

# **FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE**

by

**John W. Gilbrook**

ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

TO MY WIFE

J O A N

WITH WHOSE LOVE

HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT

THIS BOOK

HAS BEEN WRITTEN

FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE

---

ONE MAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE  
TWENTIETH CENTURY  
by JOHN W. GILBROOK

---

P R O L O G U E

"To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive,  
and the true success is to labour."

Robert Louis Stevenson.

Whereas Pilgrim, in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, began his pilgrimage from "his own house..... with a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back," and at a later stage in his journey fell into the Slough of Despond, I began my journey, through the Twentieth Century A.D. at the lowest point of the social structure, and the position into which I was born was to me indeed a 'Slough of Despond' from the very start. We were so low that it did not seem possible that we could, in those days, escape from the hard and dreary situation into which we had been born. Moreover, the Christian Church in my boyhood, taught us that it was God's lot for us in this life, so we should make the best of it and be content. We sang a hymn which began with the words, "We are but little children weak, Nor born in any high estate," and from what the Church taught, I thought God had created a two class system, the privileged and the under-privileged.

There came a time, however, as I entered my teens, when the chance came to put my foot on the first step of a ladder which enabled me to move up and away from where I was. It took one of the most cruel and bloodiest of wars in this world's history to give me this start.

There were others to whom the war gave this chance. They were after big money. My quest was for a better quality of life, for I had become aware of a higher stratum of society, those to whom life had more meaning, they fed better, were educated better and to a little cockney boy like me, spoke better. I envied them, I longed to be with them.

Deprived as my family was, it seemed to me our struggling existence gave no meaning or purpose to life. So I made up my mind very early on, that I would escape from where I was, and make my way to a more meaningful situation that the privileged people enjoyed. Where would I go ? I was not sure where, anywhere away from where I was, and I would make my way forward and upward by my own methods. I would not join the scuffle for the opportunities the war had brought, when poor people saw the chance to earn big money, I had a different end in view. If I could not get in by the front door because of my lack of qualifications, I would go in quietly by the back. I would rise into something better, because instinctively I felt it was my birthright.

For many years, in my adult life, I have told a story to many children, in many places, and so often in telling it, I felt I had an affinity with the man in the tale. It is a true story, even as everything else I shall recount hereafter in this book, is true, and every person I shall mention will be a real person who has lived in my lifetime, or still lives, and has had some influence upon my life and pilgrimage. The story to which I am referring, took place at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, on the day of the opening of the exhibition by Queen Victoria. A procession of high ranking dignitaries and visitors from all parts of the world, accompanied by soldiers and sailors, and the best bands of the regiments, formed up in Hyde Park to pass before the Queen and then out into the streets of London where thousands of people were gathered to see them. The important people assembled in the great Crystal Palace, which was erected at first in Hyde Park as the centre of the exhibition. Queen Victoria was seated upon a dais and all the important people passed before her to pay her homage. The Duke of Wellington was responsible, with the Chancellor, for arranging the positions of the visitors in the procession. What an assembly it was. The highest people in the world. Kings, Queens, Princes, Princesses, Dukes, Duchesses, and many other dignified visitors from nearly every country in the world. Programmes had been sold, so that people could identify who the visitors were. Everything was ready.



Just before the procession moved off, a very colourfully attired gentleman in beautiful robes and decorative head-dress, appeared in a hurry at the gates of the park. He looked Chinese, and the policeman on duty stood back to let him pass. "He's late," said the officer guarding the gate, "I wonder who he is, perhaps a Chinese Emperor, or Nobleman --- or --- someone ?" Quickly the Chinaman walked through the park and through the large open doors of the Crystal Palace. The guards stood to attention, "He will be late," they said, "he must be a Chinese Emperor --- or Nobleman --- or someone !" The late visitor walked up to the foot of the dais upon which Queen Victoria was seated, and bowed himself low to pay her homage. The Queen beckoned to the Chancellor and whispered, "who is this gentleman ?" "I am not sure your Majesty," replied the Chancellor, "I cannot see him mentioned on my programme." "Then," said the Queen, "make no mistake about his rank, place him between the Duke of Wellington and the Archbishop of Canterbury." So the Chinese visitor was conducted to a place in the procession, which moved forward before the Queen and out into the streets lined with flag-waving cheering people, enjoying the colourful scene. The people consulted their programmes to identify the visitors; "Ah, there's the Kaiser of Germany --- and there's the President of France," --- they ticked them off as they recognised them, --- "look ! there's the Duke of Wellington, and next to him the --- the --- er --- oh ! he's not on my programme." "There's the Archbishop on the other side of him --- but who is he ?" "Must be a Chinese Emperor --- or Nobleman --- or someone !"

The next day it was in all the newspapers, and people laughed and thought it funny. Moored on the river Thames at Westminster was a Chinese junk. It was part of the exhibition show, quite a large boat with lots of things from China on display. People paid one shilling each to go aboard. In charge of the junk was a poor old Chinaman who collected the shillings. He wanted to pay homage to the Queen, so he borrowed the robes from among those on display, dressed himself up to look important and went to the exhibition. He was not a Chinese Emperor, nor a Nobleman, not even a someone. He was one of the

poorest men in China, with no high position nor wealth. But he longed to be up there with those dignified people, near to the Queen, to be above the grovelling position he had been born into. So on that one day he said, "I will be there with them, I will enjoy their privileges, I will be among the elite for a day." So <sup>he</sup> dressed up to look the part and walked straight in. Yes, I can identify with that Chinaman, I understand how he felt and why he took advantage of that day to get up there somehow, even if he was not entitled. I know how it feels to be one of millions below, looking up to those privileged folk, knowing that you do not stand a chance of getting up among them while they occupy the positions and <sup>have</sup> the means of obtaining those positions. That means was denied to me, until I found a way of helping myself.

For what follows, at the beginning of this book, I must ask the reader to visualise conditions at the beginning of this century. Things have greatly improved since then. Many houses where we lived have gone and those that still remain have been modernised. Other buildings have been constructed. The school at the back of us has gone. It is difficult now to see the area as in my boyhood.

It was the greatest Teacher who ever lived who said, "Unto him that hath shall be given.....and from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath." I had nothing but poverty, and although I was born in an age when education was beginning to be brought to the masses, our education was very basic indeed. But, at least, I had learned to read and write, that was something I had. So if I used that, I could gain more. I had no money to buy books, but we had a public library, so I would use that. I would get all the knowledge I could. I never thought then nor since, of ever wanting to acquire wealth, although I knew by bitter experience, that we could not do much without money. Nevertheless, the great urge of my youth was for a dignified way of life which I believed came by way of education. I wanted to rise out of the humiliating, meaningless existence in the

dreary environment of my childhood. I thirsted for knowledge, understanding, intellectuality, and for something else which I could not define then, something that would give meaning and purpose to life. With nothing more than my ability to read and write, I grasped the first chance to take a step forward.

The first World War brought opportunities for jobs. Men were needed for fighting on the war fronts. Their vacant positions were taken by lads not old enough for the armed services. Women also had to do men's work. What kind of work could I do? My mother had encouraged me to believe that I would work with my brains, she told me I was not suited for manual work like my father. I was wiry, but not physically tough, so clerical work in an office, she told me, was best for me.

Just about this time also, I was beginning to understand the significance of my roots. My mother had often told me about her father. This maternal grandfather of mine I had never seen, he died not long before I was born. But I knew all about him, my mother's yarns were so vivid. My father said very little about his family. We had a photograph of a group gathered around my paternal grandparents on the occasion of their Golden Wedding in Antwerp in Belgium, and I was in that group as a baby of sixteen months, seated on my mother's lap. So I knew where my father's family originated, but it was another few years later before I learned their history. I feel however, that the discovery of my roots had such a powerful influence in my mind, and made me more than ever dissatisfied with my circumstances, and more than ever <sup>determined</sup> to improve them, that before telling the story of my own pilgrimage, which really began in my thirteenth year during the first World War, I ought first of all to give an account of my roots. I believe it will then be appreciated what was always at the back of my mind, as I started forward during that most catastrophic period of this world's history.

R O O T S

From what my mother told me, I believed that it was the family on her side only, that had known better days. However, at seventeen years of age, I was given the history of my father's family, and knew then that it was through the forebears on both sides of my family, that we had come down to where we were.

My family, with the name by which we are known, was founded by a bastard . That description is often used as a swearword. If it is used as such, then do not apply it to the innocent baby who was brought into the world and then abandoned without a name, but apply it to the father who, through his own lust, brought the baby into the world and then rejected both him and his mother. Which ever way it is viewed, my family, with our name, was founded by a bastard!

The baby was a foundling, and was given his name, in the original Flemish, by the nuns at the hospice where he was taken. On the door of the hospice was a small crib in which any abandoned baby could be placed. In this crib, one evening, the nuns found the baby who was to be my great grandfather. I think the nuns had a sense of humour when they gave him his name, and from the moment they called him by it, he was the only one in the whole wide world with such an appellation. Even our family which has descended from him, with our English spelling of the name, is the only family with it. The nuns must have had a sense of humour, because they saw what he was wearing, giggled, and named him after what they saw - GEELBROECK - which in Flemish means 'Yellow breeches.' No wonder my father hated the name, and when, at the age of eighteen years, he and one of his brothers, settled in England, they changed it, unofficially, to our present name. Another brother of my father, emigrated to America with the English version of our name so there are a few Gilbrooks out there, but they are, with us in England, all offshoots of that first foundling, my great grandfather. The foundling was brought up by the nuns at the hospice. They had him registered with the Registrar in Antwerp. They were not sure how

old he was, so he is described on the certificate, as being about one and a half years at the time when he was found, and the date is given as 21st Ventose, in the eleventh year of the republic.

The calendar in use at that time, was that imposed by Napoleon, usually known as the French Revolutionary Calendar. The Napoleonic calendar was short lived, and when it was replaced by the Gregorian calendar in the year 1806, the foundling's age on all further documents, was reckoned from the registration, which was then given as the year 1803.

Most of the male descendants from the first Geelbroeck, migrated, either to England or America. The females who remained in Belgium, married and changed their names. So the name of Geelbroeck has died out in the land of its origin. Only the English modification remains today.

The nuns at the hospice taught the foundling a trade. He was a silk worker. At that time, children of the poorer classes were not taught to read or write, and this is evident on almost all the entries at the registry of the births of the children of my great-grandfather, and also those of my grandfather. In place of the signature of the father on each certificate, it states 'unable to write.' On my father's own birth certificate, my grandfather made a mark in the form of a cross, and the registrar witnessed it.

Because the foundling was under the care of the nuns until he was a young man, when he married, they knew where he lived. One day his mother went to the hospice to trace him. She was more mature than the pretty young maiden who left that baby there over thirty-five years before, and her conscience was troubling her. The nuns gave her the foundling's address, and she arrived at the house where my great-grandfather lived with his wife and three sons. One of those sons was my grandfather, who was about twelve years old at the time. Later, in his old age, he could describe quite vividly her arrival that day. He said she arrived in a carriage; but it seemed to me, when I was told the story in Antwerp, that it would have been only a cab, of the horse and buggy type, that I saw in my early days on the cab ranks, and which

could be hired on the streets of Antwerp then. My grandfather also said she was a lady dressed in beautiful clothes. I am allowing for his boyish wonder. They were poor and anyone dressed in their Sunday clothes would look wonderful to him. Nevertheless, knowing as we do from that mother's disclosure to my great grandfather, the title and position of the father of the foundling, it could all be true about her ladylike appearance. She left a paper on which was printed a family crest, an address of a chateau and name of the owner whom she claimed was the father of the foundling. My great grandfather was not interested and gave the paper to my grandfather who some years afterwards gave it to my aunt, with whom I used to stay when I visited Antwerp in my teens.

Then came the first World War, and once more in its unfortunate history, Belgium was overrun by a foreign power, this time by the Germans. As the war progressed, there came a great shortage of paper. The German soldiers began entering the homes of the people, compelling them to turn out all the paper they had, whatever it was, however personal. My aunt's flat was on the second floor, and from her window she saw the soldiers entering the buildings. As quickly as she could she opened the drawer containing her most personal papers and began hiding them on herself, in folds of her skirt, down her stockings, there was no time to hide much. She took the sheet of paper that the mother of the foundling had left -- where could she hide it? "Zhonny," she said to me in her broken English, pointing to a picture hanging on the wall, "I did not think they would take the picture so I put the paper behind it." But the Germans turned every picture around and stripped off the brown paper backing from each, leaving the photographs only in them. They saw the paper tucked behind and took it. They took a valuable document that would have been passed on to me. My aunt described to me as best she could, what the family crest on the paper looked like. She did not know the French language as she was Flemish, so could not register in her mind the family name, but the title was clear enough to her, it was as the foundling's mother had explained on the day she visited him, but my grandfather did not know what was on that paper, because he could neither read nor write.

The father of the foundling was a Spanish Marquis, living in a chateau in the Belgian Ardennes. The mother was a pretty maiden serving on his staff.

The Netherlands, which before January 1831, included the whole of present day Belgium and Holland, had a succession of foreign rulers, for many years, dating right back to the Roman period. When, in the sixteenth century, Philip II of Spain ruled, he established Spanish garrisons throughout the Netherlands, and centralised power into Spanish hands. This caused resentment among various independent and powerful counts of Flanders who, between them, owned most of the land. During this period began the separation of the North from the South, bringing about, what is now, Belgium and Holland. Philip was compelled to grant a demand that the Spanish troops be withdrawn. He retired to Spain, but left Spanish nobles to continue to govern the various territories. The South, which was known still as the Spanish Netherlands, recognised the Spanish king as their sovereign, but was administered by the nobles rather than ruled by Spain.

The Southern Netherlands (Belgium) changed hands again under the Austrians, but when war broke out between France and Austria, the French annexed Belgium, and later, under Napoleon, it was included as part of Revolutionary France. Although the Spanish nobles then, had no authority with the ruling power, they were allowed to retain their estates, and for years, the descendants of these nobles continued to occupy their chateaux. Today the Belgian government owns most of the estates, and a number have been made into holiday centres for the people. There is, at least, one chateau still owned by descendants of the original Spanish governor, the Marquis de Croix, it is the chateau of Franc-Waret near Namur. By which Spanish Marquis, and in which chateau was my great grandfather brought into this world, and then turned out to be a foundling? The only clue was on that piece of paper taken by the Germans. For many years I have been seeking to trace back, and now, in my eightieth year, as I write this book, I am still seeking and hoping to discover who that father was.

My mother's father was J. B. Johnson, at one time champion swimmer of England. He was quite a character, but according to my mother, also something of a scoundrel. In earlier editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, under the subject "Swimming," it stated that the first recorded attempt to swim the Channel, "was made on the 24th of August 1872 by J. B. Johnson, who started from Dover, but remained in the water only 65 minutes." My mother said he had to give up on account of the cold. In the early edition of the Encyclopaedia where I read this reference to my grandfather, mention was also made of an exploit of his, recorded in an old London periodical, which sent me up to the British Museum, to search in the British Library. I found the copy, on the front cover of which was a drawing of my grandfather, standing astride London Bridge. It was on the occasion of the "Doggett's Coat and Badge" race, an annual rowing event on the river Thames, for London's watermen, and boys from some of the famous schools. One of the boys fell into the water and could not swim. My grandfather dived off London Bridge to save him.

J. B. Johnson was a publican when my mother was young, and being in the sporting world as well, was very popular with the men who were his clients. Popular songs were circulated in those days very largely through pubs and music halls. My father sang a song to me which he learned from men, singing in the pubs, when he was a boy in the Eastend of London. I can remember only the opening words now, "J. B. Johnson, he's the man to swim." My father said, when he used to sing that, he never thought that one day he would marry a daughter of J. B. Johnson.

