

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by C. Kendall

JAMES HALL, the son of Ambrose and Mary Hall, was born at Sutton-by-Hull, February 1, 1835. He was the youngest of a family of some six sons and five daughters. Our departed brother had the great moral advantage of descending from a good stock. During Mr. Hall's first decade of life he was physically feeble; he was looked upon as not likely to be reared by the most diligent nursing. After the first ten years, however, he grew stronger, but was not regarded as so strong as his brothers. His delicacy of constitution and his tender sensibility of mind led him to isolate himself to a large degree from boys of his own age. He was trained to works of industry, even as a boy, but when work was done, instead of engaging in noisy and rough play with other lads, he would at night seek the companionship of his mother and sisters. He chose at his leisure to use the needle to make book-marks and other articles for bazaars, or as presents for friends. His gentle nature found more satisfaction in the presence of females than in that of males. He was emphatically a mother's and sister's child. He lost his father when seven years of age.

Subsequently, as was then common in villages, he was sent to school in winter, and worked in the fields in summer. Shortly after this he reaped the great advantage of being sent to a good school at Scarborough, where he remained till it was time to decide as to his earthly business calling. His family was devoted to the joinery and building business. James, like the Saviour of men, took his place in the joiner's shop. He was then fourteen years of age.

At this period his tenderness of conscience, his consciousness of God's presence, his appreciation of the value of time, and of the fragments of leisure afforded him, evidenced to his fellow-apprentices and companions that he had realised a change of heart. He was in those early days a diligent student of the Word of God. His brother Ambrose says, 'I never saw him leave home in the morning, say as early as five o'clock, without reading a psalm, or chapter, or paragraph of the Divine Word. He delighted in the practice.' His associates in toil say and felt that he was trying to bear the yoke of Christ in his youth. He was converted in the tenth year of his age, and received his first ticket in May, 1846. He was regular at the appointed means of grace, both on week-days and Sundays.

During the year 1853 he received a note from the Quarterly Meeting of the Hull Second Station to accompany Brother Richard Milson to his appointments and speak a little. Many ministers who have been influential failed in their first efforts. Brother J. Hall, in his first pulpit attempt, failed. The congregation was large at his native place, many had gone to hear the smooth-faced boy-preacher. His text was, 'Such were some of you, but ye are washed,' &c. Quickly his thoughts left him. A dead silence followed. A friend announced a verse, and at its close he once more assayed to preach, and again stuck, and sat down. But he once more tried, and succeeded in delivering a short sermon. As he left the sanctuary he supposed his preaching vocation was at an end. But Mr. R. Milson and others proved wise counsellors, and he went on with the good work. September, 1854, his name appeared on the station plan. He laboured as opportunity presented itself, with tolerable success, as a local preacher till 1857, when he was called into the itinerancy.

'Well,' says his brother Ambrose, 'do we remember how he wept and agonised in prayer, through a sense of the trial which awaited him, and the responsibility of his work.' He had been truly a home-bird, but now he must go forth to preach the Gospel among strangers. We have heard him detail the conflict of the night previous to departing, and of the sorrowful and sleepless night of his devout mother. At this season he had not many books, and the apprentices and workmen of the firm, as a token of their appreciation of his Christian character, presented him with 'Cruden's Concordance,' and 'Barnes' Commentary.' This gift he

highly estimated. He was called by the Missionary Committee to St. Neot's. Mr. Blackburn was his superintendent. On reaching his destination, he found a long and encouraging letter from his brother. This and the great kindness of the friends encouraged his heart in his new calling. Coming down from London, his brother Ambrose called to see him, and preached three times for him on the Sabbath. This was regarded by him as a valuable blessing, giving him a brief but twofold rest. The value of such a visit and assistance can only be fully appreciated by a young itinerant preacher.

