

Rev. Frederick Sinden

Transcription of the obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by George Grey

FREDERICK SINDEN was born at Brighton, England, September 26, 1842. At the age of seventeen he was "born again" of the Spirit, and admitted a member of our church in his native place. It was not long before his natural endowments, which were of no mean order, combined with the greater and more essential gifts of the Holy Spirit, his devotedness, earnestness, and zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of the perishing, commended him to the officials of the Station as eminently fitted for a wider sphere of usefulness, and his name was accordingly placed on the local preacher's plan, a position which he creditably and usefully occupied until called by the Home Missionary Committee to engage in the regular work of the Ministry.

He was pledged at the Conference of 1864, and laboured successively, with acceptance and an encouraging measure of success, on the home stations of Marlborough, Torquay, Grays, and London Fourth. In March, 1868, in response to urgent requests from the Church in Australia for additional missionaries, he was chosen and sent by the General Missionary Committee to the Melbourne District, arriving safely on July 5 of the same year. It was shortly after mid-day on a bright and beautiful Sunday that he landed, and on the same evening commenced in Australia the work in which his soul so much delighted; proclaiming, with that deeply moving and thrilling energy, unction, and power, so characteristic of him in the years that followed, the gospel of Christ's wonderful love and saving grace.

For the eight months following he was the colleague of the writer and the late Rev. J. Langham, in the Melbourne First and Second circuits. It was then and there, that commenced our future lifelong friendship—a friendship that deepened and mellowed with the lapse of time. By the Annual Assembly of 1869 he was appointed to Kilmore, and thenceforward, and successively to Creswick, Smythesdale, Eaglehawk, Launceston, Longford, Melbourne Fourth; Creswick, second time; Melbourne Second; Geelong, Ballarat First, and Hobart, labouring with much acceptance and great success, particularly in "turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." And is not that, after all, the great end of the Christian ministry? The officially reported (*nett*) aggregate increase of members on his stations for the 28 years ending December, 1896, being nearly 400, which means, that from 600 to 700 at least must have been added. The significance of these figures will be understood only by those who know the conditions under which he laboured. "As the man is, so is his strength."

Our late brother, as a man, was honest, upright, and genuine, transparently open and true, playful and humorous—not without his weaknesses, but with all, and in all, manifesting a manliness of spirit that scorned and loathed the remotest approach to belittling pettiness and meanness of every kind. He was manly in thought, in debate, in character, and in life. "Do to others as ye would they should do to you," appeared to be the rule and study and law of his life.

As a friend, he was not fickle and unreliable, but constant and faithful, true as steel, and steadfast as rock. There were few sacrifices of either time or labour, or means, or of inconvenience to himself, that he deemed too much or too great to make. The spirit too, and the way in which he did it, were such as to almost make you feel that you were *conferring*, rather than *receiving*, a favour.

As a Christian he was sincere, cheerful and vigorous, deep-rooted and unswerving. He had his defects, and no one knew this better than himself, but Jesus Christ was his "mark," and by self-examination, meditation and prayer, he constantly pressed forward to the attainment of a fuller and more perfect life in Him.

“Holiness to the Lord,” was his motto, and prayer the pervading atmosphere of his daily life—the battleground of some of his greatest battles and grandest victories,

As a pastor he was faithful, diligent and discriminating. The sick and suffering poor of his flock had his first, tenderest, and most constant attention and care; while others were not neglected. Rightly recognising that success in other departments of his work greatly depended on the spirit and thoroughness with which he performed his pastoral duties, he gave the more earnest heed thereto, and was “instant in season, out of season.”

As a preacher he “obtained a good report,” was thoroughly evangelical, well versed and firmly grounded in old Methodist theology. On the great themes of the Gospel—man’s ruin by the fall—Redemption by Jesus, and Regeneration by the Holy Spirit, his “trumpet” gave no uncertain sound, nor left his hearers in doubt as to what he meant. For the lost he knew of no Saviour but Jesus Christ—no cancelling of guilt, no cleansing from sin but in His blood—no salvation and life but in Him; and no heaven without holiness. In clarion notes and with thrilling energy he preached Christ and in Him a present, free, and full salvation for all who believe. He was mighty in the Scriptures, “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,” and successful in “turning many to righteousness.”

No station went down under his ministry, nearly all of them greatly improved, and some of them, —notably Eaglehawk, Launceston, Longford, Melbourne Second, and Melbourne Fourth—wonderfully increased, both in members, finances, and spiritual power. There were but few stations in the district that were not eager to obtain his services. What was the secret of his popularity? Not greatness of intellectual attainments, nor the brilliancy of his preaching, to these he could lay no higher than a mediocre claim; but a happy blending or combination of causes, or qualities and traits of character,—his geniality and common sense—for there was no stand-offishness about him—the assumption of no *priestly* airs and pretensions—the man, the brother, not the *parson*, was always prominent, these contributed something. But his style of preaching—attractive to many—his splendid and clear-ringing voice, flashing eye, gleams of humour, and impassioned earnestness; his thoroughness and untiring energy, his spiritual power, marked success and inspiring enthusiasm, which at times swept like wind and burnt like fire, were the main factors

Nor was it alone as a soul-winner that our brother was successful, but also in the general management of the various institutions, organisations and business affairs of his stations. He was a good all-round man, equally at home on the platform and in the pulpit, in the prayer-meeting and in the class, while every question and movement that make for righteousness had his sympathy and enlisted his aid.

