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J. P. Chown, 1821-1856

CHOWN, of Bradford and Bloomsbury, is a name now almost forgotten, yet a record of his life shows him to be one of our great Victorian Baptist ministers, a devoted pastor, powerful preacher, popular lecturer, Christian citizen and trusted denominational leader. He became a town "institution" in Bradford during his twenty-seven years' ministry and then responded to a call to Bloomsbury at a very critical time in its history and in ten years restored and built up the strength of the church.

There is a long Baptist tradition in the Chown family and a tradition of involvement in questions of the day. Every generation since 1648 has had at least one member in the ministry. John Chown, a weaver, newly moved from Spratton to the church at Moulton, would no doubt know about the meeting at Northampton on new year's day 1650, attended by delegates from most of the General Baptist churches of the area, which sent a letter to Oliver Cromwell telling him that it was time to curb his ambition and devote himself to the humbler task of redressing grievances. Evidently they were aware of the warts! After the Restoration the vicar pressed John Chown to conform, but he replied that he found nothing about infant baptism in the Bible. The parish registers at Moulton have such notes as "unbaptised" and "excommunicated" attached to the entries of the Chown family. After the Toleration Act another Chown registered his house for public worship. The General Baptist church died but College Lane Northampton formed a Particular Baptist church in 1784 and four Chowns were members. A later John was minister at College Lane and two daughter churches for over twenty years up to 1837. Another Chown was trained by John Sutcliffe at Olney and had a short pastorate at Burford. A John Chown of Kingsthorpe, a shoemaker, tramped eighteen miles to Byfield for Sunday services, Monday visiting and return ready for work on Tuesday. When the chapel at Kingsthorpe was extended the corner stone proudly commemorated another Chown—Joseph Parbery, born December 9th, 1821.¹

J. P. Chown's father was "a plain, sensible, good man, very retiring, but much esteemed for his fervent piety and consistent life. He was noted for the solemnity of his prayers at the weekly services, and as an occasional preacher would discourse when needed for the Kingsthorpe pastor, or take his turn in the neighbouring villages. He was slow in speech, but his reverent and thoughtful words always commanded attention".² His mother died when he was twelve. Joseph went to the village school. He was the eldest of four children. In the Sunday school, while others learnt a few verses, he used his remarkable memory to recite whole chapters of the Bible and was very quick to answer questions. He first opened his mouth in public at a

Sunday School anniversary by giving out the hymn after the sermon. At the age of fourteen or fifteen he joined Mr. Rice's Bible Class at College Lane and the instruction there was long remembered.³ He seems to have been apprenticed to Hardy's of Nottingham and would, in their opinion, have done very well in commerce.⁴ When he was about sixteen, youthful rebellion took him away from the chapel. Full of fun and fond of recitation and song, he was the life and soul of any party of his contemporaries⁵ and was attracted to the stage. At some party he assumed the role of a parson and someone asked him to pray. Blatantly and with effect he did pray. A kindly guest spoke to him about the seriousness of his action before God and challenged him to offer himself and his gifts for the ministry.⁶ This incident, coupled with a growing dissatisfaction with his merry life, brought him back to the chapel at Kingsthorpe. Fortunately the pastor, George Ashmead, was manly, wise and strong, able to deal with the inquirer and direct him to a course of reading.⁷ He was helped too by Milne of Prince's Street.⁸ On May 23rd, 1841, he was baptised in the small river nearby—the same river in which Carey had been baptised.⁹ He began to preach and about three years after his baptism the church at Ravensthorpe (about seven miles from his birthplace), invited him to preach for six months. The first pastor, the Rev. William Goodrich, had just retired after a quarter of a century. After this lengthy trial he was called to the pastorate, offered a stipend of £40 a year and eventually ordained on July 29th, 1845. Congregations were large, week-night meetings well attended and young people attracted, but the popular young preacher was increasingly aware of the need for more training. After consultation with Hawkes of Guilsborough, J. T. Brown (the new minister at College Lane), and his predecessor, Mr. Goodrich, he applied for admission to Horton Academy, Bradford.¹⁰

In August, 1846, Chown arrived in Bradford, Yorkshire, little guessing that it was to be his home for nearly thirty years. Nor would he think that this would very soon be his church as he went along to Sion Chapel, Bridge Street, on the first day to hear the annual sermon to the students, preached this year by Henry Dowson, secretary of the Academy and minister of Westgate, from 2 Tim. 4: 1, 2.¹¹ The Academy (it was known as "College" from 1852 with the coming of S. G. Green)¹² was not very attractive outwardly, being an old workshop and warehouse acquired at the beginning of the Northern Baptist Education Society in 1805 but it had been reconstructed inside and heating added in 1826.¹³ The students now enjoyed gas light which had just replaced candles before Chown arrived! The principal's salary had been raised by £50 to £300 a year and that of the Classical Tutor to £200 and "The household expenses, including Board of Students, Do. of Servants, Wages of Do., Washing, etc., etc., £562 6s. Od."¹⁴ Very few students were able to pay for their board and tuition and Chown was not one of the few. There had been several years of prosperity for the Academy and a full house of thirty students but now there was a more difficult period for a few years, partly due to

a drop in income because of bad trade and partly from a temporary drop in applicants. There were only sixteen students in 1849. Things improved in the fifties leading to the move to Rawdon in 1859. Chown came in this more difficult period. In his first year, however, there were six new students and twenty-six altogether—quite a cosmopolitan crowd, including eight Yorkshiremen, three Scots, two from Wales and one from Ireland. In those days the session ran from the first Wednesday in August until the week preceding Whitsuntide. The Syllabus for Chown's first year was formidable. "Biblical Criticism: Syriac, the first six chapters of John's Gospel; Chaldee, the whole of Daniel; Hebrew, the Book of Ecclesiastes. Greek: Aristophanes' Nubes and Arnold's Exercises. Latin: First and Second Books of Horace's Epistles and the Ars Poetica and Arnold's Exercises. Criticism on the New Testament: First Epistle and six chapters of the Second to Corinthians and Epistle to Romans. Mathematics: third, fourth and fifth (to seventeenth proposition) Books of Euclid. German: Ollendorf's Method." In addition "All the students delivered essays and sermons in the Lecture Room in a regular weekly series: the Essays being on the offices in the Christian Church—Man's ultimate state, and some of the Evidence's of Christianity—subjects prescribed by the President in a syllabus or outline of subjects, comprising an extended system of Divinity." Not surprisingly the examiners reported that "The almost incessantly occupied time of the students in other departments of learning, affords but little opportunity for the study of the mathematics." Examiners were appointed each year from local ministers, doctors, etc., to visit at the end of the session and report to the Annual Meeting in August on the oral and written examinations. They generally gave a good report. At the end of Chown's first year the Committee report stated that they could "warrantably speak of the order, the economy, and comfort with which the affairs of the Household have been conducted; of the steadiness and assiduity, with which the students have attended to their various duties, the propriety of their ordinary demeanour, and the acceptableness of their occasional ministerial services. . . ." Unfortunately the Principal's wife, Mrs. Acworth, had died during the year. The reports of the period also solicit gifts for the library and museum "the former, although comparatively rich in Old Divinity, is greatly in want of Modern Works, particularly on Intellectual Philosophy, and the various branches of Physical Science".¹⁵

The Principal of Horton was the able and resolute Dr. James Acworth and the Classical Tutor the Rev. Francis Clowes, both former Bristol students. Acworth championed the rights of Non-conformists and Roman Catholics and contended that the State had no right to enforce the observance of Sunday. As well as being active in Association, Union and Missionary Society life he was President of Bradford Mechanics' Institute. (Dr. Steadman, first principal, had been the first president.) Clowes was a man of wide culture and interests and alive to the social issues of the day, later devoting him-

self to literary work and the editing of *The Sun* newspaper. Under the care of these men Chown benefited considerably. "Meantime he was an omniverous reader, while his marvellously retentive memory became a storehouse of information and illustration on every kind of subject. To high and exact scholarship he never pretended, but he had a native sagacity that enabled him to lay hold on the best thoughts of others, and to discriminate between the showy and the substantial. Thus with a glowing fancy he was from the first a careful and sober-minded expositor of Scripture. This combination of qualities recommended him greatly to the Yorkshire churches. . . ."

