

MEMOIR OF JOSEPH TAYLOR, P.M. T. PREACHER.

(Ashby-de-la-zouch Circuit.)

Joseph Taylor was born at Rolleston, near Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, in Nov. or Dec. 1804. His father was a parish Clerk a number of years, and was likewise engaged in other parochial offices. So Joseph, who was the youngest son, and who was more at home with his parents, than were any of his brothers, was, in early life, considerably engaged with his father in these things. And his parents keeping a grocer's shop, to which he had frequently to attend, his time prior to his apprenticeship, was in these ways chiefly spent.

During this period he received some little, and but little literary instruction; and it appears that little was gratuitously given; but his spiritual interests were very much neglected. It is true he commonly attended the services of the parish church; and, with other members of the family, was sometimes taken by his mother to the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. But on the whole he had not that attention paid to him, which is paid to some young people by parents or others. He therefore remained ignorant of the love of God revealed to those who believe.

Bro. Taylor lost his mother at an early period of his life; and his father died by the time our brother reached his fifteenth or sixteenth year. 'The death of his parents had considerable effect on his juvenile mind; and the Spirit of God also striving with him, he felt, in some measure, the necessity — the absolute necessity, of a preparation for a similar event; which he was given to know he must ere long realize.

About the time of his father's demise, he was put apprentice, by his brothers, to an uncle; and when he had been there about twelve months, he attended a camp-meeting, held by our people at Burton, and there he realized the forgiveness of his sins, the salvation of his soul; and was enabled to give ample testimony to the numbers who were present, that God for Christ's sake had then and there forgiven all his sins, and made him unspeakably happy. And from that time to the day of his death, he held fast the beginning of his confidence, he lived by faith on the Son of God.

Shortly after his conversion, he began to feel anxiously concerned for the salvation of his fellow creatures; or at least, he began to evince an anxious desire to see all mankind brought to the enjoyment of the same blessing, which himself enjoyed. And yielding to the repeated impulses of the Holy Spirit, and the entreaties of God's people, he at length began publicly to exhort those who came to hear him, to flee from the wrath to come, to make their peace with God, and prepare for death and heaven. He, of course, was soon taken on the local preacher's plan, in the Burton Circuit; when he laboured with acceptance and success, until he was called out into the more extended sphere of an itinerant preacher. During this period he fulfilled his engagement as an apprentice, and remained in his uncle's service somewhat longer than the stipulated time.

During his apprenticeship, his crosses and trials were neither few nor small; some of his relations treated him with severity on different occasions; and others, both rich and poor, persecuted him because he served the Lord; especially because he was what they called a Ranter. The clergyman of the parish and another gentleman repeatedly used all their efforts, it seems, to get him to forsake the cause he had espoused, and I might say the God he loved; for, in all probability, had he forsaken the people amongst whom he was joined, he would have fallen from grace and from God. But he, by the grace of God, was enabled to stand fast, to press onward, to preach the gospel, and to do good. The zeal of our respected brother, which appeared so conspicuous in after life, was at this time very ardent. He had, I believe, to go about two miles to the chapel he commonly attended; and, as he had to work hard at his trade, and had no time allowed him to attend the means of grace, excepting the Sabbath days, he, on some occasions, has, I understand, sat up two or more nights in the week, to work that he might sometimes enjoy the privilege of attending the house of God, on a week-day evening.

Brother Taylor was taken out to travel by the Nottingham Circuit, in October 1826. He did not precipitately enter upon this arduous work, but did it with much consideration and prayer. His Brother John, who has favoured me with some documents from which I have made a few selections, says, Joseph told him, when the Nottingham Circuit sent for him, he went up stairs and prayed earnestly to the Lord to direct him whether to go and preach the gospel, or stay at

home and work at his trade. And he said it was strongly impressed upon his mind that he must go and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Consequently he obeyed the call; and, in the name of the Lord, went forth from friends and home, and gave himself up to the service of a cause he most ardently loved.

In the Nottingham Circuit, he laboured with Brother King, to whom he was then and ever after particularly attached. And in the order of an all-wise Providence he was removed from Nottingham to Sheffield, Jan. 1, 1828; from Sheffield to Leicester at Midsummer 1829; from Leicester to Ashby-de-la-zouch at Midsummer 1831; from thence to heaven about Christmas 1832. In each of the above named circuits he was much esteemed, and very useful. And as a colleague I with others can say he has not many equals; and for piety, zeal, fidelity, kindness, humility, and a number of virtues and graces, he was amiable, esteemed, and exemplary, as a Christian, a minister, a colleague, and a friend.

He preached a full, a free, and a present salvation, with the simplicity, energy, and ability, these doctrines demand. Souls were brought to God through his instrumentality; and, no doubt, he will meet with many in heaven, whom he has been instrumental in bringing there. He was Superintendent in this circuit; in which capacity he acted with such ability, promptitude, and regularity, as gained him the esteem of preachers, leaders, stewards, members, and all; while it reflected honour upon his moral and Christian character, and made him a great blessing to the cause.

