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THE LIFE AND LABORS OF WILLIAM BRAMWELL
By John F. Thomson

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The Life and Labors of Rev. William Bramwell
A Chosen, Approved, Valiant and Successful Minister of Christ
[Life: 1759-1818] -- [Ministry: 1783-1818]

A New and Revised Edition 1905

"The salvation of souls is the glory of the ministry."
-- William Bramwell

1905

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MATTHEW SIMPSON'S SKETCH OF WILLIAM BRAMWELL

[The following sketch of William Bramwell is taken from the 1882, 5th Revised Edition of the Cyclopedia of Methodism, edited by bishop Matthew Simpson. This sketch will give the reader a brief overview of Bramwell's life before reading John Thomson's longer and more detailed biographical sketch of Bramwell. -- DVM]

BRAMWELL, William, was born at Elswick, Lancashire, in 1759, and died suddenly while attending the Methodist Conference at Leeds in 1818. His early educational advantages were limited, but his parents trained him to a religious and exemplary life. He united with the Methodists, much against the wish of his parents, and soon after, while listening to a sermon preached by Mr. Wesley, he received the evidence of his adoption. He at once became active in religious labors, conducting prayer-meetings early in the morning for the accommodation of working-people; and, having been appointed a class-leader, the Methodist Society at Preston, England, where he was an apprentice, was soon doubled. He entered the itinerant ministry in 1786, and for thirty years labored as a Methodist preacher, and was a great revivalist. Perhaps no man in

his day gathered more into the Methodist communion than did he. In 1791, through his agency, a wide-spread revival in Dewsbury occurred and in 1792, while on Bristol circuit, about five hundred were added to the societies. His success was similar on other circuits, reporting almost always at each Conference hundreds of additions to the church. His energy was tireless, his understanding masculine, his decision of character unswerving, his voice singularly musical, his command over the passions of his hearers absolute. He was ascetic, an early riser for study and prayer; reading some, studying more, and praying most. He acquired a knowledge of the Greek and the French, and translated from the latter a very good work on preaching. He was scrupulous to a fault, and charitable to excess, giving: even the clothes from his person to the poor. The quickness and clearness of his discriminations of character were marvelous, and led both himself and his friends to suppose that He possessed the power of discerning spirits. His memoir and life have been read by thousands to their comfort and edification.

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PREFACE

It has been said that "history is philosophy teaching by examples." For general history is not only interspersed with, but is largely composed of individual biography. It is this element in history which furnishes the variety, interest and profitable instruction which makes this kind of writing so agreeable to the majority of readers.

It may be reasonably inferred, therefore, that works written expressly to illustrate the principles and actions of individual men, must be pre-eminently pleasing and profitable. The experience and testimony of mankind in general confirm this.

But it would be impracticable and useless to publish the life of every good man or minister even, who has faithfully served his generation by the help of God. There is such an undeniable sameness and we might say, tameness, in the history and character of most Christian persons, that to read the life of one would be to read the lives of many.

It must be admitted, however, that there are some whose history, by reason of their religious character and usefulness, to say nothing of their talents, is so remarkable, or uncommon, as to constitute an exception. Such an exception, if his holiness and usefulness as a Christian minister are considered, was William Bramwell, the subject of this biographical sketch. We might almost say he was unique in his character and career.

Such was the ardor of his love to God, the fervor of his yearning pity for mankind, and the intensity of his desire for their salvation, that he exerted all his powers to give effect to the gracious purposes of God among the perishing children of Adam. These powerful motives were in constant exercise on his mind and heart and impelled him to labors Herculean, innumerable and incessant. He was eminently holy and faithful, and therefore the Most High used him to an amazing and uncommon extent in turning sinners to righteousness.

His friend and biographer, James Sigston, who was intimately acquainted with him for many years, says: "It is probable that there have been but few Christian ministers since the days of

the apostles who have made greater exertions to bring to the fold of Christ, the fallen children of men, and whose labors have been more signally owned by the Great Head of the Church," with almost unparalleled success.

His biography has now been before the Christian public for eighty-four years, whereby his name has become odoriferous [meaning here, fragrant] throughout Methodism, and many followers of Jesus have been edified and instructed by the living traits of holiness which it exhibits, and their enthusiasm for Christian service has been kindled at his living altar-fires, whence they have gone forth in the zealous promotion of the interests of vital godliness.

It has been thought by the present publishers, that a revised and cheap edition of the life of Bramwell would tend to bring it into more general use and thereby promote the course of true holiness and soul-winning. As at first published, it contained many personal and local references, which can be of no moment to the present generation. Such matter has been culled out. Moreover, the original work followed him from circuit to circuit in his busy career, noting his efforts and successes year by year, intermingled with much epistolary correspondence. The reviser has endeavored to give a full view of the preacher, the revivalist, the pastor, the saint, and the man, by bringing together under their proper captions the scattered hints, statements and reflections found throughout the original work.

With trust in God, with love to mankind, with unaffected attachment to gospel salvation, with earnest wishes and fervent prayer for its propagation through all lands, and its transmission to the end of time. We dedicate this new life of William Bramwell to the ever-living God, to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to His Church, for the edification and sanctification of its membership, for the work of the ministry here and their glorification hereafter.

Amen and Amen.

The Editor and Publishers,
December, 1904

[A most forcible illustration of the fact that eternity is near, a thought ever present in the labors of Mr. Bramwell, appears in the death of the editor, which occurred just before he had completed his work. The last chapter containing an account of the closing hours of Mr. Bramwell's life was written by Rev. J. T. Logan.]

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INTRODUCTION

The worst physical ills that mankind suffer, form a less amount of desolation and disaster than is included in that one word "sin" -- in revolt from God, in disloyalty to the inward light of conscience, and in the tyranny of the passions. This is the supreme evil. To redeem mankind from sin and all its dire consequences was the great end of Christ's coming to earth.

The Christian ministry was instituted to quicken, not only the intellect, but the conscience of mankind, to turn the individual mind in upon itself, to rouse it to a resolute impartial survey of its whole responsibilities and ill-deserts; to place the individual sinner before a tribunal as solemn and searching as that which awaits him at the last day, to pierce him with a new consciousness of sin, so that he shall groan under it, strive against it, repent of it, turn from it with loathing, seek forgiveness, be converted to God and be made a partaker of His holiness, so that he may at length enjoy a blissful immortality with God. Anything short of this is but a show of assault and leaves the enemy entrenched and unbroken within.

Christianity demands that He who is supreme in the universe shall be supreme in the human soul. It is a part of the work of the Christian ministry to bring the created mind into living union with the infinite mind. Multitudes are living with few thoughts of God and of the true glory of their being. Among the nominal believers in the being of God, and in the judgment to come, sensuality, ambition, and the love of the world, sit enthroned, and laugh to scorn the impotence of preaching. Christianity has yet a hard war to wage and many battles to win, and it needs intrepid, powerful ministers, who will find courage and excitement -- not dismay -- in the strength and number of their foes.

The doctrines which Christianity commits to its ministers are mighty weapons in the hands of such ministers. The perfect character of God, the tender and solemn attributes that belong to Him as Creator, Ruler and Judge: His purposes of infinite grace in Christ toward the whole human race, the character and history of Christ -- His entire self-devotion to the cause of human redemption, His sufferings and cross -- His resurrection, ascension and intercession, the promise of the Holy Spirit, His intimate union with His followers, the retribution which awaits the unrepenting, and the felicities and glories that await the faithful -- are truths capable of moving the whole soul, and warring victoriously with the whole catena [catena = a connected series of patristic comments on Scripture, a series or chain. -- Oxford Dict.] of human passions. The minister who is under the absorbing influence of these mighty truths and devotes himself a living sacrifice, a whole burnt offering to the business of saving men is possessed of power in comparison of which all other means of influence is feebleness.

Let us not be misunderstood. These same truths differ in their effects when dispensed by different men -- inert and uninteresting when expounded by one, but fraught with life and power when coming from the lips of another, arresting attention, arousing emotion, awakening zeal and deep interest and giving a new Spring to the souls of many who hear them. People listen without interest to these great subjects when treated with apathy.

It has been said that Christianity has a native beauty and an intrinsic glory all its own and that nothing is needed but to make known the naked truth and it will win its way. But there is no such thing as "naked truth" in connection with Christianity. It is not to be exhibited nakedly. God's purpose is, that it should come to men warm and living with the impressions and affections which it has produced in the soul of the preacher, and clothed in drapery thrown around it by his sanctified imagination, reason and moral feelings. It is always humanized by living in the minds and hearts of men and it owes much of its power to the soul from which it issues. The greater the entrance it has into that soul, the greater the expansion of that soul under its action, and the greater

the effect will be upon other souls. And why? Because it comes in the language of earnest conviction and strong feeling and in the power of the Holy Ghost.

The preaching of the minister who would produce saving effects in his hearers, must not be the result of cold reasoning, but of heart-felt experience. He must preach the gospel as something which he himself knows by its effects upon his own soul. He must be able to say, "I have believed myself, and therefore speak." He should speak from a solemn conviction that salvation is the great concern and with the solemn purpose that its claims shall be felt by others. Sacred knowledge, with no strong action of the intellect, no vividness of conception, no depth of conviction, no force of feeling, is of little worth to the preacher or his hearers. It comes from him as a faint echo, with nothing of that mysterious energy which strong conviction begotten of the Holy Spirit throws into style and utterance. His breath, which should kindle, chills his hearers, and the nobler the truth with which he is charged, the less he succeeds in carrying it far into the souls of men. To what profit is he armed with weapons of heavenly temper, when his hands are not nerved to wield them with vigor and success? He may for a time, by artificial means, work himself into a flame, but the flame is unsteady -- a mere crackling of thorns on a cold hearth.

It is hard for the most successful art to give, even for a time, that soul-subduing tone to the voice, that air of native feeling to the countenance, and that raciness and fullness to the conceptions, which come from an experimental conviction of the truth of the gospel. Accordingly, the most important feature of ministerial equipment, even in such an enlightened and intelligent age as this, is not sacred knowledge, essential as it is, but its conversion and exaltation into a living, practical, and soul-kindling conviction. Much as our age requires intellectual culture in the ministry, one thing more is indispensable, and that is, that it be instinct with life and feeling -- that the message to be delivered with the sincerity and earnestness of men bent on producing great effects -- that they should speak of God and Christ of redemption and salvation from sin, -- of heaven, hell and judgment to come, not as of musty traditions about which they have only read, but as of realities which they understand and feel in the very depth of their souls.

Religious feeling is indispensable to a powerful ministry; without it, learning and fancy may please but cannot move men profoundly and permanently. Religious affection with devotional feeling opens up a new fountain of thought in the soul, and seizes the religious aspect of things. It not only suggests ideas but gives felicity and energy of expression. It prompts the words that burn -- those mysterious combinations of speech, which send the speaker's soul like lightning through his hearers; which breathe new life into old and faded truths, and cause an instantaneous gush of thought and feeling in susceptible minds, bringing them to prompt decision for God.

The Christian minister, to be successful in his calling, must have faith in an eminent degree. By this is meant, not a general belief in the truths of Christianity, but a confidence in the great results which the gospel and its ministry are intended to produce. It has often been observed that a strong faith tends to realize its objects, and that all things become possible to him who believes them so. Faith and expectation breathe animation and force. He who despairs of great effects never accomplishes them. All great works have been the result of strong confidence, inspiring and sustaining strong exertion. The man who cannot conceive of higher effects of the ministry than he now beholds, who thinks that Christianity has spent all its energies in producing the mediocrity of virtue which now characterizes Christendom, and to whom the ordinary Christian has reached the

climax in the development of Christian experience and character, has no call to the ministry. The minister indeed ought to see and feel more painfully than other men the extent and power of evil in individuals, in the church and in the world, and to weep over the ravages of sin. But he ought also to feel that the mightiest power of the universe is on his side as a preacher of truth and holiness. With sorrow and fear therefore let him join an unfaltering faith in the cause of salvation. Let him remember that he is not acting alone in this arduous but delightful work, but that he is acting in union with God and Christ and angels. The apostle says we are "God's fellow workers." Let him remember, too, that the spiritual renovation of mankind is God's chief purpose for which nature, providence, and grace are leagued in holy co-operation, and then speaking and acting with a faith becoming this sublime association, he will not speak and act in vain.

The successful ministry will be animated by that frame or sentiment in which the love of God, the love of man, and the love of duty, meet in their highest result -- the spirit of self-sacrifice. Espousing Christianity as the chief hope of the human race, the ministry must contemn life's ordinary interests compared with the glory and happiness of advancing this divine cause. This will throw into the preacher an energy which nothing else can give. Such power resides in disinterestedness, that no man can understand his full capacity of thought and feeling -- his strength to do and suffer -- until he gives himself with a single heart to this great and holy cause. New faculties seem to be created and more than human might is imparted by a pure and fervent love. Most preachers, however, are probably strangers to the resources of disinterestedness as a power within them, because of the dominance of selfishness.

It will be seen in the following pages, that William Bramwell, as a minister of the gospel, measured up to the standard laid down in these introductory remarks. His eminent usefulness was not the result of exceptional natural and acquired intellectuality, but of exceptional devotion, self-sacrifice and faith in the co-operation of God with him in the exercise of his ministry.

* * * * *

01 -- EARLY YEARS

The subject of this memoir was born near the village of Elswick, in Lancashire county, England, in the second month of the year [February,] 1759. He was the tenth in a family of eleven children. His father, George Bramwell, owned and worked a small farm. The fact of his possessing this small real estate placed him in the general estimation of the public in what is known as the "Middle Class" of English Society.

His parents were warmly attached to the Church of England (Protestant Episcopal) and were scrupulously exact in attending its services with all their family every Sunday whatever might be the state of the weather. A rigid adherence to the outward observance of church ceremonies and religious duties was the highest standard of their piety: and their children could not be guilty of a graver offense than to absent themselves from the church service or going to the "meeting house" of another denomination. Beyond this, their idea of true religion had never extended. Though in love with the form of godliness, they were without the power. They did not perceive the necessity of spiritual regeneration, and of the constant communications of the divine Spirit.

Perhaps they were not altogether to blame for this. For the gospel light which the Reformation had introduced into England was now well nigh obscured by a spiritual darkness which threatened to envelop the whole land, and the spiritual guides were too often but "blind leaders of the blind." Mr. Bramwell's native country was among the most benighted in England, for its population were largely Romanists. And many of the Protestants, without possessing greater spiritual light considered their name "Protestant" a test of true religion and a passport to final salvation.

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02 -- HIS BOYHOOD

Young William imbibed a profound veneration for the Lord's day from his parents, and part of the required duties of that holy day was the regular perusal of God's holy word. This excellent habit led to his becoming a good textuary, so that when preaching in after years, he could with the utmost ease, quote the Scriptures in proof and illustration of his teaching. At the early age of seven, he had powerful convictions of sin and he deeply felt the necessity of a change of heart. These convictions never left him till he was soundly converted to God in his early manhood. Singing was a delightful exercise to young Bramwell from infancy. And having a flue [The meaning of "flue" here is obscure; perhaps the meaning is that his voice was somewhat like a flue-pipe, an organ pipe into which the air enters directly, not striking a reed. -- DVM] mellow voice, well adapted to sacred music, he was early instructed in church psalmody by the members of the choir with whom his vocal powers had made him a favorite. While yet a child, he had a place assigned him in the choir and was elevated on a stool so that his voice might be heard by the whole congregation. His subsequent excessive exertions as a preacher, robbed his voice of its early sweetness in song.

His education was such as the school facilities of his native village afforded, and which was then considered up-to-date for a young man of his social position. But poor and meager, indeed, for our day. The mental furnishings then required to fit such young persons for their life work, were not numerous, and yet but few could acquire even all of these. Hence, for the work of the ministry to which young Bramwell was afterward called his early education was exceedingly limited. But so sedulously did he subsequently apply himself to remedy this defect, that in time, he acquired an extensive acquaintance with the arts and sciences, a knowledge of French and the ability to read the Scriptures in their original language. In order to familiarize himself with the Hebrew, he at one time wrote his journal in that language.

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03 -- BUSINESS LIFE

When nearly sixteen years of age he was sent to the city of Liverpool to learn a mercantile business with his oldest brother, who was established there. He remained there, however, but a short time, because he feared the danger of his being drawn into the seductive whirlpool of pleasure in that gay and dissipated sea-port, and he had determined that nothing should hinder him from gaining the higher object of his eternal salvation. He did not yet know the power of divine

grace to preserve him faithful and incorrupt while following an honest calling, however many and great the temptations around him might be. Yet to the end of his life, he believed had he remained there much longer, it would have proved his eternal ruin; and he never ceased to express his gratitude to God, for the course he was led to take.

He next went to the city of Preston to learn the business of a currier. [currier = a person who dresses and colors tanned leather. Etymology ME f. OF corier, f. L coriarius f. corium leather -- Oxford Dict.] The strict regard for truth and honesty, which his parents had inculcated in him, now began to bear fruit. For he had not been here long, when the salesman, on finding a customer hesitate to take his word for the good quality of some leather, which was more glowing than truth would warrant, appealed to William to corroborate his testimony. But to his surprise, he said, "No, sir, the quality of that leather is not as good as you have represented it." This was soon circulated, and not only was his virtue honored and his character for veracity established, but a large increase of custom resulted to his employer. Nor did he hesitate to acquaint his employer of malpractices among his fellow apprentices, fearless of the retaliation which the delinquents might visit upon him. Thus the master was convinced that William was an invaluable help, and that his every act would be performed with a view to his interest.