The story of the beginning of Sion Baptist Church is most interesting. In 1822 a meeting took place in Bradford Vicarage of three vicars and three nonconformist ministers, including Dr. Steadman, who was pastor of Westgate as well as Principal. They were all concerned at the arrival of a Roman Catholic priest in the town, and the growing population. "After much cogitation" they resolved to increase their efforts and to "engage in prayer for Divine direction for one hour on every Saturday evening." Some time later a friend of Dr. Steadman in the Church at Westgate hesitatingly suggested that it was desirable to have another Baptist chapel in the town and he knew two people who would give £50 each towards it. "Then," said the Doctor, "to show you that I am not opposed to the business, you shall set me down for £20, and I wish you and some other friend to go round through the Church and congregation and see what encouragement you may meet with. Go as quietly as you can; do not let us expose ourselves if this affair come to nothing". A fortnight later £600 had been promised and the scheme went ahead. The chapel was 63 feet long and 48 feet wide with galleries on all sides, Sunday School and vestries underneath. Benjamin Godwin, tutor at the Academy, was the first pastor, followed by the Principal's son, Thomas Steadman, who was succeeded in turn by Thomas Pottenger. The cause prospered and a new schoolroom was added in 1838.¹⁸

In 1848 the pastorate was again vacant. Chown, who had supplied occasionally was invited to preach for a few weeks in succession during the vacation in June. A deep impression was made and on the 8th July Mr. Chown was invited to become the pastor.¹⁹ Although he had completed only half of the usual course, the committee of the Education Society agreed to release him "in order that he may accede to the urgent request of the Church in Bridge Street in this town, to take the oversight of its spiritual affairs—with the understanding that he will so far as practicable, still avail himself of the benefits of the Institution by attending the literary and other classes".²⁰ Thus an historic pastorate was begun, and the condition was fulfilled for he gave £5 the following year to pay for his tuition.²¹ His gratitude to the College was manifested throughout the rest of his life.

It is most regrettable (to put it mildly), that the minute books (except for the first and the last) and other records of Sion were

destroyed when the Church closed in 1959, but we have the well written "Centenary Souvenir" and, fortunately, the *Bradford Observer* reported the main events of the pastorate very fully. The *Observer* had first appeared in 1834, one of the founders being Dr. Godwin. It was strongly Liberal and Nonconformist in emphasis and was the main paper for the district until early this century.²² Although Chown never wrote a book, several sermons and addresses were published and from them we can learn something of his opinions and theology, a list of them is appended. He also wrote articles for Benjamin Evans' penny magazine *The Church*.²³ A short article published in 1849, when *The Church* had a circulation of 17,000,²⁴ was entitled "Three Hebrew Youths Asserting Liberty of Conscience". He claimed that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were the three first Dissenters and Anti-State Churchmen.²⁵ We see here the zealous, campaigning, young Nonconformist minister caught up in one of the great causes of his generation. His views and language were later mellowed by experience.

When Mr. Chown came to Sion it had 301 members and Bradford a population of 90,000. When he left in 1875 the population had increased to 160,000 and the membership to 817. In the twenty-seven years he received into the Church by baptism or transfer 1,311 members, an average of over 48 a year.²⁶

His preaching power, which attracted large congregations, did not lie in superficially attractive qualities. Certainly he had great gifts, but he did not rely on his fluency, and carefully prepared every utterance. Sermons and addresses were fully written out and committed to memory. Sermons were usually begun before breakfast on Monday mornings.²⁷ A sermon delivered for the Yorkshire Association at Hebden Bridge in 1850, on "The Place that is called Calvary", "electrified the gathering" and earned the young pastor a high reputation.²⁸ Speaking of his later ministry, J. C. Carlile spoke of his robust thought and genial personality attracting young people to Bloomsbury.²⁹ An unusual testimony to his preaching ability is found in the diary of the youthful Edward Whymper, the Alpine climber, who attended the historic Maze Pond Baptist Church in London with his parents. He was impressed by a few preachers but others were described as "a regular muff", "an impudent, smeary-faced old ass" and "an excited, affected young donkey" but "Chown of Bradford" was "a very good preacher, but a little too noisy".³¹ Someone who heard him in H. Ward Beecher's church at Brooklyn, said he was "Puritan-like in his directness, simplicity and fervour".³² His sermons show a fine oratorical style. To read some of them is quite a moving experience and gives some idea of the effect which they must have produced when delivered, especially in times of national crisis. He understood his craft, he once said "the sympathetic susceptibility of your audience increases with its numbers".³³ He believed that preaching, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is "a revelation of grace and glory, in which God makes Himself manifest

through Christ".³⁴ In big demand as a preacher for special occasions, it is not surprising that in that golden age of chapel-building his name appears on many programmes for opening services.

Although he was a popular preacher and in spite of allowing himself to be involved in all kinds of philanthropic work in the town and various denominational committees, Chown was always a diligent pastor. "Even when the church was largest, his manly, hearty presence was familiar in every home, and in times of sorrow and bereavement he was always there. He knew every member of his flock. . . . His visits were always pastoral; no occasion for merely social intercourse. . . ." ³⁵ He had "a large heart and the gift of remembering every face he had ever seen and every name he had ever heard, so that circumstances of every individual of his acquaintance could be instantly called to mind and kindly enquiries delighted all his friends. He never made an enemy. If the shake of his hand revealed his character he had a heart full of charity towards all men".³⁶ "The poor of the flock especially had found in him a friend, comforter and helper. He used to send a letter of sympathy on the first anniversary of someone's sorrow. . . ." ³⁷ He believed that pulpit work and pastoral work must go hand in hand. His pattern for visiting was "Ten minutes for conversation and five for prayer".³⁸ If he was able to stick to this timetable he would do his rounds faster than some ministers. The aim of his pastoral work was that "The Church should be braced up and knit together in its fellowship—made strong for its work".³⁹ The last point of his address on "Church work in large towns" was about hard work; obviously he really believed this and practised what he preached. The opening remarks of the same address show either his loyalty to the county of his adoption, or his tact. After referring to the noble heroism of Lancashire in face of hardship caused by the American Civil War, he said, "It is quite certain that if the sister County of York had been called to pass through the same trial it would have been with the same result."

Chown always stressed the importance of the prayer meeting. "The attendance of some hundreds at a prayer meeting at which there was not even the attraction of an address was an ordinary thing."⁴⁰ He once left the chair of a national temperance conference, meeting in Bradford, to make a pastoral visit and attend his prayer meeting.⁴¹ The work of Sunday schools was very dear to the pastor's heart. He advocated the "graduated system", and claimed to have received twenty-five annually from the school into Church membership, with "a reserve of never less than fifty in the enquirers' class".⁴² There was concern, of course, even in those days, about the large numbers who never joined the Church from the Sunday schools. In an address to the Yorkshire Conference of Sunday School Teachers, at Dewsbury, April 18th, 1862, he spoke on "How to Retain our Elder Scholars". Basing his remarks on John 17:12, Chown said that teachers must have a personal knowledge of each of their children and insisted that there must be "Progressiveness in instruc-

tion, adapting the teaching to the unfolding powers of youth". Auxiliaries, such as the Junior Missionary Auxiliary, Penny Savings Bank and Band of Hope, could help considerably and there must be co-operation between minister and teacher. In 1871 he was concerned that in the schools affiliated to the Bradford Sunday School Union there were 17,000 scholars but only 195 had joined the Church in the year.⁴³ A favourite auxiliary of Chown's was the Band of Hope. The strong temperance tradition which he fostered in his church lasted, for in 1894-5 the Sion Band of Hope had a membership of 275 adults and 479 juveniles.⁴⁴ In the programme of the Band of Hope Union Winter Festivals, Chown had a regular place. In 1867, for instance, "St. George's Hall was filled, perfectly packed to overflowing, and large numbers went away in consequence of being unable to obtain admission. . . . The Rev. J. P. Chown gave, with good taste and effect, various readings from the writings of Charles Mackay, James Taylor, Mrs. Farquhar, Cowper, Swain and Mrs. Prosser." Later in the programme, after musical items, Mr. Chown spoke on "Half an Hour in Malta and Sicily . . . with his usual graphic power and fervid eloquence he transferred (in imagination), the assembly to the waters of Southampton, and starting thence in a steamer, presented to them the various interesting objects to be seen in the route, at Gibraltar, Malta, Sicily, etc."⁴⁵ Presumably this was one of his holidays. Great Summer Festivals were held in Peel Park and attended by many thousands. Chown viewed Temperance work "as only tributary to something higher and better to lead the way for the enjoyment of that saving religion in which men shall be blessed for eternity as well as for time, and for which temperance is the handmaid and servant".⁴⁶

