

Life and ministry of a. j. tomlinson

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



Ambrose J. Tomlinson (1865-1943) belonged to a moderately wealthy family from Westfield, Indiana. His family conducted business, and so the young Tomlinson, after finishing his studies at the prominent Westfield Academy, tried his hand at business as well. His life in the huge Quaker community was serene to begin with. In the rural community, Tomlinson was able to connect with a few religious people who strengthened his interest in the Gospel (Hunter, 2003).

Tomlinson's neighbors in Westfield included two African-American families. Each summer the African-American families in addition to some of the freed slaves attended camp meetings of people of color. White worshippers were attracted to the meetings as well. Even Tomlinson happened to attend some of these meetings. Soon he was introduced by a man named J. B. Mitchell to Charles G. Finney, a revivalist. In the year 1894, Tomlinson and Mitchell co-founded the Book and Tract Company which took them both on short trips to Appalachia. Tomlinson was introduced to Frank Sandford, the founder of the Shiloh community, and other religious figures around this time (Hunter).

Tomlinson's understanding of religion was enhanced as he encountered important religious personalities. The Acts 2 commune practiced by the Shiloh community, for example, provided a model for his family to imitate. In the year 1899, Tomlinson and his family came across the Fire-Baptized Holiness Association of B. H. Irwin (Hunter). By this time Tomlinson had been eagerly seeking out "locations where special visitations of the Holy Spirit were occurring (Nienkirchen, 1992, p. 32)." According to Nienkirchen, the goal of Tomlinson was "to find the true 'Church of God' where the preaching of the word was being confirmed by miracles, signs, and wonders,

together with gifts of the Holy Spirit according to the pattern of Acts (p. 32).” The Church of God for All Nations describes Tomlinson’s success in eventually finding the Church of God:

According to prophecy, the Church (Zion) was ordained to arise from the grave of the Dark Ages among the Gentiles in the Last Days (Isaiah 60: 1-3; Isaiah 52: 1). This occurred on June 13, 1903, in Cherokee County, North Carolina, when Prophet A. J. Tomlinson found the body of people whom God had chosen to be the resurrection Church of God in its infancy this side of the Dark Ages. It was in this same year that the Wright Brothers arose from the earth by the invention of the airplane, a material witness to what God was doing spiritually (Isaiah 60: 8). Prior to this time, A. J. Tomlinson was a colporteur for the American Bible Society, distributing Bibles and religious literature throughout the southeastern United States.

He also printed and distributed his first publication called " Samson's Foxes." God began to move upon him to find the body of people who would be the Church of the Last Days. After investigating many groups, he scripturally determined the one which God had chosen. It was the remains of a small union of churches which in 1886 became an association under the guidance and direction of R. G. Spurling and came to be known as the Christian Union. It had dwindled into a small group in Camp Creek, however, because of the tragedies of heresy and fanaticism which had crept in to destroy the flock. In 1902 the name was changed from Christian Union to Holiness Church. The fellowship, consisting of some twenty members, was abiding under the name of Holiness Church when A. J. Tomlinson was moved by God to approach them for fellowship (“ Church of God History”).

One morning of June 1903, Tomlinson climbed the Prayer Mountain in Cherokee County, North Carolina, to pray for the guidance of God. Subsequently he was led by the Holy Spirit to join the Church of God that he had already discovered. As Tomlinson was being led by the Holy Spirit, the Wright Brothers were trying hard to fly in another corner of North Carolina. This acted as a sign for Tomlinson. Moreover, his anointed leadership role became apparent to the others as well around the same time. Tomlinson was made the pastor of the little community of believers almost immediately. He was eventually recognized as a chosen one of God. The Church was destined to grow under his guidance, until it was considered essential to arrange a General Assembly in the year 1906. The General Assembly mainly consisted of the ministry. After the meeting, the Church was able to grow further and its operations became more formalized. The name of Tomlinson's Church was eventually changed to Church of God in the year 1907 (" Church of God History").

Tomlinson noted that he felt " more fully awakened" in the year 1907 (Hunter). Soon after, he was granted the title of General Moderator of the Church of God. In the year 1910, he was named General Overseer of the Church. Four years later, the man's appointment was acknowledged as perpetual. In the year 1918, his life changed once again as his nation suffered from influenza and the Church was unable to convene a general conference. From 1919, the state of affairs of the Church began to face a downturn, as the democratic government tried to disrupt its operation.

In 1922, the democratic government was able to draw up a constitution to subjugate Tomlinson to the total control as well as limitations imposed by

the laws of the land. Tomlinson realized that this move on the part of the government was designed to control the “Theocratic Government (“Church of God History”).” From that point on, the man tried to do his utmost to make corrections in the functioning of the Church. Because the financial records of the Church were not organized, however, the government expressed its doubts and suspicions about the conduct of the General Overseer. Nevertheless, Tomlinson assumed complete responsibility for the financial affairs of his Church. He was ultimately impeached in the year 1923 (“Church of God History”).

Being a man of God, Tomlinson had failed to properly attend to the monetary affairs of the Church, as he had preferred to attend to the Holy Spirit. Although he lost his position as the General Overseer of the Church, he could not lose his anointing from God. Thus, the man remained loyal to the “Theocratic Government” as well as his appointment from God to lead people in faith (“Church of God History”). Tomlinson performed these God-assigned duties with vigor and tenacity. He even tried to reform the Church “by a principle well supported in Jeremiah 18: 1-11 (“Church of God History”).” He had been impeached in June. By September he was able to get the Church of God to publish a periodical called *The White Wing Messenger* (“Church of God History”).

Unsurprisingly, the Church of God began to flourish once more under the leadership of Tomlinson. Although it had been persecuted, the Church also began to experience financial prosperity. Most importantly, it was able to increase its understanding of prophetic truth through the guidance of Tomlinson. The flag of the Church was “revealed according to Psalms 60: 4

(“ Church of God History”).” Soon after the United States Patent Office had granted recognition to the flag, in the year 1939, Tomlinson heard of a young minister named Grady R. Kent, who had been severely persecuted in Egan, Georgia. Tomlinson invited Kent to pastor a local church in Cleveland. Once he realized that Kent was a successful preacher, Tomlinson taught him about many prophetic passages. The Church of Prophecy Makers Association was formed in the year 1941. Shortly before his death in 1943, Tomlinson appointed Kent as its general secretary (“ Church of God History”).

Thus, Tomlinson fulfilled his responsibilities toward the Church until the very end of his term on earth. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the president of the United States, was one of the many people who expressed their condolences at the demise of the great minister. Tomlinson had been largely responsible for the “ overspread of Pentecostalism” during the twentieth century (“ Church of God History”). Most importantly, however, he was responsible for helping countless people expand their knowledge about the Gospel. Milton, his younger son, who was appointed as the General Overseer of the Church of God, is not known to have possessed the qualities of his father (“ Church of God History”). After all, Tomlinson had nurtured a special relationship with God that had granted him special privileges in connection with the Holy Spirit, and ultimately with the Body of Christ.

References

Hunter, H. D. (2003, Winter/Spring). A. J. Tomlinson’s Journey Toward Racial Reconciliation.

Church of God History and Heritage.

<https://assignbuster.com/life-and-ministry-of-a-j-tomlinson/>

Nienkirchen, C. W. (1992). A. B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement.
Peabody, MA:

Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.