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Challenge, Memories and Adventure

Congregational Studies
Conference 2006

Challenge, Memories and Adventure

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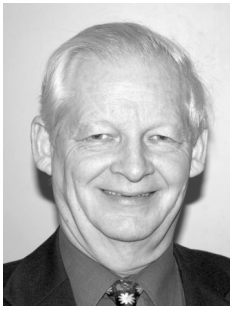
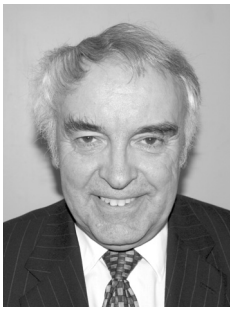
The papers are printed in the order in which they were given at the Conference; as usual the contributor is entirely responsible for the views expressed in his paper.

Rev. Peter Robinson is minister of Honiton Congregational Church in Devon.



Rev. Peter Beale was minister of Bulford Congregational Church in Wiltshire until his retirement to Bulkington in Warwickshire.



Rev. David Gregson is the minister of Reeth Congregational Church in North Yorkshire.

Photographs by Dr Digby L. James

Foreword

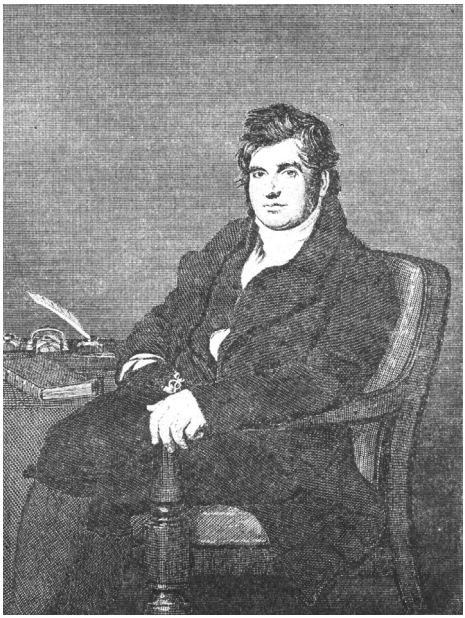
Our second conference at Highbury Quadrant Congregational Church confirmed our previous experience. The kindness and generosity of our hosts has to be felt to be believed. That is one of the great things about being at the Conference and hearing the papers live (although reading them is better than nothing). This year was a particularly good day, with challenge from the papers, time for fellowship and visiting the bookstall (which we hope to increase), and the excellent meal provided for us.

All the papers focused on issues which are relevant today. Peter Robinson's paper was particularly helpful in the challenges to evangelism which it impressed upon us. Peter Beale's memories of Dr Lloyd-Jones devoted a good deal of time to his stand on the authority of Scripture and the perils of a false ecumenicity. David Gregson's well-researched paper reminded us of the cost at which the Scriptures have been made available to us in our own mother tongue. No-one could say that we were simply dwelling on the glories of the past. Once again, we repeat our thanks to them all for the effort and discipline necessary to prepare a paper for a deadline, which has a habit of approaching at an alarming speed, in the midst of a busy ministry.

Next year we hope to see a continuing increase in support. Do come and enjoy the day, and bring your fellow church members too. There will be a slight change in the format of the conference in 2007. We plan to have two papers of the usual length, and a third somewhat shorter one. The intention is to make more time available for questions (if needed), and certainly more opportunity to spend time with one another, sharing both our joys and problems. When you have seen how it goes, we would welcome feedback on the new arrangements. The date to put in your diary *now* is Saturday, 17 March 2007 at 11.00 a.m., again at Highbury.

John Semper

Wigtown



William Jay

John Angell James

Congregationalism's Boom Years

Peter Robinson

Introduction

Which period in the history of our nation do you think has witnessed the greatest advance for the gospel? When has God more than in any other time revived his church in our land? Perhaps you might say in the days of the Reformation? Or during the time of the Commonwealth? Or even the Great Evangelical Awakening? You may find it hard to choose between them. However I doubt if many of us would have thought of the years between 1790 and 1840! Yet this period of fifty years has to be counted as one of the most blessed seasons in our nation's life when God moved mightily to send forth his grace into many previously dark corners of the land.

William Jay was the pastor throughout this period at Argyle Street Chapel in Bath. In his autobiography he writes: 'Think what an amazing multiplication of Dissenters there has been!'[1]

> The number of new places, at the opening of which I have preached, and the number of enlarged places, at the reopening of which I have preached, would appear hard of belief. Yet others of my brethren have been employed in the same work, in their respective neighbourhoods and connexions, all through the land. I cannot look at various progressions without exclaiming, 'What has God wrought!'[2]

Paul Cook, in his 1984 Westminster Conference lecture entitled 'The Forgotten Revival', remarks:

> It is not generally appreciated that from 1791 until well into the 1840s a very extensive evangelical awakening took place in the British Isles which was distinct from the Evangelical Revival of the 18th century and more effectively evangelised the nation than that earlier work of God. Over the period of fifty years spontaneous revivals of religion were breaking out all over Britain in varying degrees of divine power, sometimes limited to certain towns or localities whilst at other times sweeping the whole nation in wave after wave as 'times of refreshing' came 'from the presence of the Lord'.
>
> Within fifty years, God had stretched forth his arm to perform an astonishing work which shaped the subsequent history of this nation for over one hundred years. It laid the foundation of all the social, educational, penal and political

1 *The Autobiography of William Jay* (reprinted Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), p. 175.
2 ibid., p. 172.

> reforms which became so much a feature of our national life during the Victorian age.[3]

Statistics give weight to both this ancient and modern witness of the time; in *The Dissenters,* Volume II, M. R. Watts lists the results of two censuses taken around this time, one in 1773 and another in 1851. The 1773 census was compiled by the Baptist pastor Josiah Thompson and the 1851 census by a London barrister, Horace Mann, on behalf of Parliament. By comparing the two we find that while the population of England and Wales had increased from perhaps 7 million in 1773 to 17·9 million in 1851, an increase of 155%, the number of Nonconformist congregations had increased by 975% during the same period. They outnumbered Anglican places of worship by 5,420. Admittedly more than half the Nonconformist congregations were Methodist, but it also revealed massive increases in the number of Independent congregations. Perhaps 300 congregations in 1773, but by 1851 the census revealed 3,244 Congregational places of worship in England and Wales.[4]

Since Thompson's 1773 census recorded only the number of Dissenting places of worship and not worshippers it is difficult to accurately estimate the growth in the number of Nonconformist believers. However the 1851 census particularly asked for the numbers of church and chapel attendees present on one given Sunday, 30 March. The result was that out of a population of nearly 18 million in England and Wales, at least 3 and one quarter million were in a Dissenting place of worship on that day. Of these nearly 800,000 thousand were in a Congregational chapel. Although the census was taken eleven years after 1840 it still gives a revealing picture of what an incredible work was done by God in those fifty years or so.

So alarming was this growth in Nonconformity to the Establishment that even 40 years earlier in 1811 the House of Lords had obtained a return of the number of, and types of places of worship in towns of one thousand or more inhabitants. They were disturbed to find that there were 3,457 Dissenting places of worship in comparison to only 2,547 established churches.[5]

In that same year Viscount Sidmouth expressed concern at the increase in the number of meeting-houses and Dissenting ministers and proposed that the provisions of the Toleration Act be more stringently enforced. (This act, which dated back to 1689, allowed Nonconformists their own places of worship as long as these were certified by the bishop of the diocese and all

3 Paul Cook, 'The Forgotten Revival' in *Preaching and Revival* (Thornton Heath: The Westminster Conference, 1984), p. 87.
4 M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters,* Volume II, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 24.
5 F. Graeme Smith, *The Congregationalist and His Origins* (New South Wales, Australia: Fellowship of Congregational Churches, 1992), p. 57.

ministers took the oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance and subscribed to at least 34 of the Thirty Nine Articles.) His Bill was rejected, but he had correctly noted the considerable increase in the number of Nonconformist churches, and in 1818 Parliament responded to such alarming growth by voting that one million pounds be given for the erection of new parish churches.[6]

G. F. Nuttall, in his book *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962*, concludes therefore as others do that the older Dissenting bodies, as well as Methodism, showed themselves better able to cope with the increase and shift of population which accompanied the Industrial Revolution.[7] The vital question we must ask in the light of such information is how did this phenomenal growth come about?

Paul Cook argues:

> The revival movements of the early 19th century have usually been treated as a continuation of the Evangelical Revival of the previous century. Many historians have made this mistake, including such writers as KS Latourette in his *History of Christianity,* and R. Tudor Jones in his *Congregationalism in England,* where he explains the resurgence of spiritual life among the Nonconformists merely as an engagement 'in the task of harvesting the fruits of the Revival'.

Cook goes on to say:

> There is an obvious connection and continuity between the two revivals; but there is also a very evident discontinuity, clearly distinguishing the one great awakening from the other.[8]

He believes the answer is to be found in a fresh and distinct revival of God, which emerged from a great movement of prayer that became known as the Prayer Union and was strongly influenced by the writings of the American Congregational minister, Jonathan Edwards.

Although there can be no doubt that our land did witness a mighty move of God, my intention in this paper is not to discuss whether this should be called a revival or not, but to look at what God was doing in and through the Congregational churches of the time, and what if any lessons can be learnt for ourselves in this generation of church closure and Spiritual decline.

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6 Ibid., p. 57.
7 G. F. Nuttall, in *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962,* G. F. Nuttall and O. Chadwick (eds) (London: SPCK, 1962), p. 273.
8 Paul Cook, op. cit., p. 89.

Mission Agencies

One of the first evidences of God's quickening work amongst both the Baptists and Independents was a passionate concern for the lost. The formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 and the London Missionary Society three years later was the beginning of a new Holy Spirit-inspired love for sinners.

MR Watts makes this strong connection between concern for mission abroad and at home. 'The influence of the missionary movement did not end on the mission field: it helped, in its turn, to stimulate the expansion of Dissent at home.' He believes it 'had an invigorating effect upon the churches in England and caused them to be increasingly conscious of the missionary needs of their own immediate neighbourhoods.' Watts supports his reasoning with the example of Daniel Bowell of the Ipswich Congregational Church who in 1796 left for Polynesia, there to die a martyr's death two years later. In 1797 members of the Ipswich church 'went out for the first time into the villages around, to instruct such as they could find disposed to receive them'.

He adds, with reference to the evangelical churches in general, 'They were inevitably confronted with the question of why they were organising themselves to convert the foreigners when there were so many men and women nearer home who were going to hell because there were too few preachers to reach them.'[9]

EFCC's own publication, *Evangelical & Congregational* comes to a similar conclusion when it informs us, in the section 'Who are the Congregationalists?', that:

> Moved by a passion for souls the Congregationalists of those days produced evangelists and preachers determined to search out 'every creature' and bring them the gospel. Their earnest zeal resulted in the planting of very many churches in the expanding cities and industrial towns and in the least significant villages of the countryside. They were home mission pioneers to countless places.[10]

Where is our 'passion for souls'? Can we say that this is true of us as a group of churches? Or as ministers or as Christians?

Watts says,

> The foundation of the LMS inspired the establishment of Congregational societies for the evangelization of Hampshire in 1797 and of Essex in 1798

9 Watts, op. cit., p. 20–21.

10 The Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, *Evangelical & Congregational* (2nd edition, Weston Rhyn: Quinta Pres,s 2003), p. 10.

> and led to the formation, in 1797, of the most successful of all the Calvinistic agencies for village preaching, the interdenominational Bedfordshire Union of Christians.

Within a year of its foundation, the union was providing 150 lay preachers for nearly a hundred towns and villages in the county, and by 1816 it was giving financial assistance for the maintenance of preaching in at least 27 different places.[11]

In fact one of the phenomena that accompanied this blessed period, and that was to be a mark of much of the 19th century, was the explosion of societies for all manner of causes. William Jay reminisces about this when he writes in his autobiography,

> When I first went to London there were no missionary societies; except those of the Moravian and Wesleyan brethren; then too we had not the noblest of all institutions since the apostolic era, the Bible Society; nor the Tract Society; nor the Jewish Society; nor the Hibernian Society; nor the Irish Evangelical Society; nor the Home, nor the Colonial, Missionary Society.