To do the will of him who sent him, was his aim; and to see the work of God revive was his delight. His prayer in public, in domestic or social, and in private worship was that of the prophet Hab. "O Lord revive thy work." And when his humble, earnest, faithful prayer was answered, his heart rejoiced, and he gave glory to God. But to see Ichabod inscribed on the walls of God's house or church, was to him indeed painful and distressing.

During the six months I was favoured with being his colleague in the ministry, I was an eye and ear witness to many facts, corroborative of these statements; and I do not fear, in making the best of statements, concerning our departed brother, that I shall be found to say too much.— The natural disposition, or at least that disposition commonly termed natural, but which grace had so much improved, which our brother evidently possessed, was to "do good unto all men, especially those who were of the household of faith." He had much rather suffer in body or mind, than that others should suffer by him. As regards his intellectual powers, they will bear characterizing. His perception was clear, his judgment sound, his memory retentive; he indeed possessed greater ministerial talents than many; and all his talents were devoted to the glory of God, and the service of his cause,

"Rever'd, belov'd, and much admir'd,
He meekly vain applause withstood;
Yet to the higher meed aspir'd,
Of honouring God and doing good."

Our brother possessed a missionary spirit; and has commonly been heard to say, that he minded not to where he was sent to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to perishing men. He was a man of a tolerably stout constitution; it was thought, that his labours, which were often heavy, were borne by him with apparent ease and pleasure. But he, like Enoch, walked with God, and is not, for God hath taken him.

About two months before his death, he exchanged appointments for a week with brother D. Wilson, in the Burton circuit. The first appointment was in Burton, on the Sabbath; he preached there with power and effect, but he felt unwell during the latter part of the day; and the former part of the week he continued unwell, but not so ill as to be altogether unable to preach. He therefore went to several places, and laboured as much as he could, and probably more than it was prudent. One evening before he went to preach, some friends expostulated with him on the subject, saying, the Lord did not call upon him to labour when he was not able. But he peremptorily replied, "The Lord calls me to labour when I am able to stand." Such was his zeal, that he has been heard to say, if by standing to preach till he died, he could be the means of saving one soul, did the Lord require it, he would gladly do it. The afflictions of the dear saint increasing, he was compelled to desist from public and bodily labour. It may be remarked he

preached the last time where he preached first, at Tutbury in Burton circuit, and on the Saturday he arrived again at Ashby. Medical aid was procured, and all that could be done for him, was done, but all in vain. His disorder was said to be first the bilious and afterwards the typhus fever. And he grew worse and worse for some time; but at length began apparently to recover, and hopes were entertained that he would fully recover.

These hopes, however, were blasted. On the 22nd of December, he was taken worse again; and so he remained to the last. During his illness his pain was sometimes severe in the head, and he seemed to be delirious. But how excellent a medium is divine grace; it enabled him to bear all patiently, and to say, "Not my will, but the will of the Lord be done." At times he was asked whether he should like to recover; but I believe he invariably answered he did not care whether he lived or died, but left it to the Lord. I have frequently conversed with him about the state of his mind, and the things of God, and found that his heart was fixed trusting in the Lord.

On some occasions he proposed singing; and, though very feeble, helped me to sing the praises of God. And when we have sung and prayed together, the blessing of the Lord has been realized, and his soul and body refreshed. And he has simply said, "It does me good—it does me good." Several friends as well as myself frequently visited him, and found that if he was not in ecstasies of joy, his faith was unshaken, his patience great, and his will lost in the will of heaven. At times tears of gratitude for temporal and spiritual mercies, have trickled down his sallow cheeks, his tongue has shouted the praise of God, and his soul has been ready to

"Clap her glad wings and soar away,
And mingle with the blaze of day!"

The night before he died, several of us prayed with him; and though we did not think we should see him alive any more, we were satisfied that he and us should see each other again at God's right hand, if we were faithful until death. His loud amens and acclamations of praise and glory to God, made the room ring. And, O, it was good to be there. A dying saint—a dying minister was there—the praises of God were there—angels were there—God himself was there!

During that night a friend sitting up with our brother was witness to the power of religion over the terrors of death; for as death approached the suffering pilgrim rejoiced; yea, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He exclaimed, "Who would not praise the Lord? I will praise him with my latest breath." And so most of the night was spent, and on the following morning, being Sabbath morning, December 23, 1832, about seven o'clock, aged 28, his spirit escaped, crossed the valley, and soon no doubt reached the delectable mountains of glory and heaven. Thus lived and thus died brother Taylor; who, no doubt, will ere long meet with numbers who lament his early removal from the church below.

Funeral sermons have been preached in many places where he was known, and the writer of these remarks, preached on the occasion of his death in many places in this circuit, from Psalm xii. 1, to crowded, attentive, and much affected congregations; where he hopes much good was done. And yet prays that he, and all his brethren in the ministry, may finish their course with similar joy to that of the subject of this memoir. And that all God's people may imitate the example of such ministers as he was, and ultimately behold one another where he is, and eternally ascribe glory and dominion to him whose smiling face they shall then behold, and who sitteth on the throne for ever, and ever.— Amen.

W. ANTLIFF.

(Approved by the Circuit Committee.)

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1834/177