As an official and executive officer he took, as circumstances permitted, an active and intelligent part in the work of the district, and was for some years the trusted and appreciated missionary treasurer. In those meetings he will be greatly missed, and in none of them more so than in the sessions and public meetings of the Annual Assembly, in which he had been for so many years a prominent figure and tower of strength.

The announcement of his sudden death, which took place at the Parsonage, Hobart, Tasmania, about 1.30 o'clock, p.m., on Sunday, January 10, 1897, came upon the whole district with the shock of a great sorrow, eliciting on all sides expressions of mournful regret and of sincere sympathy with the bereaved family. Having been unwell during the whole of the previous night, and with little or no sign of improvement, he was strongly advised to remain at home and not take his morning appointment; but his soul was in his work, and being hopeful that the symptoms—the dangerous nature of which he knew not—would pass off, he persisted and went. After arrival at the church, as he was evidently in great pain, Mr. Johnson, one of the stewards, repeatedly entreated him not to take the service, but he only so far yielded as to consent to Mr.

George Mackay, a member of the congregation, conducting the preliminary exercises, saying, "I will preach, if I fall down at it," a strikingly characteristic expression of his resolute and heroic soul. He remained in the vestry for a time, then entered the pulpit, announced his text, Psalm lxxxiv. 11, "The Lord is a Sun and Shield," etc. So absorbed was he in his subject, that though in the very grip of death, he preached with but little abatement of his accustomed warmth and energy. At its close he sat down, his work was done, and Mr. Mackay concluded the service. Assisted by friends, he reached home. The attack—spasms of the heart—became more violent. He lay down on a sofa, remarking to Mrs. Sinden, who was ill in bed in the same room, "I cannot stand this pain much longer." Medical aid was called, but too late; in a few moments, and without further remark, he breathed his last.

Twenty-eight and a half years before, on a bright and beautiful Sunday, shortly after mid-day, he had landed in Melbourne, and entered into the labours of his high vocation, and on the same day of the week, and nearly the same hour, with the last message of his Master still warm on his lips, and the harness on, he landed in glory, was translated, without break or pause in active service, from the earthly to the heavenly temple, from the lower to the higher, grander and more perfect conditions of life and service.

On the day of his funeral there was ample and striking evidence of how widely had penetrated his influence in the city, of the profound impression made by his sudden departure, of the deep and general feeling of regret, of sympathy, and respect for his memory. Nearly half the city seemed greatly moved. Collins-street Church, whither the body was first taken, was deeply draped and closely packed with mourners, both aged and young. In the brief solemn service that was held the Rev. W.H. Walton delivered a pathetic and impressive address. Thence the long, sad procession proceeded along people-lined streets to the Cornelia Bay Cemetery, where, in the presence of a vast concourse of mourners and sympathisers, including ministers and representatives of nearly all the city churches, and officers of the Loyal Orange Lodge—his remains, amid tears and sobs, were laid to rest. The scene, writes an eye-witness, was one never to be forgotten. The Revs. Walton, Jackson, Currie, Rogers, Dawe, and W. Shaw (Wesleyan) took part in the impressive service, which was closed by the singing of a beautiful hymn by the church choir—a fitting close. 'So He giveth His beloved sleep.'

In-memoriam services were also held on the following Sunday, at Sandy Bay in the morning, and Collins Street Church in the evening, the Rev. W.H. Walton preaching appropriate and effective sermons to large and sympathetic audiences. "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

On the domestic side of his life, in all its relationships, as husband and father, Frederick Sinden was exceedingly tender, considerate, and affectionate, and his decease is, to his devoted and sorrowing widow and bereaved family (six), a sad and mournful loss. But it is not all loss. They inherit, not only the legacy of a precious memory — the memory of a noble and godly life, thickly sown with deeds of kindness, and of registered and treasured-up prayers, that must and will bear fruit—but also the covenant promises of their father's God — a rich and glorious inheritance. "A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation." "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive." His promises will never fail, nor his lovingkindness depart. Weeping widow and fatherless children trust in Him.

Deeply, too, will his loss, as an efficient minister, a trusted leader, and a laborious worker, be felt by the Church in general, and the Hobart church in particular, which within the last few years has suffered several severe blows. — Only nine months previously he went to the station by special request, and under peculiarly trying circumstances, and seventy names were, by the end of the year, removed from the roll. For the first six months it was a hard fight; but those loyal to the Church rallied round him, and the power of the

Master was with them, and thirty-eight were added in the nine months.- The tide of prosperity was rising and the prospect cheering, when the blow of his removal suddenly fell upon them. We bow in submission and unfaltering faith. What we know not now we shall know hereafter. To the honour and credit of the church be it recorded, that not their own loss, but the greater loss of the bereaved family, and how, by practical sympathy and generous aid, they might help them to bear it, was their first thought and deepest feeling. God will not forget this, and showers of blessings will, we believe, in one way or another, fall upon them.

References

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