Jay adds by way of conclusion, 'Here we have not mentioned the Anti-Slavery Society or the Peace Society'.[12]

In fact as early as 1776, over 15 years before the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society, a group of Congregationalists, Baptists and Evangelical Anglicans had joined together to form the 'Societas Evangelica' to sponsor evangelism at home. And between 1792 and 1830 the Particular Baptists and Congregationalists founded 68 additional evangelistic associations, 12 of which were Baptist, 21 Congregational and 35 interdenominational.[13] These national and interdenominational evangelistic societies were imitated on a local and county level, and were the impetus for the formation of the County Unions which ultimately gave birth to the national Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1831.

In his 1988 book, *Established Church, Sectarian People,* Deryck Lovegrove notes that 'over the next 25 years (from 1795) most English counties witnessed the formation of local unions of churches, or the adaptation of existing ones, and whatever their earlier purpose may have been, the new preoccupation lay with evangelism and the problems caused by growth'.[14]

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11 Watts, op. cit., p. 137.
12 Jay, op. cit., p. 174.
13 Watts, op. cit., p. 136.
14 Deryck W. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People* (Cambridge: University Press, 1988), p. 14f.

He cites the 'Dorset Missionary and Itinerant Society', which was formed, by a group of local Independent ministers at Wareham in 1795. From the outset the corporate effort of the Dorset churches was directed towards the employment and support of an evangelist to engage in itinerant preaching in the, as they put it, 'destitute parts of the county'.[15]

Over the following years Independent churches in many other areas established similar societies; most evolved, like Essex and Hampshire, directly from the earlier ministerial associations. These were well organised and structured and went about their God given task with something like a military precision. One was the Essex Congregational Union which adopted a statistically based plan for the systematic evangelisation of the entire county. The plan, drawn up by Isaac Taylor, minister at Colchester, included a map indicating 'those places where the gospel is truly preached by any denomination, either statedly or occasionally'. By 1821 the *Congregational Magazine* reported that the Essex Union had noted, 'there are upwards of 40 stations for village preaching, supported by this union, at which more than 5,000 persons hear the Gospel every Sabbath'.[16]

Likewise:

> During the first 30 years of the Lancashire Union's history the county was overlaid with a network of village stations, where in homely but telling phrase, the gospel was preached in barns, private houses, and on village greens, anywhere, indeed where the people could be induced to come and listen.[17]

These county unions were not only zealous to see the birth of churches in completely new regions but also served in a supportive role, being prepared to aid weak congregations whose future prospects as local centres for evangelism were judged to be encouraging.

Itinerancy Work

As you may have noticed much of the evangelistic work, which was supported by these new societies and unions, was itinerant preaching. This was not a totally novel idea for the Independents as Watts tells us 'old Dissent had its itinerant evangelists in the past'; however they and the Baptists 'were quick to learn from the Methodists' success in the late 18th century'.[18] They recognised the usefulness of the means that the Methodists were using and reinterpreted the scheme into their own particular denominations. In point of fact the associations were most effective when they encouraged the co-

15 Ibid., p. 32.
16 Ibid., p. 88.
17 Ibid., p. 109.
18 Watts, op. cit., p. 134.

operation of local churches in providing preachers, usually laymen, for unevangelized towns and villages on something resembling the Methodist circuit system.

The life of an itinerant preacher was far from an easy one, and many did not live to advanced years. Those preachers who did took pride in calculating the distances they had covered on their itinerant journeys. John Morton of Bucklebury Congregational church in Berkshire, was crippled by illness at the age of 13, but none the less, despite his lameness, walked 34,000 miles in a ministry spanning 55 years. But the claim to be the most travelled preacher of them all was made by the Wesleyan Reformer, James Everett. In a ministry spanning 66 years, Everett calculated that he had travelled 320,000 miles to preach 13,000 sermons. Even in 1866, his 83rd year, he claimed to have travelled 700 miles to fulfil preaching engagements.[19] These people covered these incredible distances on foot—not in an air-conditioned and comfortable car capable of travelling 50 miles in under an hour! Yet how far are we prepared to go to take the gospel to those who are still without it?

But this itinerant work was not the reserve of a unique band of evangelists; it was also taken up by ordinary ministers and laymen and even academy students. Amongst other academies active around this time, were the students at Idle near Bradford, who under the presidency of William Vint expended considerable effort providing systematic pulpit supplies. These covered not only the existing Independent churches in the Bradford area, but also congregations as far afield as Skipton (15 miles) and Honley (13 miles). In 1817, fifteen students were each walking an average of 22 miles a week, and 6 years earlier some had regularly undertaken a round trip of 60 miles on foot to preach at Grassington in Wharfedale until a church was formed a year later.

Two of the London seminaries, those at Hoxton and Hackney were able to deploy their men throughout the country using their own particular links with 'Societas Evangelica' and the 'Village Itinerancy'.[20]

From these county missions came the recognition of the need to form the Congregational Home Missionary Society in 1819, so that the wider resources of the denomination could be tapped. By 1830 this society was able to employ 53 full-time evangelists.

So, these Independents recognised the imperative of working together, even crossing denominational lines and willing to surrender much loved secondary doctrines and practices for the gospel's sake. Does our independency exclude us from co-operative evangelism? Should it? Is it

19 Lovegrove, op. cit., p. 152.
20 Ibid., p. 151.

because we cannot work together, or will not work together, that we are not more actively committed to gospel partnerships like these?

Remarkable Individuals

Much of the initiative for these endeavours remained with individuals, like Joseph Cockin. In his *History of the Dales Congregational Churches,* Thomas Whitehead relates how, when Cockin was

> at Halifax, having inspired all around with his evangelistic missionary spirit, he called a meeting at Heckmondwike, on 18 August 1811 which was numerously attended by ministers and laymen, with the result that an Itinerant society was formed for the spreading of the gospel, by the strengthening of such Independent churches as already existed in the rural districts, and for the purpose of breaking new ground.

This society was called the West Riding Itinerants, through which, Whitehead tells us, 'the first direct awakening came to Settle in 1811. There were already meetings being held in private houses, but these were quickened into new life when Joseph Cockin, his son and others arrived in the town. No house was large enough for the purpose. One Sabbath evening in 1813, the Itinerants held a service in the open air, when "not less than a thousand" were present.'[21]

So it was not only national and county societies that were active in evangelism. Local churches too played their part in founding new churches in the area surrounding their hometown. Watts believes that this was a crucial element in their success. He says that 'by itinerating from established centres, both the Baptists and Congregationalists made the most effective contribution to the expansion of their denominations'.[22]

And again these churches went about their work in a very careful manner, as a minute from a meeting held by the members of Angell Street Congregational Church, Worcester on 28 February 1828 records:

> It was agreed that no one be employed as a village preacher or reader of sermons, until he receive the sanction of the minister of the church.
>
> Mr Henry Humphreys was appointed to preach at Droitwich, Ombersly, and Upton Snodsbury, and Messrs. Charles Martin and Winspere be requested to read sermons and conduct devotional exercises at Upton Snodsbury; the Rev. Geo. Redford to select such sermons as he thinks proper to be read.[23]

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21 Thomas Whitehead, *History of the Dales Congregational Churches* (Keighley: Feather Bros., 1930), p. 346.
22 Watts, op. cit., p. 135.
23 Rev. William Urwick, M. A., *Nonconformity in Worcester* (London: 1897).

The common procedure by which each church went about the evangelisation of a neighbouring area is briefly described by Watts:

> Ministers, and more often laymen, went out from their existing churches to the surrounding towns and villages, preached either in the open air or in the house of a sympathiser, and followed this up by renting a room, barn or shop on which to hold regular services. Once a viable congregation had been gathered, a small chapel would be built.[24]

While John Angell James was minister at Carrs Lane Congregational Church in Birmingham 'six other chapels were built subsequently in the town and suburbs'.[25] One of these was the church at Smethwick. In its 1913 history a helpful account is given of the events leading up to its founding, which almost certainly mirrors that of many others at the time.

> He [John Angell James] and his people were energetic in starting work in various places, and in 1813 they determined to commence a meeting in Smethwick. The population was then thin and scattered, and they fixed upon a room near the little inn on the Birmingham road called the 'Cape of Good Hope' as the most suitable spot. Here, on a Sunday early in May 1813, was commenced the first Nonconformist Sunday School and preaching station in Smethwick.
>
> One of the preachers who used to walk out from Birmingham was William Urwick who 'Angell James had laid hold upon and was training for the ministry'.
>
> A Sunday school was formed and regular services were carried on here for some three years, when it was felt they must seek larger and more convenient premises. A home was found in the house of Mr. Newland, and here they remained, until in 1823 the growth of Smethwick, and the growth of the cause, made a further step necessary.
>
> The result was that the Rev. J. A. James laid the foundation stone of a chapel at the corner of Crocketts Lane on April the 1st of that year. Opened early in 1824, this building was used as a school and chapel for many years.[26]

It is important to notice that this church did not grow up overnight as we might think would happen during times of revival. From first steps in evangelism to stable church took the best part of eleven years. Likewise for many churches their beginnings were very unstable, and required large amounts of perseverance to get them up on their feet.

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24 Watts, op. cit., p. 135.
25 Albert Peel, *The Congregational Two Hundred, 1530–1948* (London: Independent Press, 1948), p. 131.
26 *Smethwick Congregational Church: Its Origin and History* (1913).

An example of this is to be seen in the beginnings of Congregationalism at Ashton-under-Lyne in Lancashire. There had been two unsuccessful efforts towards the end of the 18th Century to establish Independency in Ashton, and in 1795, William Roby, a Congregational minister in Manchester, whose ministry we shall consider in some detail a little later, attempted to collect a congregation, but no church was formed in Ashton itself. However, a nucleus of worshippers kept together in Dukinfield, where a cause was founded and Providence Chapel opened in 1807.

Much later, in 1815, a room was fitted up in Crickets Lane, Ashton and supplied by preachers from Manchester. In 1816 it was enlarged and the first communion service held, attended by 27 worshippers.[27] This was over twenty years after the first attempts to see a gospel church formed in the town! For other causes there is not such a happy ending; they fizzled out after a number of years, never to resurface again.

Have we the tenacity to stick at a cause that is difficult and slow to produce visible fruit? Haven't we sold out to the instant culture of our day that insists that if anything is worth having it must be had now?

William Roby

Back to William Roby, to whom, according to his biographer WG Robinson, 'more than to any minister of his day, was due the extension of Independency in Lancashire at the beginning of the 19th century. From him and from his church went out waves of expansion, which covered the county and the northwest.'[28]

In his *History of Nonconformity in Lancashire,* Rev. B. Nightingale writes,

> There had been a remarkable and unprecedented expansion of Independency in Lancashire in the period from 1795 to the beginning of 1830. It is not an exaggeration to say that behind this expansion and largely instrumental in it were the initiative, the wisdom, and the unresting toil of Roby himself.[29]

Before coming to Cannon Street Congregational Church in Manchester, he had been a minister with the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and a diligent itinerator, regularly visiting places such as Abram, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Hindley, Little Lever, Bury and Bretherton, where Congregational Churches later grew up.

Another insight into what was required in those days to plant a new church comes to light from the example of Roby and his flock at Cannon Street. Robinson writes,

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27 Rev. B. Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity* (John Heywood, 1893).
28 W. Gordon Robinson, *William Roby 1766–1830* (London: Independent Press, 1954).
29 Nightingale, op. cit., p. 154.

> He was not only concerned to send out his people to build up causes, he also had the courage to 'dismiss' members by solemn act of the church so that they might be the nucleus of new churches. The chapel at Patricroft was founded on Monday 14 April 1800 by Roby. 'We remark' says the *Evangelical Magazine,* 'that the congregation has been collected principally by the successful labours of some worthy members of the church in Cannon Street, who have in other places likewise been very useful'. The 'gathered' church itself was formed in 1804, when 8 Cannon Street members were 'by desire dismissed from that church for the express purpose of forming themselves into a separate Independent Church at Patricroft'.[30]

A similar operation was necessary to see the work prosper at Salford. Eighteen members of the Cannon Street Church were dismissed in 1815, to constitute the church at Chapel Street in Salford. In May 1817, the Cloth Hall was opened for worship and the following Sunday, a Sunday School was begun.

How many of us would be not just willing but happy to give away part of our congregation to another church? I suppose it all depends on which church members you happen to be talking about? These were not the troublemakers but the most faithful and hardworking members that were so dismissed!

Ordinary members of the Cannon Street Church mainly sustained Sunday worship at the new causes such as New Windsor, Patricroft and Sale. Roby's 'emphasis upon exertion to spread the Gospel at home', meant that he and the Cannon Street Congregation were directly involved with planting churches in the following differing situations.