Mr. Hall was subsequently appointed to Brighton and Lewes; Newport and Cowes, Isle of Wight; Ryde and Ventnor; Gloucester and Cheltenham; Hull Second, Scarborough, Driffield, Market Rasen, Pocklington, Selby, Mexborough, and Crowle. Twice we were favoured with having Brother Hall for a colleague, viz., in Hull Second and Driffield. He was a valuable colleague, trustworthy, diligent, and very companionable. It is evident from many testimonies that he was highly valued by his colleagues in the ministry. His genial social spirit and kind, gentlemanly bearing won the confidence of those who laboured with him.

Rev. C. Leafe says: 'Mr. J. Hall was my first superintendent. I found him a faithful colleague, and one of the kindest men I ever knew. I have loved him ever since; his name will ever be precious. We were always dear friends after our first acquaintance. May I and his dear family meet him in heaven.'

Rev. W. Hayton remarks: 'Mr. Hall was my first superintendent; I found in him a true friend. He was exceedingly kind, genial, and social. He sought to do the will of God. He soon finished his work, and, I believe, gained the rest we toil to find. I trust Mrs. Hall and the dear children will find the help and grace they will need.'

Rev. J. Foster observes: 'I was colleague to Mr. Hall during the year of his unexpected affliction. There are few men to whom I owe such a debt of gratitude and love as to him. His kind and pleasant Christian disposition, blended with cheerfulness and deep piety, endeared him to all who knew him. After an illness he would usually preach in such a manner as went home to the people's hearts, leaving impressions deep and durable. On one occasion I found him very feeble. On asking him how he was, he replied, with deep emotion, "I am very ill, but I am where we have often placed others, in the hands of the Lord. He has imparted sweet consolation to me." A few days later I saw him, and spoke of the probability of his recovery. He answered, "I may recover; it is possible, but," looking up while the tear glistened in his eye, added, "if not, blessed be Thy holy name, I am resigned to Thy will."'

The Rev. G. Lees remarks: 'My acquaintance with Mr. Hall began more than seven years ago, when we were stationed together. During our term at Selby we were often spoken of as David and Jonathan. Brother Hall had many excellences. In all his relationships, domestic, social, and ministerial, he appeared happy, generous, and gentlemanly. He loved his family and relations dearly, and I have heard him speak of them with the greatest tenderness. He had spirituality of mind, which was quickly stirred, and few persons enjoyed a hearty religious service more than he. In his last affliction I was always impressed with his patience, and I believe his affliction worked out for him an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. On my last visit, about a week before he died, when I prayed, he responded very fervently, and when we rose from our knees, was bathed in tears, apparently having had a good time. When tidings of his death came, all at once the better country seemed sensibly near, and more attractive, as one more loved one was added to those who shall stand at the beautiful gate waiting and watching for me. I sincerely pray God's blessing on those who survive and mourn his loss.'

Rev. W. Robinson contributes a very full and able sketch of his reminiscences of Mr. Hall. A few extracts are all we can give, such as refer to traits and incidents not explicitly touched by other testimonies, They

laboured together twice, viz., St. Neots, and Gloucester and Cheltenham Stations, four years intervening. When first joined in the work, Brother Robinson remarks: 'I had the fullest opportunity of knowing the real character and spirit of Mr. Hall. We lodged with the same kind family, slept in the same bed, prayed and studied together, and, I am bound to say, he was, in every sense, a true man and a Christian. I never saw a frown on his countenance; I never heard an unkind word from his lips. His generous bosom could not beat with any pulsation but that of kindness and love.' When they met again as yoke-fellows, Mr. Robinson says, 'He was the same kind, pure, ingenuous, and devoted man of God that he was aforesaid. We continued together a year, and saw not a few of our young friends converted, many of whom remain members of the church to this day. In mental power I consider Mr. Hall was superior to very many. Had he been a hard student, and subjected his mind to rigorous discipline, he would have shone as a bright star in our ministry. I always thought he seriously underrated his own powers, and was so timid and diffident of his own abilities that many a time it proved to his own hurt. He was truly a gospel preacher. The texts from which he used to preach—how sweet their familiar sounds— were, "We preach Christ," "Christ in you the hope of glory," "What must I do to be saved?" &c. The first time we heard him preach was from "What must I do to be saved?" A better sermon we have seldom heard. We remember his fine presence, clear voice, and powerful exposition of Divine truth impressed us very deeply. He was also a good visitor, and his visits were ever welcome, being sunny and full of good cheer. Finally he was a genuine son of the Church to which he belonged. He was by deep and sincere conviction a Primitive Methodist.'