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04 -- HIS PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE UNDER DIFFICULTY

He seized every opportunity to increase his knowledge of divine things. The ardor and soul of his mind in this respect could not escape the observation of anyone who knew him. After retiring to his room he studied till far into the night. On this being discovered, his employer with whom he boarded, would allow him no more candles in the evening. But this did not hinder his pursuit of knowledge, but only made him more careful to devote every moment of leisure during daylight, to his beloved Bible and other books of instruction. Besides this, after the family were retired to rest he would lie near the hearth and by the remnant of the fire, he would read as long as the coals afforded any light. This he considered one of the greatest privations he ever endured, and always urged others to make diligent use of their privileges and opportunities.

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05 -- UNDER CONVICTION FOR SIN

One Sunday evening while returning from his parental home at Elswick, suddenly and forcibly their great kindness to him, was brought to his recollection, and he began to reflect with shame and confusion on his numerous acts of disobedience and ingratitude toward them. He was so overpowered at the view which memory recalled that he fell down on his knees in the road and cried aloud to God to be merciful to his transgressions and pardon them. On reaching his chamber he rolled on the floor in an agony of mind like one distracted. This state of mind continued for some time both night and day without intermission. He was so deeply humbled at the sight of his conduct, that he could not be satisfied till at the earliest opportunity, he returned home to confess his offenses to his parents, and to crave their forgiveness. His father -- who considered him one of the most dutiful of sons -- could not comprehend the wherefore [the reason] of the depth and

power of these convictions and was surprised and astonished at them. "What have you done, my dear." said he, "to lay these heavy charges against yourself? You have not murdered anybody." He assured him that so far from having been undutiful and neglectful, he had done nothing which required a parent's forgiveness. With this consoling assurance he returned to Preston greatly relieved in spirit, and firmly resolved to live a life devoted to God.

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06 -- HIS REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD

His repentance toward God was deep and sincere, and he sought every occasion of putting it to the proof by frequent acts of self-mortification, fasting and prayer. He adopted some of the most ascetic and severe methods of mortification of the flesh, reminding him of his sins and humbling himself on account of them. He would often rise at midnight when the family were asleep, steal down to the kitchen, sprinkle a corner of the floor with the roughest sand he could find, and then kneel on his bare knees for hours, in fervent supplication for the pardon of his sins. When allowed a holiday, instead of spending it in carnal pleasure and worldly amusement, he retired to the woods, and there remained till evening, calling upon the Lord with his voice. In this frame of mind he would sometimes wander from Preston to Elswick, ten miles, after the labor of the day, and slowly return the same night without rest or refreshment. And yet, he was always ready to commence work on time the next morning. He attended the Episcopal Church services, with the most scrupulous regularity, and he showed his genuine zeal for the honor of God and his hatred of sin, by reproving it at all seasons and in every company.

His constitution, though naturally robust, was unequal to the severe inward conflict, and the added penitential bodily torture persisted in for many months. His health began to fail, his strength to wane and his countenance to grow pale. His friends observed the latter indication, and were concerned for him. Two physicians were called to diagnose his case. But they could not satisfactorily account for the emaciation of his body, and called the indiscernible cause of it "a nervous complaint." But God, who is rich in mercy, shortly afterward effected a great deliverance for him and he was healed in body and spirit.

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07 -- HE EXPERIENCES JUSTIFICATION

Having prepared himself by much prayer and self-examination for worthily partaking of the Lord's Supper, and while in the act of receiving it from the hands of the man of God under whose ministry he had greatly profited, he obtained a clear sense of pardon and his spirit rejoiced in God his Savior. Glory to Jesus! A sense of guilt and condemnation, together with darkness and gloom were at once removed in a manner incomprehensible to him, and his soul was blessed in a manner utterly beyond all that he had been led to expect or desire. The height of his joy was equaled only by the previous depth of his sorrow. He testified in every way his unfeigned gratitude to Him who had made him glad with the light of his countenance.

Influenced by this principle, he reproved sin in all places and the commission of it vexed his soul. He suffered neither rich nor poor, young nor old to escape reproof when he perceived anything in their spirit or conduct that was culpable. If any young persons swore in his presence, he affectionately reproved them, and if they still did so, he endeavored to buy them off from profanity with money. He thus induced many to promise that they would no more utter oaths and imprecations. In the same spirit he often followed depraved men into saloons and dissuaded them from their ungodly ways. In fact he was always instant in season and out of season, in working for the Master who had so mercifully brought him "out of darkness into marvelous light."

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08 -- THE YOUNG CONVERT FEELS LONESOME

At this critical period he walked alone in the ways of God and he felt it was not good for him to be alone. But what could he do? None of his friends appeared to be in earnest for the same blessings which he enjoyed. He knew of nothing better than to associate with the church choristers. He thought that no company of men on earth approached so near in their spirit and employment to the heavenly choirs, as these. To unite with them in celebrating the high praises of God appeared to him -- artless as he then was -- the best way of gratifying his pious feelings. This plan he heartily followed, and was constant in his attendance as one of the choir.

But these persons proved to be most unfit companions for one, who, like him, would exercise himself unto godliness; for levity and mirth was their peculiar delight when not immediately engaged in the service of the church. They also frequented places other than the church. To perfect themselves in their various parts, they considered, it necessary for the whole fraternity to assemble regularly in a large room in an ale-house. By gradually imbibing the spirit and habits of these new associates, Mr. Bramwell almost imperceptibly lost the comfort and happiness out of his heart; his religious feelings became dull and languid; and in this uncomfortable frame of mind he passed nearly three months. Reader, be warned by this, and take heed to your choice of companions if you are a seeker after God and a follower of Christ.

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09 -- BRAMWELL BECOMES A METHODIST

To this time he had neither heard a Methodist preacher nor attended any of their meetings. He was prejudiced against them, but yet, not so much as his parents were, whose antipathy was deep and inveterate. His father had exacted a promise from him not to attend the preaching of the Methodists, and he had warned all of his family against any connection with such a despicable community. He considered them an infatuated and deceiving body of people -- in fact, wolves in sheep's clothing. Hence no wonder that though strongly and often solicited by his friend Roger Crane, who was a member of the Methodist Society in Preston, to hear a Methodist preacher, he always declined the invitation. This good man, having heard that Mr. Bramwell was so much in earnest for the salvation of his soul as to be almost beside himself, took pains to become acquainted with him and gain his confidence, and this after an interchange of many visits ripened into a strong and mutual attachment. Such an intimacy was peculiarly pleasing and profitable to

Mr. Bramwell and he perfectly acquiesced in all the religious views and statements of his more experienced companion. The persistent refusal of Mr. Bramwell to accompany his friend to hear a Methodist preacher, at length, caused a shyness between them; their interviews became less frequent, and in the end their intimacy ceased for nearly six months, during which time the alluring habits and maxims of the world most insensibly stole upon him, and a second time he lost the sensible comfort of communion with God out of his soul. However, Mr. Crane sought the renewal of their friendship by once more requesting the pleasure of his company to hear a Methodist preacher. This time Bramwell cheerfully assented, and went to the meeting. On returning therefrom, Mr. Crane asked him how he liked the sermon "O!" said he, his eyes beaming with joy, "this is the kind of preaching which I have long wanted to hear, these are the people with whom I am resolved to live and die." He went again and began to meet in class and was soon afterward admitted into the society.

About this time Mr. Wesley visited Preston and on being introduced to Mr. Bramwell, he said, "Well brother! can you praise God?" Mr. Bramwell replied, "No, Sir!" Mr. Wesley lifted up his hands and replied smilingly, "Well, perhaps you will tonight" And so it came to pass, for that very night he found the comfort he had lost and he was again enabled to rejoice in the Lord. He soon received a clearer manifestation of the love of God, and was more fully established than ever in grace. His desire for the salvation of sinners was intense, and this impelled him to labor for this end in season and out of season. Five o'clock morning prayer meetings were established by his efforts; he became a class-leader; and he also began to exhort sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

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10 -- HOW HIS PARENTS REGARDED IT

After the expiration of their son's apprenticeship, his parents removed to Preston for the sole purpose of enjoying, without interruption, the society and converse of William, for whose religious character they entertained the highest esteem. But they were greatly mortified when they found that he had begun to meet with the despised Methodists. They were so much exasperated that they threatened to let him have no money to enable him to commence business. This however did not trouble him, for he had learned that if he would be an approved disciple of Christ, it might be at sometime, absolutely necessary to forsake both father and mother. Yet he was very desirous of their spiritual welfare; therefore, he continually urged on them the necessity of a change of heart. And he had a strong and rational ground to hope, toward the close of their lives that his labors had not been in vain.

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11 -- HE EXPERIENCES THE SECOND WORK OF GRACE

Having experienced the pardoning mercy of God, he walked in the fear of the Lord and enjoyed the Comfort of the Holy Ghost. That he might more clearly perceive what was his Christian calling, and enjoy all the salvation purchased by the blood of Christ, he regularly perused the Book of God and implored divine illumination. Being obedient to the teachings of the

Spirit, it was not long before he was convinced of the necessity of a further work of grace upon his heart. He now saw that it was his privilege to be cleansed from all sin. In relating the manner in which he received this great blessing of Entire Sanctification, he said, "I was for some time deeply sensible of my need of heart purity, and sought it carefully with tears and entreaties and sacrifice, thinking nothing too much to give up, to do or to suffer -- if I might but attain this priceless experience. Yet I found it not, nor knew the reason why till the Lord showed me that I had erred in the way of seeking it. I did not seek it by faith alone, but as it were, by the works of the law. Being now convinced of my error I now sought it by faith only. Still it tarried a little, but I waited for it in the way of faith. When in the house of a friend in Liverpool, whither I had gone to settle some business, I was sitting with my mind engaged in various meditations concerning my temporal affairs and future prospects in the ministry, my heart now and then lifted up to God, but not particularly about this blessing -- heaven came down to earth -- it came to my soul. The Lord for whom I had waited came suddenly to the temple of my heart, and I had an immediate evidence that this was the blessing I had been seeking for some time. My soul was then all wonder, love and praise. It is now about twenty-six years ago. I have walked in this liberty ever since. Glory be to God I have been kept by His power, by faith I stand."

"In this, as in all other instances, I have proved the devil to be a liar -- he suggested to me a few minutes after I received this blessing, that I should not hold it long -- it was too great to be retained -- and that I had better not profess it. I walked fifteen miles that night to a place where I was to preach; and at every step I trod the temptation was repeated, 'Do not profess Sanctification, for thou wilt lose it.' But in preaching that night the temptation was removed and my soul was again filled with glory and with God. I then declared to the people what God had done for my soul; and I have done so on every proper occasion since that time, believing it to be a duty incumbent upon me. For God does not impart blessings to his children to be concealed in their bosoms, but to be made known to all who fear him and are desirous to enjoy the same privileges. I think such a blessing cannot be retained without professing it at every fitting opportunity for thus "Ye glorify God and make confession unto Salvation."

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12 -- HE IS APPOINTED A LOCAL PREACHER

Among the Methodists it was customary for farmers, business men, and mechanics, who had the qualifying gifts and graces, to be appointed local preachers as distinguished from the regular itinerant preachers who were called out of the ranks of the local ministry and who were wholly devoted to the work of evangelizing. Very soon after Mr. Wesley's visit, referred to earlier, Mr. Bramwell was appointed a local preacher. But he had frequent struggles concerning his call to the ministry, and the matter lay with such weight upon his mind that he would spend considerable portions of the night in prayer, wrestling with God for divine direction concerning this important subject. He once spent thirty-six hours together in a large sand hole under a hill on Preston-Moor that he might know the will of God concerning him. His agony on these occasions was so great that the sweat frequently poured down his face. And so exquisite was his perplexity of mind concerning his duty that he was heard to exclaim, "What shall I do?"

Although he was thus the subject of much anxiety and temptation yet he did not hesitate to take up the appointed work. Fully did he prove the truth of Luther's statement, that "prayer, meditation, and temptation are needful to make a good minister of the gospel." He was not satisfied with laboring to save souls in Preston but he preached throughout its neighborhood visiting most of the surrounding villages, covering a considerable portion of the county. And in doing so, he met with violent opposition and persecution, so that he might be truly said to have gone with his life in his hand. This may partly account for some of his inward struggles in the prospect of taking up the work.

But once committed to it, he spared neither exertion nor expense. He sometimes paid, what with us would be in value about as much as five dollars, for the hire of a horse, and on the Sabbath rode forty or fifty miles, preaching three or four times, and that very often in the open. But it was his usual practice to walk on these occasions. Under his preaching multitudes were awakened and convicted of sin, many of whom received the knowledge of acceptance with God. Ann Cutler was one of the earliest fruits of these village labors. She became a woman remarkable for holiness of character and prevalence in prayer. Her name became a household word in Methodism, and she was familiarly called "Praying Nanny."

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13 -- HIS CALL TO THE ITINERANCY

Mr. Bramwell was so much blessed in his labors in and around Preston as a local preacher, that it was the unanimous sentiment of the church that he was fitting for a much more extended sphere of usefulness in the itinerancy. Indeed he was powerfully persuaded of this in his own mind. On this account for four years after he was free from his apprenticeship he purposely abstained from commencing business for himself, although an advantageous opportunity had presented itself. During the whole of this period, he had been most zealously engaged in introducing the doctrines and discipline of Methodism into many of the benighted and uncivilized districts around Preston, and that entirely at his own charges. He now received a call from Mr. Wesley to assist as an itinerant on the Liverpool circuit. But his friends at Preston represented to Mr. Wesley that the work of God was so increasing in and around that city, that his services were particularly required there for its furtherance. Hence he returned to Preston to the great joy of those who knew him best, and had felt the power of his preaching.

He now thought his lot determined, and that he was providentially settled in Preston. He therefore took a store and commenced business with flattering prospects of success in the acquisition of a fortune. He was engaged to marry a young lady -- one of his early converts; he was surrounded by his family connections; his parents were less bigoted and more lenient toward Methodism, even manifesting something like esteem for it, and everything concurred to invite him to settle down, make money and enjoy himself among his friends.

But this was not to be. For not many months after he had commenced business, Dr. Coke wrote him several times and earnestly requested him to give up business, become an itinerant preacher and travel the Kent county circuit. This was a most important crisis in his life. He earnestly sought direction from Heaven and consulted his Christian friends. At length believing that

he was called of God to devote himself entirely to the work of the ministry, he no longer hesitated, but immediately wound up his business, purchased a horse and a pair of saddle bags and set out for the Kent Circuit in the winter of 1785 -- a distance of about three hundred miles. He was now in the twenty-sixth year of his age

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14 -- HIS ENTRANCE UPON THE ITINERANCY

When Mr. Bramwell reached the city of Canterbury -- which seems to have been the headquarters of the Kent Circuit, he found the Methodist Society in a languishing condition. But his entrance into the circuit with that man of God, Thomas Shadford, was the precursor of such a revival as had not been witnessed for many years. Mr. Bramwell adopted from Mr. Shadford a plan of more extensive usefulness and devotedness to God; and though he afterward studied the lives of eminent ministers, and particularly that of Thomas Walsh, yet he never found anything that would enable him to improve upon the method suggested by his venerable colleague.

The people regarded Mr. Bramwell as a messenger of God, and expressed an earnest wish that those preachers who should afterward labor among them might always manifest the same zeal, love, and disinterestedness in the Savior's cause.

Though his labors were crowned with signal success, yet was he often depressed in spirit, and tempted to leave the work. But through God's grace and the counsel of a judicious friend, he took courage and went forward, trusting in the Lord. This was during the first year of his itinerancy. He did not spare himself but was abundant in labors. He delighted in his sacred calling, and from the success which attended his preaching, he was encouraged to "do the work of an evangelist and make full proof of his ministry" with increased earnestness.

An event, apparently miraculous in character, happened at the close of this conference year, which left no room for reasonings and unbelief, and which fully convinced him that he was called of God to this ministry. It appears that when in compliance with Dr. Coke's entreaties he consented to give up his business and take a circuit, it was stipulated that he should not be required to wait the usual period of probation before his marriage. Dr. Coke also promised him that he would use his influence with Mr. Wesley for his appointment to the Blackburn circuit which included the town of Preston, the home of his prospective wife, and where it was necessary that she should remain for some time after their marriage until certain domestic and temporal affairs were regulated and finally settled. Instead of this, however, a Mr. Burbeck was appointed to Blackburn and Mr. Bramwell to a distant circuit, and hence was on account of circumstances compelled to locate. But see how God works -- he "moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

The conference for the preceding year, 1786, appointed Joshua Keighly and Edward Burbeck to labor in the Inverness circuit. When approaching within two miles of Keith, in the dusk of the evening about sunset, they beheld some twenty yards before them, a dark shade, like a screen, drawn across the road. They took courage and rode up to it, when it divided and opened like a two-leaf gate, and, as they passed through it an audible voice said, "You may pass on to your

circuit, but you shall never return to England." This prediction was actually accomplished in the death of these two holy men in the course of the year. For about the time of the sitting of the next conference, Mr. Keighly was stricken with brain fever and died the eighth day. The people of Elgin lamented his death for his preaching and holy conversation had been made a blessing unto many. Mr. Burbeck remained on his circuit, till he received his appointment for the Blackburn circuit. He seemed anxious to get away that he might defeat the prediction. On his way to Keith, however, and within about four miles of that village, he was taken ill, carried thither, and died the ninth day. A more pious, sincere and upright minister, the church but seldom sees. Mr. Burbeck's trunk arrived at Blackburn and the stewards were in daily expectations of seeing him. Instead of which, they received the intelligence that he had died in Scotland, en route to his appointed circuit. How mysterious a providence is this; especially when the preceding circumstances are considered!