I was quite young when my mother first told me stories about her father. They were not happy stories. My aunt, my mother's sister, used to visit us, and the two of them used to talk about their young days. They did not seem to me to have happy memories. They would talk about the several wives he had, it was either four or five, and my aunt would say, "he hurried each of them to their graves." They both told me of the time when he married the youngest wife. My mother and my aunt were almost young women, at that time. My grandfather always wore top hat and tails.



The men who frequented his pub called him "gentleman John." But he was no real gentleman. He was a compulsive gambler, lost a lot, owed a lot, was always in debt. But he could talk and was very plausible, he made people believe he was a gentleman. Of course, he had been brought up in a good family and was educated at a good school, but his family had disowned him. His last young wife was deceived by him. On the day he married her and was bringing her to the home she had not seen, my mother and aunt were given the job of going to the pawn shop to get the bedding out of pawn. That was her nuptial bed. The police sought him for debt. On one occasion, my mother said, they had to leave their large public house, and take shelter in another pub where the landlord was a friend. They were huddled down in the basement with a large fire to keep them warm. Suddenly, someone came down to keep them quiet. Screens were put around the fire to stop light shining through the cracks of the door. The police were upstairs looking for him.

There were a few happy occasions my mother could remember of her childhood, when they had servants of their own, a cook, a parlour-maid, and one or two others. But the last occasion they enjoyed this kind of life, within a few weeks of having their own servants, they had lost everything and my mother was in service as a parlour-maid herself. She remained in service until she married my father.

My maternal grandmother, my mother's own mother, was the first wife of J.B.Johnson. She was a good woman and very religious. She was confined to her bed for some time before she died, and my mother's task was to read the Bible to her at certain times each day. This is, no doubt, why my mother also had such strong religious views, and moulded my thinking about these things, when I was a child. How very important is the mother's first programming of that amazing data processing function, in the brain of each of us. When we are born, it is void of any data, unless we have inherited memory from the genes of our forebears - I have strong reasons for believing in this possibility - but I think there is

no doubt, from the moment we arrive in this world, impressions are being made upon us by other humans, in my case chiefly through my mother, and these impressions by sound and touch, are fed into the data process of the mind, and once they are processed, they are there for ever. Long before we are able to make our own decisions, our lives in this world, how we think, how we act, how we feel about others, have largely been moulded for us, by those who had the first contacts with us when we arrived, by our parents who brought us into the world, by their forebears who passed on their genes and D.N.A., structure, with its genetic information, and theirs before them, right back to the beginnings of our roots.

### COCKNEY BOY AMONG THE TIN GODS.

It was my mother who made me aware of some enemies of the poor. She called them by the name that revealed their character. It was after a visit to a local government office to seek help. What her need was I cannot remember, we were often in need. My father did his best to earn enough to keep his family, but he could not always get a job, and it was probably at a period out of work <sup>when</sup> she applied for assistance for her family. I saw her when she came home, angry and indignant, she said, "who do they think they are, tin gods?" "Sitting up there, looking down on us through their noses, refusing to turn a hair to help us." I was to hear this term "tin gods" from her on a number of occasions, but as time went by I met some myself and sometimes had my own conflicts with them. Who were these "tin gods"? Today, those who enjoy the privileges of an improved Welfare State, and who have no knowledge of the Poor Laws under which we lived at the beginning of this century, might not understand the harsh treatment poor people received at the hands of government administrators in my childhood. They had power because they administered within the framework of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. That act was harsh and inhuman, so too were those government officers who administered it. From the 16th century onwards there were various Acts passed for the relief of the poor, but it was the Poor Law Act of 1601 which for the first time regularised Poor Law administration and ordered it should be financed by rates levied on occupiers of property. There were other Acts from time to time which made amendments

and set new guide lines but a very unsatisfactory system continued right until 1834 when a new Poor Law was enacted. To quote from today's official records of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, this was "based on a harsher philosophy that regarded pauperism among able-bodied workers as a moral failing. The new law provided no relief for the able-bodied poor except the misery of the workhouse, with the object of stimulating workers to seek regular employment rather than charity." But what, when there was no employment? My father was fortunate that he was not long before finding some work but often he had to do very hard work for very little money. My father was considered an able-bodied man and that was why my mother was refused any relief, and it was during this period that I also heard my mother say, "if we go on like this we will all be in the workhouse," and I was really afraid. I feared the workhouse. There they separated the members of a family, they put the women and girls in one part of the building, and men and boys in another. You had to scrub floors or do some other hard work for the meals they gave you, it was degrading. I know now that my mother would never have allowed her family to go there, in spite of the fact that there was no dole nor unemployment pay, nor even any relief from the Poor Law officers, there was nothing, absolutely nothing, so my mother did something. Although she had five young children, while my father was out looking for work she took in washing from people in a better off district. She went with our baby's pram to collect it and bring it home, then put it in an old brick built copper filled with water and a coal fire beneath. When the linen articles and garments had boiled she transferred them to a large zinc bath, the same bath in which she bathed us on Fridays, then she scrubbed the articles up and down upon a scrubbing board until her fingers were sore. We had an old cast-iron mangle with wooden rollers which my father got from a junk shop and repaired. It had a large wheel handle on the side and sometimes I helped my mother to turn it. I could not keep it going very long it was very exhausting but my mother never complained, she was earning a little cash until my father found work. When the articles were wrung they were hung in our

back yard - if the weather was good. If it was bad, the washing was hung around a fire in our living room until it was dry enough to iron. A couple of old heavy flat irons stood on the hob of our kitchen stove. My mother tested an iron, to see if it was hot, by licking her finger then touching the iron with it. My father had a better way that did not risk his finger. He spat straight on to the iron and if it shot straight off with a sizzle, it was hot, but if it dribbled down the iron it was too cool. The ironing of the linen was a long process and very tiring and my mother had to do all this between preparing meals for her family with what bits and pieces of food she had. All her hard work was for a few shillings to get more food for the family and sometimes to pay the rent of the house. Sometimes while we were waiting for the cash to come for items like butter or even margarine, my mother would make some tea, pour some in a saucer, we would dip one side of a slice of bread in it, then sprinkle it with sugar. We thought this tasted good, but it did not do my teeth any good. Sugar was cheap enough then, I can remember many occasions when I have been sent to the corner shop for a half-pennyworth of sugar to keep things going .

Eventually my father would get work somewhere. He had only one trade he knew anything about. He was born in London when his parents were there on one of their migrations, and when old enough went to school under the new education system, known then in London as Board School, later called Council Schools. Every now and again his parents would go back to Antwerp and my father would go to school there. He was bi-lingual. Finally they returned to Antwerp to stay and my father finished his schooling there. His mother had a brother in the musical instrument making trade, and when my father left school, his mother was advised by her brother to apprentice my father to the mechanical organ trade which had started up in a big way in Antwerp. I once saw a very large mechanically played organ in a dance hall in Antwerp, and my aunt told me that my father had some small part in helping to make that organ. But my father did not finish his apprenticeship. He told me he was sacked, and gave as the reason that he would keep whistling while the tuners were tuning the pipes.

My aunt gave me another version of the termination of my father's apprenticeship. She was the eldest of the children, he was the youngest. It was her job to get my father up in the morning and off to work. She said he did not like that kind of music making and did not want to go. "Zhonny, he was a naughty boy," she said, "I could not get him out of bed to go, and they got tired of him." When he left the job, he and his brother decided they liked England better and went to London, where they changed the spelling of our name. My father was then eighteen years old, so joined the British Army and got new documents with his new name on them. He was very musical, had a good ear for tones and learned new things quickly. The new telegraph system by morse code was introduced into the army. He went with the army to India, and from being a telegraph operator, soon became telegraph master of a communications station. The popular musical instrument in those days, was the banjo. My father and another banjoist in his company formed a double act and entertained the troops in India. They were not only players but good dancers and their act was to do both together. They were asked by their superior officers to organise the army "gaffs" which was their equivalent of the cheap music hall entertainments back home in London. Before long they were invited to entertain at the officers mess, to which members of the British Raj in India were invited. After six years in India they came home, left the army and settled in London near each other. My father married my mother and his friend also married. They could not get work in the entertainments profession and my father could not get enough work in musical instrument repairs, so as his family increased he got any job he could. For most of my childhood he had various jobs at the gas works at Beckton, East London. He started as a stoker, a hard, hot, exhausting job, that finally gave him lumbago, through continually perspiring and getting cold afterwards. When he was ill there was no sick pay, the new National Insurance Act was not introduced until 1911, then it did not benefit families like ours immediately. For a time he was a tram conductor, then a driver, and finally went back to the gas works as a sheet metal worker. There were

times between those jobs when he was out of work and tried to get musical instrument repairs, which was the only work he really knew anything about, but could not make enough at it to keep a family. He was a very good banjo player and tried composing. He had a few pieces published in 'Turner's Banjo Monthly,' and a couple of songs accepted and published in the 'News of the World,' the Sunday newspaper that in those days, included a popular song with words and music. However, financially, things did not improve for us until the coming of the first world war. When Lord Kitchener made his famous appeal for volunteers for his new armies, my father, as an ex-soldier, joined up and was immediately made a sergeant instructor, and from that time my mother began to draw an allowance for herself and her children each week from the post office. I was then twelve years of age.

With my brothers and sister, I was going on Sundays to the parish church Sunday School. I was also a choir boy so attended the adult services. Music has influenced my life very deeply from birth to the present day. When I was very young I used to go to sleep at night with the sounds of my father downstairs, working out various melodies and harmonies on his instruments. I loved to hear the soothing sounds that sent me off to sleep many times. There was no radio or television then, not even the new gramophone in our house, just my father's music. Later, as we learned on old instruments my father found in old junk shops and repaired, we also added our own music to the home. In all the dreary environment of my childhood, music, to me, was the only thing that seemed to make sense of life. My mother had the same routine with each of her babies in turn. After bathing and feeding us and making us comfortable for the night, she would then take her baby in her arms and quietly sing it to sleep, always it worked, with all of us, and I loved to hear her sing.

About a couple of years before the coming of the war, the Vicar and officers at the church, discovered that my father had some talent in entertainment. They asked him to take part in a fund raising concert

at the church hall. He proved to be popular and was asked to take part in further efforts, so he formed a small troupe of himself and three of us boys. The popular groups then were known as Nigger Minstrels, which seems a horrible term to me now. My mother made our colourful costumes with cotton materials, which I believe she got from the ladies at the church, and my father made some black wigs with a kind of imitation astrakhan material. He also obtained some grease paints and blacked our faces. That was my first smell of grease paints, which has fascinated me ever since. I believe two of my sons must have inherited this from me, they have both chosen the acting profession as a career. My father taught us songs and dances. He, of course, was the main turn and we filled in around him. I remember one occasion when we three boys had to finish a routine with a dance, as an exit off stage. Just before we reached the wings I backed into a grand piano. I tried not to show I was in pain until we were well off stage. I was due on again in a couple of minutes as a solo act. My Dad did what he could to help me and I got through alright, but I was glad when I could go home. The folk who were entertained by us boys, had no idea of the struggle our parents had to clothe and feed us. Both my mother and father were too proud to allow anyone to know our position. There were a few occasions when my mother went to the "tin gods" but she became disgusted with them. When the war came and my father went out to France to the war front, all our entertaining ceased for a few years. It was that terrible war that changed everything for me. It was the beginning of my own personal pilgrimage through life, out and away from where I had been born, along new paths, always travelling hopefully, but never arriving, still believing the goal is ahead, and finding satisfaction, not in the arriving, but in the constant striving to succeed.

Being a London boy, I knew that every weekday, commuters travelled up to the city to their offices and businesses. Those who lived in the better part of our district went on the Underground railway from Plaistow station. The Underground was above ground from Bow Road station eastwards to Barking. Today it continues further on still into

Essex. I had travelled only once on this railway up to London, with our choir when we went to St. Paul's Cathedral to hear the Cathedral choir give an oratorio. We also went on an excursion, each summer, by steam train to Southend-on-Sea. So I had seen, both the City of London and the country and sea, outside of our dreary area. Although the buildings in London were historic and looked grand, I preferred the country and would rather live there. However, I knew, if my mother had decided that my career would be office work, I would have to travel each morning with all the other commuters.

London, to me, was where the "tin gods" lived and moved and had their being. So I thought I would no doubt brush up against some of them occasionally. At that point I had no idea that, because of the war, my very first job, after leaving school, was to be actually right up there among them all, indeed, in the very highest places where they operated. Strangely enough, I had a pre-view of the kind of world I was about to enter, just a few months before I left school. I had been made aware of the people in the higher realms of society, and had some brief glimpses of a few, but never a personal contact with any of them up to this time. What happened caused me to modify my opinion of the upper classes and showed me I could not generalise about "tin gods" as I had done from my earliest years. They were not all tin, some were of a more valuable metal.

I was sent on an assignment by my mother. What an assignment ! What an adventure for a very small cockney boy who had never been away from home alone before. My father was ~~away~~ at the war front, he could not go. My mother had a small baby and two other young children, she could not go. My older brother was the reason for the assignment, I was the only one who could carry it out. My brother wanted help, I must go and rescue him and bring him back home ! Of all places to carry out such an assignment - Charterhouse, that famous school in Godalming ! I had better explain why my brother was there.

My brother Alec was eighteen months older than me and had left school in 1915 a few months after war was declared. At first he



got a local job, then my mother heard that the war was creating a demand for more people in government staff positions, and boys were needed as messengers in government departments in Whitehall. My mother made the application, my brother went through the formalities, and was given a job. He had been working in his department only a couple of months, when he was persuaded by an older man in the department, that he would do far better for his future, if he took a position at Charterhouse. He would start as a butlery boy and could work his way up to a position such as librarian - eventually ! It all sounded good to my brother, who was only another deprived cockney boy like me. Our mother saw he was keen to go, made the arrangements, filled in forms, then signed an agreement, and my brother went. The agreement stated that my brother went on a three months' probationary period. He could not get home during that period, but at the end of it he would come home on a short leave. He would know then if he liked the job, and the Charterhouse staff authorities would know if he was suitable. This was, of course, a fair and correct arrangement and was what one would expect from an exalted establishment like Charterhouse. However, after one month my brother was homesick and wrote a heartbreaking letter to my mother. He did not like it there and wanted to come home. My mother read the letter to me. She soon forgot the agreement she had signed. I had not seen it but had some vague idea that an agreement had been made. However, my brother was unhappy, he could not run away and come home himself, he had no money and would not get any until the end of the quarter. He just got his food and lodgings while on probation. So, although I had never been away from home alone before, and certainly never as far as Godalming in Surrey, when my mother pointed out that I was the only one who could go, I was ready to go and bring my brother back. She said she would give me my return fare and the single fare back for my brother. I would have to travel from our station by Underground to Charing Cross, then walk across Hungerford Bridge to Waterloo Station, and from there get a train to Godalming. When I got there I could ask the way to the school. It was obvious that my mother was thinking of the school as one large

building similar to our council school at the back of our house. Ours was an Elementary School, and it said so in large letters high up on the wall. It was three floors high, the ground floor for the infants, the middle for what was called the big girls, and the top floor for the big boys, which was where I was still attending at thirteen years of age.

The picture in my mind of Charterhouse, was like the school in the popular boys magazine I read called the 'Magnet.' That was a posh boys school named Greyfriars. The stories of that school were written by Frank Richards, and those that interested me were about 'The Chums of Greyfriars.' The most famous of all the characters was Billy Bunter, and there were also the Famous Five, Bob Cherry, Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Murree Singh. How I enjoyed reading those stories. I could not afford to buy the magazine, so I had to wait until one of my pals had finished his copy and would let me have it. So all my 'Magnets' were back numbers by the time I got them. Of course, being a posh school, it was better built than ours, and I had seen at least one school I thought looked like it, when we had been on our excursions to the country and sea. The school I had seen was one single building, large, with turrets and small spires. Charterhouse, I knew, was a posh school, so, as I set off to rescue my brother, the place I had in mind was like Greyfriars.