At Leigh, in 1805 Roby used to pay frequent visits to the town to conduct evening services during the week in a small cottage taken for the purpose. A minister was called in 1811 and a new building called Bethesda erected in 1814. Roby preached the first sermon in it on 21 July.

In Hulme, the population was growing rapidly and there was little effort to introduce the gospel. With the help and support of some of his people, Roby commenced a prayer meeting in the house of Henry Moore. In 1811, a room was taken in a house in Chester Road and a Sunday school work begun. Later a schoolroom was built in 1817, which was enlarged into a chapel, in Jackson's Lane in 1821.

In Rochdale in 1814, where Roby had been regularly travelling from Manchester to conduct worship in the old theatre in Toad lane, they had gathered such a following that Providence Chapel was bought for £1,600 and opened as a Congregational Church. (It had previously been from 1806–11 a Unitarian Methodist chapel.)

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30 Robinson, op. cit., p. 66.

Roby's influence spread even further when he was instrumental in founding the Lancashire Congregational Union. When the union began its work, it concentrated mainly upon the districts of Southport, The Fylde, Burnley and Rochdale. James Morrow, whose area was the Fylde, was one of Roby's students and so too was George Partington, who was sent by the Union to itinerate in Oldham in 1807, where previously there was no provision for Independency where the people were to be found. But the work did not prosper and was abandoned in 1809. The effort was renewed in 1816, a room was rented in Yorkshire Street, and a fairly large congregation gathered, and in the same year a church consisting of 18 members was formed.

The Union was fortunate, through Roby, in finding men like Morrow and Partington, but soon it was lamenting 'the paucity of suitable persons who come forward to itinerate' and then longing for a theological academy. Roby was behind the resolutions adopted at a meeting of the union, held in October 1808, commending the 'expediency of establishing an "Academical Institution" for educating young men for the ministry'.[31] Roby's recognition of the need for trained men had led him seven years earlier to found his own academy within the auspices of his ministry at Cannon Street.

Robinson records,

> The historic Dissenting Academies, which had trained Dissenters who were precluded from the University education of Oxford and Cambridge, had educated men for the ministry and other walks of life, and had made such an important contribution to the educational systems of England, had already passed their peak and entered into decline. Roby's academy commenced in 1803, and concentrated on the training of potential ministers. It trained 17 men in its brief 5 years of activity and was the precursor of a line of ministerial training that resulted in the establishment of Lancashire Independent College in Manchester in 1843.[32]

I've mentioned earlier the activities of the students at Idle Academy, but there were several others around the country. Many began and flourished, at the time, like David Bogue's academy in Gosport, which between the years 1800 and 1825 trained 115 men for the foreign mission field and a further 60 for the home ministry.[33]

In 35 years at Cannon Street, Roby contributed to the foundation of Congregational churches in Leigh, Hulme, Rochdale, Dukinfield, Oldham and Salford. We find him present at most of the occasions when foundation

31 Ibid., p. 106.
32 Ibid., p. 111.
33 Smith, op. cit., p. 59.

stones were laid, or new buildings were opened, or new churches brought into being—at Colne, 1811 and Egerton, 1812 (in the same year at the opening of new buildings outside the county, Glossop in Derbyshire, and Shelton, in Staffordshire), Rochdale, Burnley and Leigh all in 1814, Hindley, 1815, Salford and Ashton, 1817, Bretherton, Farnworth and Salford in 1819, Hulme, 1821, Blackburn and Oldham 1823, Pendlebury 1825, and Rusholme Road, Manchester, 1827.

The question might be asked, 'Didn't such commitment to other causes hinder or affect his first call to the church at Cannon Street?' And 'Would you be willing for your minister to be away serving other churches with such regularity?' 'After all we pay his stipend so that he can take care of us!' Really? Isn't he called to serve Christ first and to be a minister of his kingdom! Yet far from the church at Cannon Street suffering decline due to the activities that took Roby from them, their experience was to see the congregation grow by over 1000 in his time there, from around 150 to 1200.

Vibrant Churches

Of course men like Angell James and Roby could only do what they did because of the support and labours of the churches they served. What occurred through Roby and the Cannon Street Church was repeated again and again up and down the land through the ministry and zeal of other congregations.

In Hull, Fish Street Congregational Church began a mission to Holderness in 1798 and in the next 22 years was responsible for the gathering of congregations in fourteen towns and villages, 11 of which had their own chapel.[34]

In Bedford, the Congregational Old Meeting established gatherings in 6 surrounding villages between 1812 and the 1840s.

In the West Midlands, Queen Street Congregational Church, Wolverhampton sent out itinerant preachers to Wombourn, Tettenhall Wood, Heath Town and Sindon between 1810 and 1839 and chapels were built in these places. And in the neighbouring Black Country, King Street Congregational Church, Dudley opened branches in Tipton, Brierley Hill, Woodside and Netherton between 1830 and 1858.[35]

The Independent church at Olney was reported in the *Congregational Magazine* in 1819 to have village preachers in 5 local communities with congregations ranging from 40–100 persons attending.

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34 Watts, op. cit., p. 135.
35 Ibid., p. 135.

In Wales too, in *The History of Congregationalism in Cardiff and District*, it is recorded that when 'the Glamorgan Canal was opened in 1797 and then the Nantgarw China Works in 1800, they brought workmen to the district, and it was soon felt necessary to build a chapel to meet the needs of the worshippers who lived there. A room was taken for Sunday School purposes. The members of Groeswen Church would go there in the morning, but would remain at Nantgarw in the afternoon for the school, and later a prayer meeting or preaching service was instituted for the evening. The chapel was built in 1829.'

Bethel Chapel in Caerphilly is another of the many offshoots of the church at Groeswen. In 1820, those who could not attend regularly at Groeswen owing to the distance, began to hold prayer meetings in a house at Caerphilly, and occasionally a preaching service was held in a convenient room. In May 1832, a room was obtained above the Clive Hotel, and here services were held until the building of the first chapel in 1848.[36]

Other Causes of Advance

Finally, it must be briefly noted in passing that there were other less usual ways in which Congregational churches came into being apart from the evangelistic activities of itinerants and churches.

Not a few of the congregations gathered by Whitefield joined the ranks of the Congregationalists, as did later many of the churches of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.[37] Groups leaving the Presbyterians, who in the main went over to Unitarianism, and some that came out of Methodism formed Congregational churches.

Just as common was the reason for the founding of Crescent Congregational Church in Liverpool, which originated with a number of people who seceded from All Saints, in 1800, because of dissatisfaction with the clergyman, the Rev. Robert Banister. These rented a small chapel in Maguire Street, and organised themselves into a Congregational church.[38]

A similar event took place in Sedbergh where, in 1821, owing to dissatisfaction with the new vicar, and desiring the 'pure milk of the word', a few godly people separated themselves, and met, during the week in cottages for prayer, and on Sundays for prayer and praise under similar conditions.[39]

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36 John Williamson, *The History of Congregationalism in Cardiff and District* (1920), p. 130.
37 E. A. Payne, *The Free Church Tradition in the life of England* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965), p. 93.
38 Nightingale, op. cit., p. 164.
39 Whitehead, op. cit.,p. 360.

C. S. Carter in his work *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century* informs us that

> the tendency towards fragmentation shown by the Methodists in the first half of the 19th Century, and the similar tendency among the Baptists and Congregationalists for individual congregations to split and split again, contributed in no small measure towards the expansion of Dissent.

Unholy arguments were in fact quite likely to promote amoeba-like growth among the Baptists and Congregationalists. Disputes over the election of new ministers and dissatisfaction with the established pastors led to splits in existing churches and to the founding of new Congregational churches in Sheffield, Coventry, Talgarth, and Southampton, and even Jay's Church in Bath, split over his successor in 1853. Arguments over discipline resulted in the formation of a new Congregational church in Warrington in 1811.[40]

Conclusion

What is the relevance in all this for us, living two hundred years later and in a very different religious climate? That was the time of the rising tide of Congregationalism; we are now not simply witnessing the tide going out, but are experiencing the lowest tide ever recorded!

This study does not provide the answers to our present problems, but I would like to draw out my own observations from what I have learnt while preparing this paper, and my own limited experience of what I observe as the present day state of our churches. I will briefly present them before you to do with as you wish.

Those who saw the blessing of God upon their endeavours had a real and passionate concern for the souls of their peers. This love for sinners that is a large part of the motivation behind the ministry of Christ himself must be sought for our own hearts. Ask yourself, why should I evangelise the lost? What is the chief reason that moves me? If we have no such passion let us earnestly ask God for it.

Saying that, I would also insist that we are not to wait until we have such a love before we move towards reaching this present age with the Good News of Christ Jesus. There can be no excuse for disobeying the clear commandments of God in the Scriptures to preach the gospel to every creature. We are to go with faith before feeling into this area of Christian living and service, just as we are to do in every other. Would you tell someone they must only come to worship on a Sunday when they feel like it?

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40 Payne, op. cit., p. 93.

Practically and additionally these Congregationalists of the past were teachable and learnt from other christians outside their immediate circle or denomination. The Methodist revival had a huge effect upon the older Dissenters like the Independents. They took from Methodism what they saw as beneficial, such as itinerant preaching; and sermon delivery, which had been traditionally reading a prepared script, became much more contemporary in style and application. They weren't selling out to modernism or worldliness, but refused to be blinkered by prejudice and arrogance. This did not in any way compromise their high views of God's sovereignty and his Word, nor cause them to water down the gospel or even become closet Methodists. The real differences remained.

There is much for us to learn from the 'New Churches' and the Charismatic Movement. We cannot with clear conscience declare everything that is happening among them, in terms of conversion and church growth, as a deception of the devil or just clever marketing. Read some of the articles they are writing and you will find a lot you agree with in their doctrine, and some things you don't. But why God is blessing them at this time is a question worth pursuing.

The church planters of two hundred years ago worked together in a true gospel ecumenicity; not only in the formation of societies and unions for evangelism, but in seeing the real benefits of such a partnership even across denominational boundaries and differences that were long held beliefs.

Why aren't we doing more together? Where is our Home Missionary Society? Where can local churches perhaps, whose ministers are in a fraternal relationship, pioneer a church plant in a neglected area? It can't be that difficult, except where we may be too concerned for our own kingdom?

There must have been a great deal of sacrificial giving both of their time and money. This last subject needs noting when we consider the vast difference between our own income and theirs. The majority of people who filled these chapels were only paid enough to live on and had little extra for pleasures. Yet they gave to support this mission work both at home and overseas. How is it that in our day so many missions and evangelistic societies are bewailing the fact that they are struggling financially? And recently some are even having to make evangelists redundant through lack of funds.

They also gave away their own people to see churches planted and growing. Is it healthy for a church to grow and to be numbered in hundreds of members, or would it be better for it to separate and form another new church elsewhere? Why do we think size is all that matters? Is Mega church the only sign of blessing? Many of our churches have people travelling from villages and towns sometimes several miles away. Why not start a church in the town

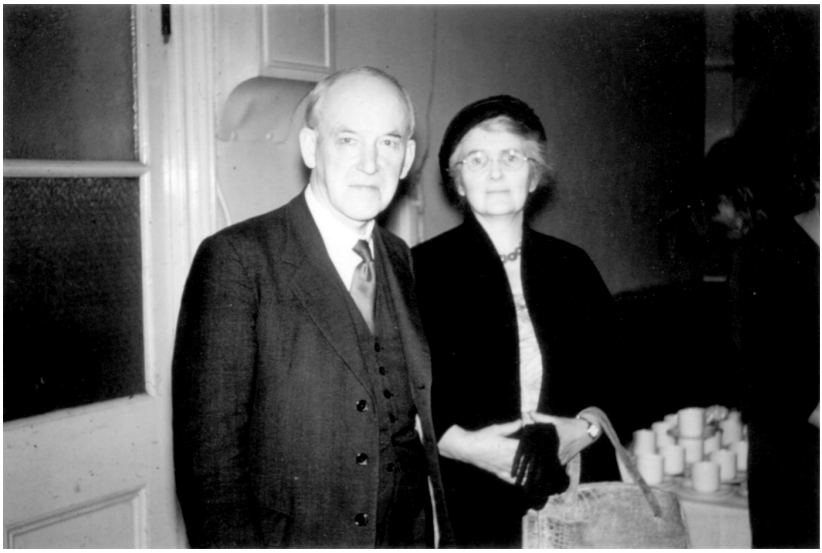
they are coming from? That's how we've seen that many of our churches began in the 19th century, with a small home group.