The Blackburn stewards wrote Mr. Wesley, informing him that they were without a preacher on account of Mr. Burbeck's death. He in reply, requested Mr. Bramwell to take the circuit and labor in Mr. Burbeck's place. In the whole of these happenings it is easy to trace the footsteps of the Almighty, who is never at a loss to accomplish His own infinitely wise and gracious purposes, by a thousand wondrous ways to foolish man unknown.

Mr. Bramwell was now fully persuaded that he was called of God to this ministry, and instantly entered upon the work to which he was so mysteriously and wonderfully assigned. The Methodists at Blackburn received him as a messenger of the Lord. He left his wife at Preston while he labored on the circuit. How long the periods of his absence from her were, the record does not show. But the next circuit, on which he traveled two years, was large in extent and he was frequently thirty miles from home, and was never at home except one night in the course of every six weeks. Thus his wife, who had left her home and friends to reside among strangers, instead of enjoying the society of her husband by way of compensation, was called to endure all those privations to which the wives of the preachers were subjected in the commencement of Methodism.

Mr. Bramwell, having entered upon the marriage state with one who was in every respect suitable for him, did not, like too many, relax his zealous exertions and become remiss in the fulfillment of his calling. But while he manifested the greatest kindness to her who shared largely in his affections, he seemed to feel the force of the words of the inspired Paul, "It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that rejoice be as though they rejoiced not; for the fashion of this world passeth away." On his return home from the circuit his first inquiries in general were concerning spiritual things. He evinced the strongest desire to promote the spiritual interests of a wife whom he ardently loved. Whenever he was about to leave her to go the round of his circuit, he uniformly commended her to God in earnest prayer.

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15 -- MR. BRAMWELL AS A PREACHER

The opinion has been too prevalent that if a minister enters heartily in revival work, if he encourage prayer meetings and exhort plain people to unite with him in carrying on the work of

God, that this is transparent evidence of his being a person of only ordinary abilities and attainments. Now, were these sentiments actually correct -- which they are not -- it would only prove that the Lord is pleased at times to choose "the foolish ones in the estimation of the world to confound the wise."

But the sentiment is extremely erroneous. It was so in Mr. Bramwell's case. With good natural ability, he had an extensive acquaintance with the arts and sciences, could read the Scriptures in the original languages, besides having a good knowledge of the French tongue. And these acquisitions, which, through divine grace, rendered him so useful a minister of the gospel, were the result of years of toil and study.

He was considered a good sermonizer, and never preached without a plan or order of arrangement. But they who did not attend closely to his enunciation could not readily perceive his divisions -- the formality of which he always despised. Hence some inconsiderate ones regarded his discourses as rhapsodies without connection. That he had good natural talent was evident, but he had entirely abandoned the wish to shine -- the achievement of the most consummate victory over the flesh which he, or any other minister ever obtained. His ardor for the salvation of sinners, and the assistance which he received from the Holy Spirit, frequently exalted him above all formal preachers. It was his one aim and ambition to be a soul-winner. He subordinated every other wish to this. He saw that the human heart remained unchanged under the most studied harangues and the most eloquent orations. He therefore scorned oratorical flourishes and ornamentation as destructive of the simplicity of the gospel. The weapons he chose to wield in preference, were those mighty arms of faith and prayer with directness and plainness of speech.

His sentiments on this subject of preaching may be best understood from one of his letters to a younger preacher: "Labor," said he, "to show yourself approved as a preacher. I would labor night and day to have good sermons. But take care that your one end in all your labor and study be to save souls. Keep this end in view. There is too much ambition now to be popular. It was said of one man at the conferences that he labored for an hour to make the preachers and people think that he knew something. Oh, poor laborer! Are not members now thus laboring? I see them, and I see they accomplish nothing. How shall such give account to God? There never was a time when we preachers had greater need to tremble."

To another, he writes, "I want you to be a preacher -- a work which makes me even to the present time tremble in the presence of God. It is quite possible for us to make this a worldly business, and it may become so formal as to create in us no more concerns than any common business in life. Shall the Lord ordain us to this heavenly calling, and send us forth on this errand to save sinners from everlasting damnation? Shall he endow us with the Spirit of zeal and power to this end? And shall we after all, lose the Spirit of our calling? How can we then give in our account? How shall we stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Nothing less than the improvement of time, talents and opportunity can give us the least show in that day. I am persuaded that nothing can support us but that Almighty power that raised Jesus from the dead. Consider this my brother, and give yourself to reading and prayer -- I say GIVE yourself to these. Be a man of God in spirit, word and deed. In preaching never be tedious: the world never did, and never will bear with what is tedious. Let your sermon be clear and strong, reaching every heart. Save yourself and them that hear you. Have no end in view but the bringing of souls to God. Strive to bring some

home in every sermon. This will cure almost everything. God will then be with you and give you the desire of your heart."

Mr. Bramwell was himself an eminent living embodiment of these sentiments. His method of preaching was peculiar to himself. Sometimes he made choice of very singular passages from the prophets, such as: Isaiah, vi. 1-5; Isa., xliii. 1, 2; Isa., 11. 9-11 Isa., liii. 1, 2; Isa., lviii, 11, 12; Jer., xiv. 7-9; Lam., iii. 31-39; Mic., iv. 13. The metaphors of the inspired penman were also applied in a remarkable manner to every individual, either as a private character or as a member of a Christian community. On one occasion it was said of him, "None but Mr. Bramwell could have preached from such a text."

Says one who often heard him, "Mr. Bramwell's method of preaching had considerable variety in it. Ingenious and clear in his ideas, he had always something new, and never preached two sermons alike. No one accustomed to hearing him could remember a barren season. It was impossible to hear him without being benefited. Though he accounted it the alpha and omega of his ministry to alarm sinners in their carnal security, and to instruct believers in righteousness, that they might be made perfect -- and in each of these departments he was excellent -- yet in carrying his intentions into effect, he often introduced some agreeable mode of illustration especially among the poor people in country places.

"I remember to have heard him preach an excellent sermon from Micah, iv. 13. 'Arise and thresh O daughter of Zion! For I will make thine horn iron, and thine hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people, etc.' In an easy and familiar style he explained his text by informing his audience that grain was threshed among the Orientals by means of oxen and horses, which were driven round an area filled with loose sheaves, and by their continued trampling the grain was separated from the straw. That this might be done the more effectually the text promised, in addition to the natural horny substance of the feet of these animals, iron horns and brazen hoofs. 'But,' said he, 'as I am preaching to Englishmen who beat out the grain with a flail, I conceive that I am doing no violence to the sentiment of my text if I change a few of the metaphors with those which are the most familiar to you. He then assumed that the whole portrayed gospel times, and that though in a more restricted sense, it applied to ministers of the gospel, yet it had a direct reference to ALL of the Lord's people, who are commanded to 'arise and thresh,' with the promise that they shall 'beat in pieces many people.' That they might perform for Him these services, for which their own feeble and unassisted powers were totally inadequate He will be on their side as a powerful helper, making their horn iron and their hoofs brass, giving them power, authority and unconquerable strength. In this way the Lord would impart stability and perpetuity to his own divine work. Besides, he added, it is encouraging to know that the saints are provided with weapons both offensive and defensive. The threshing instrument is of the former description. It is of the same quality as that which is said to be quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. The Son of God was manifest that he might destroy the works of the devil. An this is one of the weapons which he employs in the hands of His people to carry His gracious designs into execution. With this it is promised 'they shall beat in pieces many people.'

"In the course of his sermon he related, in the metaphorical style which his text sanctioned, many recent and remarkable instances of the successful application of the gospel flail. 'A few years ago,' said he, 'a zealous local preacher, small of stature, went to a neighboring town and with

this implement, in a most loving spirit began to thresh an assembly of ungodly men. When he had finished his work it was found that he had threshed the devil out of more than forty persons. And with the help of God I am resolved, O sinner, to try what effect the smart strokes of his threshing instrument will produce upon thine unhumiliated soul!"

"He proceeded to exhort his hearers with considerable ability, to assail sin wherever it appeared, and to attack it courageously with this powerful flail, the word of God. Such a weapon may seem contemptible in the eyes of the natural man; yet when it is properly wielded its consequences are invariably potent and salutary. I have known it in the hands of a feeble woman to bring her husband to his right mind. Even little children in making trial of it have caused their parents to cry aloud for mercy. But its heavenly charm and virtue depends on the mode in which it is applied, which should always be in a kind and loving spirit.

"I highly approved of the ingenious turn which he gave this Scriptural metaphor; for his bold and energetic language was most edifying, yet I know that many persons of frivolous minds, and others who were confirmed scoffers attended our meetings for the sole purpose of carrying away everything which they could turn into ridicule. I therefore trembled lest the uncommon things which the preacher said, should become capital for scorners and furnish a fund of laughter for their wicked companions.

"But my apprehensions at once subsided when at the close of his address he made a sudden pause, and said with a grave countenance, and in a tone of voice the most solemn and impressive, 'If any person goes from this place and attempts to scoff at the word of truth which he has heard, or the use which I have made of it, he does so at the peril of his soul. In the name of God, I here charge that person to answer for such an act of profanation at the bar of the great Judge of quick and dead!' This warning was well timed and its effects were most surprising, for though in that place, as in other villages, there are some who were 'buffoons general' in the low arts of foolish jesting, yet no one ventured to make the least unfavorable allusion to this very singular discourse."

Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway
And fools who came to scoff remained to pray."

He never would address a lazy, insensible company. He would neither allow children to cry during the time of divine service, nor any one to look round at the door and gaze on passing objects. If they did not appear inclined to give him their undivided attention, he would instantly quit, accounting it not as a mark of personal disrespect to himself, but as a sort of contemptuous insolence toward the gospel of God whose mouth-piece he was. It was his expressed determination not to preach to a people who trifled with the word of God. This commendable practice produced a degree of solemnity in the people that much assisted him in producing the impressions which he wished to make.

One idea generally prevailed in some mode or other, and formed the basis of almost all his discourses -- that every Christian man should stand in his place, filled with the Spirit of God and thus be qualified for the performance of every duty. How powerful was his call! "Preachers, leaders! prayer-leaders and people!" And sometimes his zeal was so great that not an officer of any kind escaped his notice. "Singers and ushers!" resounded through the chapel. "Suffer me, suffer

me," he would often repeat. So importunate was he, and yet so feeling, that he often returned to the charge, "Bear with me O, bear with me!" cried he. So impressive were his calls to enter into the fullness of every gospel privilege, that every head has often been bowed down, and hundreds pricked to the heart.

The fervor of his spirit when in the pulpit, often led him into an involuntary poetic strain, little inferior to those celebrated blank verse compositions, "Night Thoughts," which have made the name of Dr. Young so renowned. "I did think at such times," says one, "that he had composed some piece which described the warfare and triumph of a Christian, and that he was quoting himself. This mode of delivery was of frequent occurrence."

It may be mentioned in this connection, that an aged Lutheran minister, named Trieburn, frequently listened to Mr. Bramwell when stationed in Hull. A friend one day asked him how he liked Mr. Bramwell's preaching, and possibly anticipating an objection, said, "Does he not often wander from his subject?" "Yes," replied the venerable minister, "he do wander most delightfully from de subject to de heart." No better encomium [encomium = a formal or high-flown expression of praise. -- Oxford Dict.] could have been passed upon a gospel preacher.

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16 -- THE SUBJECT MATTER OF HIS PREACHING

The subject matter of his preaching was not a confused mass of theological matter so jumbled together that no one could discover its meaning. No, but it was a masterly and succinct setting forth of the leading doctrines of our holy Christianity, such as the attributes of divine justice, love and mercy; the fall of man in the first Adam; free grace; the redemption that is in Christ; and reconciliation with God through faith in His blood, and consequent justification of the sinner from the guilt of sin and the condemnation of the divine law, together with the inwrought works of regeneration and sanctification.

It was his decided conviction that the terrors of the law should be held over the sinner's head in preaching in order to make him sick of sin; feel the need of Christ and appreciate him as a Savior. He believed that where this was omitted or slurred over in preaching the resultant Christianity was defective. He studied mankind in man [himself] as well as in books and was acquainted with the workings of the human heart, and was not ignorant of the devices of Satan. Consequently in preaching he wielded a two-edged sword that penetrated to the very heart's core.

He preached Christ the crucified, risen, ascended and glorified One, as the only Savior appointed for men, and faith in Him as the great duty enjoined in the gospel. He showed distinctly who were the proper subjects of saving faith -- such, and such only as in obedience to the command of God honestly repent of their sins, and earnestly attempt to believe in Christ as their personal Savior -- these he declared are enabled by the operation of divine grace to believe, and to receive instantly the answer of faith -- the consciousness of acceptance with God in regeneration and the Spirit's witness to the soul that such is the fact. He made it distinctly to appear, that though salvation has unlimited degrees, yet it has two leading characteristics -- JUSTIFICATION and SANCTIFICATION -- the one what God does for us, and the other what He does in us; that as we

cannot be justified from the guilt of past offenses, but by faith in the gospel promise, so we cannot be entirely sanctified but by a further exercise of that same faith; that the fulfillment of the promise by or to faith, is always instantaneous; and that such faith in powerful operation is ever to be distinguished from that gracious habit of mind wherein we stand and walk and overcome the world.

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17 -- HOLINESS AS A SECOND WORK OF GRACE

Holiness as a second work of grace was his constant and favorite theme. He maintained that a justified believer is a babe in Christ, and only a babe. He insisted that it was necessary for this incipient Christian to hold fast the beginning of his confidence without wavering and to go on to Christian perfection -- perfection in love -- the entire destruction of sin in the heart and its complete renewal in holiness and the moral image of God. In writing to a correspondent, he said, "An idea is going forth, that when we are justified we are entirely sanctified; and to feel evil nature after justification is evidence of the loss of pardon. You may depend upon it, this is the devil's great gun, with which we shall have much trouble. He proclaimed a full and a present salvation through faith in the Redeemer's blood. He so preached this doctrine as to manifest that he himself was habitually grounded and settled in the experience of it. He raised the standard of Christian experience in holiness as high as the Scriptures do, and yet so as to place it within the reach of every justified person. He gave them no rest till they sought with all the heart to be entirely sanctified, knowing that they were in danger of counting their steps back again to the hole of the pit whence they were digged if they did not go in for possessing the "fullness of the blessings of the gospel" salvation.

He faithfully admonished his hearers that conformity to the world, and inordinate love of riches opens avenues to a thousand snares, and that they are the great bane of Christian simplicity and holiness; that this [entire sanctification] is not a state of rest, but of labor; not of indulgence, but of self-denial and that these, if they spring from faith that works by love, are sure marks of Christian discipleship. "The reason," said he, "why many seek to be saved from the remains of the carnal mind, and sanctified wholly, and do not get the experience is because they have secretly backslidden, and thereby have forfeited their justified standing in the divine favor. If they were correctly acquainted with their own state, they would first seek to be justified again by faith in Christ."

It has been said with much truth that God justifies sinners in order that he may sanctify them, and then sanctifies them in order to keep them justified. It was said of Mr. Bramwell that "the grand object of his preaching was to get believers cleansed from all sin, sanctified wholly and perfected in love." And his ministry was as remarkable for the quickening and purifying of believers as for the awakening and justifying of the ungodly. In this he was faithful to God, to the Scriptures, and to the souls of those to whom he ministered. Thousands will bless God through eternity that they ever heard from his lips such a gospel.

To many incredulous minds who heard reports of this teaching, it had the ring of a "strange doctrine." They were, however, inclined to his meetings in the character of spies. But to their

surprise they found there "a feast of fat things full of marrow," and they became candidates for "holiness," received the experience and returned glorifying God.

Such were the doctrines which Mr. Bramwell continually pressed on his hearers. He urged them in some degree in almost every sermon, giving each their due attention according to the relative requirement

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18 -- THE POWER AND DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT ATTENDED HIS MINISTRATIONS

Whatever of prejudice may have preceded his appointment to a new charge, it was soon dispelled after his arrival and he came to be regarded as an eminent minister of the gospel. His ministrations were attended with such mighty power that the veil of ignorance was rent, the mask of hypocrisy torn off; the essential difference between the lifeless "form of godliness" and genuine Christianity was fully made to appear, and sinners saw their natural sinfulness and deformity as in a mirror and were deeply affected at the sight. The attention of the saints, too, was turned upon themselves in connection with their holy calling. Present effects were looked for; genuine Holy Ghost power was experienced and present effects were received. His sermons were attended with such mighty awakening and convicting power that several persons were generally in soul distress before their conclusion. Under his awakening appeals and persuasive invitations untold numbers trembled, believed and turned unto the Lord. The humble broken-hearted who were longing for God's salvation were encouraged Now to believe in Christ as a present and all-sufficient Savior and to share in the gladness of all that believe.

Says one who was accustomed to hear his preaching, "A divine authority and a gracious unction attended his words -- it was a kind of electric sensation, and it was felt by the whole assembly. I have often seen congregations of two thousand people so affected under his preaching as to be unable to restrain their feelings till tears came to their relief. Never did he preach with more energy, or with a greater measure of divine unction attending his words than when he pressed the Methodist -- nay the Christian -- doctrine of entire sanctification, the utter destruction of all inbeing evil and the restoration of the whole inward man to the moral likeness of God."