The building schemes give some idea of the growth of Sion Baptist Church during Chown's pastorate. In 1849 the Sunday School building alongside the chapel was overcrowded, so it was pulled down and a larger one built. In 1851 an attempt was made to sell the chapel because its accommodation was inadequate. This was unsuccessful so it was enlarged and improved. Subsequently the capacity was increased on two other occasions by re-arranging the seating and extending the gallery forward. 1853 saw a branch school opened in Caledonia Street, which grew and prospered for many years. In 1861 it was resolved to build another chapel and establish a new Baptist Church, consequently Hallfield Baptist Church came into being in 1863 in a growing and respectable part of the town. It was expected that Mr. Chown would become the pastor, but he chose to remain in the old place and leave the more favoured sphere for someone else. Sion dismissed 110 members to form the nucleus at Hallfield and the Rev. Jonathan Makepeace was invited to be minister. By 1868 Sion had become so crowded again that discussion took place about building a new chapel. Soon it was feared that this may not be necessary because the pastor received an invitation to Melbourne, Australia. The Church lovingly and unanimously pressed him to

decline it saying that they could not anticipate him being any more useful elsewhere. On August 9th, the twentieth anniversary of his settlement, he announced that he had declined the call.⁴⁷ (He had declined a call to Maze Pond ten years earlier.⁴⁸) A week later a special sermon was preached, "A Twenty Years' Review", and afterwards printed and sold at a penny. The text was Psalm 126, v. 3, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad". From it we gain a little more insight into the Christian spirit and worship of the Church. The preacher referred to the peace of Christian fellowship which had been unbroken, "We asked the riches of Divine grace in this matter, because we know if we had been left to our poor selves, it would have been far otherwise. . . . It has been a period of activity and, sometimes especially, in which minds of very varied inclinations have been brought into labour and friction with one another, but this has never been permitted to interfere with harmonious action. God has given his people grace . . . in which they have shown themselves ready to carry out that part of our Covenant in which we agree that 'as far as duty will allow', we will give up our own private opinions and feelings for the good of the whole. We look back to this too, with all the more thankfulness because it is not that it has not been tested".⁴⁹ We can understand this when we remember that there were several "self-made men" in the Church who were used to being the boss in their own sphere. It speaks volumes for his pastoral wisdom that this could be said after twenty years. The Review also tells us there had been 800 baptisms, the baptistry being opened a hundred and ten times and "seldom, or never, has it been without divine blessing in winning souls to Jesus". The sermon concluded thus: "Amid all this, one drawback that saddens and distresses . . . there are some present who have sat and apparently worshipped with us these years, and yet have given us no good reason to believe that they have accepted the Saviour of whom they have been told. Again, with love and earnestness and prayer, would we lift up our voice in warning and entreaty, and beseech you to accept the proffered grace. Again, we tell you of the Name above every Name, and point you to the divine sacrifice. 'Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little.' Turn to the Lord and seek salvation in His love, so shall you be delivered from present guilt and coming woe, and filled with everlasting blessing, which, may God grant to all, for Christ's sake. Amen." Three hymns were printed with the sermon which had been used in the service. At least two of them must have been written for the occasion, perhaps by the pastor, for one refers to "these twenty years" and the last verse of the third was:

Fill thou this Sion with thy praise,
 Enrich it with thy love;
 And make it through all coming days,
 Like Sion's mount above.

A new site was acquired in Harris Street for £3,000 and the

pastor reminded a Church meeting that 1873 would be the jubilee year of the chapel and suggested that the new chapel should be "A Jubilee Memorial of thankfulness to God for the mercies these fifty years have brought, and its erection as an occasion for renewed dedication to His service". Thus the new chapel became the Sion Jubilee Chapel. Subscriptions were promised and it is interesting that the pastor's promise of £1,000 is twice as much as the next largest. It may be that he was returning a gift given to him earlier by the Church or it may mean that he would make himself responsible for £1,000—collecting some from elsewhere.⁵⁰ He was always generous. Hallfield had cost £6,800 and Chown gave £700⁵¹ which his grandson says was half of his savings.⁵² Another instance of his generosity is seen in the *Observer* report on December 26th, 1867, "Sion Chapel—Yesterday the Rev. J. P. Chown, with his characteristic consideration, entertained the widowed members of his church, about fifty in number, to dinner and tea." At the stone laying ceremony for the new chapel Mr. Briggs Priestley said how glad he was "that Mr. Chown had that day signed and sealed a new contract with the people of Bradford, a contract which would probably keep him in the town for many years, perhaps to the end of his life".⁵³ Two years later the chapel was opened. It was designed by the famous Bradford architects, Lockwood and Mawson, whose work is much beloved of John Betjeman. It is a handsome building with Corinthian pilasters and columns the height of the front. It seated 1,200. The opening services were fully reported and on August 13th, 1873, it was proudly stated: "The schoolroom and classrooms . . . form educational premises such as do not exist in any chapel yet erected in Bradford. The heating and ventilating have been carefully attended to, and not only is the chapel, but the school and classrooms are also connected with a lofty ventilating shaft of sufficient size to ensure perfect ventilation in every part of the building."⁵⁴ The pastor was given the honour of preaching the opening sermon, which was from Leviticus 25, 11, "A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you." His friend, Hugh Stowell Brown of Liverpool, preached in the evening from Ephesians 3, 8. The other speakers included another great leader in the north, Charles Williams of Accrington, who spoke at a luncheon. He referred to the material, intellectual and spiritual progress of Bradford and said that the whole country was indebted to them for sending Mr. Miall to Parliament and hoped that they would keep him there, they had also given him £10,000. "Bradford had proved itself in many things to be most active religiously, most intelligent politically and most philanthropic on behalf of any movement which might be for the welfare of the country and the world."⁵⁵ In October Spurgeon came to preach in St. George's Hall. In the course of his morning sermon he said, "We have seen come back the Popery which we thought had been banished from the land, and it has not come up as an importation, but has grown up in our midst like the deadly Upas tree." In the evening hundreds went away

disappointed because they could not get in. "The crush in the galleries was so great that at one time before the commencement of the service there were symptoms of a disturbance. When Mr. Spurgeon addressed the vast assembly the most profound silence was immediately secured and preserved throughout his sermon." The new chapel cost over £18,000, but as all this had been raised, the collections from Spurgeon's visit, of £250, was divided between the Bradford Fever Hospital and the Stockwell Orphanage.⁵⁶

There was no organ in the old chapel or the new until after Chown had left. "... the singing was led by a Precentor and Choir, without instrumental aid. The Precentor sounded the desired 'pitch' on a pocket tuning pipe; or, the same was blown on a wooden pipe, within which was a slide, also of wood. This pipe (the slide being drawn out to a given mark), when blown, gave forth a wood-wind note of the desired 'pitch', and thereupon the tune was struck."⁵⁷ Chown did not object to organs, however, as when he preached in St. George's Hall the organ was used. He also preached at the opening of at least two organs—at Listerhills Congregational Chapel, Bradford, and at Heptonstall Slack Baptist Church.⁵⁸

A Sion Church Year Book for 1885 with supplement for 1886 shows that the income from pew rents, £367 in the former year and £378 in the latter, went direct to the minister, C. A. Davis, as his stipend. This was probably the arrangement in Chown's time too and the amount would be similar, certainly in his later years, as the prosperity of the church did not change much. It is interesting that when Westgate's second daughter church, Trinity, was opened, to mark Westgate's Centenary in 1857, the pew rent system was abandoned in favour of free-will offerings. In a lecture on the subject, the first pastor, H. J. Betts, argued that the pew rent system was not in accord with the Voluntary Principle professed by most dissenters, and it perpetuated distinctions between the rich and the poor and caused jealousy and offence.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, although the church flourished, the system did not work and pew rents were resorted to, but this did not produce enough income either, so they had both rents and offerings.⁶⁰ If the Sion people heard or read Mr. Betts' lecture, they were not convinced. The year of Chown's death, 1886, saw discussion of the subject in the *Baptist Magazine*.

Yorkshire Baptists were generally slow to adopt Open Communion⁶¹ but in 1854 the Sion Church decided "That in future, Christians of other Evangelical denominations be admitted to communion with us at the Lord's Table, but not to participate in the government of the Church".⁶² Henry Dowson, for thirty-two years minister at Westgate and twenty-four years secretary of the College, was amongst those who were concerned at this growing practice and formed "The Baptist Evangelical Society".⁶³ He left Westgate in 1866 to become Principal of the Society's College at Bury (subsequently Manchester Baptist College).⁶⁴ Chown had already succeeded him as secretary of Rawdon College, in 1864. Presumably he did not

object to the decline of Calvinism and the latitudinarianism of S. G. Green, who had succeeded Acworth as Principal.⁶⁵ Acworth, in his retirement at Scarborough, helped to form the Albemarle Church on open communion principles, separating from Ebenezer and Benjamin Evans.⁶⁶ The difference of opinion did not stop Dowson coming back to take part in the opening services of Sion Jubilee Chapel.⁶⁷