When I arrived at Godalming station, I asked the ticket collector if he could tell me the way to Charterhouse. He pointed the way down, what was then, a country road. I kept walking in the direction he had shown. There were hedgerows most of the way both sides of the road, with gaps here and there, which did not seem to lead anywhere. I kept going, until on my left, I came to an opening with a gravel road leading into some grounds with lawns and trees and clumps of bushes and shrubs. Then I saw a board which said Charterhouse, but I could not see any school. Partly obscured by the trees and bushes I could see small out-buildings. I thought this could not be the main entrance, I would keep going. It was late Autumn in the year 1915. I had been delayed at Waterloo Station as there was no train until early afternoon. It was a sunny day and I could see the sun was already going down towards

the horizon. I had to find and rescue my brother before it was dark. Further along on my left, I came to another path through an opening, and as I drew opposite to it, three schoolboys walked out. I went up to them and asked, "please can you tell me where I can find a butlery boy named Alec Gilbrook, he is a new boy ?" They did not appear to be surprised at my Cockney speech, and when they replied in their posh accents, it was what I had expected. They looked and sounded as though they had come straight out of Greyfriars. One of the boys said, "I don't know the name, but there is a new boy at the Bodeites, try there." They pointed the way across the lawns and beyond some bushes. It was my first indication that the school consisted of more than one building, and in a short while I learned that it was divided into separate boarding houses, each with its own house name. Even then, I did not realise how many houses until I was directed from one to another every time I got a negation to my enquiry for my brother. I found the Bodeites house, went up to a door in an archlet and pulled on an iron rod bell pull. A bell clanged inside, and an older boy opened the door. I do not know what position he held, but I knew that at Greyfriars they had prefects. To my request for my brother, I was told that he was not there. "Have you tried the Robinites?" I was asked, and the boy directed me there. Across another lawn, along a pathway, around some more bushes - the houses seemed to be scattered around somewhat. I found the door bell of the next house, and pulled that. To my question there, came another "no." Then, "have you tried the Verites ?" I was directed there. I was watching the sun getting lower, I still had not found my brother, I was beginning to panic. I was a very small boy, physically, for my age, and looked younger than thirteen years. I was in strange territory, among a class of people I had never even approached before in my life, and I was on a secret mission, for I dare not let them know why I wanted to find my brother. Each time I drew a blank, I was directed to another house. I did not know then that there were twelve separate boarding houses. After leaving one house, unsuccessfully, I found myself near the road again.

I walked along it a bit further, wondering what I could do. I believed there were still more houses to which I could go, and I knew my brother was there somewhere, but the time was going, and I was a long way from home. I had not gone far along the road, when three more school boys came along as though they were returning to the school from a walk. I do not know why each group of boys was three in number, was it a rule of the school when boys went out? I asked them the same question as I had asked at each house, "please do you know a butlery boy named Alec Gilbrook, he is a new boy?" They consulted with each other, then one said, "have you tried the Headmaster's house?" Immediately he said that, something flashed through my mind. My brother, in his letter home, had said something about being sent to the Headmaster's house. When the boys pointed out the house to me, away across a grass lawn as big as a playing field, I almost ran across to it. I was really worried, those pupils must be going in to their evening meal.

As I got near to the building, in the middle I saw a large door up a few steps, in an arched porch. It was obviously the main entrance and not the tradesmen's door, but I was beyond caring about that. I walked up a couple of steps and pulled another long bell pull hanging down from the ceiling of the porch. A bell rang inside and in a moment or two the door opened. A gentleman of medium build looked down at me. He was wearing an academic gown and I knew at once he was the Headmaster. No doubt he could see I was somewhat agitated and before he spoke he smiled at me, then asked me what he could do for me. What did he see as he looked at the little boy in half a panic on his doorstep? Up to that age I had never been self-conscious of my eyes. It was shortly afterwards, when I told my mother the remarks the girls were making to me, that she told me I had always had appealing eyes as a child. They were large and clear with picture frame circles around blue irises. When I was tired or scared, my eyes opened wider still. When I looked at that Headmaster I must have had the appeal of a little puppy dog. He looked at me through very intelligent and kindly eyes that began to reassure me. I asked, "please sir, is there a butlery boy

here named Alec Gilbrook ?" "Yes," he said, "we have a boy here with that name." He stepped down to me, put his hand on my shoulder, then said, "I will show you where to find him." He led me down the steps, along the front of the house, around a corner, where there was a wide step leading up to a side door. As we stepped up, he pulled a chain hanging by the side of the door and I heard a bell ring inside. I had a moment of relief on the headmaster's own front door step, when he said my brother was there, but now, another fear came to me. I thought he was going to stay there and hear why I had come for my brother. But he did not. The bell was one of those on a coiled spring, that went on ringing for a bit. As it died away, the headmaster said to me, in a kindly and reassuring manner, "now somebody will come and will tell you what to do." He turned and went back to his front door. The side door opened, and there was my brother ! He looked at me in amazement, "how did you get here ?" he asked. I half whispered, because I was not sure how far away the headmaster was, "mum has sent me with your fare money to bring you home." He signalled to me to be quiet, beckoned me to enter, and closed the door without a sound. He then made a sign for me to follow him on tiptoe, along a short corridor to a few steps. As we went down the steps my brother turned to me and pointed to an open door to my left. I looked into a large dining hall with several long tables running the full length of the room. They were partially laid for a meal. My brother whispered, "I was just laying out the cutlery." A few more paces and we went through a small door and down a narrow staircase to the basement. Once we were down there, my brother paused and relaxed a bit. When he opened the door to me, he was wearing a green baize apron, such as men servants wore in those days. He took it off and laid it on a table, then pointed to a cupboard and stool and said, "That is where I clean all the boots and shoes." I saw boot brushes and tins of polish. I knew, of course, that the upper classes did not clean their own boots, that was done by the servants in those days. My brother took me through, what looked like a store room, then opened a door in the wall. We were below ground level, but outside the door were some stone steps that led up to a path through some shrubs. Once we were at the top of the steps my brother looked cautiously around, then pointed to an

outbuilding opposite, indicated a window up on the first floor, told me his bed was behind that and that he was going to collect his things. He then hid me behind the shrubs and said, "don't move until I get back." I was surprised that everything was so dead quiet. My brother was the only one in his part of the building, and since leaving the headmaster, I had not seen another person. Yet I knew that in a short while that dining hall would be filled with people eating. It seemed an age before my brother came back. At last he appeared, with his small suit case in one hand and his overcoat in the other. "Follow me," he whispered. He wove his way in between bushes and shrubs and over flower gardens. I followed, and when there was a gap in our cover, he paused and looked around before we ran across to the next clump. My brother had been there for only one month, but he seemed to know his way about, and when we came to a hedge he even knew where there was a gap, where we squeezed through and slithered down a grass slope on to the road. When we were on the road, we started to run towards Godalming station. Once we were well away from the school, we slowed down to walking pace.

At Godalming station we bought my brother's single ticket to Waterloo Station, worked out what it would cost from Charing Cross to Plaistow, and found we had just three pence over. We were both hungry, I had eaten the sandwiches my mother gave me, in Waterloo station about midday, when I had my long wait for the train. So we put one penny each in a slot machine and both had a bar of milk chocolate. Later we did the same with the one penny left, and shared it. We would get nothing else until we got home. The train came in after a twenty minutes wait, and when we were seated comfortably in the carriage, I began to think. Of course, I had carried out my task at my mother's request, and I wanted to bring my brother home, but I did not like the way we had done it. I felt very uneasy inside, and particularly because of that headmaster. When my brother and I were down in the basement of the house and I explained how I was brought round to the side entrance and described the gentleman who brought me round, my brother was horrified and in a hoarse whisper exclaimed, "that was the headmaster," as though he was speaking about God.

If that headmaster was God, then I learned that day that God is much kinder than we had been made to believe at our church. The parsons and officers there were solemn and severe and separate from us, almost unapproachable and made me feel that God is the same. I would make it clear that at Charterhouse in those days the headmaster was also housemaster. That had been continued from some years before when a Doctor Saunders began the system and his boarding house was known then, and ever since, as the "Saunderites" and this was the house up to the front door of which I had gone and had met the headmaster in 1915. That headmaster held the dual positions until 1924 when they were separated while he was still headmaster. I had only a brief encounter with him but the time factor is irrelevant. What matters is what happened within me in that brief contact with him. He did more than make an impression upon my mind, he began a process which brought me to a new understanding of 'them' up there and 'us' down here. While class barriers are wrong, in every class there are divisions of good or bad, those who relate rightly to others and those who do not. If the relationship of a human to all other humans is self-giving, it is creative and will affect for good those to whom we relate. This to me at present is the nearest I can get to understanding the Nature of the One we call God. That headmaster impressed something upon me in those brief moments with him. I knew he was not God but I felt he had something to do with God and I felt guilty. I wished I had found my brother without seeing that headmaster. He was so kind to me, he himself took me around to the door that led to my brother, not knowing he was assisting me in my secret assignment, to take away from Charterhouse a butlery boy, indeed, to take away from that headmaster his own butlery boy. I did not know then who he was and what great influence he had, and was still more to have, in the sphere of education. It was many years later when I discovered he was, at the time when I visited Charterhouse, Frank Fletcher, M.A., formerly Assistant Master, Rugby School, 1894 - 1903; Master of Marlborough College, 1903 - 1911; then Headmaster of Charterhouse, 1911 - 1935. Later in 1937 he became Sir Frank Fletcher, Kt. At the time when I made my brief visit to Charterhouse he was the Chairman of the Headmasters' Conference and later, in 1933, became President of the Incorporated Association of Headmasters, which was

an entirely different body from the Headmasters' Conference and included the level of State schools' education, down to the lowest department of Elementary schools where I was then. The H.M.C., included all independent schools, boarding schools, 'public' schools, as the most notable of them are known, schools for the children of the privileged classes. But the I.A.H.M., was the body which included Headmasters of Secondary schools, State schools, schools under local authorities.

Things began to move in education after the first world war, moves for education that the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George had begun even during the war. In the last volume of his "War Memoirs", he comments with pride, that the stress of the war years "did not deter the Government from educational measures." Those measures were given a boost forward immediately after the war when the Minister of Education, Mr. H.A.L. Fisher, brought in his Act of 1918 which was welcomed by the teaching profession as a real step forward towards the realisation of a comprehensive system of national education. During the time of Sir Frank Fletcher as President of the I.A.H.M., a levelling up took place between the independent schools and the State schools and he took an important part in this. His many meetings with the President of the Board of Education, his letters to the Minister of Education and other educational departments, are all on record in the annals of the Board of Education. In a letter published in "The Times" of 15 April, 1935, he writes, "many of us who have been concerned with the administration of public schools during the last twenty-five years, have desired to see these schools opened somehow to all classes of boys, and not limited to those whose parents can afford high fees." In course of time it did become possible for boys in Elementary schools, passing up through Secondary schools, to qualify for places in many of the public schools, including Charterhouse, which is not so exclusive today.

But it was all too late for me. It was what I had longed for as a deprived little boy, but it was never to be mine. I stood outside and saw it all happen and even the little way I did progress through life, mostly I have had to make my way in through back doors. On rare occasions I have acted like the old Chinaman in the introductory story to this book and made my way in boldly through the front door. The Charterhouse experience came



just before I left school and was a rehearsal for my educational pilgrimage for the whole of my life. Even on that brief visit I did not approach the school through the correct channels, but quite literally, went up to the front door, right up to the highest place and conversed with the Headmaster himself. I was hopelessly out of my element and knew, because of the purpose for which I had gone, that I had no right to be there.

But I saw it all and felt the atmosphere, and had contact, not only with some of the pupils but with the one who was responsible for the education of those privileged boys, and carried away with me something of the atmosphere that has remained with me for the whole of my life. It was a beginning of my understanding of what education is all about. Up to that time I had a vague understanding that the children of the privileged classes had knowledge of things we were never taught in our elementary school. But young as I was, I had some idea that it was not just an accumulation of many facts about many subjects stored in their minds, that put those folk on a plane above us. The boys I talked with at Charterhouse had an air of confidence and dignity, something we lacked in our degrading environment.

The education the Charterhouse boys were getting had been possible because of the money provided by their parents, but I believed then, and still believe today that knowledge, enlightenment, understanding and a dignified way of life can be obtained without money. If I am determined to seek I will find. The effort of seeking, I was to discover, in itself, gave some meaning, purpose and direction to my life.

Within a few months of my Charterhouse venture, I left school, and began my own pilgrimage, out and away from where I had been born, to somewhere and something higher, nobler and more meaningful, somewhere - where ? I do not know yet, I still have not arrived, but I can record what I have learned so far on the way through over eighty years of my pilgrimage.

#### THE FIRST STEPS FORWARD

My first job, as I have already said, was made possible because of the First World War. I cannot imagine, coming as I had from an Elementary school, that I could have qualified for such a position, but apart from this, even if, because of the war, the educational requirements had been lowered,

nevertheless, I had not reached that which was required for the job my mother was seeking for me. She had decided to get me into the War Office in Whitehall as a "boy writer," which was the term used then. It was the first step in becoming a Civil Servant. I would have to be a boy messenger for the first few months, while learning my way about and taking some classes in further education provided through the Civil Service. To qualify for the position as a "boy writer" I must have been in Standard Seven in the Elementary School at the time of my leaving. I had not. I finished in Standard Six, and although I was up to the education standard of seven, I still had not gone through Standard Seven. So the written certificate given by the Headmaster to my mother, stating that I was in Standard Seven by my time of leaving, was something of a 'fiddle' for a start. My mother had obtained the application forms from the War Office and went to our Headmaster for the certificate. He knew my mother, because we lived right opposite the main school gates. We had only to step out of our back garden gate, take about ten paces across a paving-stone alley-way and step into the school playground through the main gates. That is probably why we were often late at school, we usually left things until the very last minute. My mother had five young children all in various departments of the same Elementary school. The first child, my elder brother, had left the previous year and, after his Charterhouse experience, got a job in a munitions factory at Woolwich and developed lead poisoning through his work. When he recovered, after many weeks, he joined the boys' service in the newly formed Royal Flying Corps. Our father was away at the war front in France. So my mother now turned her attention to me and determined to get me into a good job. The Headmaster knew my mother's circumstances and was prepared to help her. He told my mother that while I was not in Standard Seven, I was one of the brightest boys in Standard Six and really up to the grade of Seven. So he started me off on something which has been the pattern for much of my life ever since. Only the very last position I held in this country, which I had until retirement, was I really qualified from the beginning, and I was qualified for that by reason of all the other positions I had held previously. Most of those places I got in like the Chinaman, learned as I went along and qualified by experience of the work, but I held each job satisfactorily.

I was due to leave school on my birthday, the 28th June, 1916. My mother prepared in advance, obtained the leaving certificate and sent off the application early in May. However, she had something else in mind for me in the meantime. While she was with the Headmaster she asked if I could leave before my birthday for a temporary job being offered, at which I could earn money until I was accepted for the War Office position.

I was a boy scout in a troop at our Church. Boy scouts and girl guides were required as messengers at the newly established Office of the Censor in Portugal Street off the Kingsway in London. The Government had decided that all mail going out of the country and coming in should be censored.

I wanted to go as a messenger because two girl guide friends of mine were already working there. They were as keen as me that I should join them.