And there was the giving of men to the work of evangelism, men to preach in small struggling causes, and those willing to leave all for the gospel ministry. Academies were started in every region to train, equip and support them. Why is there such a shortage of both men and colleges? Why is there only a handful throughout the whole nation? I challenge you, both young men and older men. Have you really asked God if he wants you in the ministry, with a willingness to obey whatever he commands?

So what should we do in our day, acknowledging that there are very real differences in our situation? Envy them? Sorrow because we do not experience such growth? Pray for revival, but effectively do little, except where we have a sense of guilt, and then only do what will quieten our consciences?

Surely it must be the combination of earnest prayer and earnest endeavour, of a heart cry to God for His grace to be outpoured upon this land and of a love-fuelled pouring out of our own energies and powers towards the people of this land.

Let us then 'thank him for all that is past and trust him for all that's to come'.



Dr and Mrs Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel in 1960 (photograph supplied by John Legg).

The Doctor—25 years on

Peter Beale

Although it seemed a good idea at the time, the folly of undertaking such a task as this has been increasingly impressed upon me as the months have passed. The 25th anniversary of Dr Lloyd-Jones's death (a couple of weeks ago on 1st March, St David's Day) has been marked by many, in this country most significantly by a major conference to be held next week at Herne Bay Court, organized by the Martyn Lloyd-Jones Recording Trust, at which Derek Swann is to be one of the speakers, as he is also next Saturday at a one-day conference at Sandfields, where the Doctor commenced his ministry. There is a special commemorative issue of the *Banner of Truth* this month, as well as an article in *Evangelical Times* (by Paul Cook). I was not one of the Doctor's close friends; I am not Welsh; I am far from being a theologian with a firm grasp of the nuances of the Doctor's teaching on such matters as the baptism and sealing of the Spirit; all I am is a very ordinary retired pastor who owes a great deal to the Doctor, and had the privilege of knowing him, and thank God on every remembrance of him. So this paper is by way of personal reminiscences, followed by a brief attempt to assess his continued influence a quarter-century after his death.

One advantage which I do have is that I did know him, heard him on numerous occasions, and was blessed by his personal counsel at the time when I was much exercised of heart concerning my position in the Church of England, in which I had been nurtured and converted, and served in the ministry for over ten years before seceding in 1974. As time goes by inevitably the number of those who actually heard him declines, and it is interesting that the opening article in the commemorative *Banner*, an appreciation of his spiritual legacy, is by a pastor who had never met him, and first took up one of his books only in 1997. It does strike one that occasionally those who have never met the Doctor jump to unwarranted conclusions about him, and I was particularly aware of this when recently listening to a tape about him by John Piper, who obviously did not even understand what the term 'Calvinistic Methodist' means!

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones was born on 20 December 1899 in Cardiff, brought up in the Calvinistic Methodist or Welsh Presbyterian church, and came to a saving knowledge of Christ in his mid-20s, by which time he had qualified at St Bartholomew's Hospital as a doctor and was well on his way to a prestigious career in medicine, being assistant to Lord Horder, physician to the Royal Family. It was not long before he discerned God's call to the

ministry. He gave his reasons in a sermon preached in 1929 at Sandfields on 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's':

> It is not often that I make any kind of personal reference from this pulpit but I feel this morning that I must speak of an experience which bears on this very subject. When I came here, people said to me: 'Why give up *good* work—a *good* profession—after all the *medical* profession, why give *that* up? If you had been a bookie for instance and wanted to give that up to preach the gospel, we should understand and agree with you and say that you were doing a grand thing. But medicine—a good profession, healing the sick and relieving pain!' One man even said this, 'If you were a solicitor and gave it up, I'd give you a pat on the back, but to give up medicine!' 'Ah well!' I felt like saying to them, 'if you knew more about the work of a doctor you would understand. We but spend most of our time rendering people fit to go back to their sin!' I saw men on their sick beds, I spoke to them of their immortal souls, they promised grand things. Then they got better and back they went to their old sin! I saw I was helping these men to sin and I decided I would do no more of it. I want to heal souls! If a man has a diseased body and his soul is right, he is all right to the end; but a man with a healthy body and a diseased soul is all right for sixty years or so and then he has to face an eternity of hell. Ah, yes! We have sometimes to give up those things which are good for that which is the best of all—the joy of salvation and newness of life.[1]

Dr Lloyd-Jones's ministry falls into three sections: from 1927 to 1938 he pastored the congregation of the Welsh Presbyterian Church's Forward Movement work at Sandfields, Aberavon in South Wales, where there was much blessing on his ministry and many were converted: Mrs Bethan Lloyd-Jones records many of these in *Memories of Sandfields*. Then in September 1938 he was called to be assistant to Dr G. Campbell Morgan in the pastorate of Westminster Chapel in central London. Following Dr Morgan's retirement in August 1943 he became sole pastor, continuing until his retirement, partly due to ill-health but also because he was anxious to prepare his expository sermons for publication, in 1968. From then until his death in 1981, as well as his literary labours, he exercised a fruitful ministry to pastors and churches throughout the British Isles and far beyond. Publication and republication of his works have continued since his death, the final volume of his *magnum opus* on the Epistle to the Romans, based on his Friday evening ministry at Westminster Chapel, appearing as recently as 2003, some 33 years after the first!

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1 Quoted in Iain Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The First Forty Years 1899–1939* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), p. 80.

I first became aware of the name of Martyn Lloyd-Jones in 1957, when I became an undergraduate at Cambridge and a member of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, the CICCU. The IVF (Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions), as it was then known, brought out around that time a significant quartet of 'IVF Pocket Books' which were to have a lasting influence on generations of students: *Basic Christianity* by John Stott, *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God* by James Packer, *The Story of the Church* by A. M. Renwick, and *Authority* by D. M. Lloyd-Jones. The Doctor's book contained the substance of three addresses given by him at a conference of the General Committee of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) in Ontario in September 1957. The addresses deal with the authority of Jesus Christ, of the Scriptures, and of the Holy Spirit. He begins his introduction by stating:

> If I understand the modern religious situation at all, this whole question of authority is one of the most important problems confronting us. As such it demands our careful study. There is no doubt that things are as they are in the Christian Church throughout the world today because we have lost our authority … I believe that this fact is true of all sections of the Church, including the evangelical section which … in common with others has been trying to produce a spurious, artificial substitute.[2]

He sees the degree of 'success' enjoyed by the Church of Rome at one extreme and Pentecostalism at the other as being attributable to 'a note of certainty and assurance—a note of authority. The same thing is true of many cults whose success is to be attributed in much the same way to their claim to possess authority in some form or another.' In addition, he suggests that the question of authority was being raised acutely at that time by movements such as the World Council of Churches and the World Student Christian Federation. Nearly fifty years later his comments have a remarkably contemporary feel about them:

> The question is being asked everywhere, 'Is there any final authority? Is there any objective source for this authority?' A similar question is, 'Can truth be known? Can truth be defined? Can it be stated in a number of propositions?'
>
> Now it seems to me that lying behind these questions is the suggestion that truth is so great and so marvellous that it cannot be defined, and, therefore, that you cannot say definitely that this view is right and that is wrong.[3]

Another significant contribution by Dr Lloyd-Jones to the Christian student scene was a small 6d booklet first published by IVF in December 1952 under

2 D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Authority* (London: IVF, 1958), p. 2.
3 Ibid. p. 8.

the title *Maintaining the Evangelical Faith Today*. In it he writes about the different directions from which challenges come to the maintenance of the Evangelical faith: the main challenge he sees as coming from

> what is called 'the œcumenical' outlook and way of life. [Incidentally in those days 'ecumenical' was always spelt with an initial 'œ'.] We nearly all meet it in the Churches to which we belong and in them any young people's and other organizations which supplement the work of our Churches. We meet it most in the form of an all-pervasive climate of opinion, which dislikes anything which is really distinctive in doctrine or in life; which demands, indeed, ever less emphasis on doctrine, or on definition, or on ethical principle. Never was a time when polemics in any form was at such a discount.[4]

In a way from which some more abrasive brethren could learn much even today, he emphasizes that it is only with reluctance and as a last resort that we are to separate from others:

> The important consideration is that we must be quite sure that we are contesting about and contending for a matter which is absolutely essential to the preservation of the gospel. We must not withdraw ourselves from other Christians for anything less. For example, there are amongst equally devoted Christians at least three possible views with regard to the interpretation of the Book of Revelation and particularly of the 'Millennium' … We must agree to differ. In a similar way, it would be wrong—although there have been those who have done it—to separate simply on the mode of administration of Christian baptism.
>
> It is not that we wish to be separate from others, far from it. Nothing would be easier and nothing more comfortable than to drift in the oecumenical stream. But if words mean anything at all in the New Testament, then we must stake everything on the gospel and be content with nothing less than the greatest possible fidelity to the great essentials of the apostolic teaching. We cannot give our full support to anything else. We accept the gospel because we believe it to be the gift of God to us and eternal truth. Because it is the truth, then we must take our stand upon it and, with Luther, we can do no other.[5]

This determination not to let secondary issues cloud what he regarded as most important is also illustrated by J. I. Packer in his article 'A Kind of Puritan' in Christopher Catherwood's symposium of tributes entitled *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Chosen by God*. Packer writes, somewhat wryly,

> He did not think that any Anglican, not even a Puritan Anglican, was or could be as seriously concerned about the church as he was himself, and during the '60s he occasionally put the boot into me on that point. His

4 D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Maintaining the Evangelical Faith Today* (London: IVF, 1952), p. 4.
5 Ibid., p. 15.

> ecclesiology had developed over the years: ordained a Presbyterian and officially one to his dying day, he became in polity 'a convinced Independent' (his phrase to me), and ceased to baptize covenant children, though retaining affusion as his mode of baptizing adults. This combination of tenets and procedures was unusual if not unique. But he would never make polity an issue; he urged, rather, that evangelical churches should accept without question each other's varieties of organization and usage provided these did not directly contradict Scripture, and concentrate together on the common quest for doctrinal purity, spiritual profundity, and missionary vitality, under the guidance and authority of God's written Word. It was thus, to his mind, that true Christian unity would be shown and the church's real health promoted.[6]

In addition to issues of church government and practice, he was equally adamant that Evangelicals should not separate over Calvinism or Arminianism (i.e. the relationship of the sovereignty of God to human responsibility), or over charismatic issues (e.g. whether spiritual gifts have ceased: he differed from B. B. Warfield and many other Reformed teachers on this matter).

In January 1959 (my old diary tells me—I had forgotten!) I heard the Doctor for the first time when he was the speaker at the CICCU pre-terminal meetings, and the following year, on 30 March 1960 I heard him preach in the village hall at Harston near Cambridge: I went to the meeting riding pillion to Dr Jim Douglas, at that time Librarian of Tyndale House and busy on the preparation of the *New Bible Dictionary*, on his BSA 'Bantam'. As I recalled it, he was preaching one of his most famous sermons which he used in various places, and which I heard on more than one occasion, entitled 'But God …', an exposition of Ephesians 2:4f, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us …'; but my diary tells me differently: his text was in fact Acts 4:24ff!