Chown served the Association as joint secretary from 1859-60; wrote the Circular Letter in 1856 on "The Spiritual Condition of the Churches" and in 1867 on "The Witness of the Spirit in the Heart of Believers"; S. G. Green considered the latter to be "of sterling worth as a theological essay"⁶⁸; preached at the Assembly in 1850, 1858, 1862 and 1875 and was president in 1871. In his presidential address, delivered in the big new chapel at Farsley, he welcomed the progress in the work for the freeing of religion from State patronage and control. In this year after Forster's Education Act, which did not please many Nonconformists, feelings were particularly strong in Bradford, for Forster was one of Bradford's M.Ps. Chown, however, simply said that churches and Sunday schools were now relieved of much that was elementary and secular and should now lay hold of all the facilities at their disposal, that the young may be made wise unto salvation. He then went on to speak of "the awful war in Europe, . . ." the spread of intemperance and the need for more prayer and Christ-like character, "it is what we are, far more than what we say, that exerts an influence upon our fellow men".⁶⁹ Regarding the Education Act, perhaps he thought it better to be positive, but the Report of the Association Committee was written in a different vein, "Mr. Forster's much vaunted Bill may satisfy bishops and clergy and lukewarm 'Dissenters' of the land, but all genuine Nonconformists regard with dismay the operation of a measure introducing a substitute for the church rates recently abolished".⁷⁰ In January, 1871, W. E. Forster suffered the unusual embarrassment of a vote of confidence being rejected when he made his annual address to his electorate, reflecting the general disenchantment with Gladstone's government and Nonconformist opposition to the Education Bill. On the platform supporting him, however, was J. V. Godwin, son of Benjamin Godwin and a member at Sion.⁷¹ In his end of the year address, when he reviewed the year, Chown made no mention of the Act or the controversy.⁷² It seems to have been his practice to avoid controversy. Jonathan Glyde, minister of the Horton Lane Congregational Chapel, served on the School Board, the progress of which was not always smooth, and he advertised sermons against the Anglo-Catholic movement. Another Congregationalist, J. G. Miall, brother of Edward Miall, M.P., engaged in public disputes, including one on Baptism with Francis Clowes.⁷³ There were meetings in the town of the Liberation Society and in defence of the State Church but Chown's name is not to be found attached to any of the disputes in meetings or public correspondence. Across the Pennines, Williams of Accrington took a more definite

stand on some of these issues,⁷⁴ but the final analysis of his, Williams, views, could no less be said of Chown, evangelism was his supreme task. "Christianity was of more immediate social significance than politics".⁷⁵ However, in his earlier days, Chown was a leader in the Saturday half-holiday movement with a Mr. George Taylor "and other zealous friends of the working classes".⁷⁶ He also attended a meeting, addressed by a woman, about the Contagious Diseases Act, regarding which the Association refused to accept a resolution in 1863.⁷⁷ He seems to have been more ready to serve than to argue for he was a founder member of the Board of the Fever Hospital, a member of the Board of the Infirmary for many years and rarely missed its meetings,⁷⁸ he was a welcome visitor to the Workhouse and served for a short time on the Board of Guardians.⁷⁹ Willing support was given to any worthy cause, for instance, a resolution to open a fund for victims of mining disasters in Barnsley and Staffordshire was "supported by the Rev. J. P. Chown, with a few appropriate words".⁸⁰ The fine lead in Christian Citizenship given by the minister was followed by the Church and there is a long list of Councillors, Aldermen, Mayors and Lord Mayors who were attached to Sion.⁸¹

The engraving, published by J. Heaton and Son, which hangs in many of our Baptist vestries, depicting a group of our mid-Victorian leaders including Chown, Godwin (with a copy of *The Freeman*, published in Leeds), Dowson, Acworth, Evans, Brown and Birrell from the North, reminds us that the centre of gravity of the denomination was not so far South as it is now. Also it captures very well the spirit of confidence of the age, especially when compared with its partner, portraying the previous generation. These men, and their less well-known contemporaries, whatever their blind-spots may have been, played a very important part in shaping society in our Northern industrial towns and cities.

Chown expressed the Christian confidence of his age. In his sermon on "Australia and the Church of Christ" preached in 1852, the young preacher is full of exuberant patriotism and Liberal Imperialism. He saw the movement to the Antipodes as "Another step in the mighty forward movement, . . . like the Israelites going into Canaan, Columbus . . . the Pilgrim Fathers . . . Britain, through God's mercy is almost the only nation that has been preserved in peace and stability among the changes and revolutions in the world, . . . it is well that some strength should be transferred to other lands. England is the centre and refuge and home of the civilised world, gifted . . . above all other lands of earth. . . . Now is the best time yet and it will be better still in fifty years time." He referred to discoveries and blessings such as the railroads, telegraph, Bibles being given away and Sunday schools. Referring to the first gold mine being opened in Australia, he said that it was as if God were saying, "There, England, thou hast nobly done, and there is thy reward . . . it really seems as though God has intended the Anglo-Saxon race, above every other, to carry out the original command to "multiply and inherit the earth". He

admitted that there were disorders in Australia but it was like water rushing into an excavation from every side and when it found its level, permeated with Christian calm everything would be alright. The Church should make sure that Christians and Christian literature go. He was glad that the history of colonisation had changed from oppression and wickedness.

Two years later he preached on the Crimean War, expressing some of the intense anti-Russian feelings of the time. He dealt with the causes of the war. He said its "origins are in the lust of pride and ambition that has been raging in the minds of all Russian emperors for the last four centuries and especially in the case of the man who bears office now, by whom the present state of things has been provoked. . . . The inhabitants of that vast region might have been employed more effectually in benefiting the country if their emperor had summoned them to the cultivation, for instance, of some of those thousands of acres of land. . . ." He also blamed the exercising of authority in or over the Church which can only be claimed by God, especially by "that bearded, booted despot, whose only creed is selfishness and ambition, whose only faith is the sword". There were some things which encouraged him: "the increasing spread and power of Christianity and the peace principles, as seen in the unwillingness that has been manifested to go to war. Fifty years since the sword would have been out much sooner." He also admired the Friends' peace mission to the Emperor. "For the first time for forty years the Romish Church adds to prayers for the Queen, that she may conquer her enemies."

Nevertheless he still thought of the three great enemies of Christianity as Paganism, Mohammedanism and Romanism "which are all weakest at their head. Mohammedanism dying out in Turkey, Paganism receiving its beath-blow and its image gods floating down every river in China and Romanism only upheld by French bayonets at Rome". He concluded, "The Lord Omnipotent reigneth". A year later the emperor died and Chown preached on "The Issues from Death", and although he said that he would think of the event rather than the man so as not to exult over the fallen and dead, the emperor still came in for severe judgement.

If he had no liking for Russia, Chown had a great interest in and liking for America. In December, 1861, he preached on England and America and the sermon was repeated, by request, the following Sunday afternoon in St. George's Hall. The text was Luke 2.14, "On earth peace, good will toward men". Speaking of the tension existing between the two countries and talk of war, he referred his hearers to the text, saying that England and America ought to be activated by this spirit more than any other nations in the world for they both professed to be governed by the gospel. He reminded them that the countries were closely related and of the impossibility of the question in dispute ever being settled in that way. Britain in particular ought to note the text, she was the older nation and had learnt so painfully,

so often and so recently what war is. "We must not judge them as a people too critically or harshly in the midst of trials and difficulties such as they have now to grapple with."

After seventeen years in the ministry the Church granted Chown four months' leave of absence to visit the United States of America. As a mark of esteem, the Church collected £1,022 10s. 6d. as a welcome home gift, presented to him in the following way: the freehold of the house which he had rented for twelve years, costing £900, a hundred pounds in bank notes and the remainder for Mrs. Chown. He was quite overcome by this generosity. He revealed that he had declined an honorary D.D. from Rochester College.⁸² The next month Sion, with the other Baptist churches in Bradford, helped to entertain the Baptist Union for its Autumnal meetings. Dr. Angus was president. The *Observer* advertised and reported numerous lectures on America by J. P. Chown during the Autumn. Subjects included Sunday schools in America and the condition of the freed slaves. The most remarkable was called "A Summer Furlough Across the Atlantic", which twice filled St. George's Hall, and in those days the Hall seated 3,328.⁸³ The speaker was cheered when he entered and the lecture, which took nearly two hours to deliver, "was frequently applauded by the attentive and spell-bound audience". It was given four and a half columns of small newspaper and later published in a booklet. The *Observer* commented: "We admit that the space given to Mr. Chown's lecture is inordinately long . . . Mr. Chown's disinterested and energetic efforts to promote the welfare of all classes of the community as well as his eloquence and force invest his speeches and lectures with a public interest". In the chair was W. E. Forster, M.P., "supported by his Worship the Mayor, and many respectable inhabitants of the Borough".⁸⁴ The chairman said that the "want of good feeling between the two countries" arose from want of knowledge. "In order to obtain knowledge you cannot do better than listen to the story told by a man of the power of description and good judgement of our friend Mr. Chown." The lecture is a most interesting and vivid description of the journey which included New York, Philadelphia, Washington (where he had an interview with the President, Andrew Johnson), Chicago, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Buffalo, Cleveland, Albany, Boston and Troy, with accounts of the commercial and educational progress, and historical connections of each place. He thought Niagara "the grandest natural sight in the world". He spoke of a mass meeting in New York to receive some of the victorious generals, and Grant especially. Other signs of the recent war, prisons and hospitals were also visited. Of the American character he said, "It is remarkable how, gathered together as they are from every nation under heaven, they all become one people." In education "they are far, very far, in advance of ourselves". He referred to the Americans' "unbounded hospitality", their inventiveness—"the patent office in Washington has to be enlarged every year", and their "vigour and energy of character". The last section

of the lecture was about the desirability of union between England and America. He closed with words which had closed his first address on the other side of the Atlantic: "God bless the two countries and grant that the great Atlantic may bind them together rather than separate them. Let their national emblems, the lion and the eagle, king of earth and heaven, be but types of the spirit in which they shall be strong to battle for all that is right and noble and true and to soar to all that is glorious and sublime". He repeated the lecture again for Sir Titus Salt in his new Institute at Saltaire.