Nothing would satisfy him but to see the power of God revealed in the awakening and conversion of sinners. For this he wept and studied; fasted and prayed; preached and exhorted. Is it any wonder that a very general revival took place wherever he went as a pastor? After preaching, he often desired those who felt disposed to remain and unite with him in holding a prayer-meeting so that in general it was ten and eleven o'clock at night before they dispersed. One such occasion they continued for two hours praying for a person who was under conviction. All that were present prayed in rotation, but Mr. Bramwell prayed alternately with each one. While he was agonizing in prayer a powerful effusion of the Spirit descended upon them, at that moment the person in distress received a clear manifestation of the pardoning love of God. All present were deeply affected and not only were they, but the very room seemed filled with the divine glory and to tremble.

"I shall always remember the first covenant service," says one, "at which Mr. Bramwell presided in Nottingham. After others had spoken and offered prayer he engaged in prayer and so laid hold of the Almighty, as to prevail with Him for a blessing. The glory of God descended upon all present in such a manner as I never before experienced. Many were so affected that they could not descend the gallery stairs without assistance. That was the beginning of good days in Nottingham." His earnestness in preaching and his powerful and successful pleadings at the throne of grace soon attracted general attention. His powerful preaching and praying were so mighty through faith that the stoutest-hearted sinners trembled under them, and such were the glorious displays of divine power that a deep concern for salvation was manifested by all classes of society, and multitudes were delivered from the power of satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. About one thousand souls were added to the church during the first two of his three years' labors here. It should be mentioned that the Separatists had, just previous to Mr. Bramwell's coming, taken the large chapel, hence he and his co-laborers were obliged to assemble their congregations in a barn till another chapel could be erected. Yet, so did the work continue to increase that the new building had forthwith to be enlarged to make room for the increasing church and congregation.

During the first year of his labors in the city of Leeds there was an increase in the membership of three hundred and seventy-one. By the end of the second year of his labors on the Birstal circuit -- an exceedingly hard field -- there were five hundred additions. In Sheffield, during the first year twelve hundred and fifty souls were added to the Lord, and by the end of the second year the additions had increased to eighteen hundred! His pastorate at this place was a period of remarkable revival power. At a single love-feast, about one hundred persons were convicted for entire sanctification. Referring to this period of Mr. Bramwell's ministry, one contributor writes, "If ever I experienced Pentecostal seasons, those gracious and abundant manifestations of the Spirit which no language can describe, it was at this time when hundreds, if not thousands, were added to the church. I shall never forget the day when the hymn beginning,

"Angels now are hovering o'er us,
Unperceived among the throng."

was sung at Garden Street chapel, for if ever man was conscious, so far as humans can be, of the presence of supernatural beings, I was at that time. Many of those present felt and experienced unutterable things. There seemed to be but a thin veil between us and the invisible world; and we felt as though we had been admitted into the presence chamber of the Most High. But whether angels were there or not, of one thing I am well persuaded, that

"Heaven came down our souls to greet,
And glory crowned the mercy seat,"

while many were pressing their way through the straight gate into the kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And often was the spacious floor of the large Norfolk Street chapel clustered over with little groups of praying laborers surrounding a seeker, ready to administer the word of consolation, or to pray with a faith that shook the pillars of hell's kingdom and opened the gates of heaven!"

The life and zeal which dwelt in Mr. Bramwell kept him at the utmost distance from formality and tediousness. He observed that "slow singing, long praying, wearisome meetings, and late attendance at the means of grace were indubitable marks of a low state of grace." He did not confine himself to the ordinary routine of singing and praying once before and once after the sermon, but frequently called on two or three others to unite with him in supplication. At other times, when in the midst of his prayer, he would break forth into singing in a strong mellifluous voice, the large congregation at once uniting in the strain. To the beholder it was singularly impressive to witness a whole congregation and their minister singing in a kneeling posture. By such methods as these the impressions produced by the sermon were rendered much more effectual. And because he was eminently holy and faithful, the Most High was pleased to render the preaching of His servant effectual in an amazing and uncommon degree.

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19 -- HIS HABITUAL PRAYERFULNESS

When we inquire for the secret of his almost unparalleled success in soul-winning, it is not to be found in extraordinary public efforts such as are common at the present time: though his own individual public efforts were "extraordinary" in the highest sense when compared with the generality of preachers. The prime secret of his great usefulness was his habitual prayerfulness.

Says one who knew him well, "I attribute the greater portion of his usefulness in the ministry to his diligence in prayer. While closeted with the Omniscient One, he had the varied states of the people unveiled to him. This was the secret of his ability to dissect the mind and feelings of all his congregation and to touch the actual condition of every individual composing it, and to speak a word in season to each." He prayed much in private both by day and by night, and often continuing whole nights in the holy exercise of intercession. "I have been acquainted," says another, "with many pious and holy persons, but one like Mr. Bramwell, for faith and prayer, I never beheld. He was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." It was his regular practice to rise at four a. m. and devote the first hour to earnest intercession in behalf of his family, his friends, each class throughout the circuit, the church, the community, the world at large, and for a blessing on his own ministry. The next hour he attended the morning prayer-meeting. This is according to the testimony of many in whose homes he remained over night.

"One of the most constant effects," says one, "of Mr. Bramwell's residence in any place was the general spirit of prayer which he encouraged, the like of which was never before experienced in Methodism. Strong desires for the conversions of sinners, the destruction of sin, the advancement of holiness, the general spread of the gospel and for the coming of the latter-day glory, were felt and breathed by many individuals. They were answered by the Holy Spirit diffusing His own blessing and sealing the truth with His own power, so that the most sanguine hopes were entertained by the faithful that those great and blessed effects would extend throughout Christendom and into heathendom.

"How often," says one, "have we heard him wrestle in agonizing prayer for those in soul-distress. And when the obtained deliverance came, how his countenance shone with a heavenly radiance and his eyes sparkled like flames of fire; and his whole frame quivered with

animation. We have heard him say he felt as though he could lift the whole apostate race of man to God." The fervency of his prayers, the boldness and tenacity of his faith, and the ardor of his zeal were without parallels, save in Jesus and Paul.

A great revival occurred during the second year of his ministry at Dewsbury, to which circuit he was sent in 1791. The first year he described as "a year of hard labor and much grief." Previous to his advent there had been some unpleasant disputes among the membership. They divided, and the Separatists took the chapel and called another minister. As a consequence religious animosity and foolish bickering well nigh destroyed the religion of both parties. He says, "I could not find a person who experienced sanctification, and but few who were clear in pardon, and active religion scarcely appeared." He would neither speak evil nor hear it concerning anyone.

He began to supplicate the God of all grace, and he exhorted the people to unite with him in supplication for the revival of the work of God. He offered them more frequent opportunities for so doing by instituting prayer-meetings at five o'clock a. m. "As I was praying on one occasion in my room," says he, "I received an answer from God in a particular way, and had the revival discovered to me in its manner and effects. I had no more doubt All my grief was gone. I could now say the Lord will come. I know He will come and that suddenly. From his entrance upon this circuit his heart would have fainted in him unless he had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. But being a man strong in faith, he continued instant in prayer, waiting on the Lord, was of good courage, and the Lord strengthened his heart, and gave him his desire.

Ann Cutler, familiarly called "Praying Nannie," was led to come to Dewsbury. It was her constant practice to rise between three and four a. m. and wrestle with God for a revival. Mr. Bramwell was similarly engaged, as was his custom, in another appointment. They often relieved the burden of their souls by praying aloud and then it was well nigh impossible for anyone to sleep in the same house, or to be unrefreshed in spirit.

The blessed effects of these intercessions were soon apparent. "Nothing very particular appeared, till under Nanny Cutler's prayer, one person received a clean heart [and] we were confident the Lord would do the same for others. At another prayer-meeting two persons found peace with God; and in that week two others received the same benefit. On Sunday morning following we held a love-feast for the bands (before breakfast) when several were much concerned for sanctification. One received the blessing. On Monday evening the bands met; a remarkable spirit of prayer was given to the people. Four persons were wholly sanctified and some were left in distress. Several who were the most prejudiced were suddenly struck, and in agonies groaned for deliverance and on the Thursday one who had been in distress for heart purity for two weeks was cleansed from carnality.

"The work continued in almost every meeting till sixty persons received entire sanctification and walked in its liberty. Our love-feasts began to be crowded and people from every neighboring circuit visited us. Great numbers found pardon and some purity. These went home and declared what God had done for them. The work now began to spread in every direction. In one place about a hundred new members were added to the society, and many believers were quickened and excited to greater diligence and activity in the work of the Lord." The records do not give the total number of additions on this circuit, but it was large.

In the year 1793, Mr. Bramwell was removed from Dewsbury to Birstal circuit. A revival of the work of God had commenced in the preceding year under his predecessors. He did not use any extraordinary efforts here, but prayed much in private, sometimes whole nights, and exhorted all the saints to adopt the same practice. Realizing the inefficiency of the best concerted schemes without the blessing of God, he assured them that all these together could not avail without constant, fervent prayer, and he used long remembered arguments to prevail upon the people to unite with him in this important work. He said with an energy and feeling peculiar to himself, "I know a man that, on the bended knees of his body, prays for Birstal thirteen times a day: sometimes for hours together!"

What followed? "At the love-feast on Christmas day of that year [1793] the Lord poured out His Spirit in a very remarkable measure. Many persons were awakened and not less than fifty of them received the forgiveness of their sins. At the next love-feast, held on Easter Sunday, another fifty souls were brought out of darkness into light. From this time on, an extraordinary influence went forth and began to manifest itself among the people. Persons of every rank and class of society began to attend the preaching; all the chapels and the private houses on the circuit that were appropriated for the purpose were exceedingly crowded."

Mr. Bramwell sometimes held watch-nights in private houses, when out on the circuit. In one of these there appeared nothing in particular at the beginning and at ten o'clock he was about to conclude, but he commenced again and continued to wait on God in prayer till twelve o'clock. At that hour he still felt unwilling to break off, and like Jacob, said in his heart:

"With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day."

Shortly after midnight, a young woman cried aloud for mercy; several others were soon in deep distress of soul, and before four o'clock in the morning, no less than fifteen persons were made glad with an assured sense of God's pardoning love. Those meetings were of frequent occurrence in several parts of the circuit and were always attended with blessing to souls. On one occasion a young man who was a stranger to Methodism was passing a house where prayers were being offered for a soul in distress. He heard them and approached to listen; he was immediately seized with conviction and fell upon his knees outside the door. At length, he entered the door, and was observed to tremble exceedingly -- soon after kneeling, he fell prostrate on the floor, but in a little time he rose and began to praise God for pardoning his iniquities and giving him the light of His reconciled countenance.

So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed, that at the close of Mr. Bramwell's labors on the Birstal circuit, the membership was doubled -- without mentioning a large number of probationers and a multitude who were still under serious conviction, but had not united themselves in church fellowship. Young people only ten years of age were clearly awakened and savingly converted. This had such an effect upon their parents that many of them also were awakened and converted.

This revival was esteemed by many good people to be extraordinary and singular; some thought it was the work of God and others that it was too enthusiastic. But it often happened that when any of those who held the latter opinion went to hear for themselves the divine power affected them, and they were constrained to cry aloud to the God of mercy.

Soon after the revival commenced, Mr. Bramwell's colleague in the ministry (for there were two preachers on the circuit) could not endure the apparent confusion which it produced. He therefore thought it his duty to oppose it, which conduct influenced the class-leaders adversely, who for a time maintained a cautious reserve and kept at a distance, not knowing what judgment to form of the, to them, strange proceedings. One of the most judicious of them declared the change in his sentiments thus: "In the love-feast on Christmas day I had such a conviction that this work was of God as caused me immediately to close in with it, and to give it not only my approval, but my hearty co-operation. When I came out of the chapel on that day, several of the leaders gathered around me and asked me what I still thought about it. I replied, 'we have long been praying for a revival of religion, and now when it is granted to us, shall we be dissatisfied, and oppose its progress because it does not exactly accord with our weak ideas, or manifest itself in the particular manner in which we expected it?' From this time all the leaders joined heartily with Mr. Bramwell in the work and their united labors were crowned with abundant success."

This revival, so imperfectly detailed here, was felt in all the surrounding circuits. Many of the world's people having heard wonderful accounts of the men who, it was said, had "turned the world upside down," went to Birstal out of curiosity and numbers of them obtained salvation and went to their homes justified and praising God with glad hearts and free. But this great work was as remarkable for the purifying and sanctifying of the justified, as for the awakening and justifying the ungodly. Those were as the days of the Son of Man, and were long remembered and referred to by believers who lived in the Leeds, Halifax, Bradford and Huddersfield circuits, as the period of their espousals to Christ. The Holy Spirit wrought powerfully, and faith was in lively exercise both in the preachers and the people. These caught the flame; and prayer-meetings and watch-nights were more strictly observed and the work of the Lord prospered in many places beyond the borders of his own circuits.

Writing from Sheffield in 1795, he says, "Many souls had been set at liberty in the classes and at the prayer-meetings previous to Thanksgiving day; but on that evening the work broke out in the chapel -- there was a general outpouring of the Spirit. We desired all who were in distress to come into the vestry where eight souls were delivered from the bondage of sin. Eight more received pardon on Sunday. Monday was our love-feast, and near the close the power of God came upon us. We concluded at the usual time, but begged of all who were distressed to stay, and before eight o'clock it appeared that more than twenty souls were delivered. The work has gone forward every day since, less or more. In two classes more than twenty experienced salvation. To speak within bounds I have had clear evidence of more than one hundred persons having found liberty in three weeks. Oh, pray for us that nothing may hinder. The Lord be with us all in this great work.

"I see that the world is in a miserable state; none truly at peace but they who leave all and follow Christ, preach a present salvation, and pray for present blessings. The Lord always

prospered this plan. Preach sanctification as a blessing now to be received by faith. Christ has done all in point of merit -- but we must ask and receive that our joy may be full."

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20 -- MR. BRAMWELL'S ESTIMATE OF PRAYER

"I see more than ever that those who are given up to God in continual prayer, are men of business both for earth and heaven. They go through the world with composure, are resigned to every cross, and make the greatest glory of the greatest cross. On the other hand, if not given up to God in prayer, every cross brings the greatest perplexity and robs them of the little love and patience they possess."

And speaking for himself under date of 1795, "I have always union with God. I feel nothing but pure love in the greatest afflictions. I am often powerfully tempted and sometimes heavy -- this was in our Lord. I feel that I am going on. I have a continual opening between God and my soul in prayer: and in praying without ceasing I shall receive the fullness of God. I know I am drinking much deeper into His spirit. I have a constant heaven in dependence upon the Lord. I am more than ever ashamed of unbelief. O, how it dishonors God and His truth! All is ours and we shall receive all. The Lord waits to impart more of his love, and will give more to the hungry. O, my brother! give yourself to Him in much prayer, and faith. Keep yourself as much as possible composed -- let not little things dissipate your thoughts. Be fixed in God. Can you plead with God more? Do pray more, and say to the Lord for me, 'I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless him.' I pray more. I am giving myself to continual prayer, and will still cry Lord make us meet for Thy glory. Every moment may we live to Him and Him alone. My soul continually goes out after the Lord. Let us live every moment free from all the world. O! what need of keeping up the strife every day: May nothing slacken our pace!"

One who knew Mr. Bramwell for upwards of twenty years says, "His whole deportment and conversation were such as impressed one that he lived in the spirit of prayer and devotedness to God." He says in 1801, "I am still giving myself to continual prayer," and in 1804, "It is praying continually that keeps the mind. I am more convinced of this than ever. O! let God have the first and the last!" He writes from Hull in 1804, "I have had three weeks of agony (in prayer) but now see the Lord working. I have not preached lately without seeing some fruit. The Lord is saving souls. O, that nothing may hinder! Pray, pray much! Continue in prayer, in earnest prayer."

To his daughter he wrote in 1810, "One thing is needful, which is continual prayer. All will fail unless you labor in this way; let the times be as frequent as possible. Full of expectation, look for the promises and believe for the blessing. Be mighty in this duty. You will be strongly tempted to neglect prayer. Satan can continue his authority with all persons who do not give themselves to it.

"Armed with all Thy might, I cry to Thee,
In this I shall receive the victory."

"Let your times be fixed for private prayer -- say twice in the forenoon and twice in the afternoon. Very often retire from company to pray. Retire from every company, however friendly, a number of times in the day; mind not what words or looks you receive. To be singular will be at first your fear. But look at your Lord, read his practice frequently in the New Testament and consider how singular He was without the least fear of a frowning world. What is my duty? This is the point, without the least regard to consequences. Let nothing hinder the full salvation. Read Phil., iii. 10-12. Look well into it and make every purpose and promise your own. You are never in greater danger than when there is the form without the power. I can say my life is prayer." Writing in 1815, to a friend he said, "I never lived in so near a union with God as at present. To retain a constant sense of the presence of God is our glory in this world. It is to live in Him and always to feel it. You know how:-- prayer, constant, private prayer. I have lately been roused out of my bed in the night, to pour out my soul to God. I feel I never prayed too much; it is my life -- is my all in Him."

"Few Christian ministers," says his biographer, "have had more intimate communion with God, or have evinced a greater degree of self-dedication than Mr. Bramwell -- a man strong in faith, mighty in prayer, enjoying constant union and communion with God. A man endeared to us by the consciousness we had of his being like Abraham, the friend of God." No sudden alarm, no picturesque scenery, no political views, no worldly conversation interrupted for one moment his union and communion with God.

