

JOSEPH WILLIS BRITTON

Joseph Willis Britton was born in Pontypool in 1847. The son of the Wesleyan minister the Rev Maurice Britton he was educated at Kingswood School, in 1869 was accepted as a candidate for the ministry and spent three years at Didsbury College.

He married Emily Jane Sophia Jones in Fetcham, Surrey on the 10 th February 1876 and their first child Annie Sophia was born in June 1877 shortly before their leaving Maidemhead. Their family was later completed with four more children: Maurice William, Herbert Edward, and twin girls Bertha and Winifred. Herbert died later in WW1.

Joseph was active editorially as evidenced by editing The Wesleyan Methodist circuit magazine (a journal of local Methodist news & general literature) from 1888-1890 and published "Yarm: A Sketch of its History" in the Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Magazine in 1889.

He strongly supported the Temperance Movement as indicated in his address to the Bury St Edmunds Temperance Meeting in December 1898:

"The Rev J W Britton presided, and in the course of his opening address, said he thought that every Christian minister should be on the side of temperance, and he was getting more and more the idea that every Christian man and woman should be on the same side. He was convinced that the temperance movement was the movement of God, and if they were not moving along the line of total abstinence he thought they were not exactly moving along with God. Of course he did not say that people who took intoxicating liquor did not go to Heaven; he would not be so foolish or absurd, but still he thought it was a hindrance to them in preparing themselves for Heaven. In alluding to the growth of the temperance movement, he said thousands and millions had been brought to the side of temperance, but yet their forces seemed but feeble compared with the forces ranged against them, for in many places the drink traffic was in its full strength. The speaker made allusion to a recent speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Brewers Association, in which he said there was drunk in the country 31 gallons of intoxicating liquor per head of population, and though he did not drink his full quantity, he hoped everyone else in the room did. He (the speaker) thought it was a very startling thing that in the 19th century they should have a Chancellor of the Exchequer who should make such a statemnet. The speaker also quoted statistics connected with the drink traffic, and in conclusion spoke in favour of the Local Veto, Sunday Closing, and other matters included in the temperance programme"

On the occasion of the death of the Archbishop of Canterbury in December 1902 it was reported:

"At Wesley Chapel, Fulwood Road, before the sermon, the Rev J Willis Britton (superintendent of the Carver Street Circuit) referring to the loss which the nation had sustained in the decease of the Archbishop of Canterbury, desired in the first place, to express their sympathy with the Anglican Church in the death of him who so deservedly stood at its head. There was no section of the church, not least of all the Wesleyan Connexion, but would feel the loss of so great a personality. The late Archbishop was a man of true Catholic sympathies, fearless in the expression of his opinions, a lover of justice, and of truth. His marked ability and consecrated spirit won for him the place he filled and which he filled so well. The secret of his life was found in the message which he sent to the churches at the close of the last Lambeth Conference of Bishops, "Tell them to love the Lord". That was his message to them all today. Love and service marked the highest type of life. The closing days of this year were marked by the deaths of three of the leaders of the Churches - Hugh Price Hughes, Dr Parker and now the Archbishop. Under the shadow of death all minor differences were forgotten, and their hearts were united in the burden of a common sorrow and the brightness of a common hope"

The obituary notice in the Conference Minutes said of him:

"He had an alert and vigorous mind, and his sermons, packed with evangelical truth, were enhanced in effectiveness by the gift of a lucid, terse expression, and a clear distinct voice"

His strength failed rapidly towards the end and he died on July 24th 1931 aged 84