Chown's popularity as a lecturer had begun in his first year in the ministry, with a series on Christopher Columbus as part of the syllabus for the Mechanic's Institute. He lectured for the Institute almost every year.⁸⁵ They were generally called "Lectures to the Working Classes". One of the 1854 series had the title "The Poetry of the Earth", W. E. Forster chaired the meeting. "The object of the lecture was to illustrate the fact that, to a cultivated and thoughtful mind, there is poetic beauty scattered over the broad face of nature, and that we need only have eyes, gifted beyond their common use, to

Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

He executed his task with characteristic eloquence and ability, and was listened to evidently with great attention and delight."⁸⁶ The series terminated with a lecture on "The Working Classes". The aggregate number who paid for admission to the twelve lectures was 7,644, one lecture was delivered to 2,383 persons.⁸⁷

The work of lecturing grew out of a concern about "the fearful injury done to the young especially by vicious places of amusement". Chairmen were chosen from the most prominent men of the district of all shades of political and religious belief to bring them face to face with the people. Chown claimed that some had been brought into the Church directly from weeknight lectures and others converted to God while listening to words interspersed in addresses that were not avowedly religious in character.⁸⁸

In 1866 Chown advertised a Christmas Service on Sunday afternoon in St. George's Hall "tickets for stalls 1/- . . . choir of 200 voices, . . . collection for Town Mission and the Eye and Ear Hospital".⁸⁹ On the Monday it was reported that the hall was crowded and hundreds had to go away. He had preached from Nehemiah 8: 10, 11, 12, and said, "Christmas should be decorously kept, and without indulging excess; and also that those who rejoiced should endeavour to make others sharers in their joy by their liberality to the needy." The collection was £45. This end of the year service became an annual event. After the first one the tickets for the stalls were 6d. each. Usually Chown reviewed the past year ending with a Christian exhortation. Over the years hundreds of pounds were collected for the hospitals. The services carried on after he left Bradford. The Bishop of Ripon, Dr. Boyd Carpenter, conducted them for several years, and then various speakers were invited,

including Father Bernard Vaughan and Bishop Welldon.⁹⁰ The report of the 1873 service gives some idea of the scope of his addresses. He referred to Plimsoll's agitation in favour of seamen, he was sure that it would receive the approval of all who studied wreck charts of this island; the visit of the Shah of Persia—he hoped it was the forerunner of a great development of the resources of that vast and wonderful eastern territory. The African War filled him with deep concern and anxiety. He referred to eminent men who had died, the ex-emperor Napoleon, Lord Lytton, John Stuart Mill, Sir E. Landseer, Dr. Guthrie, Bishop Wilberforce, Archdeacon Sandford, Rev. Thomas Jackson, Rev. Baptist Noel and Mr. Winterbotham, M.P. He alluded to "sorrowful events and calamities", the North Fleet catastrophe, the loss of the *Atlantic* and *Ville de Havre* and the accident on the Tyne—"a large number of these due to preventable causes. 17,000 persons perished in 1872 by violent or sudden deaths. Strong drink was the cause of many". Then he reviewed local events, the opening of the Town Hall, visit of the British Association, the erection of various new places of worship and deaths of some leading townsmen. In conclusion he appealed to his audience to look back and see how they had spent the year and if they had not already found salvation to accept it while there was yet time.⁹¹

In 1874 the optimism of 1852 was somewhat modified. Chown deplored the fact that it had become necessary to put bills on walls in Bradford warning people against using profane and obscene language in the streets. He also considered it a calamity that the lash had been considered necessary to deal with the many crimes of violence. "He did not say whether it was necessary or not—those who knew better than he, had decided it was, but he could not help asking what the nation was going back to when such a punishment was considered requisite."⁹²

A testimony to Chown's power as a lecturer appeared in the *Glasgow Examiner* in 1857: "In hearing him, one recalls the times of the old, sturdy Scottish Covenanters, who on our hillsides kindled to enthusiasm the devotion and patriotism of our forefathers . . ." ⁹³ His versatility gave him a wide appeal. In 1861 he addressed over 3,000 young women in St. George's on "The Excelling Daughter". (The next item of news after the report of this meeting was the serious illness of the Rev. P. Bronte at nearby Haworth, "recovery not expected".) ⁹⁴ Before he left Bradford "Exeter Hall was almost as familiar with his voice as St. Georges". ⁹⁵ Presentations were made to him in appreciation of his lectures in 1853 and 1856. ⁹⁶ He felt that "The soured malignity" of a great proportion of the people to religious institutions, and movements, and men was to some extent at least modified, if not wholly removed". ⁹⁷ He seems to have been able to keep the confidence of all classes of the community. Unfortunately some other religious leaders did not do the same. In the St. George's Hall service at the end of 1886 the Rev. E. H. Sugden paid tribute to Chown but also made scathing references to

some socialist speakers who had visited the town and referred to some articles appearing in the *Observer* which showed that the condition of working men was good. Letters appeared putting the other side.⁹⁸ The fact that the infant mortality rate reached its peak in Bradford in 1884 (201 for every 1,000 children under one, now it is 26) shows that in many respects conditions had not improved during the century.

Judging from the delight given by his lectures on "Music its Province and Powers" (in 1856), and "Readings from the Bradford Poets", which "drew forth roars of laughter",⁹⁹ Chown found his relaxation in music and literature, and in the Yorkshire Dales, ". . . Malham, Gordale and Craven are appreciated at once by all who have wandered, as some of us have, amid their glories".¹⁰⁰ His travels abroad, already mentioned, were obviously a great delight to him.

Clearly a man who could speak for two hours on a subject to over 7,000 people, as Chown did on America, must have had a considerable influence on public opinion and attitudes, his contribution to the shaping of society in the rapidly growing "Wool Capital of the World" was incalculable. His lectures were a valuable contribution to adult education. He helped to make Bradford a stronghold of Nonconformity so that when the Bradford Anglican Diocese was created in 1920 the first Bishop, Dr. Perowne, found it difficult to get established in this "Free Church Diocese".¹⁰¹

The feeling expressed in 1871 about Mr. Chown's "Life contract with Bradford" was to be disappointed. Bloomsbury Baptist Church had been through a harrowing experience since its first minister, Dr. Brock, retired in 1872. It is perhaps unwise to dwell on such episodes, even a century later, but a little account of the troubles may be useful in giving some idea of the state of the Church and why Chown felt it his duty to go there. It also provides an excellent example of tactful and gracious leadership by the Bloomsbury deacons of the time. In November, 1872, Bloomsbury had called T. W. Handford to the pastorate. He trained at Rawdon and began his ministry in Bolton in 1863. The Church there had been pastorless for three years and was at a low ebb. It quickly revived under Handford and soon the chapel was crowded and Claremont Chapel was built.¹⁰² He seemed a good man for Bloomsbury but the Rev. J. L. Chown says that his troubles began in Bolton with drink, but there was some medical bungling when his child was born, with tragic results in more ways than one.¹⁰³ In October, 1874, Dr. Brock was asked to come back to chair a specially requested Church meeting at Bloomsbury to enquire into the state of the Church. It was revealed that in May the deacons had spoken with the pastor about his debts and "hasty and imperfect preparation of sermons". He promised to do better. However, his debts amounted to £730 and many people left the chapel. Reports grew worse and when the deacons visited him Handford admitted to "deliberate and continuous adultery".

