liverpool District acted as secretary to the District Sunday School Committee.

In the affairs of the Preachers' Friendly Society he took great interest, and for five years acted as its treasurer.

During his four years' ministry in Liverpool he succeeded in erecting the fine church we now have in Prince's Avenue in that city, and having regard to the condition of the circuit when he entered it, this was no ordinary achievement.

Of Mr. Graham as a man and a friend much might be written. Nature had dealt bountifully with him, he had a noble presence, a fine social nature, a rich fund of humour, a kind and sympathetic heart which made him a most enjoyable companion and an ever welcome guest in the homes of the people. In this connection, it is not too much to say that, throughout Lancashire, there are numerous homes where the name of Walter Graham is a household word and where it will be held in reverent esteem and affection for many years to come.

As a preacher, Mr. Graham was plain, practical and scriptural. His ministry was characterised by a noble earnestness and was often attended by much Divine unction and spiritual power; believers found edification and enrichment as they listened to his devout and spiritual expositions of the Word, while his appeals to the unconverted in his congregations were often most impressive. The following testimonies to the worth of the departed, are from those who knew him intimately and long:- The Rev. James Travis writes:- "I knew the Rev. Walter Graham, for forty years, and for thirty of those years he was one of my most intimate friends. He was a capable minister, and faithfully discharged the duties of his high office. He filled several important ecclesiastical offices with efficiency and satisfaction, but he never lost the man in the ecclesiastic. His affability, kindness and generosity won for him hosts of friends. He was, above all, a manly Christian. It is a joy to me that I cannot remember a mean deed he ever did, or an uncharitable sentence he ever uttered. I have seen him under almost all sorts of conditions, both public and private, but I know nothing of him unworthy of a Christian minister. I am richer in soul because of my acquaintance and intercourse with him."

The Rev. Adam Morton writes:- "I became acquainted with the late Rev. W. Graham when he came to my native circuit, Bradwell, in the High Peak of Derbyshire, in 1870. The great service he rendered to Nonconformity and to Primitive Methodism in that locality cannot be overestimated. He was the means of the establishment of a School Board at Bradwell, in the face of tremendous opposition; and when the election came he was returned at the head of the poll. After entering the ministry it was my privilege to be his colleague for three years in Stockport Second Circuit. I was much impressed with his great business ability and with his clear grasp of the rules and usages of our Church. He was of an exceedingly genial disposition, and was ever a welcome visitor in the homes of the people. His sermons and addresses were marked by strong common sense, and were of a practical nature, their delivery being forcible and impressive. He was the very soul of honour, and was held in high esteem by his ministerial and other friends. His personal kindness to me, during an unbroken friendship of thirty-three years, I can never forget.

Earth seems the poorer for his departure, but though on our own account we mourn for him, we rejoice that he has entered into a well-earned rest."

When superannuated, Mr. Graham came to reside in Moss Side, Manchester, with his only surviving son. He at once identified himself with our Church at Moss Lane, where he received a hearty welcome. But it soon became painfully evident that his strength was rapidly failing; some months before leaving Bury he was prostrated by paralytic seizure, and affliction was followed by sore bereavement in the death of his beloved wife. After nearly thirty-six years of happy companionship he was left alone; it was a great trial, and he never fully recovered strength.

As long, however, as health permitted, he continued to preach almost every Sunday, and his interest in District and Connexional affairs continued as keen as ever. Some of the latest Sabbaths on which he was able to preach were very happily spent among his old friends at Prince's Avenue, Liverpool, where on successive Sundays he occupied the pulpit. His final appearance in the pulpit was at Enys Street, Pendleton, on October 18th, where he preached in the morning on "Things that accompany salvation," and in the evening on "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

The end came unexpectedly. "He was only confined to his bed a few days. Medical skill proved unavailing, his work was done, and on the evening of November 25th, 1903, the tired sufferer passed to the eternal Sabbath keeping of the people of God.

And now that he is no longer with us, what finer testimony to his moral worth and spiritual excellence could those who most loved him desire than this? - That for forty years he fed the flock of God, ministering to the needs of young and old, with rare wisdom, sympathy and diligence; and through all this tract of years ever wearing the "white flower of a blameless life."

The interment took place at Stretford, on Saturday, Nov. 28th, in the presence of a large number of ministers and officials from various circuits, and sorrowing relatives and friends. A most impressive service was held in our King Street Chapel, Stretford, in which the Revs. D. Neilson, J. Travis, J. Hallam (representing the General Committee), G. Parker, A. Morton, W. Barker, A. Humphries and W. Johnson took part. Mr. Travis delivered an address full of deep feeling and warm appreciation of

those gifts and virtues which distinguished the deceased, as a man, a minister, and a friend. The service at the grave was conducted by the Rev. T.H. Hunt, President of the Conference.

An "In Memoriam" Service was held in Moss Lane Church, on Sunday evening, December 20th, conducted by the writer, the text being, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

"Tis sweet as year by year we lose  
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse  
How grows in Paradise our store."

---

## References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1904/655