He wrote in 1816, "I am giving myself to God to receive a much deeper baptism (of the Holy Spirit) which I feel is my liberty in this world. I cannot rest in sins forgiven or in being cleansed from all unrighteousness even. I see the glory which belongs to me in our blessed Lord, is for Himself to dwell fully in my soul. I must rise, I must dwell with Him for ever, Amen!" Hence he was always aspiring for "a higher up" religious experience.

Says one who was acquainted with him for upwards of twenty years and enjoyed a close intimacy with him during his three years he served as pastor at Nottingham -- "His whole deportment and conversation were such as evinced that he constantly lived in the spirit of prayer and devotedness to God. I have had the honor of entertaining him under my roof, when I have been an ear witness of his ardent supplications at a throne of grace at the early hour of four o'clock in the morning. And this I have been informed was the regular practice with him in winter as well as in summer."

In the houses where he lodged while going the round of his circuits, his prayers and intercessions were often heard during the night. He uniformly left his bed at four in the morning to enter upon the duties of the day: every moment of which was spent in union with God, and in devotedness to the salvation of the people. Thus plenteously anointed with holy oil, his whole soul entered into the work of proclaiming the jubilee of the gospel.

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At the division of the Methodist body in the year 1797, the Society at Nottingham were deprived of their chapel by the seceders, and had no place in which to assemble for worship. They were consequently under the necessity of building a new house for themselves, but they experienced much difficulty in securing a suitable site, for vacant lots were not only very scarce but very dear. For nine months they had been on the search; during which they had made application for such lots as they deemed suitable, but altogether without success. No one would sell. The most desirable situation was a small enclosure under pasture and various applications were made for a portion of it. But the owner steadfastly refused to sell. Thus all their attempts were frustrated, and their hopes apparently blasted. But their extremity was the Lord's opportunity. For at the very time they were ready to despair of procuring a chapel site, Mr. Bramwell came over from Sheffield on a visit. He was accompanied by another minister named Longden. It was on the 28th of May, 1798.

The next morning one of the stewards related the distressing circumstances in the case. "He heard me," says the narrator, "with much attention, and then said, 'Brother Tatham, let us pray about it.' In his prayer he said, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof -- the cattle upon a thousand hills. The hearts of all men are in His hands and He can turn them as the rivers in the south.' He then most feelingly described our situation, crying, 'Lord I Thou knowest their necessity, and I believe that Thou wilt provide a lot for them this day,' laying peculiar emphasis upon -- THIS DAY, which expression he repeated several times. Perhaps no one ever entertained a higher opinion of Mr. Bramwell's faith and prayer than myself: yet even in the face of that promise, which I had frequently seen fulfilled, 'Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them,' (Mark, ix. 2-4), when I remembered the various applications we had made, and the disappointments which followed, I found it difficult to believe against hope.

"But the Lord's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. We agreed to search the town for some other piece of land. But I was called off upon other business, and could not afterwards meet with my friends, although I sought them the whole forenoon. I afterward found that they had gone to Mr. Sherwin's paddock, [paddock = a small field, esp. for keeping horses in, a field; a plot of land. -- Oxford Dict.] which we had entirely despaired of obtaining. Mr. Longden, on their return said they had seen some land near the theater which would be suitable for our purpose. I asked if it belonged to John Fellows, who I recollected had a garden at the back of his house between the theater and Mr. Sherwin's paddock. He replied, 'I think that is the gentleman's name. I waited upon Mr. Fellows and asked him if he would sell us a portion of his garden as a site for a Methodist chapel, and after a short pause, he said, 'I will let you have it.'

"After my return I discovered that this, though the most eligible site of any in that part of the town, was not that which Mr. Longden had fixed. He had seen Mr. Sherwin's, and not knowing that it had often been refused us, he had considered it a most suitable situation. But being a stranger in Nottingham, he had forgotten the name of the real owner and was quite undesignedly the cause of my going to Mr. Fellows. Thus providentially were two apparently trivial circumstances used to put us in possession of the lot upon which our chapel was afterward built, -- namely, my absence from the friends who went in search of a site and Mr. Longden's mistake in substituting the name of Fellows for Sherwin. These things evidently happened in order that the prayer of faith might have its accomplishment and demonstrate that 'All things are possible to him that believeth.'"

Another instance of Mr. Bramwell's faith was at a time when a general alarm agitated the dissenters from the Episcopal church, in consequence of a bill for the abridgment of their religious liberties, which was about to be brought into the house of commons. Many at that time were moved to plead mightily with God that this bill might not pass, and Mr. Bramwell was one of them. One Lord's day, before a very crowded congregation, he got into an agony of prayer and after wrestling for some time, he said, 'Lord, Thou hast now told me that this bill shall never pass into law.' Adding, 'it is out of the power of any man, to bring it to pass.' Several of the congregation thought he was going too far; but in about a week from that day the bill was quashed."

All who had once proved the kindness and affection of Mr. Bramwell's sympathizing spirit, accounted it a great advantage to unburden their minds to him. His counsel was not confined to spiritual things; but when desired he gave them the most judicious advice respecting their temporal affairs; and always closed the interview by fervent prayer to God in behalf of the persons concerned, mentioning particularly the things about which he had been consulted, whether they related to the soul or the body.

Among those who availed themselves of this privilege, was a local preacher, named Jackson, whose business was the manufacture of woolen cloth. Trade was at one time in a state of great depression. He had many goods on hand, and had not disposed of a single piece during many weeks. He relates that "one morning as I was going to Leeds market I called upon Mr. Bramwell at Birstal, and related the situation to him. With much feeling he said, "Thomas let us pray!" We knelt together; and he prayed with much holy fervency, and uttered such expressions of confidence in God that I could not soon forget He spoke in faith, as if it had actually been revealed to him that my deliverance was at hand. I pursued my journey to Leeds, endeavoring all the way to believe what the man of God had uttered in prayer. My faith gained strength by reflecting on the many precious declarations which God had given in His word concerning His care for His people and His supply of their needs. I soon found Him to be the God of providence as well as of grace; for I had not been more than a quarter of an hour at my stand in the cloth hall, when a merchant with whom I had never before traded, came along and purchased all the goods I had on hand."

"This answer to prayer, proved to me at that time a most seasonable relief, and has encouraged me ever since to confide in the provident goodness of my heavenly Father."

On one occasion he was sent for in haste to go and visit a sick gentleman who was apparently at the point of death, yet unprepared to meet God. Says the narrator of the incident, "I united my solicitations with those of the messenger, to induce him to go, but we could not prevail with him. He appeared for a short time to be in a state of mental abstraction. He then said, 'Let us pray!' and kneeling down, he prayed in a most powerful manner. Among other things he declared in all the confidence of faith, 'O, Lord! I believe Thou wilt save the gentleman about whom we have been talking!' The messenger retired, and I own, my surprise was great when a few days afterward I learned that the gentleman had experienced the pardoning love of God and the assurance of the divine favor."

Wherever Mr. Bramwell went he endeavored to promote the comfort and happiness of all around him. When any of the members of the numerous families whom he visited were suffering

distress or affliction, like a good Samaritan, his bowels of compassion yearned over them, and his benevolent spirit went out to their relief. To relieve human suffering and to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit afforded him the highest gratification. "Divine healing" was not then so much in vogue as now. Yet Mr. Bramwell believed that God was directly accessible for immediate bodily healing for the sick. When he was stationed in Nottingham he went in his regular turn to preach at the village of Watnal. On one of these occasions he remained all night at the home of a Mr. Greensmith, whose nine-year-old son was severely afflicted with a scrofulous humour [scrofula n. = a disease with glandular swellings, scrofulous adj. -- humour n. = the four chief fluids of the body -- Oxford Dict.] in his eyes so that he was unable to bear the light unbandaged. Previous to his departure in the morning (Dec. 14, 1818), when his horse was brought to the door, he asked where the boy was who had sore eyes. He was told that he was in a dark room. He requested him to be brought out, who, when he came, put his hand on the boy's head, and looked upward as if in the act of prayer, but no audible words were uttered. He then went out leaving the child standing, who, as if conscious of some important change, pulled off the bandages, looked out of the window, and asked if Mr. Bramwell was gone. His eyes were observed to be perfectly healed, and all the family were perfectly astonished. At the time of Mr. Bramwell's death he was thirty years old and he had never afterward had any optical trouble.

Another remarkable instance of healing in answers to his prayers is given by a Mr. John Clarke, of Nottingham, who says, "I was once attacked by a violent pleuritic fever, when all around me despaired of my life. Many kind friends visited me in my affliction; and almost unceasing supplication was offered for my recovery, but all prayers appeared to be without effect until Mr. Bramwell came home off the circuit. He immediately came to see me, and on entering my room was quite astonished at beholding such a woeful change in my appearance. He thought I had all the marks of a speedy dissolution upon me; and giving me a look of the greatest sympathy, he raised my head a little by means of a pillow. He then knelt at the foot of the bed and prayed to God in my behalf. His faith seemed to gain ground as he proceeded. He continued his intercession with the greatest fervency, and in an agony, asked in submission to the will of God that I might be restored. The Lord heard and answered his servant's prayer, for I immediately experienced such a sweet tranquillity and melting of soul as I am unable to describe. From that moment my recovery commenced, and I was soon strong enough to resume my ordinary occupation. Thus Mr. Bramwell might be said to be possessed of a key that opened heaven and drew the blessing down. Many are the blessings, temporal and spiritual, which have been procured by his prayers."

During his itinerancy in the Hull circuit there were many remarkable answers to his prayers, of which the following are examples: in the winter of 1804-5 Mr. Brayshaw fell and pitched upon his right shoulder. Not finding much inconvenience ensuing at the time he neglected to apply any remedy, but after some weeks mortification set in. So rapid was its progress that his medical attendants had decided to amputate his arm as soon as he should have sufficient strength to undergo the operation. They probed and laid it open to the bone; but so much was nature exhausted that it was feared at every successive dressing he would die. A chronic asthmatical cough then suddenly stopped; a convulsive hiccup came on, and all hopes of his recovery were lost. His family were called in; he took an affectionate leave of them, and gave them, as he thought, his last blessing. At this crisis Mr. Bramwell and his colleague called to see him as they were on their way to the select band meeting. Mrs. Brayshaw requested them to remember her husband at the throne of grace in the meeting, praying for his recovery. While they were engaged in agonizing

prayer for him Mr. Brayshaw's asthmatical cough returned, the hiccup left him, and to the astonishment of all in the room he recovered. A friend called after the meeting and observed that she was almost sure that he would recover, for there had been such an uncommon outpouring of the Spirit accompanied with such faith when the men of God were praying for his recovery, that she had no doubt concerning his restoration. The event proved the correctness of her opinion. and it was generally thought to be a miraculous cure in answer to prayer.

Thomas Ryder, a local preacher, relates the following -- "In the year 1805, our daughter, Abigail, was so very ill of whooping cough, that at times she appeared to lose her breath, and my wife often thought she was dead. Mr. Bramwell was on the Hull circuit, and when in that part of it where we then lived, he slept in our house. At one of his visits we told him how violently our child was afflicted. He asked several questions concerning her, and then said, 'Let us pray!' We knelt down, and the man of God prayed with peculiar fervor, and apparently in strong faith, that the Lord would bless the child and speedily restore her. The Almighty, whose eyes are over the righteous, and whose ear is ever open to their cry, heard and answered the prayer of his servant. Our daughter began to recover from that hour, and never afterward had a severe attack."

There are some cases that not even the united prayers of Moses, Job and Daniel could prevail for, of such is the following: Mr. Bramwell was once desired to pray for an unhappy woman who was very ill, and who had been much addicted to drunkenness. Her husband had been converted some time previously and had often invited Mr. Bramwell to his home. This woman had been raised several times in answer to his prayers. He was sent for once more to pray for her. When he arrived, he and the husband knelt down together, and after being silent a few moments, he exclaimed, "I can pray no more! The Lord will not answer! She will now die!" And in the course of a few hours she died according to the word of the man of God.

While he was traveling on the Sunderland circuit, he and one of his colleagues were being entertained at the home of a worthy and respectable friend. At that very time the owner of the house was endeavoring to dispossess the man to devote the premises to some other purpose. The prospect was exceedingly distressful to the man and his family, as no other place could have been procured which would have suited them so well. During the evening Mr. Bramwell was made acquainted with the whole affair. After performing family worship in a manner that was long remembered he and his colleague retired and spent nearly the whole night in prayer concerning the case of these good people. It was but a short time after this that affairs took a most unaccountable turn in their favor. They could only regard it as a direct answer to Mr. Bramwell's prayers; for the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

One more instance of his power with Israel's God must suffice, and that is the case of Sergeant-Major Thomas Riley, of the Seventh Dragoon Guards: "In the month of July, 1811, I was quartered at Sheffield. Our regiment was under orders for Spain, then the seat of a protracted and sanguinary war. My mind was painfully exercised with the thoughts of leaving my wife and four helpless children in a strange country, unprotected and unprovided for. Mr. Bramwell felt a very lively interest in our situation; and his sympathizing spirit seemed to drink in all the agonizing feelings of my tender wife. He supplicated the throne of grace day and night on our behalf. My wife and I spent the evening previous to our march, at a friend's home in company with Mr. Bramwell, who sat in a very pensive mood, and appeared to be engaged in a spiritual struggle all the time,

until he suddenly pulled his hand out of his bosom, laid it on my knee, looked me in the face and said, 'Brother Riley, mark what I am about to say: you are not to go to Spain. Remember, I tell you, you are not, for I have been wrestling with God on your behalf, and when my heavenly Father condescends in mercy to bless me with power to lay hold of Himself I do not easily let Him go: no, not until I am favored with an answer. Therefore, you may depend upon it, that the next time I hear from you, you will be settled in quarters. This came to pass exactly as he said: for on our march the next day, I was informed that our regiment was countermanded; and when we got our quarters at Chichester I wrote to him with a grateful heart, informing him that his prediction had received its accomplishment, as our regiment was not to go to Spain.'

Says one of his intimate acquaintances, "I attribute all our great national deliverances to the intercessions of such men as Mr. Bramwell. When Napoleon threatened our happy land with invasion, our friend made it the subject matter, not only of private prayer, but also of his public intercessions. Who can ever forget the confident manner in which he at those times expressed himself?"

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22 -- HIS DISCERNMENT OF THE SPIRITS OF MEN

Some of the gifts of the Spirit which good men receive, may be mentioned to edification, because they are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Others are of a more particular, secret kind, and communicated only to chosen souls. They form no subject of instruction to other persons, but seem to be tokens of the Divine regard for the individuals themselves. Of the latter description is the "discernment of the spirits of men," which many of Mr. Bramwell's friends in their intercourse with him, remarked at times that he appeared to possess, or something nearly resembling it. His intimate communion and close walk with God entitled him to the appellation which was given to Abraham -- "the friend of God." When the Lord was about to destroy Sodom and Gamorrah, he said, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?" It is not therefore at all wonderful if men eminent for piety often find in more senses than one that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

The nature of the communion which such holy souls enjoy with God, and the terms of the close relation which subsists between Him and them, are not at all times proper subjects of disclosure, for often it would be "casting pearls before swine." Mr. Bramwell was neither accustomed to speak of this gift in public, nor in the company of friends. Its effects they frequently noticed, and indeed, his occasional exercise of it in the presence of others, was the only manner by which it ever became visible.

Mr. Thomas Jackson, of Dewsbury, relates the following instance of its manifestation: "A woman with whom I was well acquainted and who had been a member of the "Methodist society many years, came into the house one day when Mr. Bramwell was with us. He looked earnestly at her and said, 'Woman, you are a hypocrite! and if you do not repent and become converted, hell will be your everlasting portion!' He then added, 'I know you will hate me for speaking the truth.' I was amazed at the abruptness of his manner, and the strong language in which he expressed himself; and not the less when I reflected on the person to whom this had been said, because I

maintained a high opinion of her religious character. But I was soon convinced of the truth of Mr. Bramwell's words, for the woman had departed under a consciousness of her guilt, self-condemned and humbled. She sent for me late in the evening of the same day to pray with her as she felt herself in great distress of spirit. I found her in a hopeful state of repentance, calling to remembrance from whence she had fallen, and desirous of doing her first works. I therefore poured out my soul before the throne of grace in earnest intercession in her behalf. In the course of a few hours the Lord was pleased to manifest His mercy to her, and by His Spirit bore witness with her spirit that she was His child. Her joy was excessive; and she has often been heard to declare that if she had died in the state of mind in which Mr. Bramwell saw her, she must have been eternally lost."

"One day," says another witness, (Mr. Stones) "as he and I were going together to visit the sick we passed a saloon, out of which came a man just as we got beyond the door. When we had proceeded a little farther, Mr. Bramwell groaned in spirit, and said, 'Lord have mercy on that man! Do you know who he is?' I replied, 'Yes, sir! Do you?' 'No,' said he, 'but this I know, that he is a perfect infidel.' 'Dear Mr. Bramwell!' said I, 'do not say so.' He replied with increased emphasis, 'I am sure of it! He is a perfect infidel!' It is remarkable that this very man, to my certain knowledge, bore such a character for infidelity and profaneness as perhaps had not his equal in all of Yorkshire, if in the entire Kingdom."