The secretary spoke of the "heartfelt sorrow at the revelation of the last few days . . . shared by all who have loved Mr. Handford". His resignation was accepted¹⁰⁴ and he left the country.¹⁰⁵ The Church meeting was informed that supplies had been booked, including McLaren, Clifford, Chown and H. S. Brown. A pastorate committee was appointed and regular prayer meetings called to seek guidance. On March 15th, 1875, the committee recommended to the Church that "The Rev. J. P. Chown would bring with him ripe experience and all the qualifications necessary to fill so important a position as the pastorate of Bloomsbury Chapel". There were 220 present at the meeting, 201 voted for the proposition and six against. It was asked that the invitation be conveyed as speedily as possible. Mr. Benham in the chair said that "he and the secretary were prepared to leave for Bradford by the 11.55 train tonight". They were instructed to offer Mr. Chown a stipend of £700 a year, payable quarterly. The next Church meeting received a report of the deputation. They arrived in Bradford at 8 o'clock in the morning and had a long interview with Mr. Chown who said that "all he could say to them was that he would seriously consider the matter and pray over it and let them know the result with as little delay as possible". Nothing was heard until the 2nd of April, but on the 31st March a passage appeared in several London newspapers to the effect that Mr. Chown had complied with the invitation. The secretary wrote to him asking for an explanation, but the next day had a letter saying he felt it his duty to accept. Later the same day he had a telegram "Church declined to accept resignation last night—the meeting was adjourned for a week".¹⁰⁶

The Sion deacons were panic-stricken and said they would do anything to prevent him leaving them.¹⁰⁷ The *Observer* of 2nd April said there had been a Church meeting at Sion of a private nature, but they understood that an amendment had been passed and the meeting adjourned for a week. A week later two columns of the four-page paper were devoted to the subject. It said that at a large meeting the previous evening "his resignation was formally though reluctantly and sorrowfully accepted". The report went on: "In expressing our deep regret at this decision, we do but give utterance to a feeling in which our townspeople of every class and of all political and religious parties will unite . . . we had begun to imagine the pastor of Sion Chapel almost inseparable from Bradford. For in truth he has belonged to us all. No name has during the last quarter of a century been more intimately associated than his with every effort for the moral and social elevation of the whole community. The years have witnessed an almost unparalleled advance in the material prosperity of Bradford and no ordinary debt of gratitude is due to the men who have enobled and hallowed this progress by the influence of charity, temperance and religion. Among the foremost of them a place in affectionate memory will ever be given to Mr. Chown."

In the final letter of acceptance, kept in the Bloomsbury Church book, Chown said, "I have no condition to specify except that I should enjoy the same arrangements for annual holiday as was understood in the case of your late honoured pastor Dr. Brock, and that a yearly collection be made on behalf of Rawdon College". His wishes were met "with great pleasure", and Mr. Benham read to the Church meeting an account of Mr. Chown's work in Bradford from the *Observer*. Chown said that till then he had always felt that Bradford was where God wanted him to be. His decision certainly seems to have been made from a sense of duty. He consulted friends who all said that he ought to go to Bloomsbury.¹⁰⁸ Mrs. Chown did not want to go and for some time was "home-sick" for Bradford.¹⁰⁹

The Mayor of Bradford and Sir Titus Salt, along with other gentlemen of the district, called a meeting to decide how the people of Bradford might express their appreciation of Mr. Chown's work in some tangible form.¹¹⁰ The Mayor said that Mr. Chown was "almost an institution in the town". A resolution was passed expressing sincere regret at his removal, "a serious public loss" and opening a subscription list. Sir Titus gave "a handsome sum", and said at least a thousand guineas should be raised. Mr. Priestman expressed the opinion that "£5,000 could easily be raised, so strong is the feeling . . ." ¹¹¹ This was rather optimistic, but a thousand pounds was subscribed and duly presented to him by the Mayor at a meeting in the Town Hall. "Mr. Chown, evidently deeply moved, said that he would lay the gift at the feet of the Master . . . he thanked all Bradford for all their kindnesses."¹¹² For a few days columns of the *Observer* were taken up with accounts of presentations: from the Yorkshire Association, an illuminated address; Polyglot Bible and address from the Band of Hope Union; address and a volume with a thousand signatures of members of the Church and congregation and a marble timepiece, vases and a pair of gold eye glasses for Mrs. Chown and a volume of photographs from the young men. The gifts were displayed in a shop window for all to see. The farewell services, of course, were crowded, seat-holders being admitted first by ticket.¹¹³ His last sermon was on the Cross of Christ, as his first had been.¹¹⁴ The honoured place which this Baptist preacher held in his town belies Trevelyan's opinion of our 19th century leaders, "Able men embittered by a sense of ill-usage and ostracism".¹¹⁵

Alas, Hallfield Chapel is now demolished and Sion Jubilee Chapel looking dirty and neglected, houses a department of the Technical College but is doomed to make way for the inner ring road.

Speakers at the recognition service at Bloomsbury included Spurgeon who enlivened the proceedings with a witty speech. He sympathised with Bradford but told them not to look for another like Chown but a young man of undeveloped genius.¹¹⁶

At Bloomsbury a new "tide of spiritual prosperity set in".¹¹⁷ The minutes contain many interesting details of the work. A Mid-

Summer morning service for young men and maidens saw the chapel "as full as it could well be". The Lord's Supper was held weekly, the first and third Sundays in the month after morning service and after evening service on the other Sundays. The pastor preached at Moor Street on the first Sunday evening of the month. Mission work in St. Giles was "showing signs of a gratifying character". There was open-air work and tract distribution, a poor mothers' treat and dinners for poor children in St. Giles. A Psalmody Class was formed to improve the singing. Baptisms took place on Monday evenings. Much interest was shown in the pastor's Bible Class. Chown preached the memorial sermon after the death of Dr. Brock from the text "And they glorified in me", hundreds couldn't get in. It was passed that "all, even the youngest, who make credible confession of faith be admitted to the Church" (it would be interesting to know how young). It was recorded, "Our wealthier neighbours, who need the gospel being taken to them as much as the poor, shout not to be overlooked", accordingly suitable tracts were to be put in envelopes and directed to each householder in the squares North of Holborn as far as Euston Road.

In 1877 pew rents produced £996 16s. 6d., the minister paid for two sittings in pew 28, 15/-.¹¹⁸ When Chown settled in 1875 Bloomsbury had 675 members and 1,200 scholars; when he retired there were 776 members and 1,381 scholars.¹¹⁹ We speak of a mobile population these days, but Bloomsbury had one then, most of the Church meetings had dismissions to other churches and transfers from other churches. During his pastorate Bloomsbury became more than ever a London centre for the denomination, "and the pastor's kindly presence and cordial greeting gave a charm to all its assemblies".¹²⁰

For many years Chown had been a member of the B.M.S. Committee, but now in London he did more. For several years he chaired the Candidates' Committee with "kindly, yet heart searching words".¹²¹ He took a keen interest in the Psalms and Hymns Trust.¹²² Elected President of the London Baptist Association in 1879, a project of his year of office was the erection of Brondesbury Chapel (of which his son, John, was later secretary).¹²³ In 1879, with C. M. Birrell and Dr. Landels, he was entrusted with the secretariat of the Baptist Union for a few months. They had to find a new secretary and treasurer.¹²⁴ In 1883 Chown was elected president of the Union. His presidential address "Christ in Christian" reveals his Christocentric theology and evangelistic concern, "Let every church be a missionary society," he said. In the Autumn, at Leicester, in his address "Lessons from Leicester", he referred to the many historical associations of the place for Baptists, and "the audience was roused to a rare enthusiasm".¹²⁵ Unfortunately it was at these Leicester meetings that one of the events leading to the Down Grade Controversy took place. A Unitarian made flippant remarks at a civic reception, which caused offence to some.¹²⁶

Meantime Chown's health began to break. An unsuccessful attempt was made to secure an associate for the work at Bloomsbury,¹²⁷ and he resigned in December 1885. The following May various testimonials were presented to Mr. and Mrs. Chown, including a painting of Bloomsbury Chapel "with the sun setting and gloom of evening gathering round, an appropriate effect at such a time of our church's history".¹²⁸ For a few months he preached in various churches and attended committees. In June he preached in Bradford at Hallfield and the same week received, on behalf of Rawdon College, a fine marble bust of his old principal from the family of Dr. Acworth. The bust now stands in the entrance of Northern Baptist College. He had conducted the funeral service of Dr. Acworth at Scarborough, with his friend Hugh Stowell Brown. The following Sunday he preached at Bloomsbury and passed away peacefully on the Thursday following.¹²⁹

The funeral service, attended by leading ministers of many denominations, was conducted by the Revs. W. Brock of Hampstead and Richard Glover of Bristol. Dr. Angus gave the address in which he paid tribute to the way in which he had revived Bloomsbury and was loved and trusted by them all. He was buried in Hampstead Cemetery.¹³⁰ A memorial service in Sion, Bradford, was crowded and the *Observer* again devoted columns to reporting the funeral and memorial services and giving an account of his life, especially his work in Bradford. C. A. Davis of Sion said that Chown's son had told him that in his father's journal "continually occur the words 'Bless the Lord, oh my soul'".¹³¹ In Bloomsbury, memorial sermons were preached by Charles Williams from John 14:23 and Dr. Clifford from Ephesians 4:8,11. The latter summed up very well when he said, "Mr. Chown's life was saturated with the desire to lift men to the fulness of the stature of Christ".¹³²

