

## Rev. John Tamkin

### Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by John Woodcock

JOHN TAMKIN, Primitive Methodist minister. He was born at Brighton, in Sussex, on the 17th of April, 1821. He was the child of pious parents, who were Wesleyans; his mother died in the Lord when he was two years of age; his father survives to mourn the loss of his only son. Early in life John became a scholar in the Wesleyan Sabbath-school, and such was the amiability of his disposition, the precocity of his talents, and his "aptness to teach," that, at the age of fourteen, he received the charge of one of the highest classes in the school. At the age of fifteen he was convinced, that though he had been restrained from the commission of open crimes, and had enjoyed, the, benefit of early religious impressions, there was a necessity for the moral renovation of his nature—that he "must be born again."

Earnestly he sought the favour of the Lord; and while kneeling, in company with others, at a penitent's form, he obtained a "knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins," and was filled with holy joy. He also "held fast the beginning of his confidence steadfast unto the end." At the age of seventeen he was received on the Wesleyan local preachers' plan, and the duties of his office he discharged acceptably and successfully for five years, when, in consequence of unpleasant occurrences, he, after, mature deliberation and earnest prayer for Divine direction, tendered his resignation.

After a careful examination of the Primitive Methodist rules, the constitution and government of the Connexion received his hearty approval; he therefore offered himself to our small society at Brighton, and being able to produce honourable testimonials of character from the Wesleyans, he was received into church fellowship with us, and his name soon appeared on the preachers' plan. In 1845, Brighton mission having become too extensive to be worked efficiently by one missionary, brother Tamkin was called into the itinerancy by the General Missionary Committee, and on January 16th, with a profound sense of the awful responsibility, which it involves, he entered on the solemn work of the ministry. He remained on Brighton mission, much beloved, and having seals to his ministry, until April, 1846. During the summer of the same year I became acquainted with him; our acquaintance soon ripened into close friendship, which remained uninterrupted to the moment of his departure.

His affability, candour, eminent piety, and great prudence, rendered intimacy with him pleasant and beneficial. He had the heart of a brother, and was unusually faithful. After leaving Brighton he laboured in the St. Alban's, London, Glasgow, and Paisley missions, in each of which he fulfilled the duties of a missionary creditably to himself and profitably to the societies, and was successful in the conversion of sinners to God. Mr. G. Austin, who was his superintendent in London, says of him, "I ever found him a humble, cheerful, prudent, pious, punctual, industrious, intelligent, and successful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Always in earnest, he pursued his course, impelled by love's constraining power. When removed from us by the General Missionary Committee to take charge of a Scotch station, his removal was lamented by all." Mr. W. Garner, General Missionary Secretary, writes, "I found him to be one of the most orderly, agreeable, and acceptable missionaries under the Committee's direction."

While in Glasgow he had two violent attacks of pleurisy, which reduced him to a state of extreme weakness. On one of these occasions the writer went from Edinburgh to visit him, and found him completely prostrated, but enjoying a remarkably peaceful and happy state of mind. Grasping my hand firmly, he said, "I have no doubt of my acceptance with God; I have not felt a momentary alarm,— I have perfect peace."

From his sympathising friends he received every possible attention and kindness, and ministers of other denominations kindly supplied his pulpit whenever requested to do so. This greatly soothed and encouraged him in his affliction, and was often mentioned by him with gratitude. Notwithstanding these interruptions to his labours, he had the happiness of seeing his station improve numerically, financially, and spiritually.

In June, 1850, he was united in marriage to Miss Sarah Ann Colbron, of Brighton, whose many excellences rendered her a suitable "help-meet for him."