On the 2nd. June, the Headmaster gave me a personal testimonial which stated I was leaving for work and that I was a "thoroughly respectable and reliable boy who will do his utmost to satisfy his future employers," and I began immediately at the Office of the Censor. I enjoyed my few weeks as a messenger there. The work was easy, the weather was good in June, 1916, and each lunch time we had an hour off and I with my two girl guide friends, ate my sandwiches in the Embankment Gardens, then strolled along the Embankment by the river Thames. It was the first time I had seen Cleopatra's Needle.

I knew nothing of its history then, except that it had come from Egypt, and in common with thousands of people who have walked by it and looked up at it, through all the years since it was first erected, right up to the present day, I knew nothing of what was buried beneath it. I discovered much later in some records, when I first began to teach children, before the Second World War, what those in government in the Victorian period, decided to bury under its foundations. The obelisk came from Egypt, and the Egyptians have passed on much of their history to us by burying, under the sands, records of their past, with objects in use hundreds of years ago. When Cleopatra's Needle was presented to Queen Victoria, and after an adventurous sea journey, was towed up the river Thames on specially constructed barges, before erecting it, after consultation with Queen Victoria, they decided to bury under its foundations records of the days of what was known then as the British Empire.

So underneath Cleopatra's Needle on the Embankment today are articles which were in use in the Victorian period. Among them are children's toys, tools of various trades, clothes then worn, even ladies' hairpins. Doultons, the well known pottery firm, claim to have some of their best pieces of work buried there. Also with historical records of that period are photographs of buildings in London and other cities, pictures of furniture in use and vehicles used on the streets, the great British invention of the steam-locomotive railways and many other things. We were proud of the fact that we were a great empire with territories all over the world ruled by Queen Victoria. The empire made England a rich country, in spite of the fact that the poorer classes lived in poverty. When the Queen was succeeded by her son, King Edward VII, in the year 1901, the Empire was still intact. At school we were taught to be proud of our might. On our world atlases all the parts coloured red showed territories that were ruled over by our King Emperor and before him the Queen Empress. We were given the impression that it was a privilege for those people over whom our Sovereign reigned, to have their countries administered by us. Of course, we did make many improvements in the lands belonging to our Empire, but the whole story was not taught to us in our Elementary School. The ordinary folk who lived in those lands were usually referred to as the natives. That term was synonymous with inferiority, and even in our depressing environment whenever we were told about the 'natives' I felt quite superior, at least we were not as low as them. As I saw those folk in my imagination I had a story in my mind my father had told me about India. He told me many stories but this was when they first went out and landed at Bombay. With his regiment they sailed on a troop carrier and had been in cramped conditions for several weeks. The young men were eager to be on land again. When they were allowed ashore, almost the first thing they did was to go into the market place and overturn the stalls of the 'natives' just for the fun of seeing their wares rolling into the gutters. They were the days when the British Empire was glorious and we sang songs and even hymns in Church, which said that God had made us mighty, and we asked Him in our songs to "make us mightier yet." I wonder, did God sanction our sending fighting forces into some of those lands to exploit their resources for our own ends? That is why, when I learned later what they placed beneath

Cleopatra's Needle as being considered the most important thing they buried there, I blushed with shame. When I make an occasional visit to London today and pass by that obelisk, I feel a sense of guilt that people in this country should have been so arrogant and hypocritical when they said, "this is what has made England and the Empire so great, this is where our power and might has sprung from," and they placed down there a BIBLE. A Bible with a page open at the sixteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, showing the words of Jesus Christ, that "God so loved the world that He gave...." Did they not know then the meaning of the central theme in the message of Jesus Christ to this world? The heart of His Gospel is that God loves and God gives. They put the very words down there and could not have understood what they meant, or else were deliberately hypocritical. Said Jesus, "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and again, "the first of all the commandments is, thou shalt love." In the days of the mighty British Empire we did more getting than giving and even today, with all our recession, we are well off, while two thirds of this world's inhabitants are living a sub-standard way of life and many thousands of children, every week, in the very lands which we annexed as part of our Empire, are suffering and dying of malnutrition. While I was actually writing this, my wife switched on the radio and there were replies to questions from listeners on what is being done to help those in the under-privileged countries of the world, and one man asked, "what have they done with all the money we have sent, do they really thank us?" My God, is that man so ignorant? We are not sending to them our money or goods, we are sending what is really theirs. We are returning just a little of what our forefathers took from them in past generations. Even if I eat one more little bit of food than I really need, I am eating someone else's food. I am responsible to do my small bit to help atone for the sins of my forefathers.

Today, I think, we could place among those records under the Embankment, a new volume entitled "The Restitution of the British Empire," and I would plead with our present government and the department responsible for our national monuments, please, if you do not want future generations to know what hypocrites we were, then dig down and bring up that Bible from under Cleopatra's Needle.

Those who see that obelisk today can read something of its history inscribed on bronze plates near its base. Cleopatra's Needle in London, is one of two granite monoliths erected by Thothmes III at Heliopolis in Egypt about 1475 BC, and was re-erected by Augustus at Alexandria later. It was presented to Queen Victoria by Egypt and after a hazardous sea voyage, when it was nearly lost in rough seas, was brought to the mouth of the river Thames, mounted on specially built barges, floated up the river and, in the year 1878, erected where it now stands. Two large bronze sphinxes are flanked, one each side of the Needle. Looked at from the Embankment pavement, can be seen quite large lumps chipped out of the granite blocks at the base and particularly under the sphinx on the right hand side. The right-hand sphinx also has some holes punctured through its bronze body. This damage was caused by enemy bombsdropped near to it, not during the second World War only, but in the first World War, and I saw it shortly after ~~the~~<sup>one</sup> bomb had been dropped in the year 1916. In all the years since there has been no attempt to repair the damage, I wonder why not? Further along the Victoria Embankment there are other places where the stone work has been pitted by bomb shrapnel in the second World War and the holes have been filled in with cement. I wonder why they have not bothered with the damage to Cleopatra's Needle? Recently, I stood watching people walking past and hardly anyone so much as glanced at it. I wondered if they knew what was buried beneath where they were walking. But does it really matter now? The world has changed so much since they placed those things under the obelisk. In 1878 they showed household things in use then, that probably did not even include a primitive electric light bulb. Electronics and the silicon chip have made a new way of life since the days of Queen Victoria. The British Empire also has gone since then. Most of our former colonies have been returned to the people to whom they originally belonged, giving them self rule. On the question of decolonisation I would include the following quotation from a pamphlet produced for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London and published by the Central Office of Information in 1982. "Decolonisation, as it is normally understood, has consisted of the withdrawal of an alien administering power and the transition of a new State to independence or self-government, in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of its people. In this spirit Britain has brought over forty countries to independence. Indeed

there is now no British dependent territory, except where their inhabitants wish to remain so."

It is without doubt a credit to Great Britain that many of those former colonies were so influenced by our democratic form of government and the fairness and justice of our judicial system that they decided to retain, not only the English language as their official means of communication with other nations, but also to build their own forms of government and judiciary upon those we established when we ruled over them. They also have chosen to become members of the Commonwealth, which since 1947, is the comprehensive term for all territories within the old British Empire, including the Dominions. We still retain one or two outposts of the old Empire.

At the time of writing this we were going through a time of serious conflict with Argentina over their invasion of one small colony away down in the South Atlantic Ocean, which we have quite legally retained, namely, the Falkland Islands. We have retained Sovereignty over these islands because, unlike those colonies where the former indigenous peoples were conquered by our superior force of arms and our rule imposed over their rightful sovereignty, in the Falklands, at the time when we took them into the British Empire, there were no indigenous people on the islands. As far back as can be discovered, no people possessed those islands when we took them. The first ever to sight them and name them, were English navigators. John Davis, an Elizabethan navigator and captain of the ship Desire, is credited with sighting the islands in 1592, having been driven near them by a "sore storm." Another Englishman, John Strong, in 1690, went ashore from his ship, the Welfare, to inspect penguins and thus made the first known landing. He found no indigenous people there but kept a record of what he did find. He sailed through the strait between the two main islands and named it Falkland Sound after the third Viscount Falkland who was a Commissioner of the Admiralty. Some years later one or two settlements by other nations were held for brief periods. The French in 1764, had a settlement on East Falklands which later they sold to the Spanish. Not long afterwards the Spanish abandoned the settlement when they also abandoned other territories they had conquered on the mainland of South America. This all happened before there was a country called Argentina. The Province of the Rio de la Plata did not obtain independence and name

itself Argentina until some years after Spain had given up her claim to any part of the Falkland Islands. Yet the Argentines base their claim to sovereignty of the Falklands on a statement made, as far back as 1816, by those colonists of the Rio de La Plata who had rebelled against Spain in 1810 and founded a local Provisional Government in the United Province of La Plata. Their claim was that if Spain had given them independence and had also given up any claims to other territories which Spain had conquered in South America, then the Province of the La Plata had a right to succeed to the other territories over which Spain had previously ruled. This, in their minds, included the Falkland Islands. But Spain had never reigned over all the Falklands. In 1770 they bought out the French on East Falklands and named the garrison town there, Soledad. They did not hold this garrison very long and had abandoned it before independence had been given to the Province of La Plata and certainly before there was a country called Argentina. In 1820 the rebels of the La Plata, while our garrison was withdrawn, sent a force and took possession of Soledad. In 1828 they established a Governor there. A few years later the British Government reasserted its legal claim to the Falklands and in 1833 "a British force peacefully expelled the Argentine soldiers and their vessel from Soledad and raised the British flag." The British Prime Minister said in 1834, that the British were not prepared to permit "any other state to exercise a right as derived from Spain, which Britain had denied to Spain herself." However, the Falklands conflict of 1982 is now over and we still retain this outpost of the old British Empire. At least we have made some amends since we took that Empire by force of arms. Not only have we returned our colonies to self rule, but many who were citizens of those colonies have been given the choice of remaining in the new self ruling countries or coming to Britain to live. Many thousands chose to come here and in every city in Great Britain today can be seen people of every colour, race and culture. London is probably the most multi racial city of them all.

All this has happened in my lifetime and as I see Cleopatra's Needle today a whole kaleidoscope of events passes before me. It brings before my mind all the remarkable changes from my birth at the end of the Victorian period, through two World Wars, the discovery and harnessing of atomic power, the probes into outer space, to the age of the micro chip. When I first saw that Needle in 1916 I had no idea it was pointing up and away to somewhere that my mind could not then even imagine.



My idyllic days at the Office of the Censor did not last long, just a month in fact. After some formalities and a medical examination, I began as a messenger boy at the War Office. I started at the beginning of July, 1916, just at the time when David Lloyd George took the place of Lord Kitchener there. Up to that time, from the beginning of the war in 1914 and throughout the early months of 1915, Lloyd George was Secretary of State for War. In 1915 the prime minister, Mr. Asquith, reconstructed the government on a coalition basis, which meant the Liberals admitted both the Conservatives and Labour. In the new administration Lloyd George became minister of munitions. In that capacity he made one of the most notable contributions to the victory of the Allies. It is recorded of Lloyd George at that period, "his methods were unorthodox and shocked the civil service, but his energy was immense. He imported able assistants from big business and used his eloquence to induce the cooperation of organised labour. When, in the summer of 1916, the great Battle of the Somme began, supplies were forthcoming." On 5th June, 1916, Lord Kitchener was on his way by sea to Russia when his ship struck a German mine and he was drowned. I can remember vividly the shock that affected the whole populace, from the most humble folk where we lived, to the top ranks in the many government departments where I had to go with papers from the Office of the Censor. Many rumours circulated among the ordinary folk. I can remember people saying Kitchener was not really dead, he was on a secret mission and our government wanted the Germans to think he was dead. There was hardly a street corner in London that had not got, on a wall, a poster of Kitchener pointing his finger at us and saying our Country needed us. He was on too many posters throughout the Country for people not to believe he was still with us.

It had been planned for Lloyd George to go with Kitchener to Russia, but at the last moment some acute developments in the Irish situation, prevented Lloyd George from travelling with him. After it was accepted without any doubt that Kitchener was dead, the prime minister, Mr. Asquith, appointed Lloyd George to take his place at the War Office.

Imagine how thrilled I was, when as a boy messenger, I started at the War Office, just at the time Lloyd George had taken office there, to discover that for my very first post, they placed me on Lloyd George's floor.

Lloyd George to me, when I was a small boy, was the liberator of the working classes. I often heard my parents talking about him and how he was fighting for better and fairer conditions for us underprivileged people. Of course, he and his family themselves had known years of struggle and hardship. His father had left Wales to become a headmaster of an Elementary School in Manchester and Lloyd George was born there. He was a baby of only one and half years old when his father died leaving his mother in poverty. She returned to Wales with her children to her brother, a shoemaker and Baptist minister, who supported her and her children. It was from this uncle that David Lloyd George imbibed many of his formative beliefs. At fourteen years of age his uncle enabled him to take studies and embark on the career of a solicitor. When he entered politics and began to make a reputation, he fought for social reforms. Lloyd George entered Parliament in 1890, winning a by-election at Carnarvon Boroughs, the seat he retained for 55 years. He had made a name for himself in the House of Commons before I was born. But his major achievement was during the years immediately before the first World War in the field of Social Insurance. They were the years of my boyhood. He was inspired by a visit he made to Germany in 1908, where he studied the Bismarckian scheme of insurance benefits and decided to introduce health and unemployment insurance on a similar basis in Britain. This he did in the National Insurance Act of 1911. The measure drew bitter opposition and, at first, was even unpopular with the working classes who were not convinced by Lloyd George's slogan "ninepence for fourpence," the difference in these two figures being the employer's and the state's contribution. However, Lloyd George was undeterred and piloted his measure through Parliament with great skill and determination. It is now recorded of him, "he thus laid the foundations of the modern Welfare state and, if he had done nothing else, would deserve fame for that achievement." My parents believed his insurance scheme must be a good thing and I was influenced by their thinking. As I have said already, when my father was out of work there was no unemployment pay and he did not receive a penny from anyone, my mother had to take in washing to earn just a little to feed her family. Lloyd George's unemployment pay, though not very much, would at least support a family's basic needs. So when I entered the War Office, Lloyd George, in my mind, was a great hero.

It never occurred to me that I would ever see Lloyd George in person. I had seen photos of him in newspapers and periodicals, but being brought up with the belief that the "tin gods" who ruled over us were quite unapproachable, I always thought of them as being "up there" and us as "down here." Lloyd George, of course, was of far superior metal, but it was among the "tin gods" that he lived and moved and had his being. Working as a messenger boy on his floor I had to carry documents along the corridors to various departments, but it was never my job to go to Lloyd George's room, that was for the senior messengers. His room was on the first floor about the middle front of the War Office, with his windows facing Horse Guards' Parade. I had been there about a week when I was sent to a room a bit beyond Lloyd George's to deliver some papers. Imagine me then. I was a very small, thin boy, slow in developing, and I looked much younger than my years. I must have been the tiniest creature moving about the War Office. They had to alter a uniform to fit me and told me I would soon grow into it. It was of coarse navy blue serge with gold badges and was a bit baggy on me as I walked along the corridor. Lloyd George's room was on my right and I was about twelve yards away when his door opened and a gentleman came out and crossed the corridor. I heard a voice in Lloyd George's room and there emerged a small figure of a man who was calling across to the gentleman on the other side. When I was five to six yards away I saw the small man was Lloyd George. His face, his particular style of hair, were just as I had seen in so many photos. I had known he was a short man, but I had not expected to see such a great man so small in stature. He turned his head in my direction and saw me coming and was turning his gaze back again to the gentleman opposite when suddenly, he turned back to me again as though he had seen something startling or, at least, unusual. He continued to look at me as I came near to him and I looked up to him with the same large wide appealing eyes with which I had looked up into the face of the Headmaster of Charterhouse only a few months before. Then I remembered the discipline instilled in me in both the Boys' Brigade and Scouts and I turned my eyes away, held myself erect and marched past him up the corridor. It was impossible for Lloyd George to know that soon he and his war cabinet were to create a job for that little boy which was to change the course of my life. They must have been planning it about then.

