

Reverend James Pridie 1786 - 1873

Born at Oxford on the 22nd September 1786; James Pridie and his eleven siblings were educated in the doctrine of the Established Church. He was apprenticed to a carver in stone and wood and at the age of twenty left Oxford, spending a few years in London before moving north to settle in Manchester. After hearing the nonconformist minister, Rev. William Roby of Grosvenor Street preach, he "became converted to God" and joined the church where Roby was the minister. James was employed as a junior master at the Leaf Square Grammar School, Pendleton but later pursued a course of theological study. He commenced his ministry at Malpas, in Cheshire and preached there in alternation with Boughton for two years before becoming the pastor of New Windsor Chapel, Salford.

James served as the pastor at New Windsor for thirteen years during which time he and his wife Susannah (nee Legge) had several children, George in 1817, James in 1819, Benjamin in 1820, Sarah in 1822, William Roby in 1825 and Hannah in 1827. (They had another son, Robert born at Halifax circa 1831).

With a small congregation and an increasing family, to make ends meet he ran a school in addition to his duties as a minister. Despite its success, the school was demanding of his time and as he wished to focus his energies more on his pastoral duties, he decided to accept the invitation to become the pastor of Sion Chapel in Halifax, commencing his regular duties on Sunday, 28th of June, 1829.

Sion Chapel prospered under James's ministry, seeing a significant increase in the size of its congregation and Sunday school. On a personal level, James took an active part in the movements of his religious denomination; serving as the secretary for the Home Missionary Society, the Halifax Branch of the Religious Tract Society and the Bible Society. And in 1855 he became the first chairman of the West Riding Congregational Union, a position which he held for two years.

In 1855, Rev. Charles Smith Sturrock was engaged as co-pastor of Sion Chapel to relieve some of the burden of James's pastoral duties. In June 1858, he decided to take full retirement whereupon the church and congregation combined to raise the sum of £1200 with which to purchase a life annuity for him and a generous benefactor undertook to pay the annual rental on his home at 3, Rhodes Street, (the house the family had occupied since their arrival in Halifax in 1829). James received expressions of gratitude for past services from both members of the church and congregation and the teachers and scholars of the Sunday school.

In 1863, James and the Rev. W.R. Morrison, the incumbent of St. James's presented an address on behalf of the Church and Dissenters to the Prince of Wales during His Highness's visit to Halifax in August. James was at the time described as the "oldest minister in the town". His last appearance in the pulpit was on the Sunday following his eightieth birthday when he delivered a sermon from the text "What shall I render unto God for all his benefits towards me."

Despite his advancing years and infirmities, he continued to be a regular attendee at Sion Chapel and maintained a keen interest in the religious affairs of the time. He passed away at the age of 86 at his home in Rhodes Street on the 25th January 1873 and was interred in plot 312 at Lister Lane Cemetery along with his daughter, Sarah (d. 1872) and son, William Roby (d. 1874).