Another instance of Mr. Bramwell's power of discernment is related by the same witness:-- "One night as I was preaching at Birstal, a man who was a stranger to all present, either by pretense, or in reality, fell ill, and had to be taken out of the chapel. The account of which he afterward gave of himself was that he came out of Lancashire in search of work, and had nothing to eat for three or four days. One of our friends took him home and entertained him for the night. The next morning two of the friends came to me and expressed a desire that I should head a subscription paper for the relief of the poor man. I accordingly put down the amount which I considered it my duty to give, and they went around to obtain what they could from others.

"In the mean time, Mr. Bramwell came home off the circuit and I related the circumstance to him. He wished greatly to see the man himself; so we went together to the house where the man was waiting to receive the money which was being collected for him. We found him within; and he very pathetically related his tale of woe to Mr. Bramwell. It appeared to me to be quite rational, accurate and, ingenuous, piercing to the bottom of my heart. While the man was rehearsing his troubles, Mr. Bramwell listened with closed eyes, and frequently groaned in spirit. At length he lifted his head and looked at the man with an eye that pierced him through and said, 'Tell me' is there not a base-born child in all this? The man appeared to thunderstruck, began to tremble, faltered in speech, and confessed with hesitation that there was such, and that he had left home to avoid paying for its support according to legal enactment.

Mr. Bramwell very faithfully reproved him for his sin, and warned him of the judgment to come, advising him to return home, do what was just and right, desist from evil practices, and turn to God with purpose of heart. On the man expressing some reluctance about returning to his home, Mr. Bramwell threatened to have him arrested as an impostor if he did not leave the town immediately. The man left without his booty. Mr. Bramwell afterward assured me that to the best of his recollection he had never seen the man before."

A local preacher of Nottingham, named Tatham, says, "On one occasion I went with Mr. Bramwell to visit a dying man who desired his administrations. For sometime after our entrance into this dwelling Mr. Bramwell remained silent; at length he exclaimed, 'All is not right here! I am clear there is something amiss in this place!' Then turning to the woman who was represented as the man's wife, he said, 'This man is not your husband. You never were married to him, but for several years you have been living in sin!' His words went with power to their hearts -- they both wept exceedingly, acknowledged the charge to be true, and began to entreat the Lord to have mercy upon them."

The same contributor says: "In revivals of religion when God raises up instruments to carry out His gracious purposes and various witnesses of His power to save, the enemy of souls, in order to promote the interests of his kingdom, has raised up other instruments to ape or imitate the work of God in the same manner as in the days of old, when, by his servant Pharaoh, he ordered the magicians of Egypt to exhibit the very miracles which Moses had performed by the Divine command. If the hypocrisy of such is not timefully discovered, the injury which the good cause will sustain by them is inconceivable. Now Mr. Bramwell was by no means of a censorious disposition, but he had the gift of discerning the spirits and dispositions of men in a remarkable manner. I have frequently known him to detect impostors who have stepped forth to exercise in various meetings." The writer furnishes no example of this class of persons, however.

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23 -- MR. BRAMWELL AS A PASTOR

In his first address in what proved to be his last appointment, Salford, he stated the duties of ministers of the gospel, and expressed his determination to labor after that model. "I shall call upon you," he said, "not to eat and drink or spend the time in conversation with you upon indifferent subjects, but concerning the state of your souls." Well, how did he fulfill the promised? What is said in answer to this inquiry must be drawn from records of his practice in his previous charges. It is witnessed of him, that he "fully discharged the duties of his pastoral office among a numerous people" in town and country; that "he made it his business to call on every Methodist family in the town (hearers as well as members) and also on as many in the country as he conveniently could and pray with each of them. He was peculiarly attentive to the sick." This meant a great amount of labor when it is remembered what kind of pastoral calls his were, and that in most of his charges there were all the way from five hundred to two thousand members. The chapel, or "church" as Americans would say, which stood as the "headquarters" of the circuit, housing a congregation of from eighteen hundred to two thousand people, with from eight to twelve other chapels or preaching places in the surrounding country. Of course he was assisted by one and sometimes two ministerial colleagues, a corps of perhaps twenty to thirty local preachers and a staff of fifty or sixty class-leaders.

Says one, "While he was with us at Nottingham, it was his regular practice to rise at four a. m. during the summer months, and at five in the winter. The first of his waking hours was devoted to earnest intercession in behalf of his family, friends, the church, the world and for a blessing on his own ministry. If it was a day on which there was no morning prayer-meeting he would remain

in his study reading the Scriptures and studying for the edification of his flock. In this manner he spent the forenoon of every day, seasoning all his exercises with much prayer. The whole of the afternoon was generally devoted to visiting the sick and poor of the society. Into whatever house he went, it was a point of conscience with him, not to leave without praying. It appears as though he could scarcely live unless he was made useful. He often entreated the Lord that he might be delivered from that bitter cup, a useless life."

Another witness testifies: "When Mr. Bramwell preached at Gomersal (on the Birstal work) he generally remained all night at our home. As soon as dinner was over, it was his constant practice to pray in the family, and then to visit the neighbors from house to house. In this way he generally called on seventeen or eighteen families in an afternoon and prayed in each of them with the utmost fervor." "These visits," says another, "were short and spiritual. If possible, he would have the whole family collected and having ascertained the religious state at them all, he would pray for each by name, and implore blessings suited to their respective necessities. We have often felt on these occasions the influence of his affectionate solicitude, his penetrating look and his pointed inquiries, and believe it was in vain for the formalist, the backslider and the hypocrite to think to elude detection by him. The rich and the poor alike, were admonished; growing evils in families destroyed in the bud; parents, children and hired helps taught their proper duty. All were constrained to assent concerning our revered friend that in labors he was more abundant."

Occasionally, some who were poor and godly, invited Mr. Bramwell to take tea with them. He always went if he was at liberty. Several friends and neighbors usually assembled with them, and great was the enjoyment which they had in each other's company. Says one at whose home he was wont to stay in the country, "I was accustomed to invite a few friends, whose chief desire was to have their souls blessed, to take tea with Mr. Bramwell. Affectionate inquiry was then made into the state of each person's mind. They who had not received the blessing of justification were urged to seek it till they obtained it; and they who were justified, not to rest till they were wholly sanctified."

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24 -- MR. BRAMWELL WHEN IN COMPANY

When in company, Mr. Bramwell constantly endeavored to "redeem the time" or buy up the opportunity for the most profitable object. He would not converse on trifling subjects, but the most common theme of his discourse was, "What shall we do to praise the Lord more, to promote His glory and to obtain greater blessings?" "It has been my lot," says one, "to mark Mr. Bramwell's very exemplary conduct in the social circle, and in this respect, I must affirm that I never met his equal. His conversation was eminently such as tended to minister grace to the hearers. It was his aim in company to direct his conversation to one point and that was a present and a full salvation. Throughout the whole, he maintained the most jealous and vigilant eye, lest the conversation should in the least diverge toward topics not equally definite and important. Nor was he contented with this; it was not long before this man of God, and the company with whom he was engaged, fell on their knees and wrestled in prayer, till

"The opening heavens around them shone

With beams of sacred bliss."

"One particular instance of this I will relate. It was during the sitting of the London conference, in 1804, when I frequently met Mr. Bramwell. On one occasion he desired me to meet him at a friend's house in the city. On entering it, the voice of devotion saluted my ear. Mr. Bramwell and his friends engaged successively in fervent social prayer. At the tea table he ruled the conversation, so that not a sentence concerning politics, the common topics of the day, the foibles of the neighborhood, or any indifferent subject was permitted to transpire. The attention of the company was directed exclusively to the great concerns of their present and eternal salvation. It was not long before a person present advanced something irrelevant to the single aim which this man of God held so tenaciously in view, but he suppressed it immediately by exclaiming, 'Now we are wandering from the point again.' After conversation on the best subjects had continued for some time, the company again joined in fervent prayer until the preaching hour arrived and importunately pleaded for the realization of the great blessings which had occupied their attention.

"I am particular," says the narrator, "to mention this trait in Mr. Bramwell, because in common with many who profess to be influenced by the fear and love of God, I have experienced great difficulty in ordering a conversation aright, so that each person might be able to say at the close of an interview, he had imbibed a greater aversion to sin and a more ardent thirst after holiness. When such is not the result, have we not reason to fear that either we, or those with whom we have conversed -- if Christians -- are in some degree fallen from our first love -- from the life, the pleasure and the power of godliness it is truly lamentable to notice the great degeneracy that prevails in the conversation of nominal Christians in the present day. Some are content to while away every golden moment with subjects of a mere worldly nature. Some have outridden every profitable purpose of anecdotes, and haul in facetious and ludicrous tales which are worse than the 'old wives' fables,' against which Paul warns Timothy, merely to excite merriment and levity. Cowper says,

'Tis pitiful to court a grin
When you should win a soul."

"Christianity," he observed, "does not exclude cheerfulness. Christian cheerfulness consists of tranquil peace, hope bright with the prospect of immortality and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is a sacred flame that sheds an incomparable radiance over life,

"Laying the rough paths of peevish nature even,
And opening in each breast a little heaven."

Those who were favored to be thus intimate with Mr. Bramwell, breathed, in his society, a heavenly atmosphere, and acknowledged a peculiar influence to accompany all his conversation. They admired the correctness of his principles of action, which were conformed to the precepts of the gospel. They saw that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world, and more abundantly toward them.

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25 -- HIS BENEVOLENCE

In nothing did he approach more nearly to the imitation of his Lord than in his benevolence. It cannot be thought singular that he was courteous, pitiful and kind; for all ministers of the gospel ought to exemplify these virtues. But he relieved the necessities of others, by making frequent sacrifices of his own personal comfort. He was ever inclined to do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. How great was his charity toward his Christian brethren! He was wont to declare that he should delight in having all things common as the primitive believers did after the day of Pentecost. And this was no empty profession with him, for to share his last penny with Christ's poor, was a matter of no uncommon occurrence. Even in the early period of his ministry and married life his Christian beneficence was truly remarkable. When he met with objects of distress and suffering he often gave them his all, and when he returned to Preston from having gone the round of his circuit, which was once a month, he generally requested his wife to supply him with more money, that he might still further exercise his charity.

He would never consent to have more than one suit of clothes, and one pair of shoes in a course of wearing at a time. And as soon as they began to have a worn appearance, he bought new ones, and gave the old ones to those who were in need. Indeed he had been known to give his only overcoat in severe weather to one who had none, nor would he spare the garments of his beloved wife for the relief of women in extreme distress. In manifesting his sympathy with the poor and afflicted he literally wept with those that wept. While visiting a sick man on one occasion, who was in extreme want, and lying in bed without a shirt, he retired into another room, took off his own shirt, and gave it to the poor man. He was indeed a good Samaritan; he considered every suffering child of Adam as his brother or sister; as bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, whom Christ had loved unto death, and therefore having a claim for his utmost efficient help.

When there was any doubt in the case of applicants, he would ascertain the extent and reality of suffering by personal investigation, and then administer to their necessities, property, food, medicine, with his counsel, sympathy and prayers. Often was he thus a help in need, a ministering angel of mercy, both to the afflicted body, the broken spirit and the despairing mind. When, therefore, he enforced the most difficult, and least palatable duties of religion, the people did not inwardly respond, "Physician heal thyself!"

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26 -- HIS DEEP HUMILITY AND JEALOUSY FOR THE HONOR OF GOD

"God knoweth the proud (or conceited) afar off, but giveth grace to the humble." This grace of humility was well put to the proof at the outset of Mr. Bramwell's ministerial career, when he was put down for the Lynn circuit instead of Blackburn, as already explained. To a man more inflated with an idea of his own consequence, or less fervent and sincere in his wishes for the salvation of sinners, the deferring of his hopes would have been most grievous and distressing. But though he was naturally of a sanguine temperament, the grace of God had humbled his views and made him will to behold the glorious remedy administered by others. He did not rate his ministerial talents so highly as to imagine with some weaklings, that when he was quiescent the progress of Christ's cause would cease or only have a tardy motion. He very properly considered

it a high honor to have a dispensation of the gospel committed to him that he might bear ever so humble a part in the grand operations of human redemption. In the bare anticipation of this he had rejoiced when called to his first ministerial appointment -- Liverpool. And when he was so honorably remanded to Preston again, to move in the humbler sphere of a local preacher and preach the glad tidings of salvation among his friends and relatives, he had felt the summons to be no small trial. Yet, to that which he deemed a providential call he had yielded a cheerful obedience. He had again dedicated himself to the work of the itinerancy and by an unexpected occurrence was compelled to desist from his labors as an itinerant preacher a second time. This was a season in which satan assailed him with heavy temptations. But having committed nothing worthy of reproach, he maintained his wonted firmness of spirit. He did not, like many, sullenly refuse to lend a hearty co-operation in the cause of God; but with pleasure embraced every opportunity of declaring the gospel message.

The disposition of mind with which he bore these heavy trials had no affinity with stoical apathy. On the contrary he had considerable anxiety which called for the exercise of much faith and patience. Not knowing how to act, or what course the Lord would have him take, whether toward a business career or toward the itinerancy, he remembered the inspired counsel, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy path." He gave himself to prayer, asked counsel of God, and waited for the answer. And his way was soon made plain, as we have seen, and with what result?

Amid all the fervor of a revival, the greatest fear he knew, was, lest he, or any of those whom the Lord had honored by employing them to bring it about, should forget their own littleness and, beginning to think too highly of themselves, should neglect to ascribe all the praise to God, to whom it was entirely due. That sinful man should in the slightest degree encroach on the province of God, was an idea most revolting to his grateful spirit -- he could not endure the bare contemplation of it; but in all the fervency of holy zeal he bore his decided testimony against such a presumptuous infringement of the Divine rights and denounced the man who could audaciously attempt to rob God of His glory. Hence, it was his constant cry, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto Thy name be the glory!" In this way he was instrumental in preserving many from destruction through spiritual pride.

He guarded with much jealousy against the rising of this proud feeling in himself, and he was equally anxious to hinder its prevalence in others. If he observed it even in its budding, he exclaimed against it, and gave warning of the dangerous consequences of fancying ourselves to be persons of consequence on account of the wondrous act of Divine condescension in using us in the execution of His purposes of grace. He knew that such a spirit was highly offensive to God, provoking most justly his indignation and wrath, impeding the blessed work of salvation and destroying all personal religion in those by whom it is cherished, besides bringing on all the labor of the minister, "blasting mildew and hail." He wrote as follows to a friend in the year 1807. [The following quotation is as it was printed in the book text, though it sounds like something may be missing. -- DVM] "To seek men; world self-praise, is so shocking to my view at present, that I wonder we are not all struck dead when the least of this comes upon us."

On this awful subject the biographer gives the following dream, which happened to a gospel minister on the evening of May 30, 1813:

[Shelhamer quotes this dream in "Heart Talks," and I have included it in a compilation entitled, "Significant Dreams." Shelhamer's book gives the "Memoirs of Bramwell" as the source. -- DVM]

"Being much fatigued at the conclusion of an afternoon service, this minister retired to his room to take a little rest. He soon fell asleep, and dreamed that he walked into his garden, entered a bower, and sat down to read and meditate; while thus engaged, he thought he heard someone enter the garden. He immediately hastened toward the direction from whence the sound came that he might discover who it was that had caused it. He soon discovered that it was a particular friend of his -- a gospel minister of considerable talent, who had rendered himself very popular by his zealous and unwearied exertions in the Christian cause. The dreamer was surprised to find the countenance of his friend overcast with a gloom which it was not accustomed to wear, and that it strongly indicated a violent agitation of mind apparently arising from conscious remorse.

"After the usual salutations, his friend asked the dreamer the time of day: to which he replied, 'Twenty-five minutes after four,' on hearing this the stranger said, 'It is only one hour since I died, and now I am damned.' 'Damned! for what?' inquired the dreaming minister. 'It is not,' said he, 'because I have not preached the gospel, neither is it because I have not been rendered useful, for I have now many seals to my ministry, who can bear testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus, which they have received at my lips: but it is because I have accumulated to myself the applause of men more than the honor that cometh from above: and verily I have my reward!' Having uttered these expressions, he hastily disappeared and was seen no more.

"Awakening with the contents of this dream deeply engraved on his memory, the minister proceeded, overwhelmed with serious reflections, to his chapel with a view to conduct the evening service. On his way thither, he was accosted by a friend who inquired whether he had heard of the severe loss the _____ church had sustained in the death of that able minister, Rev. Mr. _____. He replied, 'No,' but being much affected at hearing this singular intelligence, he inquired the time of day when this death took place. The reply was, 'This afternoon at twenty-five minutes past three o'clock.' This dream conveys its own lesson and needs no comment."

Without doubt, it is comely and proper to rejoice when sinners are awakened and converted. Such happy occurrences must afford the highest gratification to the minister whose labors have been thus highly honored of God and to all the faithful saints who have stood by him. For if there be great joy in heaven over one repenting sinner, a similar expression of gladness upon earth over the same circumstances cannot be sinful. But "the accuser of the brethren" is on the alert right here, to attack the unguarded human heart just when it is elated with this sacred pleasure, and to change this correct and heavenly feeling into a principle of towering arrogance. How needful therefore amid the most sacred delights to "watch and pray that we enter not into temptation!" We may rejoice, but it must be "with trembling," on account of the frailty of our nature.