Lloyd George had succeeded Lord Kitchener as Secretary of State for War, but he held that post at the War Office for only a few months. He had taken Lord Kitchener's place at the end of June 1916 and I started as a messenger there at the beginning of July. By the 5th December that year Mr. Asquith resigned his premiership and two days later David Lloyd George was appointed Prime Minister in his place. I did not stay at the War Office as long as that, in fact I was there only two months. I did not like it there. I had been spoiled by starting my first job, after leaving school, at the Office of the Censor. There we were free to go in and out and, as I have said, had the lunch hour each day with my girl guide friends along the Embankment in the June sunshine. At the War Office we had severe restrictions. I was issued with a pass and when I entered in the morning I could not leave the building again until I booked out in the evening. Unless, of course, I was sent outside to another Government department with documents. That happened only a few times and I soon learned to take advantage of those occasions. I took my time over those errands and stayed out as long as I could. However after a month I told my mother I did not like being shut up in the War Office and wanted another job. The war had caused a shortage of men so jobs were plentiful. I gave the required notice at the War Office and got a job as an office boy with a large tailoring firm in Whitechapel named Glanfields. They had contracts for all government uniforms including the Police and Post Office, but because of the war, were also making military uniforms and equipment. We worked six days a week then, but I did get out for an hour each midday. It was nice being able to pick and choose my jobs and I was only a couple of months at Glanfields when I heard of a position as office boy at a tea bonders and wine vaults firm, near the Tower of London

where the pay was a bit more than I was already earning. Just a week's notice at Glanfields and I was in the new job. I loved the sweet smell of the piles of tea laid out on the wooden floors in the warehouses and also the aroma of the wines wafting up from the vaults below. Not only were the teas being blended but the various aromas were too, they combined to make one peculiar but pleasant fragrance which I can still call up in my senses after all these many years. Unfortunately , those pleasant smells are always associated with the first really frightening and traumatic experiences in my life. The office in which we worked was a typical Dickensian one with high sloping desks with high stools to sit up to them. Being a small boy I had to climb up my stool on the bars holding the legs together. We had large heavy ledgers and day books and I had to make entries in another large book recording the documents I had to take around to various firms in the city of London and also to the Customs office on Tower Hill, at least it was on Tower Hill until German airmen moved it with a bomb. The worst of all my experiences of the bombing of London in the first World War happened while I was with the firm.

When the Germans first bombed England from the air they used the huge Zeppelin airships. They began making their way to London by following the river Thames up from Southend. Once or twice they reached as far as our district in the east of London but having too much opposition from our anti aircraft guns, dropped their bombs around us and turned back. The Germans gave up using Zeppelins after a while as they were too vulnerable and used aeroplanes instead. I remember the last Zeppelin that reached us at night. We watched it almost over us with searchlights illuminating it, we could see the rows of windows in the long cabin running the length of the bottom of the great cigar shaped airship. It was trying to avoid the

searchlights and turned northward away from us and disappeared in the dark sky. No bombs were dropped on our district. Anti aircraft guns were firing as the Zeppelin disappeared northwards. We went indoors but had not been in very long when we heard people shouting and cheering in the streets, we rushed out and saw the sky was no longer dark but away northwards over Hertfordshire a vast red and golden glow that lit up the faces of the people in our street. In the middle of the glow was a ball of fire descending to earth and although it was about fifteen miles away, we could see the twisted frame and cabin of the Zeppelin burning in the fire. That night, besides anti aircraft fire, our defence people had sent up some of our latest aeroplanes to deal with Zeppelins. A young airman had manoeuvred his machine above the Zeppelin, followed it, then came down to its level and emptied two drums of machine gun bullets into it before it caught fire. I can remember his name being splashed across the headlines of the papers next day, hailing him as a hero. He was Lieutenant Lefee Robinson, who brought the Zeppelin SL II, down over Cuffley, Hertfordshire. There were no more German airships sent after that, but it was not long before the Germans began to use aeroplanes instead. They came at first by night. I remember the times we were huddled under the staircase and in the passage on mattresses, too terrified to sleep until the noise of the guns and falling bombs ceased. It was the first time any nation had ever experienced attacks from the air and we were not prepared for them. In the second World War we had shelters both indoors and outdoors, but in the 1914 to 1918 war we had nothing. We were fortunate in not having bombs fall near to our street but we could hear them falling around our neighbourhood, Woolwich on one side and Stratford on the other and the noise of the anti aircraft guns was unnerving. My father, who had been out in France on the fighting front, caught "trench fever" and some other complaint, and when he was near to death they brought him home, with many other casualties, to a hospital in England. I cannot remember where his hospital was but it was near London and I remember we went to visit him after he had been in England a few weeks and he was wearing the uniform they gave to all wounded and disabled soldiers, a light blue suit of a material that looked like flannelette. He looked ill and nothing like the proud father we saw going off to war in his smart uniform with three stripes on his arms. He was sent to another hospital later much further away.

When he recovered sufficiently they discharged him from the army as a disabled soldier. He came home to us at the time when the worst of the bombing started, and having had experience of the trenches, collected together all the odd bits of materials he could find and constructed some sort of reinforcement over the top of our staircase. It made us children feel a bit more secure at the time, but when soon afterwards I got experience of the bombing a bit too close for comfort, I realised that while my father's construction would have stopped bits of debris coming down the stairs, if we had a direct hit it would have been useless. After a while the night raids stopped, they were costing the Germans too many aircraft. However, after a short respite the Germans made one or two surprise daylight raids. I was working with that firm near Tower Hill when they got through for the first time to the City of London. I had been sent out on my usual round delivering documents to various offices and was instructed that on the way back I was to call at an ironmongers in Fenchurch Street for some materials. I had been there before, the shop with three or four storeys over it, stood on the corner of a street off Fenchurch Street. It had an under-the-pavement men's lavatories just outside and I usually called there and intended to do so on this occasion. Something made me go another than my usual way. In so doing I met a lad with whom I had worked but who had left the firm about a month before. I stopped to talk with him, asked him what job he was in, was it better than the work he had been doing with us. It was a chance meeting - or was it? I was with him just two or three minutes but that time was just enough to save my life. From that time through the rest of my life I have believed that there is no mere chance in any of these happenings, yet when I think of those others who died on that day in the City of London, I am compelled to ask

why did not some mere chance happen to them to save them from being killed ? Providence or the Grace of God is not only for me, I am not privileged above my fellow men. Yet I have had other occasions in my long life when unusual things have happened and I cannot shut my eyes to them, although I have no answers at present. I said goodbye to the lad and continued on my way to the shop. I had reached a side street just one block before the corner I was making for, when people were stopping and pointing up into the sky. I joined a group nearby, they were saying "aeroplanes" when just at that moment two loud explosions shook the pavement and I knew they were bombs. Some of us dived for the shop on the corner. It was a tobacconist's and just inside the door was a spiral staircase with a wrought-iron banister coiling down to the basement below. We ran down. The basement was quite empty and as I looked up I saw a thick glass fanlight at street pavement level, about six inches high, running the whole length of the two walls forming the corner of the shop. There was not much protection down there so I crouched under the iron stairs, as I had huddled under our wooden stairs at home during air raids. Just as I got under there was an almighty thud on the earth that shook our cement floor and walls like an earthquake. Bits of our plaster fell but the thick glass stayed, as it apparently did not take the full force of the blast. Then everything was quiet and we waited for what seemed an age, though it was probably about twenty minutes. At last we heard whistles blowing and voices calling "all clear." There were no air raid sirens at that time in the first World War, the police and civil defence people came around on bicycles blowing whistles and calling out "take cover," when a raid was almost on us, and "all clear" when it was over. There was no warning at all for this raid, it caught us all unprepared and it was the first time enemy aircraft had penetrated as far as the City of London, they had tried several times before but found the anti aircraft guns too effective for them, so had to drop their bombs on the outskirts of London and turn back. This time with new types of aircraft they reached the City. In this raid too they lost a number of aircraft but did some damage to London.



We went up and into the street. There was dust in the air and a strong smell of cordite. Nobody seemed to be about. The other chaps who had been in the basement with me disappeared in the opposite direction to which I was going. I started off on the short distance along to the ironmongers, then suddenly stopped short. It had disappeared, the three or four storey building was a heap of bricks and broken timber in a large mound that had spread over the pavement and road where the men's lavatories were, completely burying them. I stood staring for a few seconds, there was no hope for anyone who had been in that building or the men's lavatories and I knew that if I had not met that lad for those few minutes, I would have been under all that rubble. I had to go across the road to the opposite pavement in order to get past the debris spread over the road. No defence helpers or firemen had yet arrived, they were probably busy where other bombs had dropped around the district. I continued down to the Minories along which I usually went towards Tower Hill where my firm was. When I reached the corner of the Minories there was a brewer's dray in the gutter with a dead horse on the ground between the shafts. There was blood all over the ground and running along the gutter. I looked up to the driver's seat behind which was a protective board with the name of the brewery in large letters. The board was bespattered with bits of flesh and blood. A boy near by, saw me looking and said, "that is all that is left of the driver, they have just taken the rest of him away." I had never seen anything like this before and I felt sick. When I got back to my firm, the men in the office could see I was shaken when I told them about the ironmongers, they said I would be alright if I had a little rest. I had sat down for only a short while when I was asked if I would take some documents around to the

Customs office on Tower Hill. The men in the office had never left the building during the air raid, they had sheltered down in the wine vaults, and probably had a drink while they were there to steady their nerves. Some of them often smelled as if they had been sampling the wine, and one, who was a brother of the manager, was occasionally too drunk to do his books, they let him sleep it off in a corner. They had no idea how scared I was to go out again, I felt a bit more secure inside after what I had just experienced. However, I went with my documents to the Customs office only to find that too had gone, not completely like the ironmongers, for that had received a direct hit. In the case of the Customs office, the bomb had dropped just outside and blown the front of the office in and wrecked the inside. The shrapnel from the bomb had also hit the iron railings around the Tower of London opposite the Customs office, and those marks in the railings are still there today. No doubt the bomb on the ironmongers was intended for Fenchurch Street Station and the one outside the Customs office was meant for the Tower of London, they both were a bit off target.

When I got home that evening I wanted at once to tell my mother all that had happened, but when I went to speak I found I could not, my voice had gone. I wanted to cry, but would not because I thought for a boy of fourteen years working in the City, it was cissy to cry. So I signified to my mother and whispered "I can't speak." My mother was a very understanding, sensible woman, quick to size up any situation with her children. She, of course, had heard the air raid and knew it was on the city and half expected something like this. She said, reassuringly, "it's alright, it's just shock, I'll get you a cup of tea and you'll be alright then." I always believed what she said, so when I drank my cup of tea I found I could talk, then it all came out

and I felt better. But after that experience I was always nervous when I was sent out to deliver documents. I walked about in constant fear, expecting any moment to hear a whistle blow and someone call out "take cover !" I wanted to be in the office where I could shelter in our deep vaults. After a couple of weeks I could not endure it any longer and asked my mother if I could leave the job and get work near home. My mother agreed. We were quite near to the docks, near enough to walk to them, but those who worked there usually took a penny tram ride. The nearest to us were the Royal Victoria and Albert docks and my mother had been told that the Port of London Authority wanted boy messengers to work in those docks. Among the folk in our district it was reckoned that anyone who got a position with the P.L.A., could have a job for life with good prospects. I worked a bit longer with the tea and wine firm while we went through all the formalities, the filling up of a questionnaire, interview and medical examination. It was all quite easy because the Headquarters of the P.L.A., was quite near the firm where I worked. My mother wrote a note which I took to work asking if I could have an hour or so off for the interview and medical examination. Jobs were changing all the time during the war so the manager of the firm was not bothered very much. I got the P.L.A., position as messenger but, for some reason I cannot now remember, it was going to be a few weeks before I started. However, once my mother knew I would be starting in the docks, and knowing I was scared to be in the city in case of air raids, decided I could give my one week's notice at once. The day when that week expired and I left the firm will remain with me for ever, how can I ever forget it, when I left in the evening and arrived home just in time to witness the most terrifying nightmare of my young life. It was the evening of the Silvertown explosion.

Christmas 1916 followed just after I had made moves to work with the Port of London Authority. After a few days holiday break at home I returned to the Tea Bonders for a week or so, gave my week's notice on Friday 12th January to leave on Friday 19th January, 1917.

I was paid up just before 6. p.m., left the firm and made my way to the Underground station. That station today is Tower Hill, in the old days it was Mark Lane. I arrived at Plaistow station about 6.40 p.m., and by the time I had walked down to Balaam Street it was just after 6.45 p.m. To reach our street on the left, I had to pass the fire station on the right. Our fire brigade had not long progressed from the old horse drawn fire engine with a shiny brass boiler and wide chimney, out of which belched smoke when on its way to a fire. As children we were excited when we heard it leaving the station with bell ringing, and we ran out to see the horses galloping along, firemen hanging on to rails around the wagon, and smoke trailing as it raced along. I used to wonder, as a boy, why if it was going to a fire, it had to take a fire with it. Later I learned that the fire in the boiler was for a steam engine that pumped water through the hoses. Just as I was approaching the fire station, I saw in the dark night sky a large red patch of flickering light. I knew it must be a fire reflecting on the clouds. Because of the air raids all lights were blacked out, and curtains drawn in the houses, so the red light in the sky was ominous. I stopped outside the fire station thinking someone would ring the alarm bell on the side of the double doors, I wanted to see our new petrol driven engine go out, with its extending escape ladder attached. Suddenly the fireglow became brighter. I ran home quickly and as my mother opened the door to my urgent banging, I said, "come quickly in the back yard, there's a fire somewhere !" In the yard I said, "I'm going to see where it is," then climbed over the back gate, which was locked, and dropped to the pavement of the alleyway between us and the school at the back. I ran along to where there was a space between the main school building and the workshops where I had an unobstructed view across our recreation ground towards the docks. I was about to run nearer to the fire, when suddenly the dark night burst into brilliant sunshine --

so it seemed -- but with it the most ear splitting roar and blast such as I had never heard in any air raids. I stopped dead still as the ground shook like an earthquake. Shattering glass sounded all around but I was rooted to the spot, staring in horror at what I could see across the recreation ground. Everything on earth seemed to be going up into the sky, a huge gas holder, a boiler, great girders, roofs of buildings, tanks and debris of all kinds flung up into the centre of a brilliant yellow, gold and red fire lighting up the sky. In a second I realised that what was going up would come down again somewhere. I ran back to our gate. It was taller than me and on the alley side had no bars on which to climb up. I grabbed the top of the gate and seemed to leap over it. My mother was in the yard illuminated by the fire. As I went up to her we both heard a scream from the window upstairs. It was open and there was my aunt Frances, her face lit up with the red glow, her hands to her head, staring towards Silvertown and shouting "it's Percy, it's Percy !" My mother called to her "no Frances, it's not where Percy is," but my aunt knew it was. My aunt Frances was always the favourite aunt of us children. She had married our uncle Percy just recently and while they were waiting for their own house, had a room upstairs in our house. Our uncle was a foreman in an oil refinery adjoining the firm of Brunner Mond's chemical industry where the explosion occurred. From their room upstairs he must have pointed out where his firm was, and my aunt could see that the inferno covered all that area. My mother brought her downstairs and tried to console her, said to her it would be better to wait until we found out where the explosion was. The distance, as the crow flies, from our house to my uncle's works, was only about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, but because the docks came between, the distance round through Canning Town was almost  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. My uncle usually went and returned by tram, but all trams had now ceased because of the explosion. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when about a quarter of an hour after the explosion there was a furious knocking on our front door, my younger brother ran to open it and in rushed our uncle Percy like a man demented. I had never seen anything like it before, nor anything like it since.