While at Cambridge I sensed the call of God to the ministry, and being at that time an Anglican (I had been brought up and converted in an evangelical Anglican church) I applied to, and was accepted by, the C of E for training for the ministry, and after a year working in Germany, went to the staunchly evangelical theological college of Tyndale Hall, Bristol in 1961. It was a time when the Banner of Truth had an extensive publishing programme, and we took full advantage of the special prices for students. But although later it was the Banner which published most of the Doctor's books, it was at that time that I purchased his two-volume *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount,* first published in 1959 and 1960 by IVF. These sixty sermons had been preached

6 J. I. Packer, 'A Kind of Puritan', in *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Chosen by God*, ed. Christopher Catherwood (Crowborough: Highland Books, 1986), p. 44.

at Westminster Chapel as part of his regular Sunday morning ministry and recorded in short-hand. He explained in the Preface to the first volume why 'they have been subjected to a minimum amount of correction and alteration, and no attempt has been made to conceal, still less to expunge, the sermonic form'. He sets out his view of expository preaching, which he exemplified so well and in which he has been such a challenge and encouragement to myself and countless other preachers of the Gospel:

> I am profoundly convinced that the greatest need of the Church today is a return to expository preaching. I would emphasize both words and especially the latter. A sermon is not an essay and is not meant, primarily, for publication, but to be heard and to have an immediate impact upon the listeners … I have a suspicion that what accounts for the dearth of preaching at the present time is the fact that the majority of printed books of sermons have clearly been prepared for a reading rather than a listening public. Their flavour and form are literary rather than sermonic.
>
> Another characteristic of expository preaching is that it is not merely an exposition of a verse or passage, or a running commentary on it; what turns it into preaching is that it becomes a message and that it has a distinct form and pattern.
>
> Furthermore, it must always be applied and its relevance shown to the contemporary situation.[7]

Following ordination in 1963 to a curacy in Nottingham, it was my privilege to become a member of the Westminster Fellowship, the ministers' fraternal chaired by the Doctor at Westminster Chapel: in later years it met (as it still does) on the first Monday of each month. To be admitted to membership one had to be proposed and seconded by existing members, and it was my fellow-curate at Lenton who proposed me. At that time, prior to the momentous events connected with the Doctor's speech at the Evangelical Alliance meeting in 1966, there were a considerable number of Anglican ministers in membership of the Westminster Fellowship, as well as men from other 'mixed' denominations: over 400 men were 'on the books' at that time, and the Institute Hall (now called the Lloyd-Jones Hall) was usually filled to overflowing. The normal pattern of the day was to have a speaker on a pre-arranged subject in the morning, followed by discussion chaired in his inimitable way by the Doctor; then, after lunch, there would be discussion of a particular pastoral issue raised by one of the members. It seemed to a timid newcomer that there were a number of men, usually sitting in the front row,

7 D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount,* Vol. 1 (London: IVF, 1959), p. vii.

who would regularly contribute to the discussion (the names of Geoff Thomas, Paul Cook, Errol Hulse, Iain Murray, John Marshall among many others come to mind), while the rest of us listened without venturing to open our mouths—particularly so when we saw how the Doctor did not suffer fools gladly, and the flaws in the confidently proposed arguments of men were mercilessly exposed by the chairman! In many years of membership of the Fellowship I never did pluck up courage to say anything! But that did not mean that I did not profit immensely from being there. Even if on occasions the morning speaker was not too scintillating, and the afternoon discussion somewhat arid, it was worth attending just to hear the Doctor sum up what had been said and bring biblical light on each subject: this was his particular gift, and I do not think that anyone has been able to replace him in this.

I continued to attend the Westminster Fellowship for the first couple of years of my curacy in Nottingham, together with quite a number of Anglicans and members of other doctrinally mixed denominations. Even in those days, the question of secession was seldom far from the surface (J.I. Packer observes that it was in 1962, following the commemoration of the 1662 Great Ejectment, that 'the Doctor began to publicize his view, and to call on his denominationally-involved peers within evangelicalism to separate'[8]), and in 1964, the doctrine of the church and its government was being studied at the Westminster Fellowship, with papers from men representing the different positions: on 9th March we had offerings on 'The Case for Presbyterianism' (by Rev. Murdo MacLeod) and 'The Case for Independency: Congregational Church Polity' (by Rev. David Marshall). David Marshall writes of the difficulty facing him, in words which, although composed even before the setting-up of the Congregational Church of England and Wales, will ring true to us today:—

> In the first place, the principles of Independency as a form of church polity are almost unknown in this land at the present time. The Congregational Union of England today talks of interdependency by which it seems to mean some form of connexionalism. Ministers who still hold to the historic Independent polity have been described as 'extreme independents'.[9]

Other papers covered the positions of Methodism, Christian Brethren, and Episcopacy (by Rev. Duncan Whyte, then vicar of St Simon's Southsea, who commented: 'The Secretary, with what he imagined were words of assurance, informed me that Dr Jones would be in the chair, and the case presented before brethren in Christ. Why he should imagine, that with a Calvinistic Methodist as Judge, and an Assembly of Westminster Divines as Jury, an

8 J. I. Packer, op. cit., p. 45.
9 David Marshall, *The Case for Independency*, typescript of paper given at Westminster Fellowship, 9 March 1964.

Episcopalian protagonist would be put at ease, I cannot understand'), as well as the meaning and significance of the word *ekklesia*, and the Council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15.

An article, in the commemorative issue of the *Evangelical Magazine of Wales* following Dr Lloyd-Jones's death in March 1981, describes the famous controversial meeting in October 1966 at which he set out his view on the need for Evangelicals to 'stand up and be counted':

> Some called it his Rubicon. But he finally crossed it—and that publicly—on the night of October 18th 1966 at the National Assembly of Evangelicals convened by the Evangelical Alliance at Westminster Central Hall.
>
> A now defunct religious weekly, *The Christian*, described it at the time as 'an exciting meeting, with two rows on the platform occupied by leaders of evangelical thought in Britain today, all listening intently to Dr Lloyd-Jones, small in stature, insignificant in figure, and yet mighty in eloquence, with a great command of the Scriptures and the ability to hold the largest congregation spell-bound.'
>
> 'He was attempting to get evangelicals to face up to the doctrine of the Church—something, he said, that he had never been able to get people to hold a discussion on during the 30 years in which he had been associated with evangelical work in London. They were always afraid that someone would be offended and that divisions would be caused. Often, so he argued, 'evangelicals … seem more concerned to maintain the integrity of their denominations than anyone else in the denominations'.
>
> 'He argued that the existence of the ecumenical movement should force us to reconsider this position, and he drew attention to the various moves that were afoot (some subsequently completed) towards denominational mergers and also to the alarming new attitude that some were showing towards Rome.
>
> 'There were two major questions, he said, that evangelicals must address themselves to at once. The first was, Were evangelicals content to go on with being nothing but an evangelical wing to the Church? The second—even more basic—was, What was the Christian Church?
>
> 'Evangelicals rightly put doctrine before fellowship, which was the exact opposite of the ecumenicals. Could we be content, he asked, with a "paper Church"? "The Church, surely, is not a paper definition. It does not consist in Articles or a confession of faith. It consists of living people. Sometimes we are told that the Church is a place in which a man can fish, but surely the church does not consist of unconverted people. It consists of saints."
>
> 'He then turned to the question of the sin of schism. "It is not schism to divide over basic points of doctrine," he argued. Thus to divide from Rome was quite

right. But he went on to accuse evangelicals of being the only people who were guilty of schism. They who were agreed on the essentials of the gospel were divided from one another and were actually fighting for the denominations that most of them were in because they had been born into them.

'"I make an appeal to you evangelical people this evening. What reasons have we for not coming together? Why is it that we are so anxious to hold to our inherited positions? Some say we would miss evangelistic opportunities if we left the denominations, but I say, 'Where is the Holy Spirit?' Surely, He will honour the truth if we hold together. Evangelicals spend their time criticizing their own leaders, but these men are still your leaders. You cannot justify your decision to remain in your denomination by saying that you maintain your independence. You cannot dissociate yourself from the church to which you belong. That is a contradictory position, and one that the man in the street must find very hard to understand.

'"We believe the Bible and we take it authoritatively," he continued, "and we are the only people doing this … We are the modern representatives and successors of the men who fought this fight centuries ago. We are standing in the position of the Protestant Reformers. God is calling upon us to maintain this ancient witness not occasionally but always. The need has never been greater. There is a need of conviction of sin, of new life, of turning to God, of becoming God's people. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, but have we the right to ask Him to do this, when we spend our time arguing in the churches? If we would only stand constantly together, I believe we would then have the right to expect the Spirit of God to come down in a mighty revival.

'"I am well aware that there would be great and grievous difficulties. There would be family and financial problems if we acted on these principles, but has the day come when we are afraid of principles? The early Christians had great problems, but they were not daunted. Was Luther not confronted with problems? We are living in tremendous times, in one of the great turning-points of history. We may be small in number, but since when has the doctrine of the remnant become unpopular among Evangelicals? We are not interested in numbers but in the truth. Go home and read the story of Gideon again, and see how God has acted through one man. If we stand for God's truth we can be sure God will honour and bless us.

'"Therefore, fellow evangelical Christians, rise to the occasion and listen to the call of God. If we have one objective only, namely, the glory of the Lord, we shall be led by the Spirit to the true answer to these problems."'[10]

I was not present at that meeting, but, for those of us who had been attending the Westminster Fellowship over the previous two years, the

10 'October 1966', *Evangelical Magazine of Wales,* April 1981.

Doctor's exhortation could not have been particularly surprising. Indeed, the Evangelical Alliance, which had sponsored the meeting, had specifically invited him to speak to this subject and to repeat in public the arguments he had previously put in private to their Commission on Church Unity. As is well known, John Stott, the chairman of the meeting, publicly rejected the policy proposed by Dr Lloyd-Jones, declaring that history was against him in that others had tried unsuccessfully to do that very thing. He also maintained that Scripture was against him, in that the remnant was within the Church and not outside it.

The writer of the *Evangelical Magazine of Wales* article accurately observed that the evening was a watershed so far as evangelicalism was concerned, particularly in England but also in the British Isles in general. 'Its effects are with us still', he commented in 1981, and a quarter of a century later this remains true. In the intervening years, many ministers and churches have reluctantly separated from their denominations in an attempt to 'stand together in fellowship on the distinctiveness of the gospel over against all that would contradict or undermine it'.

One of the 'side-effects' of the events of October 1966 was the bringing into prominence of the previously little-known British Evangelical Council, as the Doctor put it forward as an appropriate body for the true expression of biblical unity. In November 1967, at the BEC's annual conference, in the context of the 450th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, he made a further plea for evangelicals in the denominations to leave them and to join in fellowship in the BEC in a true expression of biblical unity. The principles embraced by Luther in 1517, those of the Protestant Reformation, were applicable to the present day. The real questions to be asked were not, 'How can we find a formula that will satisfy men of diametrically opposed views?' but, 'What is a Christian? Is he only a man who objects to atomic bombs and apartheid? Luther is thundering down the centuries and asking us this question. Then, How does one become a Christian? How do I get forgiveness of sins? And, What is a Church? Is it an organization or a gathering of believers?' Those of the 'in-it-to-win-it' school of evangelicals who hoped to infiltrate and reform the denominations from within were, he maintained, suffering from 'midsummer madness'. Revelation 18:4 was the relevant text: 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins …'

In 1966 following the Evangelical Alliance meeting, the Doctor decided that the Fellowship should be wound up, because the presence of the Anglicans and others who were happy to continue in mixed denominations made continuance difficult in the light of recent events. I still have the letter

which was sent out by the secretary of the Fellowship, Rev. John Caiger of Gunnersbury Baptist Church:—

> My dear Brother,
>
> You may have heard that at our meeting at Westminster last Monday (November 28), Dr Lloyd-Jones felt it right to announce the closure of the Fellowship.
>
> He was moved to do this because he believed that the deep cleavage among us regarding the position of Evangelicals in their present denominations would lead to strife, and this must at all costs be avoided.
>
> The Westminster Fellowship has therefore ceased to be, and the Doctor closed it formally with a prayer of thanksgiving for all the blessings we have enjoyed and shared during the twenty-five years of its existence, and of supplication for direction for us all in the years that are before us.
>
> I have written to Dr Lloyd-Jones expressing to him the profound gratitude which we all feel for his wise and patient leadership through the years, and the sorrow we feel in accepting his decision.
>
> A further meeting was held after the closure at which the Doctor was not present, at which a resolution was passed calling for a gathering in January of all those who were able to endorse what the Doctor has said in his address to the National Assembly of Evangelicals at the Central Hall, Westminster: and it was hoped that Dr Lloyd-Jones would agree to be present.
>
> The details of this meeting, and the plans that have been made in the light of it, are set out in the statement which accompanies this letter.

The accompanying statement, signed by T. H. Bendor-Samuel, Leith Samuel and David Mingard, explains that Dr Lloyd-Jones had consented to take the chair at a meeting on 23 January, to which all previous members of the Fellowship were invited, on the basis of endorsement of the appeal made by the Doctor at Westminster Central Hall. It was noted 'that attendance does not imply the intention to secede immediately from the denominations. All brethren are welcome excepting those who are convinced denominationalists.'

Although by no means a 'convinced denominationalist', at that stage my thinking had not developed to the extent where I saw eventual secession as inevitable, and I reluctantly withdrew from the Fellowship. Although I had much sympathy for those who had seceded or were in the process of seceding from the Church of England, particularly Herbert Carson who had been a friend since Cambridge student days when he came to be vicar of St Paul's, I was still a staunch member of the Established Church, taking the line of Bishop Ryle that so long as we had the 39 Articles and the Book of Common

Prayer, which showed the C of E to be an evangelical church, and the freedom to preach the Gospel, I should remain within it.

