

Ithiel Smart 1636-1692

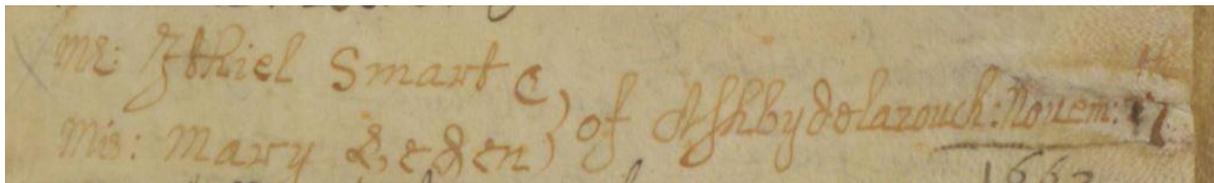
Vicar 1676-1691

Ithiel Smart junior was born in Wombourn, Staffordshire, on 20th March 1636, the eldest son of Ithiel Smart, vicar of St Benedict's Church in the village. He was baptised on 25th March. Several other children followed and 6 – 3 boys and 3 girls – survived to adulthood. In 1642 the family left Wombourn for London, returning in 1648, but in 1650 they left the village permanently when Ithiel senior was appointed vicar of Ashby de la Zouch.

Ithiel junior was educated at St John's College, Cambridge, arriving as a sizar (a student who performed various menial duties in and around the college in return for financial help with his education there) in June 1654, having previously been a pupil at Mr Brooksby's school in Birmingham.¹

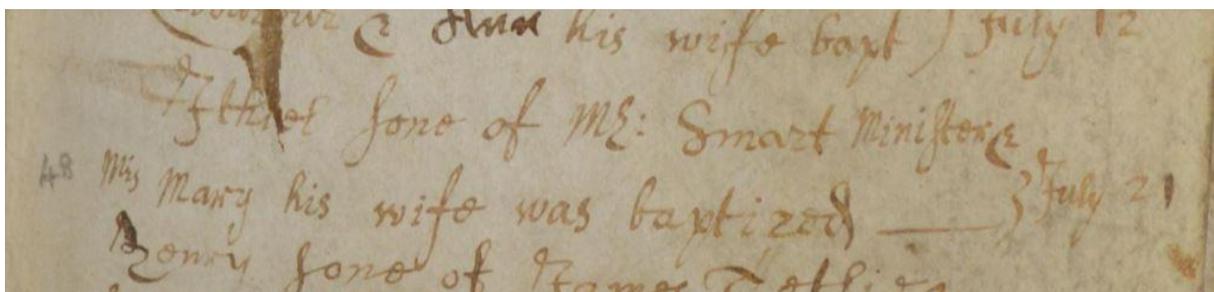
He was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield in 1661 and priest a year later. Both ordinations took place in St Mary Chapel, which may refer to the Lichfield town centre church of that name, as Lichfield Cathedral was in ruins at the end of the Civil War. His first appointment was as Curate of Smisby. In 1676 he was appointed vicar of Ashby and given a licence to preach throughout the Diocese of Lincoln. His patron in Ashby was Theophilus, 7th Earl of Huntingdon, who required his ministers to conform to the strictures of the Church of England.

On 17th November 1661, Ithiel married Mary Heden at St Helen's, Ashby.²



Marriage of Ithiel Smart junior and Mary Heden

A son, also Ithiel, was baptised on 21st July 1663. This Ithiel did not follow his father and grandfather into the church. He became a mercer in Nottingham and pre-deceased his father. He was buried at St Helen's on 30th January 1689. There are no records of any other children born to Ithiel and Mary.

