

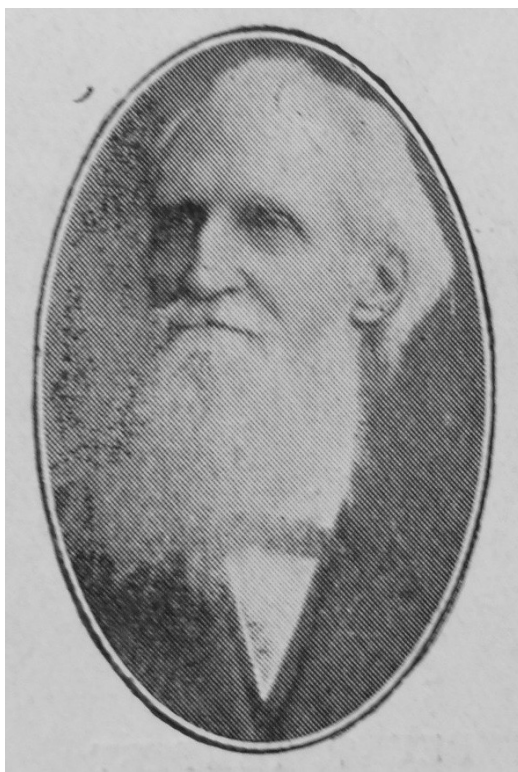
Rev John Mitchell

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Thomas Kynaston

John Mitchell was born at Swinefleet near Goole, September 10th, 1841. His parents were devoted Christian people, and in his youth he had the advantage of careful religious training. When a boy his parents removed to Batley, where his father, Mr. James Mitchell, was appointed superintendent of the Sunday School, and his son John, the secretary.

When in his teens he became a local preacher, and his gifts were soon made manifest. It was felt that God had destined him for a larger sphere of service, and when he was in his twentieth year, the Church called him to the active work of the ministry.

He filled this high office and discharged its important duties with consistency and faithfulness for thirty-five years, when owing to a breakdown in his health he retired from the active ministry and was placed by the Conference of 1896 on the list of superannuated preachers.



He laboured with marked success upon the following stations: York, Clayton West, Pateley Bridge, Skipton, Penzance, Sydney, Bath, Gloucester, Horbury, Darlaston, Swansea, Preston, Colnbrook, and Wrexham. Some of these were large stations where great demands were made upon the minister's time and strength, and where his powers were taxed to the utmost, and considering that our brother had never a robust constitution, still with care and the medical knowledge he possessed he was able to hold by his post for thirty-five years.

In 1865 he married Ruth, daughter of James and Mary Stuart, of Bird Lane Farm, Barnsley.

Mrs. Mitchell proved a worthy partner, and shared with her husband the joys and sorrows, the delights and disappointments of a minister's life. She was also a preacher of considerable ability, an intellectual woman, who shared with Brother Mitchell his love of books, and was in thorough sympathy with his ministerial work.

As a Primitive Methodist minister our late brother answered two vital requirements. He was a good business man and he was a successful preacher of the Gospel. On many of his circuits the one problem which confronted the officials was, "How to reduce the heavy chapel debts?" He never shirked this arduous task. He worked hard, gave liberally and often pinched himself with poverty in order to lighten the burdens and lessen the liabilities of trustees. He was not afraid to deal in bricks and mortar, and when at Bath he built a new church—an event in his ministry which he cherished

with great pleasure and satisfaction. As a business man he was attentive to detail, punctual and regular in his habits, and methodical in all he did.

As a preacher he was above the average in intellectual strength. He was a lover of good books, and he read them. His library was thoroughly up-to-date and stocked with the works of some of the best authors of his day. Although he had no special college training he acquired a very extensive knowledge of the Bible, and was a most helpful and instructive expositor of the Scriptures, and a born teacher.

In connection with several of his churches he formed Theological classes for the discussion of Christian doctrine, and to encourage young men to study the Bible, and out of those classes have come ministers of the Gospel, local preachers, and officials of the Church. Another striking characteristic of his preaching was his evangelical fervour and passion. His sermons were earnest and heart-searching, he gripped the conscience, laid bare the inner life and made pointed and powerful appeals to men to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and the result was conversions. He had faith in revivals and when in Penzance Circuit it was estimated that 600 converts were won for Christ.

As a man he was genial, brotherly and sympathetic. Gentlemanly in appearance and manners, he was a welcome visitor to many homes and had a large circle of friends. He was an affectionate father, and made untold sacrifices for his children. He appreciated the advantages of education and at great cost to himself he thoroughly equipped his sons to fill responsible positions in life. During the last years of his retirement he resided with his son and daughter at Egremont, in Birkenhead First Circuit, where his pulpit gifts have been recognised and his services requisitioned by other denominations, especially the Presbyterian Church. Some few years since he was the preacher on one occasion at the old Scotch Kirk in Oldham Street, Liverpool, when Sir Edward Russell was a member of his congregation. The following week an appreciation of the sermon and the preacher appeared from the pen of Sir Edward in the columns of "The Liverpool Daily Post." It spoke in the highest terms of Brother Mitchell's lucid and faithful exposition of the Word of Life.

He was a member of our Seacombe Society and has manifested the keenest interest in its development and prosperity. One of the last acts of his generous nature, was to celebrate his jubilee as a member of the Primitive Methodist Church by raising £50 for the building fund of our new schools. A week before his death he was seized with an attack of heart failure from which he never recovered. Rallying for a moment from a semi-conscious condition he said to the Rev. W. Upright, the night before he died, "Tell my brethren 'that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin.' " In this glorious faith he passed to the higher service of heaven on Monday, Sept. 7th, 1908.

The interment, which took place in Liscard Cemetery on Wednesday, Sept. 9th, was attended by a large number of friends including the following ministers:—The Rev. F. Smith, who officiated at the funeral, the Revs. J. Crompton, T. Bramall, W. Upright, T. Kynaston and the Revs. J. G. Goold, M.A., and J. Fraser, M.A., of the Presbyterian Church.

References

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