Writing to a friend in 1799, he says. "I am striving with continued prayer to live nearer to God than I have ever done: and he brings my soul into close union. I live with Jesus, He is my all; O! He lays me at His feet -- I am less than nothing in His sight. This walking with God! this conversation in heaven! O! how ashamed I am! I sink into silent love. I wonder how the Lord has

ever borne with me so long. I never had such a view of God and myself." In 1807, he writes, "I know nothing: I am nothing. Everything that I do, preaching and praying seems to be nothing compared with what it should be. Here I am and here I live, wondering that even the Lord himself should notice me for one moment. I became more ashamed and more dependent on my heavenly Father. I am most grieved with my preaching. It is so far short of the subject -- redemption, full salvation. I tremble as much as ever: and the modesty put upon my soul makes me tremble in the presence of the people. I am using every means by prayer and other help to be fit to live among the angels. Lord Jesus make me to do thy will as those pure spirits do it above!"

Of such a man it could be truthfully said "he well knew how to 'condescend to men of low estate,' and the poorest member of a class could approach him without the least embarrassment. Far from assuming an air of consequence, or superiority while in the company of the least esteemed of Christ's followers, he endeavored by his endearing and affable conduct to convince them that he was a friend and a brother. Abhorring the fashionable practice of pretending not to know a poor man on the street, he heartily greeted him."

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27 -- HE PRACTICED AND PREACHED THE SIMPLE LIFE

Mr. Bramwell, as a Methodist preacher, stood for simplicity in dress and also in all manner of living. It was the law of the church, yet many of the Methodists were edging towards the world. He noticed and reproved this in his daughter, who was a school teacher, in a private ladies' school. Writing to her in 1811, he says, "You are now entered upon another station in life. I suppose that you imagined your former state called you to make some appearance which was connected with your social standing. In this I have always thought you were mistaken. However, on your leaving the school, even in your own mind there can be no further plea (for worldly conformity in dress) I, therefore, your most affectionate father, wish you by every means to consider how you may, in the greatest degree ornament your (Christian) profession. You are a child of God, a follower of your Savior. You will be noticed by all -- all will watch, and you should expect it.

"Let all your manners be open, free, kind to all, yet modest, serious, without the least gloom. Let your clothing be quite plain -- bonnet, gown, shoes -- everything. Though dress is not religion, yet plainness is becoming. A well-dressed Quaker appears to me to be near a pattern. I wish you to be such, and not hesitate for one moment, but without saying a word to anyone determine in God to do so. The greater the cross the greater the glory. I want you to live in closest union with your Lord. Your being an eminent Christian lies near my heart Nothing can satisfy (me) but being admitted among the first orders in glory. Strive to get quite above a light spirit. You know the Spirit of the Lord is a happy spirit, but it is a quiet, serious spirit. Make great improvement in the divine life. Give a good account to me and to God. We shall have to stand together in judgment. I shall be closely examined as to my conduct toward you, and you on the ground of receiving instruction. It is a day at which I often look. O, the change of views by all the world! The torment, the glory! Stand by me now and stand with me then, and forever. Have all things ready; receive every purchased blessing."

To his son, he writes: "To be great in this world is nothing -- but to be great in the sight of Jehovah -- to be proclaimed in heaven as great -- to be crowned with glory, and to be had in everlasting remembrance with God -- how glorious!"

How he viewed "the good things of this life" may be gathered from a letter written from Sunderland in 1806. He says: "We have too good a house in Sunderland, and the friends are too kind. I have had to watch and fast or should have been ruined with good things." We regret to say that a Methodist preacher of a later generation has been heard to say, "Fast? Yes, when I can get nothing to eat." Such an one would neither make devils tremble nor sinners quake. Again in writing to his biographer. The following year, while still at Sunderland, he says, "I sit down to write you what is upon my mind respecting myself -- my warfare is continual. I am surrounded with the powers of darkness. The temptation to sloth, to fainting and against preaching are as great as ever, and, I sometimes think, are much increased. Invitations to feast, to eat and drink, are more numerous here than I have ever known them. A great many friends in affluent circumstances and naturally friendly have a tendency to produce these effects."

He faithfully warned his hearers that conformity to the world, inordinate love of riches, are open avenues to a thousand snares, and are the great bane of Christian simplicity and holiness.

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28 -- HIS GRIEF ON THE SPIRITUAL DECLENSION OF METHODISM

As a Methodist minister he uniformly felt for the affairs of Methodism. It had been burdened for some years with financial embarrassments. He was much grieved on account of this state of its affairs, because he thought it might in a great measure have been avoided and because it hindered the planting of the gospel in other places. Economy in expenditure and less of worldly show and costly ornament in its places of public worship were at once the preventives and the cures which he prescribed for this malady. But his great concern was not about outward things, but the inward declension which was the cause of it, and which in his latter days was only too perceptible. "Remember," said he, "we as a body are going from the inward to the outward splendor -- which has been the bane of all churches. In all churches from the beginning to the present time, satan has used outward splendor to darken the inward glory."

It seemed to him as though the love of refinement, the love of power and the love of money were sapping the spiritual strength of the denomination. He might have said with F. W. Robertson, "I cannot shut my eyes to the lesson of history that the arts, such as architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry, have not, in themselves ennobled, but often deteriorated nations. The worship of the beautiful is not the worship of holiness and therefore, to talk of these things as though they were to do the work which can only be done by the cross of Christ, I hold to be false sentimentality." He saw plainly that the absence of spiritual enjoyment of God and finding their all-sufficiency in Him was the real source of declension among the Methodists of his latter years.

He says, "The Methodists from all proper information that I can gather, are not decreasing, and perhaps not much increasing. But I am certain the glory is departing (the teaching and experience of entire sanctification is on the decline and if not enforced will produce a declension

of the work among the people. The mixture of things in general, I am confident is increasing. The reason why the Methodists in general do not live in this salvation is, too much sleep: too much food and drink: too much conversation with the world: too much preaching and hearing: and too little fasting and prayer, self-denial and self-examination. A number of Methodists now will be in public the whole of the Sabbath, and if they heard angels all the time they would be backsliders. It is astonishing how the devil is cheating us, and at the same time filling for a moment our heads and emptying our hearts. Great God, what shall we do? how shall we return? Is it possible to bring the Methodist body back into the same way? I fear not I sometimes lose my hope of it. Is it too late to see, to know, to understand the machinations of the devil."

"I do not see how this is to be restored among us because the greater part of those in authority, arising from riches, etc., are averse to this teaching in their minds. The rich and mighty sit upon their seats, and too frequently usurp improper authority, which damps the living flame among the simple and as the number of such authorities increases the preaching of the doctrine of entire sanctification will decrease, and this from a fear of displeasing such authorities. Young preachers seek to gain the respect of such persons to their own destruction. That the doctrine is gone in a great degree from the pulpit, from the monthly magazine, and from the Christian meetings is evident. I never was more concerned. How shall we return to our sanctification? I have some doubt concerning it. It must begin with us. We have to pray that the number of those may be increased, who boldly as at the first, declare the whole counsel of God. Speaking for himself, he says, "I never preached with so much power: I never wept and entreated so much, and I never saw so little general effect in that way. If the Methodists had not had among them what no other people have had (so much of the unmistakable light, life and power of godliness) then they had not had sin, but now they have no excuse for their neglect. But after all, we must conclude that the most of the power of God is yet among them. To be cleansed from sin is great indeed; but to receive the inward glory in its full influence -- this is salvation.

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29 -- HIS IMPLICIT LOVE AND TRUST IN JESUS

He writes, "The love of Christ is my study. O, what shall we do, our Savior, [in order] to love. My faith, my love to Jesus increase daily. I grieve that my love is no stronger; that I am no more like Him. I wonder at His glory, and sink before Him in shame. I am frequently at a loss to understand how it is that my love to Him is so little. I am sometimes ready to stumble at myself on this account. Am I right? Can I be right in this little love? Could I die for Thee? Could I suffer long, and still love with a passion like Thine? I cry to God daily, hourly, constantly to receive a thousand times more love. I am receiving more love; it comes by drops after agonies of prayer. I must give myself away; for the sacrifice was consumed. I too must be consumed -- self, all the man must be consumed. And I must live. Thus to lose myself in Him I find is my glory. Then nothing but Christ in word, thought, preaching and praying. All the Son of God! His mind; His way; His work; His manner! To this I am coming -- I am near. I am just going into my Lord. Here the noise of self, of the world, and of the devil, is over. All is burning, all is rest, yet, all is calm within. Here the Lord teaches, the Lord governs, and the Lord continually supplies. The eye fixed, the soul established; the tongue loosed, and all in the Spirit! This is salvation, and this salvation belongs to all believers.

"I am convinced our glory is little comparatively, especially as it respects the body. We are the temples of the Holy Ghost. I see the necessity of the greatest purity in the outer man. To keep the whole requires constant prayer, watching, looking always to Christ. I mean that the soul be never diverted from Him for one moment; but that I view Him in all my acts, take hold of Him as the efficient strength by which I do all my work, and feel that nothing is done without Him. All is of Him; never weaker, and never so strong. All things are dross when compared with Christ and the glory of His kingdom. I hunger! I thirst! I pray; and with all my heart dedicate my soul to God. I am giving myself to God, to receive a much deeper baptism, which I feel is my liberty in this world. Never expect your heavenly Father to keep His covenant only on the proceeds of your acts of faith. This faith must be like the pendulum of a clock -- it must be kept moving, to put the whole soul in motion. And as your faith increases, you will more quickly mount up, run faster, labor more, love more, rejoice more, and drink the cup (of suffering) with greater cheerfulness. O, this full salvation, this full salvation! He bought it; He promised it; He imparts it Glory -- everlasting glory be to the Lamb of God!"

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30 -- AS THE SUPERINTENDENT AND OVERSEER OF A CIRCUIT

In those days the circuits were large, containing many preaching places, and usually employed two, three and four traveling preachers, who preached not only on Sundays, but every week-evening also, save Saturday. The senior minister was called the "Superintendent." He was within the bounds of his circuit what the presiding elder is on the district -- the director-general and overseer.

As a superintendent, his conduct was most exemplary. He was anxious to know what proficiency the people made in religion. To ascertain this, he met the society in every country place, where he went and requested his itinerant brethren to do the same. The local preachers were also desired to meet every society in the places where they preached. He was determined by all means to know all the members of the church and how they conducted themselves. He usually met the society after preaching on a Sunday evening when the holy fervor which he had felt during preaching was far from being evaporated. He appeared unwilling to leave his post. "Suffer me, suffer me," he would often repeat in the midst of the closing benediction. He frequently resumed singing, with Praise God from whom all blessings flow, when the house instead of being emptied would be filled with fresh incense.

He delighted to press the people to believe, but he did not omit to inculcate other matters which were essential to a well-rounded and symmetrical Christian character. He recommended punctual attendance upon the public means of grace; but he would not have any home duty neglected. He insisted upon the duty of private prayer, but he would not infringe upon the work of searching the Scriptures. He considered the religion of Christ an empty name when it was destitute of love -- that perfect, powerful, and operative principle which leads to acts of universal good-will to man. He proclaimed, "Owe no man any thing but love."

The attainment of entire sanctification was what he would constantly impress upon their minds. Too many, he declared, were only outer court worshipers, when it was their privilege to enter into the Holy of holies. To live dead to the world, and ever prepared for a dying hour was his constant theme. This, he would enforce by many familiar similies. "If," said he, "the call should be at midnight, can you rise and at once willingly and cheerfully obey the summons? If at noonday, are you ready? Is everything in its place? Can you obey with the same alacrity with which you would run to the door on hearing a loud rap? Or is there something to be set in order, before the call can be attended to?" He also observed, "That, if not both willing and ready at any moment of time to attend the summons of death, we were not fit to die." Preaching and conversing after this manner, his appointed time at length arrived, and as he had taught, so he learned to obey.

On quarterly conference and other public occasions, it was his wish to have the business transacted with all convenient speed and to spend the balance of the time in earnest social prayer. From such meetings the official brethren, the local preachers and country class-leaders, departed, happy and comfortable, praising God for the enjoyment which they had experienced. It was his constant endeavor to stimulate to action all the men that had an office in the church, and to make them view the cause of God as their own. Formality and stillness were his dread; he was afraid that they would produce a sleepy and lukewarm spirit.

In promoting the work of the Lord, he employed the talents of the local preachers, leaders, and others in prayer, and they became effective and important helpers to him in every place. The embers of love were kindled all around; and when he re-visited the societies, he found them striving together for the furtherance of the gospel. Opposition was broken down, lukewarmness gave place to zeal and a holy union was maintained, and the work of God in town and country broke out in revival flame and power, and visible signs and wonders were wrought in the name of Christ. Preachers and others have been known to come fifty miles on purpose to obtain the blessing of heart purity, and joining with him in the holy violence of prayer, experienced the operation of the cleansing power. Rev. John Smith, a holy soul-saving celebrity in Methodism, was one of these.

He detested slander in all its forms, and would never allow anyone to speak evil of an absent person. He never suffered any difference between brethren to be introduced into a leaders' meeting unless the parties had spoken to each other about the matter in private, according to the Master's direction. "Tell him his fault between him and thee alone." When any affair was brought forward in that meeting, he studied to settle it with as few words as possible, avoiding all debates and cavils which only tend to mischief. If any one wandered from the point of discussion, Mr. Bramwell always interrupted him and would not allow him to confound others with extraneous subjects. He never had an unpleasant business meeting, for, when anything unpleasant offered itself, he had both wisdom and courage to act discreetly and promptly, and thus the business was at once settled.

Appropos to the foregoing may be mentioned here, Mr. Bramwell's conduct in relation to a serious division which took place among the Methodists by the secession of a preacher, named Alexander Kilham, who formed a new organization. He was appointed to Nottingham in 1798. A great number of the members joined the new connection, and those who remained were in a very unsettled state. Those who had been as brethren, no longer fraternized, but viewed the acts of each

other with aversion. The trustees of the large chapel had given it up to Mr. Kilham, consequently the preachers were obliged to officiate in dwelling houses and barns, or such other places as could be secured for the purpose. This was very embarrassing and caused many painful feelings to the preachers. But to Mr. Bramwell, coming from a circuit where all was love and harmony, this condition of affairs was peculiarly distressing. He entered upon this new field of work with the fixed resolution not to minister to mutual aggravation by engaging in any controversy respecting the division but to do everything in his power to build up the breaches and to labor to bring as many souls to Christ as possible. He exerted himself most heartily to raise the necessary funds for erecting a new chapel in Nottingham and grandly succeeded, besides seeing the Lord's work prosper at every place on the circuit, adding many hundreds to the membership. He could say "I live above the division; I feel much compassion -- my bowels yearn for all men -- and I can speak evil of none."

In every part of his circuit, after preaching on the week-nights, he examined the class record, and inquired after the absentees. He met the leaders once a week and kept a list of their names. He held a special examination of the leaders once a year, when he asked the following questions -- First. -- Are you in debt? Second. -- Do you enjoy a clear sense of acceptance with God? Third. -- Are you wholly Sanctified? Fourth. -- Are you punctual to the time of beginning, whether the members are present or not? Fifth. -- Do you conclude in an hour? Sixth. -- Do you attend to family prayer morning and evening?

On coming to a circuit, he sometimes found that several leaders had two classes. In those cases, he appointed proper persons to take care of one of them, observing that no leader could take care of more than one class. And when the classes doubled their membership, or nearly so, he divided them and appointed other leaders, observing that twenty souls were as many as one leader could attend to.

He had the following rules printed and put into their hands for their guidance. First. -- Let every leader meet his own class, except in cases of urgent necessity. Second. -- Be punctual to the time of meeting. Third. -- Sing no more than two stanzas at the opening. Fourth. -- Be brief in prayer and particular to confine the petitions for those present. Fifth. -- Ask several persons to pray at the close. Sixth. -- Conclude the meeting in an hour. Seventh. -- Let the absentees be noted and visited by the leader during the week. Eighth. -- Let the leaders be zealous in speaking to persons who come under the word. Ninth. -- Let every leader labor to enjoy the blessing of entire sanctification as a good qualification for his office.

If any of the classes were in a languishing state he privately spoke to some of the most lively leaders to visit them.

This man of God, having thus taken every necessary step, and having engaged his colleagues, the leaders, and the members, together with himself in earnest prayer to God for a revival, the Spirit of the Lord was soon poured out and many souls were brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light.

In the local preachers' meeting, he asked every man his Christian experience, and advised each one to speak and hear evil of no one, which counsel they all promised to follow. Is it any wonder that the Spirit of the Lord was poured out abundantly and that many felt His saving power?

As many young persons were added to the societies in his circuits he saw it necessary to guard them against the temptations peculiar to the young, and to give greater effect to his exhortations, he addressed the sexes separately -- the men on one Sunday evening and the women on another, not one of the opposite sex being present. This method gave him the opportunity of using greater plainness of speech and a greater degree of faithfulness. His instructions could not fail to be well received, because they were given with affection, while the correctness of his own deportment rendered him unimpeachable.

His genuine piety and affectionate concern for the welfare of souls and for the prosperity of the work of God, were manifested in the whole of his deportment among the people; and he was so truly consistent that he never seemed to lose sight of the character of a Christian minister. Into whatever company he went he seemed to carry with him a consciousness of the Divine presence which influenced his whole conduct

He was conscientiously strict and firm in his adherence to the Methodist discipline. Says one of his colleagues, "The language of my fears, grounded on vague report, was, that however excellent he might be as a preacher, he could be very unfit to govern a large society, and that his management of discussions, and his decisions in our various official meetings, would be guided more by his own feelings than by mine. But never was any man's conduct so opposed to such a theory. 'Thus saith the law,' was his constant observation, 'we must not, we will not go contrary to our rules.'" Every breach of them caused him much pain as their strict observance afforded him pleasure. It was therefore with much regret that he saw some members of the greatest promise forfeit their share in the benefits of church fellowship by forming such matrimonial alliances as were contrary to the word of God, and in opposition to the rules of Methodism. Whenever he discovered young men or women allured by this fascinating snare, he faithfully described the heinousness of the offense and affectionately warned them of the danger into which they were running.