The *Missionary Herald* of August carried a tribute and the motion passed by the committee expressing their high regard for the deceased, and sympathy with Mrs. Chown and Mr. John Chown. Chown had twice preached the annual sermon of the B.M.S. and once that of the L.M.S. and Wesleyan Missionary Society as well as deputation work in all parts of the country.¹³³

One other service to the denomination ought not to be forgotten. When the repeal of the Stamp Tax on newspapers made a denominational paper possible, Chown and Acworth were among the founders of the *Freeman*. It made its first appearance on January 24th, 1855, intending to devote itself to the "gripping political issues of the day". At the end of its third year it had reached a circulation of 30,000.¹³⁴

Two other observations suggest themselves regarding Victorian chapel life. One is about stipends. A hundred years ago there was a greater inequality of stipends, for while Bloomsbury was paying £700 a year and Sion £350, averaged sized churches were paying less than half the latter. Tetley Street, Bradford, paid £150 in 1885,¹³⁵ Mirfield, Yorkshire, £120 in 1871.¹³⁶ Things are more equal now (unless the

minister of Bloomsbury gets over £5,000). Some may think that the trouble is that it has been a levelling down.

Secondly, Church attendance. The 1851 census revealed that Bradford had five Baptist places of worship with a total of 3,425 sittings and on the census Sunday a total attendance of 2,615 in the morning, 948 in the afternoon and 1,529 in the evening. We are not given figures for individual churches.¹³⁷ In 1881 a similar census was made in Bradford. We then had fifteen places with 9,214 sittings, 2,978 attending in the morning and 3,107 in the evening. Sion had 511 in the morning and 520 in the evening.¹³⁸ The evidence available suggests that there had not been a significant falling away since Chown's time. It can be argued from this that most of the chapels, even the more successful ones, were not full every Sunday, even if they were on special occasions. In Bradford in 1881, 19.3% of the population attended worship in the morning, 14.8% in Nonconformist places, and 17.0% in the evening, 12.0% with the Nonconformists. Very often most or all of the sittings were let, but everyone did not come to every service. For instance, Miss Kate Shaw, a respected member of Salendine Nook, Huddersfield, who died about two years ago, used to say that when her parents got married (which would be sometime in the 1870s) there were not two adjacent sittings available for them in Salendine Nook Chapel. It is good to know that some good single friend changed her sitting so that the couple should not be separated at worship.

In conclusion, mention must be made of Mr. Chown's descendants. He had two sons, Joseph Waterfield (Waterfield was Mrs. Chown's maiden name), who was a doctor, an M.B. of Edinburgh, where he was also awarded the Bronze Macadam Medal for Chemistry. He went to Australia in 1878 and practised at Melbourne and then Terowie, South Australia, until his sudden death in 1884. John was on the Stock Exchange, became secretary of Brondesbury Chapel and died during his presidency of the Baptist Union in 1922. He could remember hearing Charles Dickens read and recite with great effect in Bradford in 1866 or 67. John was father of Herbert, who served the denomination well, including his service on the committee of the Baptist Hymn Book, Stanley, who became a Presbyterian and legal advisor to their Assembly, Leslie, who is an octogenarian Baptist minister having served at Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton, for over fifty years, and Dora, who died in 1958.¹³⁹

One concludes, by way of an apology, with a quotation from a recent article in the *Fraternal*. "We need the Victorian virtues to get the Victorians out of our system. It is a sort of historical homeopathy."¹⁴⁰

PUBLISHED SERMONS AND LECTURES OF J. P. CHOWN

Those marked * are in the Archives Department in Bradford Central Library. Those marked = are in the Angus Library, Regent's Park College. Apart from the presidential addresses to the Baptist Union,

I cannot find anything by Chown in either the Baptist Union Library or Northern Baptist College Library.

The following are listed in *Bibliotheca Bradfordiensis*:

- Sermon on behalf of widows and orphans fund connected with the Oddfellows, preached Sion, May 30th, 1852, pp. 16.
 Sermon to Sunday school teachers, 1852, pp. 16.
- * Issues from Death, on the death of the Emperor of Russia, March 11th, 1955, 4th edition, pp. 16.
 - * Australia and the Church of Christ, 1852, pp. 16.
 - * Present War Crisis, 1854, pp. 16.
 - William Carey—lecture in Exeter Hall for Y.M.C.A., 1858 (there is a short extract from this in the *Baptist Magazine*, 1886, p. 291).
 - * Readings from the Bradford Poets, given on Thursday evening, February 11th, 1858 (reprinted from the *Bradford Review*), pp. 12.
 - * Book of words for songs for the Lecture on Music, 1858.
 - The Excelling Daughter—a sermon to young women in St. George's Hall, Sunday afternoon, January 13th, 1861, pp. 12.
 - * Our Elder Scholars; how to retain them, 1862, pp. 16.
 - * A Summer Furlough Across the Atlantic, a lecture at St. George's Hall, October 3rd, 1865, reprinted from the *Bradford Times* and revised by the author, pp. 32.
 - * A Twenty Years' Review, sermon with hymns, August 16th, 1868, pp. 14.
 - * England and America, sermon in Sion, Sunday morning, December 22nd, 1861, re-delivered by request in St. George's Hall on Sunday afternoon, December 29th, pp. 12.
 - = Sermons, including his farewell to Bradford, with a brief sketch of his life, 1875, pp. 70.
- Sion Jubilee Chapel: Church government with historical notes*, pp. 36.

Listed in the Angus Library Catalogue:—

- = Acceptable Words, a sermon, London, 1877.
 - = The City, the Plain and the Mountain, or Intemperance, Abstinence and Religion. Bradford.
- There is also, in Bradford Library, a copy of a tract on personal evangelism by Chown: "Run Speak to this young man", Zechariah 2.4, a motto for Christians. London. The Book Society.

The Baptist Magazine, 1886, has an extract from an address to young men, delivered in St. George's Hall on the Parable of the Prodigal Son (p. 352), and an extract from his farewell sermon at Bradford on "The Cross of Christ", Phil. 3.18.

So far as I can discover there are no personal papers still in existence. Rev. J. L. Chown remembers his father destroying about 2,000 of J. P. Chown's sermons when he was in his 'teens. They were in such a small hand that he could scarcely decipher a word.

The various testimonials and gifts were lost when the family home was badly damaged by a land mine in 1941, the exception being the painting of Bloomsbury, which is in the possession of J. L. Chown.

NOTES

¹ J. L. Chown, "Chowns: Christians and Citizens", Transactions of Baptist Historical Society, September, 1922, p. 145 ff.

² S.G.G. (S. G. Green) Memoir of J. P. Chown in Baptist Handbook, 1887, p. 103.

³ Green, Handbook Memoir.

⁴ J. L. Chown in letter to writer, 8th December, 1971.

⁵ Green, Handbook Memoir.

⁶ Chown, letter.

⁷ Green, Handbook Memoir.

⁸ Chown, Transactions, *op. cit.*

⁹ J. Bentley, Sion Centenary Souvenir, 1924, pp. 24, 27.

¹⁰ Green, Handbook Memoir.

¹¹ Horton College Report, 1846.

¹² J. O. Barrett, A Short History of Rawdon College, 1954, p. 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁴ Horton College Report, 1846.

¹⁵ Horton College Reports, 1841-1853.

¹⁶ Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 19f.

¹⁷ Green, Handbook, memoir, p. 105.

¹⁸ Bentley, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 10, 17, 20, 23.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁰ Horton College Report, 1848, p. 13.

²¹ Horton College Report, 1849, p. 27.

²² Wood, Butler; Bradford Newspapers. MS. in Bradford Central Library.

²³ Benjamin Evans and the Radical Press. Baptist Quarterly, vol. xix. 243.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ The Church, 1849. p. 214.

²⁶ Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

²⁷ Green, Handbook Memoir, p. 107, and Bradford Observer, July 9th, 1886.

²⁸ Green, "The Rev. J. P. Chown" in Baptist Magazine, 1886, p. 290.

²⁹ J. C. Carlile. The Story of the English Baptists, p. 293.

³⁰ Frank S. Smythe, "Edward Whymper", p. 24, quoted in article in Baptist Quarterly, Vol. 10, p. 203.

³¹ Quoted by C. W. Skemp in sermon at Westgate, 11th July, 1886, reported in Bradford Observer, 12th July.

³² Church Work in Large Towns, paper read at Baptist Union meetings in Birmingham, October, 1864.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Green, Handbook Memoir, p. 105.