However, within a comparatively short time my views began to change, particularly in the light of the first National Evangelical Anglican Congress which took place at Keele in 1967. At that conference (which I did not attend) Evangelical Anglicans made a conscious change of direction. No longer were they first and foremost Evangelicals, behaving as virtual independents within the C of E, doing their best to ignore the fact that they were surrounded by men who preached another gospel, avoiding contact with the hierarchy except when it was necessary to invite the bishop for confirmation services. Instead they were primarily Anglicans, throwing themselves wholeheartedly into the life of the denomination 'warts and all', even though in so doing they cut themselves off from their former good relationships with other Evangelicals outside the established church. I could not stomach this, and before long my thoughts were turning reluctantly towards secession: although I was very happy where I was (by now I had moved to Cambridge, where I was minister in charge of a daughter church, St Stephen's, in a thoroughly Evangelical parish largely surrounded by other Evangelical parishes) the time would come for me to move on to become a vicar, and I was beginning to wonder if I could continue in a doctrinally mixed and compromised church.

It was during my time in Cambridge that another opportunity came to meet with Dr Lloyd-Jones. For a year before moving to St Stephen's, I was curate at the parish church of Christ Church, Newmarket Road, which had situated within its parish Eden Baptist Church, of which the pastor at that time was David Smith, later to serve on the staff of Bible Colleges first in Nigeria, then Northumbria, and currently at Glasgow Christian College. Both my vicar at the time, Dr Bryan Hardman, and myself were happy to steer clear of the Ecumenical Movement, and consequently we were able to enjoy very good relations with David and the church at Eden, and shared in a holiday Bible club together. The Doctor was invited to preach at the Eden church anniversary, and I was asked to chair the meeting: although I had attended the Westminster Fellowship for several years, this was the first occasion on which I was personally introduced to the Doctor. I cannot remember what he preached on that occasion, but what I do recall is that it was for the first time that I realized that theistic evolution was not such a good option as I had thought, and that there were good reasons for adopting the creationist view which I have firmly held ever since!

While at St Stephen's I became involved, as well as with the local Anglican Evangelical ministers' fraternal, with another fraternal formed by a group of Reformed non-conformist men including David Smith of Eden, David

Bugden of Warboys, and Bob Cotton, then at Barrow near Bury St Edmunds. These men were a great help to me as I shared with them my increasing concerns about my situation in the Church of England, and it was not long before I reached a position where I felt able once more to apply for membership of the Westminster Fellowship: although still in the Established Church, I had no doubt that my future must lie outside it, in fellowship with those who maintained uncompromisingly the biblical gospel.

In May 1970 there appeared a book which reflected the new direction taken by most Evangelicals in the Church of England since Keele. In *Growing Into Union: Proposals for Forming a United Church in England*, two eminent Evangelicals (James Packer and Colin Buchanan) joined with two Anglo-Catholics (E. L. Mascall and Graham Leonard, then Bishop of Willesden, later to become Bishop of London, and subsequently to secede to the Church of Rome following the decision to ordain women in the C of E) in setting out, amidst much that was good, statements about Scripture and Tradition, about the Lord's Supper, and about Episcopacy, which went far beyond what Evangelicals had previously allowed. For me it was just another pointer to the need to separate from the confusion of Anglicanism. But sadly its publication precipitated a split between the Doctor and J. I. Packer, which resulted in the winding-up of the Puritan Conference in which Packer had been closely involved since its inception, and its replacement by the Westminster Conference. Iain Murray describes the stated purpose of the book:

> The four men gave their proposals how *both* views not only could but *must* be contained within a future united Church. Their proposed intention was to attempt to demonstrate the truth of the words of Michael Ramsey, quoted prominently at the outset: '"Catholicism" and "Evangelicalism" are not two separate things which the Church of England must hold together by a great feat of compromise.' The four authors of this new alignment professed themselves to be ready 'for the misunderstanding of those who have been close to us hitherto', but they did not intend to go back to 'traditional stances'.[11]

> Rather [state the four authors] we pledged ourselves to stay together, to work together, and not at any stage to settle for a way through [to a future union] which would satisfy one 'side' whilst hurting the other … We now present our work as those who are still definitely and confessedly Catholics and Evangelicals … But equally we are not what we were … We are determined that no wedge should be driven between us …[12]

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11 Iain Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith 1939–1981* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), p. 656.

12 C. O. Buchanan, G. D. Leonard, E. L. Mascall & J. I. Packer, *Growing into Union* (London: SPCK, 1970), pp. 17–19.

On the other hand it certainly led to a wedge being driven between Anglican Evangelicals and many Evangelical non-conformists, and to an end of Dr Lloyd-Jones's public co-operation with the Anglican leaders, including, most sadly, with Dr Packer. This is not a paper about Jim Packer, but as one who also owes a great deal to him and his helpful ministry, particularly with such books as *'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God*, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, and *Knowing God*, and his clear stand, in contrast to Anglican contemporaries such as Philip Hughes, John Wenham and John Stott, for the biblical doctrine of eternal punishment, I am both confused and sorrowful at the line he has taken on co-operation with non-Evangelicals, from *Growing into Union* in 1970 to *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* at the present time.

To return to the Westminster Fellowship, at that time there were a number of men in membership who were prayerfully considering if and when they should secede, not only from the Church of England but also from the Baptist Union (for some of these the final straw was the heretical teaching of Michael Taylor, Principal of the Northern Baptist College, and appointed President of the Baptist Union, and the failure of the Union to deal with him) and other mixed denominations. In addition there were those men who had already taken this step, often at considerable personal cost, including Herbert Carson, Eric Lane, Graham Harrison and others. Usually they had great sympathy with those of us who were still 'on the journey'. There was one brother, however, who has recently died, who after much heart-searching had seceded from the Church of England, but who then appeared immediately to lose all understanding of those who were still struggling as he had shortly before. He was called to an independent Baptist church, but this first pastorate as a dissenter turned out to be something of a disaster, as in a short time he fell out with his deacons and left. When I later had opportunity to speak with Dr Lloyd-Jones after myself coming to the decision to secede, I mentioned this brother and the difficulty he had in adapting from Anglicanism to non-conformity, wondering whether perhaps his problem lay in treating his deacons as if they were his Parochial Church Council on which he could impose his will, and that he thought he was still 'the vicar'. 'No', commented the Doctor, who was aware of the man's occupation before he was called to the ministry, 'he didn't think he was still the vicar: he thought he was still a policeman!'

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13 J. I. Packer, op. cit., p. 43.

Before long I had reached the situation where I knew I had no alternative but to secede: but the question was, where should I go? Unlike several of my former Anglican brethren, I had not become a baptist, and openings for paedo-baptists south of the Scottish border were very limited. At the end of one of the Westminster Fellowship meetings I went up to the Doctor (still in some trepidation), and explained my situation. He immediately fixed up an appointment to see me the following week at the home of his daughter and son-in-law, Fred and Elizabeth Catherwood, near Cambridge, where he and Mrs Lloyd-Jones often stayed.

The next Sunday morning Thelma, my wife, answered the phone to a woman's voice asking what time our morning service was, and whether Mr Beale would be preaching. She replied that he would, and thought nothing more of it until she went into the church shortly before the service and our lady churchwarden said to her: 'Thelma, we have two visitors this morning. I don't know who they are, but the gentleman looks as though he may be a retired minister.' Thelma's heart sank as she looked at the two visitors, and realized that they were Dr and Mrs Lloyd-Jones—particularly as she was aware that I was very unhappy with the message I had prepared. We had recently commenced a weekly morning family service, and I was basing the preaching on a syllabus produced by Scripture Union: this morning the subject was Dr Martin Luther King, and any similarity to true preaching was purely coincidental! Consequently when I emerged from the vestry and saw the visitors I was similarly horrified! But I got through the service, and at the end the Doctor made no comment on the message, only noting favourably that I had abandoned cassock and surplice and was 'normally' dressed in suit and collar and tie. It is just another indication of his great kindness and understanding: although those who thought more highly of themselves than they ought to think often received short shrift from him, he followed the Master in not breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax.

Later in the week I duly arrived at the Catherwoods' home, to enjoy Lady C's excellent buttered scones and Welsh cakes before being ensconced with the Doctor. He was very helpful, encouraging me in my commitment to secession, and understanding my dilemma with regard to future ministry as a paedo-baptist. I was somewhat surprised at a couple of his suggestions: the Free Church of England (being about to divest myself of one lot of bishops, I had no desire to get tied up with another lot), and the Wesleyan Reform Union (where I as a Calvinist would scarcely feel at home); but even this illustrates his catholicity of outlook: he was never a 'party man', and as indicated in the earlier quotation from *Maintaining the Evangelical Faith*, he would never unchurch those from whom he differed on secondary issues. The other

suggestions were the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion (and I came close to being called to a pastorate in one of these churches) and, of course and last but not least, the EFCC, where in the fulness of time I was called in 1980 to the church at Bulford.

This personal experience illustrates very well how Dr Lloyd-Jones was a *pastor pastorum* in a way that very few bishops and area superintendents and the like knew how to be. J. I. Packer remarks that his founding of the Westminster Fellowship (persuaded by Douglas Johnson, first General Secretary of the IVF) 'in effect made him bishop to literally hundreds of clergy in all denominations'.[13] Austere, almost forbidding in appearance (at a time when shirts with integral collars were becoming the norm, he continued to wear a separate starched collar, not of course a clerical 'dog-collar' but with a sober tie), as soon as one spoke with him on a personal level he was completely approachable and put one entirely at ease. My wife Lucy has given me another example of this, from the time in 1977 when the Doctor was invited to preach at the church anniversary at Latimer, Beverley, and he and Mrs Lloyd-Jones stayed with her and her late husband Alan Tovey at the manse. Lucy had made some brown bread, but Alan was adamant that this would not do for the Doctor: so some shop-bought white bread was also provided. When it came to it, however, to Alan's surprise and Lucy's delight he chose her brown bread, with the comment: 'The whiter the bread, the sooner you're dead!'

Dr Lloyd-Jones preached his penultimate sermon on 4 June 1980 at Ashford Congregational Church, in a special service to mark 25 years in the ministry of both Rev. Derek Swann, pastor at Ashford, and Rev. Malcolm Evans, pastor at Stanwell. Derek Swann described the Doctor's message on the nature of the Christian ministry from 2 Corinthians 4:5 ('For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord'), given by one who was already very sick, as leaving him with one impression: 'The gospel is the most glorious message in all the world, and to be a preacher of it is a great privilege'. He then went on to recall another example of the Doctor's kindness and approachability:

> As he was preparing to leave, an incident took place which showed how the man who could reach the heights in preaching was also thoughtful and kindly with individuals—and the young. When offered his preaching fee, he refused to accept it and said to Malcolm Evans and me: 'I want to see your children'. When they came in, he said to them: 'This is for you to spend on *whatever* you like. I'm not giving it to your parents but to you. You can spend it on ice cream, sweets, anything. You don't have to ask anyone what to spend it on. It's for you, for your summer holiday.' That certainly made a lasting impression on our families.

