



Charles Pottrnell

Life and Ministry of Charles Portnell

Early years

Charles was born on 18 February 1839 at Zeals, Wiltshire, to parents William Portnell and Rachel Parfitt. His parents and grandparents were Primitive Methodists. William was a thatcher. When orphaned in childhood, Charles was adopted by his uncle, Mr. Benjamin Parfitt. Charles was converted at a Sunday school prayer meeting in the Gillingham Chapel when he was fifteen years of age. He received his trial ticket on 18 November 1854 by Rev. G. Obern.

Ministry

His ministry was chiefly spent in rural districts, and was one of hard work, but he delighted in it. He was a good pastor, visiting thirty to forty families per week, and seldom left without prayer.

His preaching was plain, but forceful, and hearers were interested and helped by the quaint manner in which his thoughts were expressed.

Family

Charles married Mary Sarah Phillips (1847-1884) in the spring of 1868 at Sturminster, Dorset.

Census returns identify six children.

1. Bertram Benjamin Parfitt (1869-1927) - a PM Minister
2. Florence Mary Phillips (1872-1883)
3. William Charles (1874-1888)

4. Lily Blanche (1878-1953) - married Albert William Hall, a medical practitioner, in 1911
5. Bessie Maud (1880-1946) - married Francis James Collett Dyer, a PM Minister
6. Elsie Laura (1882-1961) - married William Bridge, a PM Minister, in 1926

Charles married Martha Ann Perman (about 1840-1924) in the summer of 1886 at Christchurch, Hampshire.

Charles died on 7 October 1904 at Pokesdown, near Bournemouth.

Circuits

1. 1860 - Banbury
2. 1861 - Winchester
3. 1863 - Brinkworth
4. 1866 - Andover
5. 1866 - Sturminster
6. 1868 - Basingstoke
7. 1870 - Salisbury
8. 1873 - Malmesbury
9. 1877 - Poole
10. 1880 - Winchester
11. 1883 - Basingstoke
12. 1886 - Micheldever
13. 1888 - Motcombe
14. 1890 - Portsmouth
15. 1892 - Silchester
16. 1897 - Calne
17. 1900 - Hungerford
18. 1903 - Bournemouth (S)

Primitive Methodist Magazine. 1906

Obituary of Charles Portnell by A. J. Bull from the Primitive Methodist Magazine

Charles Portnell Transcription of Obituary in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by A. J. Bull

With the passing of the silent hours of Friday night, Oct. 7th, 1904, the soul of our friend and brother "crossed the bar" and entered the heavenly port. Superannuated in 1903, he, with his wife and family, located at Pokesdown, in the Bournemouth circuit.

It was earnestly hoped that the rest and change, with the relief from the strain of the active ministry, would assist in the restoration of his health and strength. But God our Father ordered otherwise. His health throughout the brief period of superannuation fluctuated exceedingly, but a change for the worse took place a few hours before his departure, and he unconsciously sank to rest, the immediate cause of death being Bright's disease, resulting in dropsy and heart failure. On Monday, October 10th, all that was mortal of him was laid to rest in the beautiful Bournemouth Cemetery, surrounded by a large number of sorrowing relatives and friends. Prior to the interment a service was held in our Pokesdown Church, when the Rev. J. Herridge, a very old friend, gave a beautiful address, and the Revs. A. J. Bull, G. Standing, T. Phelps, W. T. Healey, also took part in the last solemn rites. There were present in addition Revs. H. B. Kendall, BA., G. Doe, J. Jones, A. Harding, J. Brace Evans, S. Flemington, Councillors G. R. Standing, Corbin Harris, Messrs. R. Hopgood, and G. White.

Mr. Portnell was born at Zeals, Wiltshire, in the Motcombe circuit, on February 18th, 1839. His parents and grandparents were Primitive Methodists. In the days of his childhood, his mother having died, he

was adopted by his uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Parfitt, whose house was the home of the ministers, and other Godly men and women.

His conversion took place, with that of twelve other lads, at a Sunday prayer meeting, in our Gillingham Chapel, when he was fifteen years of age, and his soul was filled with joy and peace. This occurred during a remarkable revival, which was long continued, and Charles, with other young converts, attended the chapel every night for three months. On Tuesday, November 18th, 1854, the Rev. G. Obern gave him his trial ticket, his name in due course appeared on the plan, and he was subsequently recommended for the ministry. His first circuit was Aylesbury, and then various others: Brinkworth, Basingstoke (twice), Andover, Sturminster Newton, Winchester (twice), Malmesbury, Salisbury, Poole, Motcombe, Portsmouth, Silchester, Micheldever, Colne and Hungerford. His ministry, of over forty-three years, was chiefly spent in the rural districts, and was one of hard work, but he delighted in it. He was a good pastor, visiting thirty or forty families a week, and seldom left without prayer. In the homes of the people he was ever a welcome guest. His preaching was plain but forceful, and hearers were interested and helped by the quaint manner in which his thoughts were expressed. Many believers were strengthened and sinners rescued in connection with his labours.

Mr. Portnell was not without the recognition of his brethren in the business matters of his district, and was appointed General Committee Delegate, and attended the Liverpool Conference in that capacity. His health began to fail when labouring in the Hungerford Circuit, and he found it necessary to retire from the active ministry. During his short period of superannuation he was seldom able to attend the means of grace, but enjoyed much of the Divine presence. Even in his weakness he delighted to sing the old Methodist hymns. Only the evening before his departure he sang with his devoted wife, "Lord, I hear of showers of blessing," and "Be it my only wisdom here," and said when he had finished, "I feel the old Methodist fire in my soul." The critical Biblical questions of the day never troubled him, but he accepted with unquestioning faith the Bible as the word of God. He leaves a wife, three daughters, and a son (Rev. Bertram B. Portnell, of Ramsgate), who are all devoted workers in the church he served so long and faithfully. "Soldier of Christ, well done!

Praise be thy new employ; and while eternal ages run. Rest in thy Saviour's joy. "