³⁵ T. H. Martin, in sermon at Hallfield, reported in Bradford Observer, 12th July, 1886.

³⁶ C. A. Davis, in sermon at Sion Jubilee Chapel, reported in Bradford Observer, 12th July, 1886.

³⁷ Church Work in Large Towns.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Green, Handbook Memoir, p. 105.

⁴⁰ Report of Band of Hope Conference, Bradford, 19th, 20th September, 1869, p. 20. Copy in Bradford Central Library.

⁴¹ Church Work in Large Towns.

⁴² Presidential Address to Yorkshire Association, in Report, 1871.

⁴³ Sion Band of Hope Annual Report, 1894-5.

⁴⁴ Bradford Observer, 14th February, 1867.

⁴⁵ Band of Hope Conference Report, 1869.

- ⁴⁷ Bentley, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-40, and "A Twenty Years' Review".
- ⁴⁸ Baptist Quarterly, Vol. 10, p. 206.
- ⁴⁹ Twenty Years' Review, pp. 4, 5.
- ⁵⁰ Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- ⁵² Chown, letter.
- ⁵³ Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- ⁵⁴ Bradford Observer, 13th August, 1873.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 9th October, 1873.
- ⁵⁷ Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- ⁵⁸ E. G. Thomas, Centenary Souvenir of Heptonstall Slack Baptist Church, p. 94.
- ⁵⁹ H. J. Betts, "Church Finance" lecture at Trinity Chapel and subsequently printed.
- ⁶⁰ Mitchell, "Trinity Baptist Chapel, Jubilee Souvenir, 1907", p. 16f.
- ⁶¹ A. C. Underwood, History of the English Baptists, p. 208ff.
- ⁶² Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
- ⁶³ Underwood, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
- ⁶⁴ Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- ⁶⁵ Underwood, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
- ⁶⁶ Baptists of Yorkshire, p. 205.
- ⁶⁷ Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
- ⁶⁸ Baptist Magazine, 1886, p. 291.
- ⁶⁹ Yorkshire Association Report, 1871.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁷¹ Bradford Observer, January 16th, 1871.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, December 26th, 1870.
- ⁷³ See "Examiner Answered", F. Clowes, a reply to Miall on Baptism.
- ⁷⁴ J. H. Lea, "Charles Williams of Accrington", Baptist Quarterly, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 183, and 185-187.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186, 188.
- ⁷⁶ Bradford Observer, 8th June, 1875.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, June 5th, 1873.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, July 9th, 1886.
- ⁷⁹ Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
- ⁸⁰ Bradford Observer, 3rd January, 1866.
- ⁸¹ Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
- ⁸² Bradford Observer, September 14th, 1865.
- ⁸³ Brear's Guide to Bradford, 1873.
- ⁸⁴ Bradford Observer, October 5th, 1865.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, July 9th, 1886.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, January 5th, 1854.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, January 26th, 1854.
- ⁸⁸ "Church Work in Large Towns."
- ⁸⁹ Bradford Observer, December 20th, 1866.
- ⁹⁰ Baptists of Yorkshire, p. 124.
- ⁹¹ Bradford Observer, December 9th, 1873.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, December 21st, 1874.
- ⁹³ Quoted in Baptist Magazine, 1886, p. 293.
- ⁹⁴ Bradford Observer, January 17th, 1861.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8th June, 1875.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁷ "Church Work in Large Towns."
- ⁹⁸ Bradford Observer, December 24th and 29th, 1886.
- ⁹⁹ Printed copy of lecture.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰¹ Articles on Jubilee of Bradford Diocese by S. Peart Binns, in Telegraph and Argus, Summer 1970.

- ¹⁰² W. Taylor, *History of Baptists in Bolton*.
¹⁰³ J. L. Chown, letter.
¹⁰⁴ Bloomsbury Church Book.
¹⁰⁵ J. L. Chown, letter.
¹⁰⁶ Bloomsbury, Church Book.
¹⁰⁷ Bradford Observer, 8th June, 1875.
¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*
¹⁰⁹ J. L. Chown, letter.
¹¹⁰ Bradford Observer, 10th April, 1875.
¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15th April, 1875.
¹¹² *Ibid.*, 8th June, 1875.
¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 7th June, 1875.
¹¹⁴ Green, Baptist Magazine, 1886, p. 335.
¹¹⁵ Quoted by Dr. Payne in *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England*, p. 108.
¹¹⁶ Bradford Observer, 23rd June, 1875.
¹¹⁷ Green, Baptist Magazine, 1886, p. 294.
¹¹⁸ Bloomsbury Pew Rent Book.
¹¹⁹ Baptist Handbooks.
¹²⁰ Green, Handbook, 1887, p. 106.
¹²¹ Green, Baptist Magazine, 1886, p. 350.
¹²² *Ibid.*
¹²³ J. L. Chown, letter.
¹²⁴ E. A. Payne, *Short History of the Baptist Union*, p. 114.
¹²⁵ Green, Baptist Magazine, 1886, p. 351.
¹²⁶ Payne, *Short History of the Baptist Union*, p. 128.
¹²⁷ Dr. Angus' address at the funeral, reported in Bradford Observer, 13th July, 1886, and Green, Baptist Handbook, 1887, p. 351.
¹²⁸ Green, Baptist Handbook, p. 351.
¹²⁹ Bradford Observer, 9th July, 1886.
¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 13th July, 1886.
¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 19th July, 1886.
¹³² *Ibid.*
¹³³ Green, Baptist Magazine, p. 291.
¹³⁴ "Benjamin Evans and the Radical Press", Baptist Quarterly, vol. xix.
243.
¹³⁵ Tetley Street Baptist Church Minute Book.
¹³⁶ D. B. Milner, "Founded on Sacrifice" in Rawdon College Magazine, 1961, p. 25.
¹³⁷ Mann, Religious Census of 1851.
¹³⁸ 1881 Religious Census in Bradford, Report.
¹³⁹ J. L. Chown, letter.
¹⁴⁰ J. C. G. Binfield, *Some Abiding Virtues of the Victorian Church*, the Fraternal, No. 159, January, 1971, p. 31.

D. MILNER.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW AND JOHN CLIFFORD

Sir James Marchant's very inadequate biography of Dr. John Clifford contains only one passing reference to Clifford's membership of the Fabian Society. But it is given on the authority of George Bernard Shaw. Clifford is said to have risen "like a lion" to a taunt that as a parson he knew little about hard work! Shaw's *Collected Letters, 1898-1910*, edited by Dan H. Lawrance, contains four letters which refer to Clifford. In March, 1899, to an unidentified correspondent, Shaw speaks of Clifford as a member of the Fabian Society. In April, 1900, to members of the Society, Shaw points out that Clifford mis-

judged the opinion both of fellow Fabians and of Free Churchmen on the South African War. Three years later, in December, 1903, writing to H. J. Tozer, Shaw said:

“I shall do what I can to discourage Passive Resistance . . . I am sorry to differ from my friend and fellow Fabian Dr. Clifford on this point, but I think the Progressive Party on the Council (i.e. L.C.C.) is right and Dr. Clifford wrong.”

G.B.S. believed that Balfour's Education Act contained so much that was good that it should be welcomed. In a letter to the Rev. Ensor Walters in January, 1904, he describes the Act as “the Magna Carta of the Free Churches” and charges Clifford with “wrecking Progressivism”. Finally, in May, 1908, he told the Rev. John Oliver, of Glasgow:

“Dr. Clifford may feel it to be his duty to refuse to pay the Education rate. But rebellion and refusal to pay taxes are not at all likely to have a good effect on those who carry them into practice.”

There is material in these references for further investigation and reflection.

RESERVE THE DATE NOW

Next year, changes in the Assembly programme mean that our A.G.M. will be held on WEDNESDAY, 2nd May, at 4.15 p.m. On this occasion we shall be welcoming Dr. W. R. Ward, Professor of Modern History in the University of Durham. He will deliver the fourth Henton Lecture, the title being “The Baptists and the transformation of the Church in the early nineteenth century”.

ANOTHER FACILITY

for our readers. In 1966, in association with University Microfilms Ltd., we were able to offer a microfilm edition of *The Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* together with a Cumulative Index to those seven volumes, first published 1908-1921. In 1970 we were able to offer a microfilm edition of volumes I-X of *The Baptist Quarterly*, published 1922-1941, with the Cumulative Index to those volumes. Libraries and individuals have been glad to purchase these to have available the work of many researchers of earlier days. We have already announced that work is progressing on the Cumulative Index to volumes XI-XX of *The Baptist Quarterly* although the date of its completion cannot be anticipated.

We have NOW agreed with University Microfilms Ltd. to make available in a microfilm edition volumes XI-XX of *The Baptist Quarterly* without further delay. This means that a microfilm of all issues of *The Baptist Quarterly* is now available.

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