While at Paisley his health became seriously affected, which excited painful apprehensions, and led him to request the District Meeting and Conference of 1852 to favour him with a station south of the Tweed, hoping that a change of residence would have a favourable effect on the state of his health. His request was granted, and he was appointed to the west branch of Hull circuit. But, alas! before the time for removing arrived, he was incapable of taking his work. It was now thought that if he could spend a few weeks at his native place, its salubrious air might have a bracing and invigorating effect on his system, and, therefore, on the 23rd of June, he arrived at Brighton, where he remained until August 20th, when, feeling somewhat recruited in health, and eager to resume his "loved employ," he removed with his family to Hull, where he was kindly received by his brethren. On Sunday, the 22nd, he preached in West-street Chapel, and in the afternoon led a love-feast at Great Thornton-street, but was unable to preach in the evening. His first sermon in his new circuit was the last he preached; he never attempted to preach afterwards. His last text was, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

The sequel may soon be told. Medical advice was obtained, and an immediate return to Brighton being recommended, he returned to his father's house to finish his course. Unmistakable symptoms of a rapid consumption now appeared, which bade defiance to the most skilful efforts to arrest it.

On November 7th he wrote me a letter, from which I make the following extract ——"My cough is distressing, and my weakness indescribable. I am writing this whilst bolstered up in bed. Ah! my dear brother, how mysterious are the dealings of Providence; but I dare not repine, they are all in wisdom. I am passive in the hands of the Lord; I know whom I have believed, and I have perfect peace within." Mr. Coates, our missionary in Brighton, visited him during his affliction, and says respecting him, "I found he had been no wavering saint, but a Christian indeed; his path was that of the just. His religious course had been a progressive one. In his affliction and at death he exhibited the same grand characteristics which he had exemplified in health. The felicity of heaven weaned his soul from earth. To the doctor, the day previous to his departure, he said, "I long to be gone." When asked by his father if he felt that Gospel which he had preached to others to be his support in death, he calmly, but firmly, replied, "Yes, yes." But there was one struggle yet awaiting him. By his bedside stood his youthful and affectionate partner, wiping away the perspiration as it rolled down his pale and sunken cheeks. For a moment or two there was a conflict between the tender anxiety of conjugal and parental affection, and the desire to be "unclothed." A flood of tears ensued, but after an assurance from his sorrowing wife that she could resign him into the Lord's hands, he was again calm and peaceful. Soon afterwards she gently asked him if he still retained his confidence, and he replied, "O, yes." She watched him as his breathing became more and more difficult, and whispering words of comfort in his ear, she reminded him of the glorious change he would shortly experience, and his lips moved "Yes." Shortly afterwards "the silver cord was loosed," and his redeemed and sanctified spirit escaped from its emaciated tabernacle, and entered "into the joy of the Lord." This occurred on the morning of December 10th, 1852, in the thirty-first year of his age, and after his being in the ministry nearly eight years.

On the 15th, his remains were carried by the Primitive Methodist and Wesleyan Sunday-school teachers to the Hanover burying-ground. Mr. Coates officiated, and on the Sunday evening following, preached his funeral sermon to a crowded congregation.

Without attempting an analysis of his mental and moral qualifications, we may be allowed to observe, that his talents were of a respectable order, probably above the mediocrity. He made no pretensions to high scholarship, nor to great intellectual attainments; nor was his mind distinguished by daring in speculation, nor profoundness in metaphysics; but he possessed that which, to the Christian minister, is infinitely more valuable namely, sterling piety.

In his preaching he was simple, faithful, affectionate, and earnest. He was clear in his views of Divine truth, apt in illustrating, and remarkably pointed and powerful in applying the word of God. His direct aim was usefulness, Hence, if he did not enchant with images of fancy, nor dazzle his hearers with sublime speculations, he sought to bring the truth home to their consciences, and to conduct their souls to the throne of grace to obtain a present salvation.

He was eminently distinguished by his attention to system and order. This, we think, might be seen in his personal appearance, and it was strictly observed in his library, journal, manuscripts, private and official accounts, and in his whole deportment.

He possessed a missionary spirit in an eminent degree, and had his physical strength been equal to his philanthropic mind, he would have laboured more extensively than he did; but his mind was oppressed and crippled by a weak and languishing body.

He was "a general family visitor," and in each of the stations he occupied he enjoyed the affection and esteem of a large circle of friends.

A widow and two small children survive to experience, we hope, the tender care of "the good Shepherd." The dispensation is dark and mysterious, but its darkness is relieved by the rainbow of promise.

May the reader and writer "be followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises;" so shall we

"Make our lives sublime,  
And dying leave behind us  
Footprints, on the sands of time."

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#### References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1853/261