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31 -- SHEPHERDING THE YOUNG CONVERTS

Mr. Bramwell never acted more in the character of a wise master builder than when he made careful provision for the young converts. By painful experience he had known in himself, the pernicious consequences accruing from the want of early Christian tuition ["teaching, instruction" no doubt being the meaning here -- tuition = teaching or instruction, esp. if paid for -- Oxford Dict.] and the communion of saints. He was therefore well qualified to appreciate the value of Christian society and godly counsel; and accordingly adapted measures for securing these benefits to all who were admitted to membership in the church. They were placed under the watch-care of the most prudent and well informed class-leaders who were qualified to instruct those babes in Christ in the "first principles" of Christian doctrine, without a knowledge of which all attempts to raise a Christian character must be fruitless, whereas, an injudicious course of instruction, or none

at all, together with the baneful infection of froward examples, may cause the incipient Christian, new and inexperienced as he is, to imagine that he has a capacity for rendering an opinion on questions of doctrine and church affairs which require the experience of more advanced disciples to decide upon. In this way the Bible becomes neglected, ignorance engendered, and pride fostered.

But Mr. Bramwell's converts were appropriately counseled respecting their conduct, exhorted to give attendance to reading, and above all the constant reading of the Holy Scriptures; books proper for their perusal were recommended, and a strict attention to personal religion and private devotion.

When he perceived them observant of these precepts, he invited their attention to the doctrinal works of Wesley and Fletcher. Knowing that superficial attainments in practiced piety, are often the result of unsettled notions about religious truth, he introduced to their notice the admirable productions of these two able men, considering their teachings to be in perfect agreement with the Scriptures of truth and thoroughly adapted to meet the wants of the truth-hungry among men. In this way he labored to form Christians and established believers out of the converts he gained to Christ.

After all [of] Mr. Bramwell's judicious precautions in behalf of his converts, he was sometimes called to mourn over miserable backsliders. It would have been wonderful if he had not, considering the constitution and environment of poor human nature. He was too well acquainted with these to be amazed at the falling away of some. His compassion for them was powerfully excited and he earnestly longed to reclaim and bring these wanderers back, and in this department of the pastoral work he was uncommonly successful. For many were induced by his affectionate entreaties to re-commence their Christian career, who lived to adorn their Christian profession by blameless lives and a holy conversation.

In all considerable revivals of religion, it has been the stock objection of worldlings and lukewarm professors that numbers "have fallen from grace." But was there ever known a fruitful soil into which the enemy did not attempt to mingle tares with the wheat? Yet the charge, when it applies to the Methodists societies, is not so well founded as might be imagined. For it often happens that a zealous, lively class experiences a great increase of members, while another class in the same circuit or in a neighboring one remains stationary. Some of the members of the latter are occasionally ready with censorious word and scornful finger to remark how many new converts among their zealous neighbors have -- "turned back" -- a circumstance which ought to excite within the Christian breast emotions of a far different kind. But these jaundiced critics see through a perverting medium and forget to take account of those converts who are steadfast and "going on to perfection." They do not consider that if none of the members of their own class have not given up "the form of godliness," they feel little, and manifest less, of its animating "power." They can demonstrate with mathematical precision that the lively class has lost more members in twelve months than they have lost in twelve years. But they do not seem to recollect that this class with whom they institute the comparison has gained, in the same number of months, more hopeful members than theirs has done in as many years.

In a society, therefore, in which the work of God remains in nearly a fixed state, the decrease in the number of its members will, in general, be very trifling; while in the other society, while several may have fallen from their steadfastness in Christ, yet the increase of stable members may be numerous in a tenfold proportion.

It would be far more profitable all around for such persons to lay aside their unjust prejudice, and to be willing for a season to rejoice in the revival light and place themselves in line for catching the sacred flame. If they cannot bring themselves to this, then "be watchful and strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die." in their own class.

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32 -- MR. BRAMWELL'S CLOSING DAYS

We now come to the closing of the earthly career of this illustrious minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The last year of his itinerancy, like those which had preceded it, was filled with arduous toil for his Master and in untiring efforts to better the condition of his fellow man and extend the kingdom of righteousness upon the earth.

For seventeen years the Salford circuit had sent in petitions to have Mr. Bramwell appointed to that work. At last they obtained their desire. The conference stationed him at that place in 1817. The expectation which had been formed was not disappointed and this godly man entered upon his labors with his customary earnestness and faithfulness. In his first sermon he stated the duties of ministers of the gospel and his determination to labor after that model. He said, "I shall call upon you [pastorally visit you], not to eat, drink, or spend the time in conversation with you upon indifferent subjects, but [will] ask you concerning the state of your souls." He pressed home upon those he visited or met the importance of obtaining the experience of entire sanctification. He expressed his fear that too many were only outward court worshippers, when it was their privilege to enter into the holy of holies. He exhorted all to live fully prepared to enter heaven on short notice. In emphasizing the necessity of being ready for the dying hour he said, "If the call should be at midnight, can you arise and at once willingly and cheerfully obey the summons? If at noonday, are you ready? Is everything in its place? Can you obey with the same alacrity with which you would run to open the door upon hearing a loud rap? Or, is there something to be set in order, before the call can be attended to?"

It seems from letters written to different persons during that year that he was fully persuaded that his work was about finished on earth, that his earthly pilgrimage was about to close. Conference assembled early in August, 1818, at Leeds. He was entertained at the home of his affectionate friend, Mr. Sigston, of Queen-Square, Leeds, during the conference. In the intervals between each of the sittings he enjoyed himself at his friend's house in conversation that was at once exhilarating and profitable. His biographer says that at such moments he shone as the enlightened minister and the pleasing companion. "His presence communicated both delight and edification; and it is the declaration of his host that if Mr. Bramwell had previously received a sure intimation that his earthly existence would terminate so soon and suddenly as it has done, he could not have conducted himself with more of that dignified propriety and innocent cheerfulness which become a minister of grace and an heir of heaven." One of his brethren who sat near him

during the whole conference, the business of which was often of a very trying description, said that Mr. Bramwell appeared constantly to act and live under a lively conviction of these words, "Thou, God, seest me."

In conversation with several other preachers at the house of a friend it was remarked how difficult it was to station those preachers who had large families. Mr. Bramwell said with much solemnity, "I think some of us ought to pray that God would be pleased soon to grant us a station in heaven!"

Some one asked him where he had been stationed for the next year, and he replied, "My brethren have appointed me to return to Salford; but I tell them they will never have another opportunity to give me an earthly station, for it is my intention to be in heaven before next conference. I am hastening to that better country as rapidly as I am able."

During his stay at Leeds he preached a few times in the neighboring villages. On Sunday evening, August 2nd, he delivered an affecting discourse from Phil. 1:8-10. He went to see his daughter, who lived only a few miles distant, at Westgate Hill, on Saturday, August 8th, and preached in the village on Sunday afternoon to a crowded congregation. His text was 1 John 4:16-18. To a large number of friends who gathered at his daughter's, he commenced an interesting conversation with them on the subject of prayer, urging them not to permit anything to take their attention from this most important part of Christian duty. He improved every opportunity and faithfully exhorted everyone to live for God. Sometimes he would pray five or six times during one short visit in making calls.

He went to Holbeck on Monday, August 10th, and took tea with some friends and preached at night. During the conversation with the friends where he dined he remarked that he felt his next appointment would be in heaven. At seven o'clock that evening he preached to a great congregation from Isa. 43:13, "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior." "This was the last text which Mr. Bramwell was permitted to choose and he spoke from it as a dying man to dying men. Great unction and power attended the word. Many were encouraged to trust yet more confidently in the promise of God, who had declared He would be with them when passing through the fire and through the water. He prayed with uncommon fervor at the conclusion of the sermon, and in this manner terminated at Holbeck the last of his public labors."

"On Wednesday in the same week, after attending the last sitting of conference a short time, he left his brethren about seven o'clock in the evening, and repaired to the house of his friend, that he might complete several little arrangements for his departure on the following morning. Mr. Sigston saw him come across the yard, and says that he advanced with a firm and agile step, like a young man in the bloom of health and buoyancy of spirits."

Although he had intelligence that his son John would reach Leeds from Durham on Thursday evening, and very much desired to see him, yet because he had promised to return to

Salford and he with the friends there on Thursday night, he made preparation to start at 2:30 o'clock the next morning by the first stage, and his friends could not prevail upon him to wait and see his son. Duty to the Lord's sheep ever came before social claims with this faithful shepherd. He could afford to forego the great pleasure of seeing his son, but he could not consent to fail to meet an engagement he had made to be with the people of the Lord.

During the last evening he spent on earth he was quite cheerful and entered readily into conversation on various topics. While the family were at supper, Mr. Bramwell made many spiritual remarks, and regretted that he had been prevented from seeing several of his friends of Leeds.

In giving an account of the last hours of his life, we will make a liberal use of the words of his biographer, for every moment seemed to have been filled with something too important to omit, and too significant to be passed over in general terms.

"Immediately after supper, raising one hand, and looking upward, he said with a pleasing smile upon his countenance, 'It strikes me that one of us will be gone in three or four months.' On which Mrs. Sigston observed, 'If it should be Mr. Bramwell, we should say, Who would have thought it, as he looked so well at conference?' Mr. Bramwell then said, 'Several of my friends have died of apoplexy, [apoplexy = a sudden loss of consciousness, voluntary movement, and sensation caused by blockage or rupture of a brain artery; a stroke. -- Oxford Dict.] and I expect to go in the same way.' Mrs. Sigston replied, 'Perhaps you desire such a mode of dying, Mr. Bramwell?' He smiled, but made no reply. Mrs. Sigston rejoined, 'If such is your wish, the Lord will undoubtedly grant your request' in a little time he prayed with the family."

Mr. Sigston urged him to retire, knowing he was to rise very early the next morning to begin his journey, but he insisted upon waiting until a Mr. Nelson should bring him an account of the termination of the business of conference. After this gentleman had departed, Mr. Bramwell conversed a few moments with his host; then he took the bed candlestick, which had been placed for him, bade farewell most affectionately to Mr. Sigston, and commended him to God with peculiar fervor. A servant sat up, who was directed to call him at half past two o'clock, and to provide him some comfortable refreshments before his departure.

"After he had entered his chamber, one of the teachers, who slept in the opposite room, heard him praying most fervently, and among other petitions, he recollects the following sentence, which was repeated several times, 'O Lord, prepare me for Thy kingdom and take me to Thyself!' He was awakened again about two o'clock in the morning by the fervent prayers of Mr. Bramwell, when he frequently heard him offering up this supplication. 'Lord, bless my soul, and make me ready!' At half past two o'clock precisely, he came down stairs, without having been called, and took his coffee and bread and butter, with as good an appetite as usual. During the time of this early repast, he very often lifted up his hands and his eyes, and with great earnestness said, 'Praise the Lord! Glory be to God!' etc. He then said to the servant, 'We will pray a little.' They knelt down, and he prayed very fervently for himself, for her, and for the whole family, beseeching God that she, as well as himself, might be fully ripened and made ready for heaven. After this she went to open the yard door, and he immediately followed her, shook hands with her, and said, 'The Lord bless you, Alice!' He departed. She locked the door after him, and returned into the house. This

was about three o'clock; and, before she had time to undress herself, she heard some person knocking at the yard door. She opened a window, and a man said to her, 'Has a gentleman left your house this morning?' She replied, 'Yes.' The man said, 'I believe he is dying in the lane.' She alarmed the family, several members of which instantly ran down into the lane. She also ran, shrieked, and kneeling down, said, 'Mr. Bramwell! Mr. Bramwell!' She thought he attempted to speak to her, but he was not able to articulate anything distinctly. One of the patrol ran for a surgeon; the other, assisted by Mr. Sigston and his young men, conveyed him back to the house. A surgeon arrived in a few minutes afterward, but, alas! the vital spark was quite extinct."

Two members of the Leeds patrol, in the pursuance of their duty, were passing up the lane shortly before three o'clock that morning. When one of them reached Mr. Bramwell, he was standing in a bent attitude, with his hands upon his knees. In answer to the query of the patrol, Mr. Bramwell told him he was very sick, and directed him to help him back to Mr. Sigston's. But they had only gone a few steps when he said he could go no farther. He then stood in his former bent position, saying he was easiest in that posture. At last he fell upon his knees, and the other patrol[man] took hold of him and said to his partner, "Be quick, and tell Mr. Sigston." Mr. Bramwell said, "Yes, do, for I shall not be long here." These were the last words which he spoke and the noble soldier of the cross ceased his warfare and entered into rest eternal.

The biographer wrote: "It is impossible to give any adequate description of the sensation which the account of Mr. Bramwell's sudden death produced on the public mind. He had been long and highly esteemed in Leeds and its vicinity, as an able champion in the cause of Christ; and the suddenness of his departure out of this world seemed to make every one more deeply sensible of those excellencies in his character and conduct, to which they had before done ample justice. For few preachers ever attracted larger or more attentive audiences; and, what is very remarkable, notwithstanding his uncommonly faithful admonitions, and his great plainness of speech, the ungodly part of mankind flocked to hear him in preference to a great number of his brethren in the ministry. This might be owing, in part, to the peculiar earnestness which distinguished his delivery in the pulpit, and which such persons regarded as a proof of the paramount impression produced on his own mind by the grand truths which he delivered to others.

"Many of his brethren, the preachers, had not left Leeds, the business of conference having only ended at a very late hour the preceding evening: and they testified, in every possible manner, their deep regret for the loss of such a faithful and affectionate fellow laborer. His friends determined to have his remains removed from Leeds, and to deposit them in the burial ground at Westgate Hill. Friday afternoon was the time privately fixed upon for the intended removal. No notice was given of it, except to the remaining preachers, who had expressed a wish to show some public mark of respect for Mr. Bramwell's memory; yet an immense multitude of serious, well-dressed people, of different religious denominations, had filled up a great part of Woodhouse lane, the road leading to Mr. Sigston's dwelling, some time prior to the hearse moving off with the body. As soon as it began to move from the house a procession was formed, as if from impulse, and without previous concert. The traveling preachers arranged themselves in pairs, according to seniority, and followed immediately after the body.

"It was a very affecting spectacle to behold such a number of venerable and aged ministers, succeeded by their vigorous younger brethren, all uniting by their presence to render due honor to

the virtues of the deceased. Then followed, in the same order, a goodly company of the local preachers and leaders; and after them a promiscuous but very respectable assemblage of private Christians. The number of attentive and deeply interested spectators that lined both sides of the road was immense; and before the procession had reached the top of Briggate, it had received a very considerable augmentation both of mourners and beholders, who extended from the top to nearly the middle of that fine street. Had any public intimation been given of the time when Mr. Bramwell's remains would be conveyed to Westgate Hill, the crowd would have been so great as to impede the free passage of the procession.

"In this solemn manner it moved, till it arrived at the confines of Holbeck and Wortley, when, after a very impressive prayer by Dr. Taft, an appropriate verse was sung. The company then separated, and the hearse conveyed the body to the place of its destination. It had previously been announced that the interment of Mr. Bramwell's remains would take place on the following Sunday.

"On Sunday, the sixteenth of August, [1818] multitudes from all parts of the country repaired to Westgate Hill, to witness the funeral ceremony of their beloved friend and pastor. Several aged people came from some of the villages beyond Sheffield, and others from places equally distant.

"Mr. Highfield preached in the area adjoining the chapel, to an overwhelming congregation. from Matt. 24:44. 'Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.' The body was then committed to the silent grave, amidst the sincere lamentations of many thousands present. Immediately afterward, Mr. Nelson and Dr. Taft delivered very solemn and appropriate addresses to the deeply affected multitude.

"This solemn event was improved the same Sunday evening in all the three Methodist chapels in Leeds, and in many of the adjoining circuits; and on the 14th of September, a funeral sermon was preached by Mr. William Dawson, in the area in front of Mr. Sigston's school, and near the place where Mr. Bramwell died. Nearly ten thousand persons were assembled that afternoon, and listened with almost breathless attention to the admirable discourse of this engaging preacher."

A plain tablet, bearing the following neat and unassuming inscription has been erected to his memory in the burial ground at Westgate Hill:

Here Lieth What Was Earthly
of the venerable
William Bramwell,
A chosen, approved, and valiant minister of Christ,
Who died August 13, A. D., 1818, aged 59.
Stranger! when thou approachest this shrine
Consecrated to his memory
By an afflicted family,
May his ashes still proclaim what he lived
To publish.

"Prepare to meet thy God."

So ends the life story of one of the Lord's most chosen vessels; a meek and humble follower of the lowly Nazarene; a faithful preacher of righteousness; a fearless defender of the truth; a servant who accomplished the great work committed to his care, with an eye single to the glory of God and with a heart engrossed with his loving task of uplifting and upbuilding poor humanity who were sunken in sin and sorrow. His lot was not to languish on a bed of pain and suffering, as is the case of many, but he fell upon the field of battle, while engaged in the conflict severe. He fought a good fight, he kept the faith, he finished his course with joy, and went to his home on high, to receive the crown of immortality and eternal life prepared for him by the Christ he loved and served. His good works remain to bless the world, and we catch fresh inspiration for service as we contemplate the godly record he has left behind.

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THE END