He had run all the way home like a madman from the very centre of the explosion to our house. He ran straight through to our living room calling out "it's all over, it's all over," saw my mother and said, "it's all finished Liz, there's no more work, it's all gone." I could not take my eyes off my uncle, his face was smeared with black and the whole of his hair was standing bolt upright like a wire brush. Usually his hair was greased and brushed down smoothly with the old Victorian quiff in front, but now it was all standing up on end. I had heard people say "makes yer hair stand on end" but I never knew until then that it could actually happen through fear. My mother sat him down and poured him a cup of tea from the pot she had just brewed for my aunt. My mother's cure for shock was always hot sweetened tea. It took some time before we could get an intelligible account from him. No one could have been nearer to the centre of the explosion, just before it happened, than my uncle. There were those, of course, inside the T.N.T., plant when it blew up and they were all killed. But my uncle was outside only a couple of yards away checking his oil storage tanks. There was a corrugated iron fence behind his back and just on the other side of that was the T.N.T., purifying shed. Hardly anyone who was in the vicinity of Brunner Mond's factory complex was left alive and people some distance away were killed or badly injured by the blast and flying debris. It has always been a miracle to me that my uncle should come out of the very mouth of hell and live. He was checking his gauges on the tanks when he heard a peculiar thud behind him, looked around and saw flames coming out of the top of the melt-pot room. He knew the whole building was full of T.N.T., which was the most powerful explosive discovered during the first World War. He knew the whole place would go up, ran to the boiler room to warn two men who were under his charge and the three of them ran together, one each side of my uncle, towards their firm's main entrance. They had got only a few yards when hell burst out of the earth. The two men running with him were both blown down and killed. My uncle was propelled forward, running as though in a dream or nightmare. Everything was going with him, buildings, tanks, fences, girders, all on a mighty wind that was rushing them forward. Later, when my uncle could talk more lucidly about it he said he thought he was the only one left in

49. ( FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE )

the universe, the world had disappeared and he was running alone. He did not pass another living human being. Here and there were bodies on the ground but no one moving until he reached Canning Town. When he ran out from his firm into North Woolwich Road, he passed the main gates of Brunner Mond's and saw firemen lying beside their wrecked appliances. The Silvertown fire station was situated right opposite Brunner Mond's gates. They saw the first flames appear and knowing there would be an explosion they were moving the appliances into the gates when it all went up. The youngest fireman was the son of the officer in charge. He had gone into the fire station to 'phone headquarters for help. The station was demolished and he woke up to find himself in the London Hospital. All communications were cut by the explosion and it was half an hour before any help came from neighbouring districts. When the West Ham firemen arrived they looked for the Silvertown firemen and found three by the damaged appliances, two dead and the other gravely injured. Inside the demolished station they found the young fireman unconscious. The whole of Brunner Mond's buildings were completely destroyed, as were those of all the other firms around. My uncle's two oil storage tanks on which he had been working, were torn open and set on fire. Streets of small houses for a long way around were demolished and flying molten metal set two flour mills alight, together with a ship in the docks, the S.S. Itala. Such was the force of the explosion that a gas holder on the other side of the river Thames was wrecked and a boiler weighing fifteen tons was hurled into the air and came down in North Woolwich Road. The explosion was heard 50 miles away in Cambridge. Altogether nearly 70,000 properties in London were affected in some way by the explosion. No doubt the school building behind us from the blast. When I think of the colossal force of the blast in tearing up great buildings and iron constructions, hurling them up into the air some distance away, and later when I saw the extent of the damage in the area where my uncle was, I am still amazed that he came out of the centre of it alive and, apart from his damaged nerves, without a scratch. The next morning he wanted me to go back with him to report, as nobody knew whether he was alive, his nerves had gone and he felt he wanted someone with him, but following so closely upon my own bad air raids experiences, I also

had lost my nerve and would not go.

A week later I walked down alone, the damage was appalling, and within another three weeks I started work with the Port of London Authority in the Royal Victoria dock where I saw more of the explosion damage.

I was still only 14½ years old.

The London of my childhood was so different from the London of today. It was not in those early days a multi racial city as it is now. To walk through the City of London or the West End then, it would have been an unusual sight to see someone from overseas in their national dress or a garment such as a sari, or a sarong, or a head dress such as a turban. Today, people wearing the clothes of the countries from which they originated are everywhere to be seen, on the streets, in shops and offices, and in all the London schools are children of overseas parents, Sikhs, Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, West Indians, and others, who wear their national head dresses and hair styles. But it was nothing unusual to us children who lived near the London docks at the beginning of this century, to see people from all parts of the world in our district. They were always men because they were seamen from the many merchant ships that brought cargoes to our docks. Groups of them would come to the shops in Barking road or if they wanted the larger stores would walk along to East Ham, which today is part of Newham. The only times when folk from overseas could be seen in any numbers in other parts of London would be on the rare occasions when an exhibition or some royal event or celebration was being held. Then colourful attire might be seen like those of the old <sup>a</sup>ch<sup>A</sup>inaman in the exhibition of 1851, but it was not part of every day life in London then to see such folk, as it is today.

London in my boyhood was one of the largest and most important ports in the world. Certainly in our docks, were always many large ocean going merchant ships. Walking towards the docks we could see them long before we reached the dock gates, their funnels towering above the houses and warehouses along the dock sides. During the first World War enemy submarines hunted our merchant ships moving between Great Britain and other parts of the world and many were torpedoed and sunk. It was the Germans' attempt to



starve us into submission. In spite of the losses there always seemed to be many ships coming into and going out of our docks. During the months while I worked as a messenger in the docks I saw cargos of all kinds being unloaded and stored and I loved the aromas of some of them. In the first World War the government did not introduce the system of rationing that we had during the second World War. People had to queue up at food shops for most foodstuffs. When I worked in the City I often queued up for my mother during my midday break. I would eat my sandwiches while I was standing in line, usually at a branch of a well known grocery chain stores known in those days as the "Maypole." The branch where I queued was near the Monument and I was usually rewarded for my patient waiting by getting half a pound of margarine and once or twice some butter. While each customer was limited to half a pound of the fats, we usually were allowed also about half a pound of sugar. What I got from the "Maypole" was a helpful addition to that which my mother obtained at our local shops. Rationing came later in 1918. In the docks I saw foodstuffs of all kinds being unloaded including carcasses of meat from overseas, but I always knew when cases of apples had arrived, I could smell them from a distance, sometimes they were from South Africa and more often from Canada. Of course, to me as a youngster it seemed a lot of food arriving, but it had to be distributed over a wide area of the country among millions of people. In the summer time we could get fresh vegetables and fruit grown locally, but we could never produce enough food in Great Britain to feed all our people and we depended upon imports from overseas. In spite of great losses of merchant ships through German submarine warfare, enough food got through to keep us reasonably nourished. We had one older messenger boy with us who knew his way around the docks better than me, but how he managed to get hold of some things I never did find out. At one end of our room he would lift a corner of the lino then move a loose board to hide things he had brought in. Once he shared with us some lovely shiny Canadian apples, mine was a real treat to me. The only thing I ever got was quite easy to get. Crates of tobacco leaf were stacked outside between the warehouses and there were always a number of leaves poking out between the boards of the crates. Walking between the tall crates and the walls of the sheds it was easy to pull out a number of leaves flatten them together and slip them in my

inside pocket. I wore a uniform that buttoned up to the neck, it was of coarse blue serge similar to that which I wore on my first job at the War Office, and as it was a bit too large for me it was easy to conceal some things inside. Anyone going out through the gates in the evening who was carrying a bag or package would often be stopped by the dock police and asked to open the bag. I had a little lunch box, so I never put my tobacco leaves in that, but in any case during the months I was there I was never stopped once and searched. I took my tobacco leaves home to my father who made cigars of them.

One of the requirements of all messengers being employed by the Port of London Authority was that they must be able to swim. I was always fond of the water but still could not swim when I was engaged. I told the interviewer that I could not swim but that I was going each Saturday to our local swimming baths trying to learn. They took me on my promise that I would learn. The men in our messengers' office, in order to impress upon us how deep the docks were, used to say they had no bottom. I had been many times with other pupils from our school to our local baths but could never learn swimming by the method our teachers used. Now that I had left school I was going alone because I believed I could learn better by my own method. Within two weeks of being with the P.L.A., I managed half a width, shortly afterwards a whole width and not long after that I trusted myself up the deep end and did a whole length. I always believed I ought to be able to swim because my grandfather, on my mother's side, had, at one time, been champion swimmer of England. I have been swimming ever since and now, in my eighty first year, I live not far from the sea and from June to September every year I am in the salt water every day when the weather is reasonable.

To cross over to the other side of the docks I had to go by ferry. This was only a rowing boat with a permanent ferry man who rowed us over. Sometimes he would let me take the oars while he sat and chatted with other men in the boat. On my first trip over, after delivering my papers, I went to where I saw a mound, climbed up to the top and looked across to where my uncle's oil storage tanks had been. I saw ~~them~~ the extent of the damage caused by the Silvertown explosion and was amazed that my uncle had got out of there alive.

There were a few daylight air raids by the Germans while I was working in the docks and on one occasion I was on the other side of the docks

when an alert came. I went down the vaults under a large warehouse and was surprised to find the huge warehouse and the extensive vaults were quite empty. It registered in my mind then that there were some cargos, for which warehouses like this had been constructed, that were not arriving in England because of the submarine menace and other difficulties caused by the war. There can be no doubt that without the courage and skill of the men of our Royal Navy, the German navy could have starved us out by means of their submarine warfare. Nevertheless, I was encouraged to see how many merchant ships from many parts of the world, were always in our docks unloading foodstuffs and other essential goods, and the Royal Victoria dock where I was working, was only one of many docks which stretched from Tilbury, near the mouth of the Thames, up river past the Royal Victoria and Albert docks to all the other docks at Poplar, Millwall, Rotherhithe, Wapping and including all the many other reaches and anchorages that comprised the great Port of London.

Today it is depressing to see most of these docks unused and the areas around them derelict. Recently there have been moves by the authorities to develop some of these places into residential areas with perhaps one or two marinas. However, it seems that London will never again be the great world port it was.

#### THE MOVE AWAY FROM MY CHILDHOOD.


As the summer of 1917 came the night air raids became fewer, but as Autumn approached my parents felt that the coming winter might bring the return of the raids we had suffered previously. My mother's older sister living in Battersea had written to say that they never had any raids that side of London and invited us over to her house until we could obtain a house of our own in that district. In September 1917 we made the move so once again I was not very long in my new job. I had started with the P.L.A., at end of January 1917 and left at the beginning of September 1917.

We had been living near Clapham Junction only one week when a lone German aircraft came around the south side of London and dropped a bomb on a house near Clapham Common. No doubt the airman was aiming for the very large railway system at Clapham Junction station, but was off target.

However, we did not get any more air raids on our district for the remainder of the first World War.

We were with my aunt only a couple of weeks before we obtained a house in a street off St. John's Hill, Battersea, a short walk from Clapham Junction station and about the same time I started in a job as an office boy in an electrical firm in Putney. At the age I was then it did not occur to me that Putney as it was then, was a much healthier place in which to work than in the City of London. The area of Putney and Wimbledon was much more open than today, with Wimbledon Common connected by fields and woodlands to the large and lovely Richmond Park. Also the residential parts were mostly large detached houses with ample garden space and trees around each and the air smelled sweeter and cleaner than that in the part of London from which we had recently moved. I envied the people who lived in those lovely houses, so different from the area in which I had been born and brought up. The house in which we were now living in Battersea and the streets around were not much better than from where we had come on the east side of London, but in our new district we were <sup>within</sup> easy reach of far better and lovelier surroundings than we had anywhere near to Plaistow. The customers that the electrical firm had, seemed to me, to be only the "posh" people who lived in these lovely houses. I was sent out frequently to some of these houses with packages or estimates and other communications from the firm and this gave me opportunities to go into the lovely gardens of some of them, up the drives to the front doors - for I never looked for a tradesmen's entrance unless it was specifically indicated with a sign "tradesmen only." I listened to the "posh" people talking, their speech fascinated me, it was like music to me, their tone and timbre, the articulation and inflection, the rounding off of wholly sounded words and phrases, it was all so superior to my coarse, clipped cockney vernacular. I watched their young folk playing tennis on their own private courts, heard their happy laughter, saw their healthy faces and felt the atmosphere of confidence and dignity which they generated. On more than one occasion, as I came away, I felt choked and wanted to cry. To cry at the sheer injustice of it all, that some should enjoy so much that life can offer, while some of us <sup>were</sup> condemned just to exist with so little.

It must be understood that the folk who occupied the properties in the Putney and Wimbledon areas were of a different class in the years before and during the first World War than those who took over after the war in the changes that came about in the nineteen twenties and thirties, the years between the two World Wars. The people to whom I was sent by my firm were not what we understand today as being the middle classes. Some perhaps would have been called upper middle class, but quite a number of the larger houses were occupied by families who had inherited titles and riches, some even from the aristocracy. Social changes had been taking place before the first World War. What is referred to by historians as the "Industrial Revolution" is a title given, not to a single event, but to the great process of economic change in Great Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Great Britain was transformed from a mainly agricultural country into the "Workshop of the World," as we were often told at our school. Old social relationships which seemed to be firmly established were torn up by the roots before I was born. Old village life in England had mostly been destroyed and in place of the village and its rural customs, had been created the problem of the new factory town such as where I was born and raised. Before the Industrial Revolution the main forms of industrial organisation in the mediaeval towns and villages in England were the localised Gilds. The Gild was in essence a combination of Master craftsmen and Master merchants who regulated and governed trade. Membership of the Gilds was also open to journeymen and apprentices but power and government of the Gilds was vested in the Gild Masters. Even in those days it was observed that the accumulation of capital took place chiefly in the hands of those Masters who were engaged in trade and

commerce. As political conditions became more settled in the late middle ages, there was a big growth of commercial enterprise. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution many of the Gild masters saw their opportunities for making quick fortunes in the supply of cheap commodities to the growing numbers of industrial workers. But they needed intermediaries between the producers and the public. This is where the journeymen grasped their opportunities, they became the middle men and thus began to evolve a new breed of middle classes in Great Britain, and by the time I emerged into this world, there was already established an upper middle class who owned the wealth, and the lower middle class, the tradesmen who sold to the public. During the years that followed the war I saw folk from both these classes take over the properties in Putney and Wimbledon and later still the London County Council bought up land in these areas and built blocks of flats to house working class people. Some of the flats were constructed as high rise buildings and while it is right to bring the workers in industrial cities out into the more open green spaces, in building as they have, they spoiled the look of these districts and destroyed much of the greenery. When I was a lad in that area during the first World War and looked, listened and longed for what the privileged then possessed, I never dreamed that the day would come when I would actually live for a few years in one of those very houses, surrounded by large gardens and woods — but that was before the property developers came and spoiled it all. It took the first World War to bring me out from the depressing environment of the industrial district of my childhood, it took the second World War to make it possible for me to live in that lovely area as it was when I was a lad. But this is another story to which I will come  later in this book.

