

Samuel Chadwick - a Short Bio

Edit by RP from Nigel Faithfull
(1860-1932)

Born at Burnley on 16 September 1860 into a two-roomed terraced house, Samuel Chadwick was small and thin, always looking as if he had not long to live. From the age of eight the young Samuel would rise at 6.00am to work with his father in the cotton mill. Two years later he expressed a wish to do everything for Jesus, and began praying three times a day. He handed his hard-earned wages to his mother, as did his father, and she allowed him one shilling for church collection and expenses.

When fifteen, he felt called to the ministry, but lacked the education, so he studied by himself from 7.00pm to midnight, struggling over grammar, arithmetic, geography, history, theology and the Bible. Samuel began preaching at the age of 16 wherever there were opportunities. Walking up to ten miles each Sunday on preaching engagements, he later became lay evangelist at Stacksteads, a challenging community populated by quarrymen and factory workers. He became a "lay pastor" of the church when he was 21. His support for the Gospel Temperance Crusade was so effective that the Brewers called him the 'Methodist devil'. A part of this crusade was a prayer league which met to pray for revival and conversions.

Chadwick's Pentecost

To understand Chadwick's theology, one must consider the influence of his experience at this point. He had prayerfully prepared 15 well-constructed sermons and imagined they were sufficient to produce a revival. But frustrated by the lack of spiritual power in his early sermons, he famously burned his manuscript collection in 1882, an event he described as a major awakening that led to a deeper reliance on the Holy Spirit. His interest in scriptural holiness led to heart searching and intense Bible study. He experienced a conviction that he was relying on his own efforts, and this led to a filling of the Spirit as described in "The Way to Pentecost": "When it came, I could not explain what had happened, but I was aware of things unspeakable and full of glory. Some results were immediate. There came into my soul a deep peace, a thrilling joy, and a new sense of power. My mind was quickened. I felt that I had received a new faculty of understanding. Every power was vitalized. My bodily powers were quickened. There was a new sense of spring and vitality, a new power of endurance, and a strong man's exhilaration in big things."

Modernism was invading Methodism, and Chadwick was convinced that a Spirit-filled, biblical ministry was the only hope for the future of the church. At an early morning prayer meeting he led his first convert to the Lord, and six more were converted that day. He called for a week of prayer. The chapel filled, people were reconciled, and a notorious sinner was saved. Revival had come and hundreds more big, rough fellows and many godless women were saved. The rough and unsanitary neighborhood became clean and respectable; the Chief Constable wrote expressing his gratitude.

“Chadwick’s train”

Chadwick felt he needed to learn Greek to become an able minister of the Word, and he found a clergyman to teach him the subject. He also attended Didsbury College from 1883 to 1886. He then ministered in Edinburgh and Glasgow before being appointed superintendent of the Leeds Mission, which he described as “a haunt of criminals and a stronghold of vice, poverty and slumdom.” A revival occurred and soon the church was so full that the police had to regulate the crowd.

In 1893 he left for 12 months at Shoreditch Mission, then moved back north to Oxford Place, Leeds. This was a ‘respectable’ church, where people arrived in carriages, but there were hundreds of empty seats. These soon filled, and an even larger church had to be built. He preached through the Apostles’ Creed and claimed, “I am still of the opinion that the preaching most appreciated by the crowd is sound theology.” With over 700 attending the Sunday morning services, many came by rail from Keighley to the evening service in “Chadwick’s train.”

The evening class attendance rose from 400 to over 2000, and later 2500. Secularist orators proclaimed on Leeds Town Hall’s steps that Christianity was bankrupt, but admitted Oxford Place Chapel was an exception, calling it a “mystery shop.” One night their adherents filled the gallery, but the ring-leader was converted, and soon all their leaders were saved.

On a lecturing tour, Chadwick preached from Revelation 13:18 a message entitled “Sixes and sevens.” He preached for 1 hour 20 minutes, and intimated that he would close, but was urged “Go on, go on!”

