

Rev. Thomas Lagar

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by W.W.

"I am among you as he that serveth" was the spontaneous confession of Him whose earthly life was, by common consent, the best and holiest the world has seen. These words interpret its most august sanctities and its lowliest acts. "That serveth" is at once its key-note and its crown of glory ineffable. To have lived in some measure after this pattern is distinction, and Thomas Lagar, humble disciple of Jesus as he was, shared this distinction.

Perhaps his earliest impulses towards such a life came to him when, as a boy under twelve years of age, he was wont to sit in the pulpit behind his grand-father, a good and devoted local preacher of our church, who made a practice of taking the small boy with him to his appointments in the neighbourhood of Stockton-on-Tees and West Hartlepool. Certainly the evangelistic impulse early stirred his heart. Only a few years later when, a youth in his teens, he was converted in what is now the Bolton Second Circuit, he at once began to gather other youths into the church, and was directly the means of several of them yielding themselves to Christ.

This passion of the true ambassador of Jesus remained with him throughout his ministry. In all his circuits he saw conversions, in not a few quite impressive revivals of religion; whole village communities were stirred, and many added to the churches. He greatly preferred that such results should follow the ordinary ministrations of the church. Instead of introducing extraneous help he consistently sought to promote among his people deepened spiritual life, a glow of sacred fervour, and the spirit of importunate and prevailing prayer. He made no pretensions to scholarship or eloquence, but his sermons were clear and earnest presentations of the gospel; in all of them sounded convincingly the experimental note.

Wherever he went he was welcomed to the pulpits of the sister churches. He invariably won the confidence and respect of the Christian public, and though firmly maintaining his Free Church principles, was on friendly terms with clergymen of the Anglican communion.

His essentially kind and affectionate disposition made him a great favourite with the children and youth of his congregations. They instinctively found in him a friend; they loved him; his efforts to lead them in the pursuit of the highest things, his solicitude for their welfare, all so unaffected and sincere, made upon many of them impressions that can never be lost. Often dear children about to die begged that he would be near them and hold their hand at the last. How many such as these, and others dearer still, have joyfully greeted him within the veil! In the whole round of his pastoral work he was singularly happy. His relations with the people of his congregations were of the simplest and friendliest. His sympathies were freely given to them, and their confidence and affection were unstintedly returned. With all his geniality he never forgot that he was the servant of Jesus Christ as well as the cheery friend of his flock.

A fellow student at the Sunderland Institute, the Rev. W. Dinning, in a "tender and beautiful letter to his widow, pays this fine tribute to his character: "He had so many of the instincts of the true gentleman. I never knew him either to say anything or do anything to give pain to the most sensitive. I think of all our young men during our year he stood out pre-eminently for his fine sense of honour; this robe was woven from the top throughout." And what was true of him as a young man at College was equally true of his life as a whole. Transparent kindness, fidelity and truth were his triple distinction, whether as brother of man or servant of God. As an administrator he combined firmness with kindness. He was never wanting either in courage or resolution. In his treatment of difficult situations he invariably displayed independence of judgment, straightforwardness and prudence.

He became a local preacher in the Bolton Circuit during the superintendency of the Rev. James Travis. From, that circuit he went to the Sunderland Institute. His active ministerial life extended over thirty-one years. Most of these years were spent in the Tunstall, Manchester and Liverpool Districts. On account of his wife's health he left Manchester First Circuit for Guernsey in 1899. From Guernsey he removed to Chelmsford, and there in 1904 his own health broke down. After a year's rest he resumed his ministry, but in 1909 was stricken by heart disease at Radcliffe and

Elton in the Manchester District. Since then he has been completely incapacitated from public work. This was to him a great deprivation, though he bore it with rare patience and submission. In the early part of 1911 his only child, a daughter of twenty-four years, died after a brief illness. This was a sore trial, the more so that his own life was hanging by so delicate a thread. With what resignation he met these sorrows and how calm and steadfast was the faith that sustained him was very apparent to those who were privileged to see much of him in these late shadowed years. He lived in the consciousness that any moment might be his last, yet, apart from his paroxysms of pain, he was ever bright and sunny, and his gentle and thoughtful consideration for others never failed.

The end of his earthly sojourn came at Lytham on Wednesday, May 6th, 1914, and on the following Saturday what was earthly of him was laid to rest in the grave which also contains the remains of his darling child. He was fifty-nine years of age. It is no small thing to have lived as Thomas Lagar lived - in the love of God, in gentleness and kindness towards his fellows, in deep and tender affection for his kindred, withal simply and faithfully as Christ's messenger and witness, intent on serving his generation according to the will of God.

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1914/661