*On a rainy day in the autumn of 1945, I was sitting in the garden of my new home in Putney, London, and looking out at the greenery that I had longed for since I was a boy. It was a beautiful sight, and I was very happy to be there. I was looking at the garden and thinking about the future. I was looking at the garden and thinking about the future. I was looking at the garden and thinking about the future.*

While I liked the district in which I worked at Putney, I was not happy with the job, firstly because there did not seem to be any future in it, and also it did not seem to be the right location to be working. I had begun my working life in that centre in London to which all the business people commuted each day. Starting in Whitehall where the "tin gods" hold authority, then in the City where the business magnates manipulate the wealth of the country, and in my early days, also the Empire, I felt that the suburbs held no authority like that. The air raids which had caused me to make changes, had now ceased, the Germans had found it was costing them too much in aircraft being shot down. I was living quite near to Clapham Junction station and it was only a few minutes by train to Victoria. So I decided I would commute each day and get a job in Westminster, not, as previously with the Civil Service, for my first weeks among them had bred within me an intense dislike of them and the establishment within which they worked. I can understand young people today who rebel against the establishment and opt out of the common routine. I felt rebellious against the establishment in my day but did not want to opt out of it. I wanted to be among them, observe them, have personal contacts with them and yet not be one of them nor part of their system. I wanted to be a freelance and not at the command or beck and call of officious superiors who delighted in ordering about their inferiors. So it was strange, or fortuitous, or Providential, whichever way it is viewed, that I should drop right into a job at Westminster where I could be just what I wanted to be. I am convinced in my mind that it was Providential, for when I sought the job I happened to be in the right place just at the right time, and too many things like this have happened in my life for them all to have been mere coincidences. For five years my work took me frequently, during the latter part of the first World War, and regularly during Great Britain's years of readjustment, into almost every Civil Service department in Whitehall, and two or three times a week into the House of Commons. I was indeed a cockney boy among the "tin gods."

It will be best at this point to explain what I mean by the term "tin gods", the title I have so far been giving to certain people in authority. It may be thought by some that I have a predilection for the term, may be even an obsession or a 'bee in my bonnet' about the folk upon whom I bestow the title.

So far, in recounting the beginnings of my pilgrimage, I have been writing in the thought forms of my younger age and experience, with an occasional digression by way of explanation in my older way of thinking. All that I have written so far, with the exception of the few jumps into the present, happened while I was a boy emerging into a teenager just at the time when I moved out of the restricting environment of my boyhood. I am now at the time when I enter a new environment in which I was to live and move and have my being for the rest of my life. The "tin gods" will still come into my story, although I have already stated that in my first probes into the world outside of my birthplace, I learned that the folk who had authority over us were not all of tin, some were of a more valuable metal.

But from now onwards I will give them their more accurate title so that all who read this will know who these people were with whom I had my early conflicts and with whom, unfortunately from time to time, have continued to have conflicts right up to this present moment of time.

I began this book with a reference to John Bunyan's book "The Pilgrim's Progress." Throughout the whole of his pilgrimage Christian had his conflicts. Bunyan gives names to those who were Christian's adversaries or "foul fiends" as he calls them collectively. One he names Apollyon, another Giant Despair, and there are hobgoblins, monsters and dragons, but then Bunyan says he saw his Pilgrim's progress as in the "similitude of a dream." All his characters were imaginative and Pilgrim's conflicts were spiritual, states of mind and battles of the soul on his way to the Celestial City.

I have no imaginative names for my adversaries during my pilgrimage. Collectively, instead of calling them 'foul fiends' I have called them 'tin gods.' Individually they are all the same to me and I will give them one name, for my adversaries have been real people very much part of the systems of this world. Those who have baulked and opposed and frustrated, not only me, but many thousands of those who have been in my class of society; for let me make quite clear now that I am not writing this as one who stands out as having accomplished



anything remarkable in this life, not as one with any great ability or influence, but as one from among the common crowd, one of the many millions of us on this earth who, as far as the measure of material possessions is concerned, have always been among those of the lowest stratum of society. I was born among the masses in the Industrial age and have spent the whole of my life working among the same people. The fact that I have never gained material advantages in this world was by my own deliberate choice. I did not want to acquire money, I wanted knowledge, enlightenment, dignity and an understanding of what this life is all about, and with this desire for knowledge and understanding, I have always had a strong conviction that whatever I gain I must share among my own people. This is the only thing that gives meaning and purpose to my life, to know and to make known. So when I was mature enough to make the choice I chose a vocation and not a career. That vocation ensured that I was always among the lowest paid workers in Europe, for while I have worked mostly in Great Britain, I have spent some time in other countries in Europe and for a few years before my retirement, "down under" in Australia as well. Only those who live and struggle in the lowest stratum of society really become aware of the "tin gods", those higher up have no conflict with them. Having said this, I think this will be the last time I will use this term for those people.

I found it difficult in selecting another suitable appellation in place of the term I am dismissing. Who are these people ? They are those who enjoy a certain degree of power and they glory in their power. Having been put into positions where legally they have a right to direct other people, they find satisfaction, not in that end to which they are directing others, but in the power it gives them to do the directing. They have authority and find great satisfaction in wielding that authority. Therefore I have decided that the name by which I will include all those I have encountered in the establishment on my journey will be simply the "autocrats." However, do not confuse the term with "bureaucrat." Our country is run by bureaucrats, they are supposed to be the servants of the government, but from my experience I know them to be more than that. Legislation is debated

in Parliament and Acts, statutes and decrees are passed, but those who do the advising and researching and who inform and influence the thinking of members of parliament and government ministers are the bureaucrats. They are civil servants whose job it is to be experts on certain subjects or otherwise call in the help and advice of outside experts. It was reported recently (at the time of writing this) that our present Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, is very interested in, and amused by, a comedy series being shown weekly on Television entitled "Yes Minister." I have followed almost every instalment and can assure those who have seen this series that, with all its humour, it is a very true portrayal of what goes on in our civil service. I have had many contacts with a number of these bureaucrats and a few have been my personal friends. Not all of them are consciously autocratic but there is an atmosphere in the civil service which becomes infectious and they all develop a similar pattern in mental attitude towards other people outside the civil service. As I have already said when referring to the 'tin gods', not all are of tin, some are of a more precious metal. So it was fortunate for me, as a young and very impressionable teenager, that I should have met one or two of the very finest men of influence at the very beginning of my contacts with those in the highest departments of this country. My meeting with the Headmaster of Charterhouse was very brief, but I am now to record my first meeting with the gentleman for whom I was to work for a number of years and who influenced me for good for the rest of my life. Indeed, I am recording what I see now as the most important point in my young life when I was directed along a path which I was to follow for the rest of my pilgrimage. At this period three important things happened within a short time of each other. Firstly, the course of the terrible First World War caused us to leave the old dreary environment of the east end of London where I was born and spent my underprivileged childhood, and move to an entirely different part of London. Secondly, I entered the service of one of the most notable and brilliant gentlemen this country has ever had, who was not only an adviser to David Lloyd George in the first World War and Sir Winston Churchill in the second World War, as one of his cabinet ministers, but who between the two wars,

brought about radical changes in some vital industries, which changes have contributed considerably to improving our living standards in this land. Thirdly, while I was at this time at a very impressionable age, I came under the influence of a group of people who completely changed my way of thinking. It was the beginning of my believing I had found the path that would lead me in the direction towards an understanding of the meaning and purpose of this life.

Our move from the east of London I have already related. I am now at the second important point when I decided to leave my temporary job in our new district and find another job in Westminster where I had begun after leaving school, which move resulted in my meeting with <sup>the</sup> ~~A~~ remarkable man who, while I was in my susceptible teens, so greatly influenced me for good.

I had been told there was an employment office in Great Smith street — in those days the Job Centre of today was called a "Labour Exchange." I told the official in the exchange that I had been an office boy and that I wanted a similar job in Westminster — as a matter of fact, I had not been an office boy really in any of the previous jobs, I was no more than a messenger in each of the positions and worked as much outside each firm as in it. The official said, "Ah, I think you have come in just at the right time, a job has just come in from a gentleman around the corner at number nine Victoria street, it might suit you." This matter of right timing has played a very important part in my life. He gave me a note in an envelope addressed to the gentleman and I saw at the end of his name that he held the degrees of M.A., LL.B. If I state his name now, I wonder how many people today would know who he was and what he has done in this country to create conditions that have brought about a better way of life for all of us today. Let me indicate something first and the reader of this may recognise him — although I think not, for although the results of his work remain all around us, his name has been forgotten. I hope in this part of my record of my pilgrimage through the twentieth century, that I may be able to resurrect the memory of this brilliant man.

When I was a child, the advantage of having electricity in our home, or in any of the homes of the poorer classes was quite unknown. At the time when I was taken into the service of this gentleman we had not long progressed from oil lamps and coal fires to gas lighting and cooking. Today most homes

have electricity, not only for lighting and heating but during the years from just before the second World War to the present day, great strides have been made in making possible the supply of electrical devices of many kinds which have become the standard equipment of most homes in Great Britain, such as automatic washing machines, refrigerators, deep freezers, vacuum-cleaners, hair driers, televisions, radios, music centres, cassette players, videos and now the latest craze, home computers. All these things being operated by that unseen power we call electricity which has been conveyed to all the homes and industries of this land in a comparatively short space of time. Indeed, since 1927 when the government decided to set up a new authority to "plan and carry out a technical scheme of electricity generation and transmission for the whole country." A new board was formed known as the Central Electricity Board, and knowing what my new boss had already achieved during the first World War and after, they appointed him its first Chairman. This was on the 1st March, 1927 and the Chairman was Sir Andrew R. Duncan, Kt., M.A., LL.B. Before long more honours were added to his titles including G.B.E., and Privy Councillor. Up to that time the government had tried on two or three occasions to co-ordinate the various private electricity generating stations supplying industries and some homes of the privileged people, <sup>but</sup> they failed to get what they wanted, namely, a viable electricity generating authority supplying the whole country. Now, with this new board and Sir Andrew at the helm things began to move. Very soon all over the country steel pylons were seen being erected, carrying cables. Some folk complained that they would spoil the look of the country-side, but Sir Andrew had a department formed within the C.E.B., the task of which was to see that the pylons were erected without spoiling the amenities and preserving the environment as much as possible. Today we take the pylons for granted because we know they are the quickest and cheapest method of conveying electrical current from the power stations to homes and industries. But this all happened just two years after I had left Sir Andrew's service, although, of course, I kept in touch with him while I was taking a course of studies, which was the reason why I left. However, while I am showing the kind of gentleman he was into whose service I was entering, I must say that there was another vital industry which the government asked Sir Andrew Duncan to rescue while I was working with him and that was coal mining. The first move Lloyd George made after the war

to retain control over the coal mining industry, which the government had held, with other vital industries during the war, was to create in 1919 a new government office, that of Coal Controller, and having discovered the skill and brilliance of Sir Andrew Duncan in his vital work during the war, appointed him to the new position. There were many problems in the coal industry when the war finished. On one hand the coal owners were asking for their pits to be returned to private ownership, whereas the men were demanding nationalisation of the mines as well as other improvements. Lloyd George also made another shrewd move at that time, which some writers today see as a delaying tactic. He appointed a Royal Commission on mines under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Sankey, composed of an equal number of representatives of miners and owners. Their report is still known as the Sankey report. Without going into this matter at length, for my purpose is only to show why Sir Andrew was chosen and to ask why such a brilliant and beneficial expert to this country should now be quite forgotten. The following year the title was changed and a modified department was renamed "The Advisory Committee of Coal Mines Department." Sir Andrew was its chairman for nine years until 1929. In the records today some colourful characters come into the story, but none of them seem to have accomplished much in solving the problems. The Sankey Commission was no more than a few months working, and some writers say it was a tragic failure. The troubles still went on, so did Sir Andrew's efforts as chairman of the Advisory Committee. For nine years he continued with his wise and fair recommendations. When Lloyd George resigned in 1922 and was succeeded by Bonar Law, Sir Andrew still went on. When the Labour government was elected in 1924, and Ramsay MacDonald became Britain's first Labour Prime Minister, Sir Andrew remained in office. Then on through the General Strike in 1926, and after it was over, when the government proceeded to break the miners by repealing the Seven Hours Act of 1919, reducing the miners' wages, lengthening their working hours, and victimizing their leaders. By 1929, through nine years of Sir Andrew's work, many of his committee's recommendations had been accepted, some leading to the great improvements in the mines today. But at the time I joined Sir Andrew in 1917, he had been brought down from Glasgow to London to be near Parliament, because of an even more vital industry at that time, namely shipbuilding. Our position was very serious at that time.

In the war we were losing many of our ships by enemy action, they had to be replaced as soon as possible. Skilled men in the various trades of the shipyards had been exempted from military service, but materials were in short supply. Then there was the question of new types of sea going craft to match the new kinds of warfare. There were new inventions and designs and the workers needed new skills and working conditions, they also demanded higher rates of pay for the new kinds of work. There were disputes and some disaffection in the shipyards. The men had their unions to take up their claims, the employers had their federation. Sir Andrew was Chairman of the Shipbuilding Employers Federation, but he had not then been given his knighthood so was just Mr. Andrew R. Duncan, M.A., LL.B., and that was written on the envelope given to me at the labour exchange. He was a barrister and had proved himself a very skillful and just arbitrator, having settled successfully a number of disputes between the workers and employers, for while he was the employers' chairman he always made it evident that he was as much concerned about the men's point of view and gave them a fair deal. It was the kind of man he was. From time to time he was called by the war cabinet for consultation and had to make journeys from Scotland to London. This was not very satisfactory and the Prime Minister, Lloyd George asked him if he could transfer his headquarters to London to be near the House of Commons and the government departments in Whitehall. I will always be grateful to Lloyd George for making that move for, unknown to him, he created a job for a little underprivileged cockney boy which otherwise I would never have had. It was that little boy in the baggy uniform and large eyes that Lloyd George stared at as I walked up the corridor.

I must emphasise the importance of the date when all this happened. We had left the east of London towards the end of 1917 at the time of the Russian revolution. Some of it had spilled over into other countries in Europe and there were workers in Great Britain who had taken more than note of it. There were men in our armed services too who were thinking, but they dare not voice their thoughts for fear of being shot as traitors. There was a lot festering in the hearts of those men, it was all to come out when that horrible war was over. Sir Andrew had earned the reputation for being wise and just, he had a lot more to do yet between the two World Wars to help bring about a better way of life for many in this country. It was for what he had already done that he was given his knighthood soon after the first World War.

Later still, from time to time, he was given other honours by those in power in government who knew the value of his brilliant intellect and used his ability. But the fact that he improved the daily lives of millions of ordinary citizens of this land does not seem to have been generally recognised. I am sure that the results of his hard work and absolute sincerity, lives on in the daily lives of all of us here today.

The address on the envelope from the Labour Exchange was No. 9 Victoria Street, Westminster. It was one of a block of terraced buildings all exactly the same Victorian era design, four stories high, with the ground floor elevated above ground level with steps leading up from the pavement to the front door which was set in an arched porch. There were also steps leading down to a basement. The whole block was continuous from Great Smith Street to Strutton Ground. Modern buildings have replaced them today. The Shipbuilding Employers' Federation was on the first floor, so inside the front door I had to go up some more stone stairs with iron work bannisters. I entered the swing doors at the top and handed my letter from the exchange to a clerk. He showed me into a large long room looking out on Victoria street, which I learned later was the board room. I was asked to take a seat at the end of the room and I saw there was another door on the end wall near the windows. In a short while that door opened and a gentleman came in. He was of good build and very good looking and carried an air of authority and dignity. I got up at once and stood to attention. His first words to me were, "have you been in the boy scouts?" "Yes, sir," I replied. "I thought you had," he said. He spoke with a slightly Scottish accent. He explained to me what my job would require and outlined my duties, one of which would be the operating of the telephone switchboard. He looked at me and said, "you are a bit small, I wonder if you can reach the switchboard," then at once continued reassuringly, "but we will find a way, we will get you a box to stand on, or something, I'm sure you will be alright for the job, when can you start?" "On Monday, sir," I replied. He looked at the form from the Labour Exchange and saw my name was John Gilbrock. "Are you called John, what are you called at home?" he asked. "They call me Jack at home, sir," I said. "Well we already have a Jack here, so I think we will call you John,

and we will see you here on Monday morning at nine o'clock." He moved with me towards the boardroom door to let me out, when I turned, looked up at him and said. "I can get a reference from my last job, sir, to bring on Monday." "I do not need a reference," he said, looking straight into my eyes, "your face is your reference." I felt a thrill within, here was a gentleman of authority and dignity who trusted me, he was the very first person to make me believe I had some value. I felt I wanted to work for this gentleman, I wanted to justify his faith in me.