Cliff College

Thomas Cook, a man of God who wrote an excellent book worth reading called “New Testament Holiness,” opened the Cliff College site for the training of Methodist evangelists at Calver, Derbyshire, on 3 March 1904. Also in 1904, he began lecturing at Cliff College, eventually becoming its principal in 1913, a role he held until his death. During this time, he influenced future evangelists like Leonard Ravenhill. Chadwick travelled weekly to lecture, becoming resident tutor in 1907. Before leaving Oxford Place, he asserted, ‘There is no other gospel, there is no other Savior. But if you reject this gospel of Jesus Christ, you will be lost, you will be damned, and that forever.’ Twenty-five persons received Christ that night.

Chadwick’s unique style of preaching used many illustrations, but avoided being ‘anecdotal.’ He taught that sermons should have an appropriate theme, contain evangelical doctrine, practical teaching and a persuasive application. The exposition should be sustained with related passages of Scripture. Both grammar and diction should be correct, with well-chosen figures of speech. He required his students to have a deep knowledge of human nature and sympathy with it. He advised them, “The peril of the amateur is to crowd too much on the canvas. What you want in a spear is a point; and to get a point you need to sacrifice much material, but a sharp spear needs no polish.”

Following Thomas Cook's death, Chadwick became principal at Cliff. His personality ensured discipline. A mature student who used to pipe-smoking, which was banned at Cliff, came to his office saying, "I'm dying for a smoke." Chadwick half turned in his chair, swept him with a look from his toes to the crown of his head, and asked, "Are you really dying for a smoke?"

"I am, sir," replied the student.

"Then," said the principal, pointing to a seat beside his desk, "Sit down in that chair and die." After commenting on this addiction, Chadwick knelt down with the student and prayed; and the craving disappeared.

Writing

Chadwick edited the weekly evangelistic paper Joyful News. Dr. Campbell Morgan praised its quality, literary style and "loyalty to the really fundamental things of our faith." Chadwick wrote fairy stories for the Christmas edition, one of which was printed in gold and sent to Princess Mary on her betrothal. In 1931 he wrote, "The Path of Prayer as Meditations" for Lent, followed by "The Way to Pentecost."

He evangelized with Moody at the Chicago Exhibition in 1893, and visited the United States six more times. The Camp Meeting Organization there held to the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification and the eradication of inbred sin and imparted holiness, as against the Keswick teaching of repression of sin and imputed holiness. Chadwick was, however, against the fanatical Holy Rollers holiness sect in New York. Chadwick led open-air meetings at Cardiff docks in the middle of a labor dispute in 1911. He preached weekly on Mondays in the villages for about an hour. His fresh and instructive sermons, delivered in a characteristically terse and epigrammatic way, brought farmers from miles around to hear him. His topics were such as 'The weather and the Word – for as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven... (Isaiah 55:10)'.

In 1918, Chadwick was elected President of the Methodist Conference. Confronting modernism, his presidential address was to the point: 'The church has been judged, it has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. What we want is a revival of religion. Until you have got a gospel that works – shut up. This is not an age for twiddling your thumbs'.

Recognition by Others

He organized a thanksgiving service for the end of the Great War at the Royal Albert Hall – the first time in English history that the King and Queen attended a Nonconformist service. The following year, a Pentecostal experience flooded the whole life of Cliff College, and a revival broke out at nearby Chesterfield, with men kneeling in the streets to confess their sins. Chadwick taught the converts how to read the Bible, which he held as the inspired, complete and infallible revelation of God, and the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

In 1920, Prime Minister David Lloyd George slept at Cliff and breakfasted with the students, exhorting them to patience and tenderness in the work of redemption. He later wrote of Chadwick, "There was, beyond question, a consummate mastery of the speaker's art ... but always it remained his obedient and unnoticed servant, entirely subordinate to his purpose of convincing, persuading, moving and uplifting his hearers. He had a great gift of friendship. It was the essence of the man. One of the most delightful memories of my life is of a stay with him at Cliff College. His whole being was full of light."

Chadwick's last words to his colleagues began, "Stand together for the Word of God, but not in any stupid sense. Stand in a spirit of unity, of faith, of doctrine, according to the fourth chapter of Ephesians. This will be the great consummation of my work and of my hopes." He died at day-break on Sunday, 16 October, 1932. Chadwick was a strong advocate for Wesleyan holiness theology and Arminianism. His most famous work, *The Way to Pentecost*, was published posthumously in 1932 as he was dying, cementing his legacy as a leading voice on intercessory prayer. Other notable works include *Humanity and God* and *The Path of Prayer*.