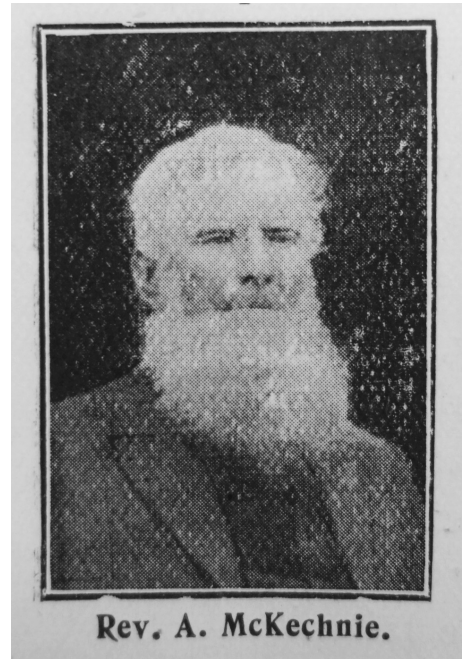


Rev. A. McKechnie

Transcription of Obituary In the Primitive Methodist Magazine by John Henry Hirst

Alexander McKechnie was born at Johnstone, a small manufacturing town near Paisley, in the year 1820. His home life did not present great advantages for mental development, but in the town the day and evening schools, and an excellent Mechanics' Institute, gave opportunities for education, which were quickly perceived and used. With a keen zest for knowledge, the records of history and travel were eagerly read, and a good foundation for later service was laid by the youth. When seventeen years old, questionings as to the ultimate meaning of life arose in his mind, and, as a result, earnest study of the Bible was begun, leading, some months later, to a saving knowledge of the grace of God. Being assured of his acceptance with God, he became a member of the Relief Presbyterian Church. The Bible study was now followed with even greater thoroughness, and as fresh light broke from its pages he was led to reject the somewhat severe Calvinism of his Church, and accept a wider interpretation of the Scriptures. At this time the Paisley Primitive Methodists missioned Johnstone. Their fervour in song and prayer, along with the preaching of a free and full salvation, won the heart of young McKechnie, and he at once joined them. At the same meeting where Alexander decided to join our people, his mother was won for Jesus, and also his brother, the Rev. Charles McKechnie (the latter still living, the oldest member and preacher of the Primitive Methodist Church in the Wyoming District, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.).



Alexander entered heartily into the work of the Society, and his zeal and sincerity, with evident ability and promise, led to his becoming a local preacher, and eighteen months afterwards to his call to the ministry. His labours as a travelling preacher commenced at South Shields in 1841. Leaving South Shields, he laboured acceptably on the following stations:- Berwick-on-Tweed, Stockton, Penrith, Alston, Middleham, Thirsk, Ripon, Keighley. Pickering, Pontefract, Barnsley (three times), Leeds (twice), Bingley (twice), Colne, Easingwold, Halifax, Wakefield, Horbury, Whitehaven, and Normanton. In some respects the record is unique, for of an active ministry of fifty-one years, the whole, with the exception of one year, were spent in the same District; in the earlier years in the Sunderland District, and the later years in that portion of it which was formed into the Leeds District.

The popularity and worth of his ministry were recognised by the Circuits, and hence his return on three occasions to old stations, two of which he worked thrice - Barnsley as an independent station, and Bingley, first as part of Keighley Circuit, and twice as an independent Circuit.

At the commencement of his ministry, long journeys, poor accommodation and low salaries were general, but the privations were borne with cheerfulness, and good service for God and man was rendered.

Mr. McKechnie was a man of distinct individuality, racy and terse in speech, vigorous in thought, clear in judgment. He held a high position in the councils of his District, the highest honours being bestowed upon him. Those who knew him most intimately bear highest testimony to his worth and work. He was marked by persistency in pursuit of truth, and, once convinced, he was unflinchingly firm in what he conceived to be right. The Rev. J.F. Parrish, in a touching appreciation, said of him: "Unmoved by fear or favour, it was impossible by threats to intimidate him, or by flattery to seduce him. Having once become convinced that a certain course was right and proper, he would pursue it to the end." The wisdom of his judgment might be questioned, but his integrity and uprightness were apparent to all. With tenacity of purpose was allied a deep sympathy and an unfailing cheerfulness. The optimism of the Gospel permeated all his activities. A favourite saying was that he had a pocket without a bottom into which he put all his troubles and allowed them to fall through. These characteristics, with an absolute certainty of Christ, made him a great power. He was ever ready to help the weak, the afflicted and the lonely. His name will live long in Colne because of his great labours for the amelioration of suffering during the Cotton Famine.

Young men found in him a sympathetic and trusty friend. Many of the young ministers owed much to his kindness and advocacy of their interests. One such testimony to his help in the earlier years is borne by the Rev. Hezekiah Cooke:— "Nearly forty-six years ago I first made the acquaintance of the Rev. A. McKechnie (at Barnsley). Being kind in heart, genial in disposition, generous in judgment of men and things, free, friendly, cheerful and chatty, he awakened the interest and excited the confidence of young men, if even they were timid and bashful, and as I was but a young convert when he came, and had a note to attempt exhorting, he won my confidence and became my first ministerial adviser and friend. He gave me wise counsel respecting my reading and studies, guided me in purchasing a few good books, and cheered me in the good work assigned me later." His sympathy with all that tended to aid the cause of truth and help men led him to take a full share in many phases of public life. In Connexional and District work he took great interest, and gave of his best in service, Whilst in political, social and civic movements he also took an active part. He rendered valuable service in the inception and advocacy of mechanics' institutions; especially at Bingley was this the case. Here he gave a course of lectures (on behalf of the Institute), which had a great popularity. The singular titles, such as "The Right Sort of Stuff to Make a Man," "The Right Sort of Stuff to Make a Woman," "Sugar Plums for Big Babies," &c., attracted attention in themselves, and this was rivetted by the homely wisdom and strong common sense of the treatment of the subjects, while the playful satire did much to expose and remedy some of the evils of the times. The interest in these lectures was so widespread that over 100,000 of the printed copies were sold.

This interest in the varied phases of life continued throughout his long career. With active mind, keen observation, shrewd judgment, and great desire for knowledge, he read much and widely, keeping in touch with the thought and movements of the day, and retaining his interest in men and things to the end. He was highly privileged in length of service, and joy of home and ministry. In 1891 the Jubilee of his active ministry was celebrated; and though one year later he superannuated, his active work was not finished. Settling in Keighley, he was appointed to conduct services and visitation at the workhouse and infirmary, and for seven years he ministered in this capacity with great success. He begged a weekly supply of newspapers, which he distributed among the poor, with words of sympathy and love, his cheery word and work bringing brightness where it was much needed. This work was only given up two years before his death, through failing health. In his home

he was richly blessed. For fifty-two years he had been helped by the wise sympathy and loving aid of his wife, and later of his children, a labour of love he ever recognised and appreciated, so that as infirmity increased the way was made as easy as possible. The end came peacefully; a week of almost painless illness, and on March 23rd, 1901, he passed away in a sure hope of a resurrection to eternal life. Faith was strong to the end; the message sent to the surviving brother indicated this, "Tell him that I am nearly through the conflict, and the promises are just as sure as ever they were, and Charlie will understand." The funeral took place on Tuesday, March 26th, the service being held in Alice Street Church, Keighley, and the interment being in Bingley Cemetery.

References

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