> We have lost not only a great preacher, but a man of God and—for me—a true friend.[14]

Another Welsh friend, Graham Harrison, wrote in the *Evangelical Magazine of Wales* commemorative edition:

> Many another minister, like myself, would gladly admit that, under God, he has been the greatest spiritual influence on our lives. What we saw in him we so often admired and in our own feeble ways aspired to emulate. To us he was a friend and a brother and a father all rolled into one. How kind he was to us as we turned to him for help and guidance. How patient as we poured out our complaints and sought his help. How loyally he stood by us when we were in trouble and difficulties.[15]

Twenty five years on, what are we to make of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones? A couple of weeks ago when I was preaching away a church secretary, probably in his late thirties, asked Lucy and me if there was anybody today to be compared to him. We had to say that really there was not. He has been described on a number of occasions as the greatest preacher of the 20th century, and I believe that to be true. Not only was he a great preacher, but he taught others how to preach, not by lecturing on the art of preaching, but by his example, both to those who were privileged to hear him at Westminster Chapel and elsewhere, and to those who are still able to read his sermons, *The Sermon on the Mount, Romans, Ephesians,* and many others, or to listen to him on tape. We benefit, not by trying to become carbon-copy Lloyd-Joneses (by which we could only become caricatures), but by seeing how he reverently and carefully takes the Word of God, expounds it and applies it to his hearers. And it is not only his preaching, but the way in which he was determined to bring everything to the touchstone of Scripture: he teaches us to think biblically, not pragmatically. And at the same time he will not let us be content with orthodoxy: he would have us above all seek the anointing of the Holy Spirit in our ministry and in our lives, and pray that God in his mercy would pour out his Holy Spirit in revival. Let him have the last word, as he writes of the authority of the Holy Spirit:

> By all means let us continue to pray for the particular efforts, for the minister, and his preaching every Sunday … But before it all, and after it all, let us pray and plead for revival. When God sends revival he can do more in a single day than in fifty years of all our organization. That is the verdict of sheer history which emerges clearly from the long story of the Church.
>
> This is the greatest need today, indeed it is the only hope. Let us therefore decide that day by day, and many times during the day, we will spend time

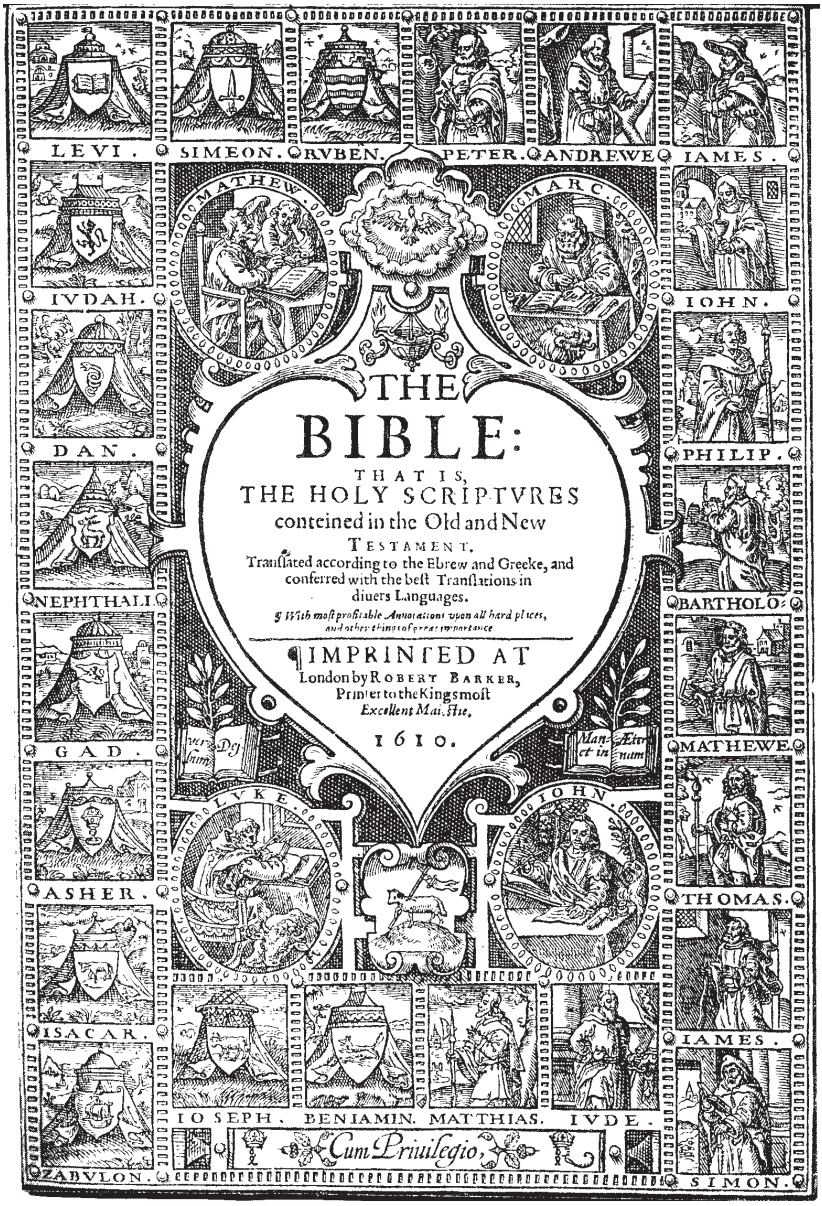
14 Derek Swann, 'Small and feeble, but filled …', *Evangelical Times*, April 1981, p. 14.
15 Graham Harrison, 'A Man Sent by God', *Evangelical Magazine of Wales*, April 1981.

before God pleading for revival … Let us remind ourselves that the God who in the past has come suddenly and unexpectedly upon the dying Church and has raised her to a new period of life and victory can do the same still, that his arm is not shortened, nor his power in any sense diminished. Let us wait upon him, let us plead with him, let us learn to agonize in prayer and let our one prayer be:

Revive thy work, O Lord,
    Thy mighty arm make bare;
Speak with the voice that wakes the dead,
    And make thy people hear.

'O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy' (Habakkuk 3:2).[16]

16 D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Authority*, op. cit., p. 93f.



The title page of the Geneva Bible.

The Adventure of the English Bible

David Gregson

In 1969 I bought a copy of *The Books and the Parchments* by F. F. Bruce. This taught me a lot about the biblical languages, the canon of Scripture and the Old and New Testament texts. To my great surprise, one chapter of the book held a special fascination for me, that entitled 'The English Bible'. My fascination with the extraordinary development of the Bible in English has, if anything, grown over the years. Most church attenders in this country, however, seem to have either a very sketchy knowledge of the subject or complete ignorance. That is one of the main reasons for my preparing this paper because in the adventure of the English Bible, we can see one of the clearest evidences of God's goodness to our nation.

For almost 500 years, the number of Bible translations in English has been far greater than in any other language. Before then, however, it was quite a different story. When the Christian message was brought to South East England by missionaries from Rome in 597AD, the Bible they carried with them was the Latin Vulgate. This was the work of a Roman scholar by the name of Jerome. The Vulgate version of the Bible was a Latin text for the common man, completed around 400AD. It held sway in England for almost 1000 years.

The language spoken by the Anglo-Saxon people of Britain before the Norman conquest of 1066 is now known as Old English. Bede, our first writer of English church history, is said to have been completing the dictation of an English version of John's Gospel with his dying breath on Ascension Day, 735. Sadly his translation has been lost. Alfred the Great was King of Wessex from 871 until 899 and he was a godly ruler. He had an English version of the Ten Commandments inserted into his law code and is said to have translated part of the Psalms.

The most memorable development in this realm in Anglo-Saxon times involved the magnificent Lindisfarne Gospels. These illuminated manuscripts were completed in Latin around the year 698 in Northumberland. Two hundred and fifty years later, Aldred, a monk in Chester-le-Street, placed an Anglo-Saxon translation in his own handwriting above the large Latin words of the Lindisfarne Gospels. That means that 600 years before the Reformation, around 950, the whole of the Gospels could be read in Old English, at least in the Northumbrian dialect. This is the earliest surviving translation of the Gospels in any form of the English language. You could say that the story of the Bible in English begins here, with Aldred in the year 950. It could only be

read and heard by the monks in the monastery, however, not by lay people outside.

The invasion of England by William the Conqueror in 1066 changed the English language and culture. A new way of speaking took over, Middle English, which was quite different from Anglo-Saxon. Bible translation took a step backwards. Indeed, until the middle of the fourteenth century, it occurred to no-one that a Bible in English, the language of the people, might be an asset. Church services went on in Latin with a Latin Bible and the whole thing was incomprehensible to any but the educated clergy. They were remote affairs with the overall emphasis on mystery; the priests were like members of a secret society. The whole thing was intended to impress and subdue, not to instruct or edify. Mystery plays were allowed in cities like York or Chester; these, however, were nothing more than biblical soap operas, not the authentic Bible. For the Roman church of the time, God spoke exclusively in Latin. The monopoly the English church had on the Bible in Latin enabled it to maintain its tyrannical hold on the English people. It was an abomination.

Then something new began to appear in England in the 1380s: laboriously hand copied manuscripts of the whole Bible translated from the Latin Vulgate into English. These were said to be linked with the name of the Oxford scholar, John Wycliffe. He was born near Richmond in North Yorkshire in 1324, spent twenty years at Oxford University, then became chaplain to Edward III and finally Rector of Lutterworth in Leicestershire before his death in 1384. John Wycliffe, often known as the Morning Star of the Reformation, became a controversial figure. He boldly questioned papal authority, wrote against prayers to the saints and pilgrimages, criticised the sale of indulgences, denied the reality of transubstantiation and spoke out against the hierarchy of the Roman church. Moreover he concluded that the reason for the parlous state of church and nation at the time was a lack of faith in the Scriptures. His solution which was quite revolutionary in his day was the translation of the Bible into the English language.

Over two hundred and fifty manuscripts of the Wycliffe Bible, whole or in parts, survive. The idea that John Wycliffe himself translated the Bible into English rests on a statement of his great Bohemian disciple, Jan Hus. Many scholars like F. F. Bruce and David Daniell feel that it is unlikely that Wycliffe, pen in hand, actually translated any of his Bible. The two Wycliffe versions of the Bible were the work of two of the great man's followers, Nicholas of Hereford and John Purvey. The project was carried out under Wycliffe's influence and in accordance with his principles. It was a translation into Middle English, not from the original Bible languages, but again from the Latin Vulgate. The English read like Latin; at times, it was stilted and clumsy

but it did represent God's Word in English. Indeed certain words and phrases which appear in the Wycliffe Bible have entered current English: woe is me, an eye for an eye, cock crowing, humanity, Philistine, pollute, schism, unfaithful, zeal etc.

This first complete Bible in English constituted an act of rebellion in the eyes of the Church of Rome. A full Bible in English had never been authorised by the church. For the clergy, it was potentially seditious, even heretical! Rooms in quiet Oxford colleges built in gentle Cotswold stone became revolutionary cells; production lines were established for turning out the Scriptures in English by hand. Rome had never before seen such a determined guerrilla campaign in the English Church.

Around the same time, 'Poor Preachers' or Lollards went out preaching in England and Wales, each with a copy of the Wycliffe Bible in his hand. The church authorities in England were in uproar, hating the Lollards, the English Bible and, of course, John Wycliffe. Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1396 until 1414, had these words to say:

> This pestilent and wretched John Wycliffe, of cursed memory, that son of the old serpent, endeavoured by every means to attack the very faith and sacred doctrine of Holy Church, devising the expedient of a new translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue.

Before 1401, no-one had ever died in England for reading the Bible in English. Following a law passed in that year against so-called heretics, and the 'Constitutions of Oxford' passed in 1409, people could be burned at the stake simply for possessing or even just reading an English Bible. Thomas Arundel was of course under orders from Rome and succeeded in setting up one of the most draconian pieces of censorship in English history. For well over a hundred years after 1409, the religious life of England was in the iron grip of the church authorities with terrifying restrictions that were unique in Northern Europe. Not surprisingly, Wycliffite Bibles became more and more scarce.

During the second half of the fifteenth century and the early sixteenth century, three events of the greatest importance took place. One was a revival of learning which came to be known as the Renaissance and which made the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek more readily accessible to scholars in Western Europe. The fall of Constantinople, the head of the Byzantine church, in 1453 before the advance of the Turks, had a positive outcome for the church in the West. Scholars fled to different parts of Europe with important manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek in their possession. Another was the introduction of printing with William Caxton setting up his press in Westminster in 1476. The third was Martin Luther's nailing of his 95

theses to the church door in Wittenberg in 1517 and that precipitated the Reformation. The first printed Hebrew Bible appeared in Italy in 1488 and the first Greek New Testament to be published in print was that of the Dutch monk, Erasmus, in 1516. Then Luther's New Testament translated from the original Greek into German appeared in 1522. Meanwhile the name of William Tyndale began to be known in England. His ambition was to do for England what Luther had done for Germany and 'to make the boy that drives the plough in England know more of Scripture' than the church leaders. The day of the monopoly of the Latin Vulgate in England was almost over.

William Tyndale was born in 1494 and brought up in the Dursley area of Gloucestershire. He was able to study the Greek text of Erasmus at Cambridge University. He went to London with a passionate desire to translate the Bible into English but was snubbed by Cuthbert Tunstall, the Bishop of London. He therefore slipped quietly across to the continent and in 1526, his New Testament in English started to roll off the press in Worms. Six thousand copies were produced in the first print. William Tyndale had the financial backing of wealthy wool merchants from his native Gloucestershire, men like Sir John Walsh for whom he had previously worked as a children's tutor. Copies were smuggled into England across the Channel and were greeted by vicious opposition in ecclesiastical circles. Naval vessels patrolled the Channel seeking to intercept ships that carried the forbidden Bibles. Ships were boarded, searches were undertaken, Bibles were confiscated and men were arrested. Bishop Tunstall deceitfully claimed to find 2,000 errors in it and ordered all copies found to be burned. Sir Thomas More wrote a critique of Tyndale's New Testament in which he pilloried it. He called Tyndale a 'hell-hound in the kennel of the devil … discharging a filthy film of blasphemies out of his brutish, beastly mouth'.