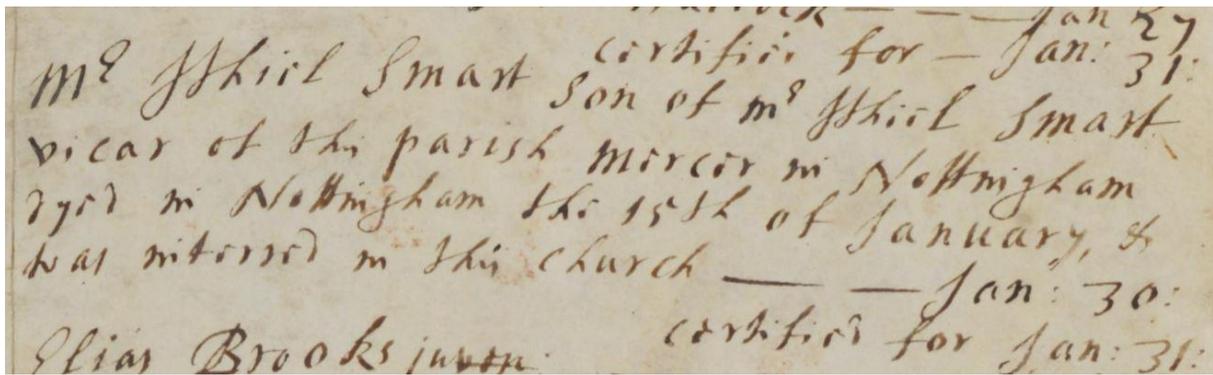


*Baptism of Ithiel & Mary's son, also Ithiel, in 1663.*³

¹ Cambridge University Alumni 1261-1900. Ancestry.

² St Helen's Parish Register. 17th November 1661. FindMyPast.

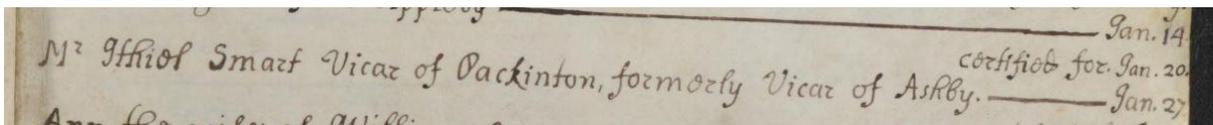
³ St Helen's Parish Register. 21st July 1663. FindMyPast.



Burial of Ithiel Smart, Mercer, at St Helen's in 1689⁴

In 1690 Ithiel Smart reported to the Earl of Huntingdon that some parishioners “rudely to our great disturbance have left the church before all was don: several that staid before, since this grant of Liberty, would hasten out so soon as sermon was ended; I demanded the reason of this change in them, they told me that they formerly were afraid of being prosecuted if they had done so.”⁵ The ‘grant of liberty’ was the Act of Toleration of 1689, by which most dissenters were allowed the freedom to worship in public provided they took a simplified version of the oath of allegiance. This would have made some people less afraid to defy their minister and the Lord of the Manor.

In 1690, Smart was appointed Rector of Packington, but died in office in January 1692. He was buried at St Helen's.⁶



Burial record of Ithiel Smart junior

Ithiel's widow, Mary, married Thomas Piddocke, gentleman, of Ashby within two years of Ithiel's death, at St Peter's Church in Nottingham, where she was resident in the Parish.⁷ The Bishops Transcripts record Piddocke's residence as Ashby de la Zouch. Mary was buried at St Helen's on 12th December 1725. Her entry reads “Mary Piddocke wife to Mr Smart Vic.”⁸ Clearly he was still well remembered, over 30 years after his death. One of the bequests in Mary's will, written in 1721, is to “Widdow Brogdon of London,” to whom she leaves “the sum of ten pounds being in satisfaction of my son Ithiel Smart his debt.”⁹ As her son Ithiel had died in 1689, the widow Brogdon had to wait a very long time for her money! Mary also left £20 to St Helen's, with the instruction that the interest on it should be divided between 20 poor widows each year on Christmas Day.

Julie Starkey
November 2023

⁴ St Helen's Parish Register. 30th January 1689. FindMyPast

⁵ Moxon, Christopher – Ashby de la Zouch, Seventeenth Century Life in a small market town.p.137. Quotation taken from Huntingdon Library Correspondence - HA correspondence, 10957.

⁶ St Helen's Parish Register. 27th January 1792. FindMyPast

⁷ St Peter's Parish Register. 24th October 1693. FindMyPast

⁸ St Helen's Parish Register. 12th December 1725. FindMyPast

⁹ Leicestershire Wills and Probate Records, 1500-1939. FindMyPast