At the Leeds Conference of 1879 our brother was smitten suddenly down with apoplexy. The stroke was severe, rendering him unconscious for many weeks. He slightly improved, so that he appeared to be conscious of the present, but could not enter into statements of the past, or realise the future. He got so far better that he could use many words, and by signs and gestures carry on conversation with his family and friends. He never got to walk or stand unsupported. A visit to his home in Hull, after his superannuation at the Conference in 1880, was painfully interesting. He highly prized a friendly or ministerial visit. If a strange minister was in town, he was very expectant of a visit. If it failed, he would weep in his disappointment. We were always interested in looking in to see him sitting up in his sweet and cosy bed with a book-shelf within reach; he was wishful to show that he could read. Sometimes he would read a psalm, at others some of his favourite hymns, and as he read the tears would freely flow down his cheeks. Like many more in a similar affliction, he often failed to command the right word, the tongue seemed to have broken loose from due control. He usually used the word *congregation*, often with repetitions, then he would pause, and with moistened eyes give you to understand he had not told the right thing. He could talk about ministers pretty well, for if he failed to master the name, he reached down his Minutes instantly, and found the name, pointing thereto.

When his eldest brother was smitten down with paralysis, he felt it much, and the news subsequently of his death made him ill. His aged mother, who lived near to him, often visited him, and to some extent he could enjoy the visits. The true-hearted mother had, perhaps, written him every week from leaving home to the time of this affliction, At length she could not visit him, and when told of her death, Sunday, March 6th, 1881, he fretted, and as well as he could, exclaimed, '*Safe at Home*' True words, beyond question, of her purified spirit. The crisis came at length. He had been about as usual till his final attack. His good wife heard him say, 'Oh come! come!' He failed to speak, and on Sunday, January 1st, 1882, his imprisoned spirit was loosed from the afflicted body, and passed to join the innumerable company. His death was improved in the Williamson Street Chapel, Hull, by the Rev. G. Lamb.

In looking at the life and ministry of our departed friend, there are many things we might say, but the editor's space for a memoir is limited, but we may say Brother Hall was possessed of manifold excellences.

1. He had considerable ability. He wielded a ready pen. He was tidy and methodical in all his works. His letters and MS were specimens of neatness.

2. He was cheerful, uniformly so. He knew what trouble was, but he did not proclaim it. We fear he allowed it to percolate in many instances to the heart, while his cheery words and looks prevented even the suspicion of its existence.

3. He was kind and courteous to a remarkable degree. He would have sustained the wrong of unkindness, either in word or deed, without any complaint or attempt at defence. No rough or discourteous words were wont to escape his lips. He was in his entire bearing gentlemanly, nay Christian. This, we contend, is the highest style of man.

4. He was a good pastor; when moderately well he had considerable delight in visiting the people where he was going to preach, and inviting them to the preaching service. In some cases he would call at every house in the village. This is a kind of enterprise which is always accompanied with beneficial results. To fully carry it out demands a good amount of physical and nervous energy.

5, Our brother was generous. He was too generous with his limited wage and large family. He had a princely disposition. It is probable if requested to aid any good institution, though unable, that his kind, generous nature would not have been able to have negatived the application, But generosity must always be under the governance of reason, or it may grow to a weed rather than a flower. In Bro, Hall's case this probably would be looked upon by many as the fly in the ointment.

We might indicate other valuable traits, but we must put on the chain of restraint. Our friend has got on the side of the river where trouble never flows. We shall see his bright face and manly form no more in the flesh. He leaves behind him an intelligent and devoted widow and six children. Our brother will still live in his family. We trust the father's God and Saviour will be near to the bereft ones, and at the termination of the pilgrimage of life each and all find a happy re-union in the spirit world. Amen.

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#### References

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