For the next ten years Tyndale lived as an outlaw hunted by Henry VIII's agents, slipping from Cologne to Worms and then to Antwerp to try to avoid detection. Finally, he was betrayed by a certain Henry Phillips, arrested, interrogated at length and made to languish for seventeen months in prison at Vilvorde Castle near Brussels. There in October 1536, William Tyndale was strangled and burned at the stake. By then, he had produced a second edition of the New Testament in 1534. In addition, he had also translated a considerable part of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew into English. Before his death William Tyndale had managed to translate all the Old Testament books between Genesis and 2 Chronicles.

The task of finishing the first complete English Bible was undertaken by Miles Coverdale (1488–1569). He was born in York, in mid-life changed from catholic dogma to Reformation principles and spent three spells in exile on the

continent, in the meantime becoming Bishop of Exeter for a short period. Miles Coverdale was a self-effacing, gentle scholar but he did not have the same brilliance as Tyndale, having no knowledge of Hebrew or Greek. The New Testament of Coverdale's complete English Bible is largely Tyndale's work as are large parts of the Old Testament. For the rest, Coverdale used the Vulgate Latin Bible and Luther's Bible in German. He did introduce some lovely expressions into his translation like 'loving kindness', 'tender mercies' and 'saving health'. Elsewhere some of his renderings now seem quaint to us: for Jeremiah 8:22, we read, 'There is no more treacle at Gilead' and for Psalm 91:6, 'You shall not be afraid for any bugs by night'. That is why some of Coverdale's contemporaries amusingly called his Bible, 'The Treacle Bible' or 'The Bug Bible'. It appeared in 1535.

Shortly afterwards, in 1537, another complete English Bible was published and known as Matthew's Bible. It was really the work of John Rogers, the chaplain of the English House in Antwerp and a friend of William Tyndale. Later, John Rogers was the first to be burnt at the stake in London in 1555 during Queen Mary's persecution. Matthew's Bible also owed a huge debt to the work of Tyndale. By then Henry VIII had broken with the Church of Rome and had changed his attitude to the Bible in the vernacular, provided it did not have the hated name of Tyndale attached to it. He actually gave a royal licence to Coverdale's and Matthew's Bibles in 1537. Then Coverdale was asked to revise Matthew's Bible and this became known in 1539 as the Great Bible because of the large sheets of paper on which it was printed. Then what would have seemed impossible three years earlier happened. Henry VIII authorised that a copy of the Great Bible should be placed in every church in the 9,000 parishes of England. He proclaimed, 'In God's name, let it go forth among our people'. As Tyndale died a martyr's death, he had prayed, 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes'—and God had, beyond all expectation!

The final years of the reign of Henry VIII saw a reaction against the Reform movement in England. In 1546 the impetuous king proclaimed that 'no man or woman was to receive, have, take or keep Tyndale's or Coverdale's New Testament'. During the reign of Catholic Queen Mary (1553–58), almost three hundred Reformers were martyred and English Bibles were publicly burnt, but copies of the Great Bible were not removed from parish churches. People continued to read the scriptures in English; the Bible in the native language had indeed come to stay.

In addition another excellent English version appeared in 1560. During Mary's persecution, eight hundred English Protestants had sought exile in Germany and Switzerland. There was a significant group in Geneva, the city where all aspects of life were marked by the influence of John Calvin. Among

them were John Knox and Miles Coverdale. Under the direction of John Whittingham, an Oxford scholar, a new English translation was undertaken from the original languages. It was characterised by accurate scholarship and once again, Tyndale's work was the basis. The Geneva Bible, as it became known, really encouraged the readers to study it carefully. It was printed in clear Roman type and had clear numbered verses, maps and illustrations, italic summaries at the head of each chapter and marginal notes of which only a minority had a Calvinistic bias. A copy of the Geneva Bible was presented to Queen Elizabeth I at the beginning of her reign. In a sense, it was the first great achievement of that golden age. It became the Bible of the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets and prose writers, including Shakespeare, the Puritans and the Pilgrim Fathers. In addition, copies of the Soldier's Pocket Bible that Oliver Cromwell issued to his army in 1643 contained extracts from it. The Geneva Bible was immensely popular and went through 140 editions between 1560 and 1644. The less Calvinistic, more Anglican, Bishops' Bible of 1568 could not halt its sales. The Geneva Bible became known as the 'Breeches Bible' because in Genesis 3:7, it says that Adam and Eve 'sewed fig tree leaves together, and made themselves breeches'.

What God accomplished in this country in the sixteenth century through the English Bible and William Tyndale in particular was nothing short of a miracle. Other European countries had had a Bible in their own languages two generations before the complete English Bible of 1535: Germany in 1466, Italy in 1471, France in 1474 and Spain sometime before 1500. The iron grip which Thomas Arundel had imposed in the early 1400s had been effective for well over a century. When God's time came, however, with His raising up of William Tyndale, all the ecclesiastical and political obstacles disappeared. Middle English gave way to Modern English around 1450. In Tyndale's time, however, the English language was still a poor, uninspiring thing, unknown outside our shores. He, however, translated the Greek of the New Testament for what it is—rough, everyday language and he was faithful to that in his English. What he wrote in his English translation was just a notch above everyday speech. In the most recent edition of *Nothing but the Truth,* Brian Edwards entitles the chapter on the Bible in English 'From the Vulgate to the Vulgar'. That's what William Tyndale's English Bible was, vulgar in the very best sense of that word. Yet in his plain style English, William Tyndale created a prose of dynamic power. His gift to the English language was immeasurable. It has been said with some justification, 'without Tyndale, no Shakespeare'. To Tyndale, we owe expressions like 'the powers that be', 'eat, drink and be merry', 'bearing the burden and heat of the day', 'scapegoat', 'let there be light', 'my brother's keeper', 'filthy lucre', 'fight the good fight', 'the apple of

his eye', 'the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak', 'signs of the times', 'stumbling block', 'taskmaster', 'Passover' and 'Jehovah'. At the same time there was such a hunger for biblical truth that in the hundred years after the first English Bible, two million copies were sold for a population of six million. At the same time, all over the country, handfuls of people met together in homes to study the Bible; humble men and women acquired a deep and extensive knowledge of the Scriptures; and the level of literacy increased dramatically as people learned to read, motivated by the desire to study the Bible for themselves. According to Melvin Bragg, no other book has had a greater influence on the development of any language than William Tyndale's Bible on the development of English. It is no exaggeration to say that under God, William Tyndale is one of the greatest of Englishmen and our English heritage is one of the most privileged of all.

A year after James I became King of England, he convened a meeting of senior clergy at Hampton Court Palace (1604). The aim was to discuss tensions in the Church of England, which really meant disagreements with the Puritans. The conference ended in failure but in the final session it was agreed to undertake a new translation of the English Bible. This pleased James I because he wanted to get rid of the Geneva Bible with its notes. To his mind, it was too Protestant and too Reformed and, after all, he was the son of Catholic Mary Queen of Scots. The work of preparing the new translation was divided up among forty-seven scholars who were each assigned to one of six groups. Two met in Westminster, two in Oxford and two in Cambridge. They worked from the Hebrew and Greek texts and the various sixteenth century versions of the English Bible including the Geneva text but the base text was the Bishops' Bible, even though it was inferior to the Geneva Bible. What was eventually published in 1611 was in fact a revision of the Bishops' Bible.

JH Skilton calls the 1611 Bible, now known as the Authorised Version, 'the noblest monument of English prose'. Alister McGrath calls it 'the greatest English Bible ever produced'. PW Comfort praises its 'gracious style, majestic language and poetic rhythms. No other book has had such a tremendous influence on English literature, and no other translation has touched the lives of so many English-speaking people for centuries and centuries, even until the present day.' David Daniell writes, 'The sheer longevity of this version is a phenomenon without parallel. English translations come and go, some with strong effect: but the King James's is still the best selling book in the world.' I personally was bought up on the AV and have a special affection for it. I do, however, recognise that a very unhelpful mythology has grown up around it.

Paradoxically, the 'Authorised Version' of the English Bible was never actually authorised by any monarch or parliament in the way the Great Bible of 1539 or the Bishops' Bible of 1568 had been. The term 'Authorised Version' was first used in 1824! Sometimes individual translations in the 1611 version are wrong, clumsy or baffling. As we have seen, the New Testament was originally written in every day *koine* Greek. William Tyndale in his robust Anglo-Saxon expressions and style sought to reproduce that in his English versions of 1526 and 1534. The AV on the other hand was intended to set the standard of the solid middle-of-the-road Anglican establishment. That is why the translators sometimes opted for heavy Latinisms rather than contemporary English. They thought that it would bring with it the great weight of the authority of the past. One glaring example is the use of the Latinist word 'charity' instead of the much more appropriate Anglo-Saxon word 'love' in 1 Corinthians 13. What is more, the Greek text used was the *Textus Receptus* of 1550 which was largely Erasmus's text of 1516. The Greek manuscripts used only went back to the tenth century and many considered them to be of an inferior sort. Indeed by the early seventeenth century, German scholars had shown great reservations about the *Textus Receptus*. In our day, Don Carson has written vigorously against false statements which are so widespread in America in particular, for example that the AV is the most accurate translation, that it honours Christ more than do other versions, etc. Despite its many merits, that is simply not true.

In fact, Tyndale's contribution to the King James's version New Testament text is about 83% and to the Old Testament text about 76%. Where the AV's rhythm, vocabulary and cadence are so exquisite, that is largely due to Tyndale's genius rather than to the translators who added their latinisms. High Anglican William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury between 1633 and 1645, waged a determined campaign to suppress the Geneva Bible and to promote the AV. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the AV had triumphed largely due to the commercial interests of the owners of the monopoly on the text, the King's Printers with Cambridge University Press. David Daniell concludes, 'The replacement from 1611 of the remarkable, accurate, informative, forward looking Geneva Bible even at the time of its greatest growth and power, with the backward looking, increasingly latinist, often badly unhelpful KJV is one of the tragedies of our culture'. Some will find that statement very controversial.

After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the 1611 Bible was established as the accepted English version. There were revisions of the AV in the eighteenth century, like the 1769 Oxford 'standard' edition, but there were no rivals to its monopoly of the market. In the meantime, there had been

a continued study of the New Testament text and this bore much fruit. In addition, older New Testament manuscripts dating back to the fourth century had been unearthed. In 1881, Dr B. F. Westcott and Dr F. J. A. Hort published a new Greek text of the New Testament based not on the *Textus* Receptus but on two of those more recently discovered early manuscripts, the *Codex Sinaiticus* and the *Codex Vaticanus*. At that time, the hierarchy of the Church of England proposed a new translation of the Bible. It became known as the Revised Version (1885) and was sympathetic to the views of Westcott and Hort. Initially it was greeted with enthusiasm but its popularity then waned because most people still preferred the King James's Version.

Across the Atlantic, the American Standard Version appeared in 1901. New important manuscripts were discovered in the 1930s and 1940s, like the Dead Sea Scrolls, which contained very early Old Testament documents and the Chester Beatty Papyri, which were three very early manuscripts containing most of the New Testament. The American Revised Standard Version was published in 1952. The translators used an eclectic New Testament text, that is, a Greek text put together from various available manuscripts. The RSV was popular in this country in the 1950s and 1960s; it was easy to read but the translators were criticised for a liberal bias which showed in references to the deity of Christ in their version.

Other Bibles followed in quick succession: the Good News Bible (1966) which is more like a paraphrase using tabloid newspaper English; the New English Bible (1970) which never really caught on; the New American Standard Bible (1971) which is an accurate, evangelical version though it does not always read fluently; the New International Version (1978) the work of an international evangelical team who sought to produce a version midway between a literal rendering and a free paraphrase; the New King James's Version (1982) which is a revision of the 1611 Bible with conservatively modernised elements; and the English Standard Version (2002) which has had a largely favourable reception from Evangelicals.

The adventure of the English Bible—and what an adventure! We should never stop thanking God for it, praying that we by our lives might seek to be spreading to others genuine biblical knowledge of God. Since William Tyndale's first complete New Testament in 1526 to the year 2000, there have been 3,000 new translations of the Bible into English. David Daniell concludes his masterly book *The Bible in English:* 'For nearly five centuries, the Word of God has gone out unhindered and souls have received it with blessing. What Tyndale opened has indeed never been shut up.' I add, O may Britain as in Tyndale's day become the 'people of the Book' again and may the nation's heart again be biblical and Christ-honouring.

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