The general office work at the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation was similar to that in the jobs I had held before this. I was also acquainted with the routine because before we left the east of London I was attending classes at an Evening Institute, as it was known then, and when we moved to Battersea I immediately enrolled at a London County Council Evening Institute at Clapham Junction. My subjects were, English, Office routine and Book-keeping, which in those days was basic accountancy. There was only a small staff and most of the members had been brought down from Scotland with the Chairman. Three of the four lady typists were from Scotland and the fourth was taken on in London. The lady in charge of the typists was also Mr. Duncan's personal secretary. She seemed a mature lady to me then, but I know now she could only have been in her late twenties. She was the personal secretary of a remarkable man and she was a remarkable woman. Not only was she a very skilful shorthand typist, but the most intelligent and efficient secretary that any superior business man or high ranking person could possibly have. When Mr. Duncan was knighted and became Sir Andrew Duncan, and the government gave him one important appointment after another, she went with him to every appointment. She was very particular about all the documents produced in her office, particularly those I had to take to various government departments and the House of Commons, knowing, of course, that a copy of each would be in the hands of the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George. One occasion will always stand out in my mind. I had to collect some documents from the typing room to take to the House of Commons. Sir Andrew had told me they were very important. They were not quite ready when I entered the room and Miss Michie, for that was this remarkable lady's name,



was watching another typist running them off on a duplicator. Bear in mind that the electrically operated duplicator machine had not been invented up to the first World War. We had the best equipment that could be obtained in those days but our duplicators were the old Roneo Rotary Hand Operated type. I watched the pages coming out and piling up and, as with all Miss Michie's work, each one was faultless and laid out like a work of art. I looked up to Miss Michie while I was waiting, she bent down, looked into my face, sighed, and said, "Oh, John, don't look at me with those eyes of yours, you will break all the hearts of the girls later on." I believe I blushed, but although she was so much older than me, I thought she was a lovely lady and I loved her. She often tried to improve my cockney speech. When I uttered some horrible phrase in clipped cockney, she would say, "now John say that again, but say it like this," and I would have to repeat as near to how she said it as I could. The few men on the staff were late middle aged because all the young men were in the armed forces or on other war work. We had two teenage lads older than me but not yet old enough to be called up for service. They both were from two different public schools, they both frequently teased me about my speech and told me how I should pronounce my words. So I was the only cockney among the educated Scottish and educated English and I tried to improve. After a few months two other lads of my age were taken on the staff and they both had been to good schools, but being my age I could relate to them more like my own pals at home and being a cockney boy I was always larking about and playing practical jokes. Once or twice I got a dressing down about it from the older man in charge of our section. But one day something got broken and he reported me to Sir Andrew and I had to go in before him. I was very annoyed at having to go in before him, I did not think what I had done justified such treatment and I did not want to get a bad reputation before Sir Andrew. So when he gave me a severe wiggling I just stood staring at him in defiance, until with a much sterner voice he said, "don't look at me like that !" and I turned my eyes down. After he had finished what he had to say he walked over to the door with me to let me out and as he opened the door he put his other hand on my shoulder and with a kinder tone said, "John, you have ability and I do not want you to waste it." Immediately I wanted to cry, the tears came to

my eyes, I went down the corridor and turned quickly into the little telephone room, I did not want anyone to see me cry. All the time he was reproving me I was defiant, but the moment he spoke kindly I melted. I waited until I was ready before I went back into our office.

One thing in which I felt privileged, if Sir Andrew needed something of a personal nature, he always chose me for the errand. In all the years I was with him he never chose anyone else. He was now in London but the shipbuilding yards were in the north of England and in Scotland. If there was an urgent call from the government for him to have consultation with the shipbuilding people in the north, he would telephone to Lady Duncan at their home, which was in Streatham before they moved to Beckenham in Kent, ask her to pack some things in a suit case, and tell her he was sending me for it. The first time I went there, when Lady Duncan asked me in, she took me into their dining room and asked me if I liked walnut cake. Remember, there was a war raging and we were having to go without many things. This was the year 1918 and while we had to queue up for foodstuffs for the first three years of the war, during this fourth year the government at last decided to introduce the system of rationing and while we all got our share of the basic foods there were many things we had to go without. Walnut cake with icing on top was a great treat for me. So after that, it was always the same treat each time I went, I always had to go in the dining room for my piece of walnut cake.

Only a week or so after my reprimand by Sir Andrew, he sent for me and told me he was giving me some promotion, he thought I would like something more interesting to do. "Can you draw?" he asked. "Yes sir, I was good at it at school," I replied. He said he was putting me as an assistant to Mr. Tilburn. Now he was our technical advisor. He had been a shipyard manager and was due for retirement but before he could retire he had a breakdown in his health. He also had one eye, the other he had lost in a shipyard accident some years before. He was a big built man with a deep voice but he rarely spoke to anyone other than Sir Andrew, and if he did he was brusque and impatient, so very few on our staff had anything to do with him. He went into his office each morning and unless he had to see Sir Andrew, left it in the evening without having anything to do with anyone else. Yet strangely I

was quite prepared to work with him, I was not scared of him, I thought he seemed to be doing some interesting work in his room with his drawing desks and slide rules, set squares, coloured pens, brushes and inks. He appeared to take to me from the first day; of course, I did not know then that Sir Andrew had asked him to help to make something of me. He showed me what I would start with, not making my own drawings but tracing his for blue printing. Blue prints were processed by an outside firm near St. James Park and once or twice a week I had to go there with my tracings or those of Mr. Tilburn. I always managed to work the time I went to coincide with the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. I would take my tracings to the firm leave them, go to the Palace to hear the band play, then follow the band back to Wellington Barracks at the end of the park and go back to the firm for my blue prints. But this came after I had been with Mr. Tilburn a few weeks, for I had been placed with him just about the time when the war ended. I started at the Federation at the beginning of May 1918, worked in the general office and telephone room up to November 1918, when the Armistice was signed. Everyone was anticipating it would happen on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. We opened our board room windows to listen, the weather was quite good for November. The whole atmosphere was tense. Big Ben began chiming eleven o'clock, we counted the chimes, then waited hardly daring to breathe, then suddenly a maroon went off, bells rang and a roar of cheering from the streets, it had been signed and London went mad. London buses then were open decks. Nobody bothered about paying fares they all jumped on buses went up on the open decks and even stood on the little roof over the driver's head, waving anything they could get hold of. Where the flags suddenly appeared from I do not know, but many people waved union jacks. Everything seemed to be converging on Whitehall and as nobody wanted to work we were given permission to go out. I went down Whitehall as far as Trafalgar Square, but I could not get near the Square, everybody was singing, dancing and generally letting off steam. When I returned to the office we were told we could go home. It was shortly after this that among the attempts to get back to normality the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace was resumed after the wartime

break and London began to restore some<sup>of</sup> its peacetime high-lights. There were times when Mr. Tilburn had to go away for a couple of days, I do not know why or whether he also went north sometimes to the shipyards. As modifications were made on the ships because of requirements of the war, new rates of pay had to be worked out for the men constructing these new designs. Drawings had to be made of the parts of the ships where these modifications were added, then calculations had to be worked out on various thicknesses of steel and sizes of holes drilled and rivets fixed and new rates of pay had to be agreed upon between the mens' unions and the employers through our Federation. This was the job of the technical advisor with whom I now worked. There were quite a lot of statistics in our work. That is why our room was called the Statistical department. When Mr. Tilburn went away he usually left me some work to do and the first time he went after I was placed with him, he left me to draw some graphs. These were not tracings, I had to make these up myself from statistics, on graph paper with various rulers, slides, set squares, various types of pen-nibs and coloured inks. I was in the room alone very engrossed in what I was doing and well on the way to completing a graph, when Sir Andrew Duncan came in to see me. He came over to my desk, looked at my work. He asked me if I had done all of it, and I said I had. He said he was pleased and that my work was very neat, then added, "John, I think we have found what you are best suited for and I hope you will apply yourself to this work. You will have opportunity here to move on to higher things." I was still immature although I was now 16 years old, but I was intelligent enough to see how fortunate I was. Sir Andrew was not treating me as employer to employee, he really was concerned about me, he wanted to bring out any ability he thought I had. It was shortly after this that I found he was on the committee of the Boys Welfare Association of which the Duke of York was Patron. They had a head office in London but had to find a larger meeting place whenever the Duke was to preside. Sir Andrew had offered our board room for a meeting and none of us did our usual work on that day, we all helped to get the board room ready although the cleaners had been over it early that morning. Everything had to be spotless. We had been told the time the Duke was coming and I was down the end of the corridor in a room with the lad with whom I was friendly, Louis Chabanais, son of a French

chef at one of London's large hotels - the name I forget now. We had a good view down the corridor and saw the Duke come in with his equerry, they were both in Royal Air Force officers uniforms and we watched them hang their uniform caps on the hooks opposite the board room and were shown into the board room where everyone else was waiting. The older man in charge of our section was an ex-journalist and was in the meeting to take notes. So Louis and I were on our own and I got my urge to be up to my tricks again. I whispered to Louis, "let's go down and look at their hats." I saw where the Duke had hung his hat and where the equerry had put his, so when we reached them I lifted off the Duke of York's and Louis took the equerry's. I looked at the lovely gold braid around the peak and then put the cap on my head and grinned at Louis. He then put the equerry's cap on his head and grinned at me. Then we hung them up and crept back to the room. Some years after this, when King Edward VIII abdicated and the Duke of York was crowned King George VI, I claimed that I had worn the King of England's hat on my head. As I think back now I realise that at that immature and formative stage of my young life I was a strange mixture. I was a rebel from my earliest days. I admired some of those who lived in the upper stratum of society, yet had an intense dislike of those who would not give to those of us on the lowest level of life, a cat-in-hell's chance of rising up to where they were. Those who were not born in my age may not understand this. It has taken two world wars since then to change things. But, as I was saying, I was a strange mixture when I was with Sir Andrew, because in spite of all that I had vowed in my boyhood, here was I now among the highest people in the land, working, not for my own class but for the bosses, not with the mens' union working out the rates of pay they were claiming, but with the employers' federation working out wages from their point of view. Was I not in the wrong place? No, for the difference was Sir Andrew Duncan, he was one of the most sincere and fair arbitrators this country has ever had, I know he was as much concerned that the men had a fair deal and good working conditions, as he was that the employers should have viable and profitable industries. But as much as he helped me personally, he did not know how I was thinking and this was a crisis period in my life, several things combined at this time to change my outlook and I was directed along a new path.

About two or three weeks before I was introduced to the folk who were responsible for my changing view of what life is all about, I was walking along St. John's Hill towards Clapham Junction Station when I saw and heard a man preaching on a street corner. I joined the few people listening. He was telling us all about the revolution in Russia and endeavouring to persuade us that we should make communism our way of life in England. We did not use the term 'communism' then but 'bolshivism' and we referred to the bolshevik revolution. The preacher referred to Lloyd George's speech at Wolverhampton on 24th November, thirteen days after the armistice in 1918, when he spoke those now famous words, "What is our task? To make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in." The preacher spoke about the men in the armed services returning to civilian life, should they come back to the bad conditions they suffered before they went out to fight for their country? The conditions he outlined I knew were only too true and I was all for what this preacher was advocating. Of course, I knew nothing then about communism, I only knew there had been a man called Karl Marx but I had not read his works and knew nothing of his philosophy. What was going on in Russia was different, from all the reports given to us it was all bloodshed and taking over of the country by force of arms. I was all for the preacher's idea of the working classes taking over the running of this country but I did not like the thought of bloodshed, we had just had more than enough of that in the war and I had seen quite a bit of it myself. As I left the preacher I kept turning over in my mind what I had just heard. There had to be better conditions and standard of life for us. Why could we not stir up all the people without any killing. I could preach and stir people I felt sure. I had done a bit of entertaining with my father and I had done solo acts when I had been on a platform before an audience and played and sang to them, I could also preach to them. By the time I reached home I had already made up my mind I was going to put the world right. When I entered our house I immediately began telling my mother what I had heard from the street preacher. She listened for a bit, then said, "he sounds like an anarchist to me." With one fell blow she destroyed all I had been planning. An anarchist to me was someone who blew up places with bombs and destroyed <sup>e</sup>verything, but had not got anything constructive to put in the place of what he had destroyed, that was no good.

About this time my mother had become acquainted with a little lady who had been a Methodist Deaconess in the north of England. She had come down to London to take on the position of deaconess at an independent mission in Battersea, situated in the poor streets at the back of Clapham Junction station. The deaconess in the course of her visitation, had a talk with my mother and my mother was so impressed by the little lady herself that she was persuaded to attend the womens' meeting at the independent mission. Up to this time my mother had been a member of the Church of England but since moving to this new district she had not attended any church. The independent mission had two functions, firstly, it was the headquarters of an organisation that had members in churches of all denominations all over Great Britain and in some overseas countries among missionaries from this country. The organisation was founded by a Queen's Councilor in Queen Victoria's time named Reader Harris Q.C. He and his family had lived in a large house on Clapham Common during the days when only the privileged occupied the properties there and one room in that house was made the office of the organisation, where correspondence went out and literature and books were kept and issued. In course of time it was decided that something should be done for the working class people in the poor area of Battersea so they bought up a disused swimming bath, with a house attached to it, turned some of the rooms into the headquarters of the organisation, built a floor over the swimming bath and made a large mission hall of it. Now, while it was not a Methodist mission, it taught John Wesley's doctrines and in particular his dogma of Christian perfection, otherwise known as 'sanctification.' Now, let me say at once, as one who has, in my long life, been through almost every branch of the Christian Church and worked with almost every Christian denomination both in Great Britain and abroad, and have made extensive studies in church history and doctrines as well as comparative religions, that this doctrine of 'sanctification' is a harmful and discreditable dogma, developing in those who believe it a sense of superiority and a 'holier than thou' attitude towards other Church members and the rest of the human race in general. Yet Reader Harris formed this organisation for the express purpose of getting members who believed they had received this experience to infiltrate into other churches to show how far short they were of what was possible for them and to make infiltrators of them. They must receive this experience.

My mother liked the Mission and was soon attending the Sunday services as well as the women's meetings. Then came a special occasion. A missionary and his wife had returned home from Korea and were to hold an evangelical revival meeting at Speke Hall, which was the name of the Mission, and my mother persuaded me to attend on the opening evening. My sister came too. The preacher was the Reverend John Thomas, a Welshman, with a florid and emotional style of preaching, and was a strong fundamentalist. Up to this time I was a confirmed member of the Church of England and had transferred from being a member of the choir in the east of London to a choir in Battersea. So, I had always believed that at my baptism as a baby I had been made a child of God and a member of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is one of the things I had learned when I had to memorise the catechism in preparation for my confirmation. But these people at Speke Hall said no, those ordinances like baptism and confirmation were only outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace, it was the inward and spiritual grace that mattered. They said it was as simple as this, that you were either lost or saved and that if I had not been saved then I was still lost. I did not feel lost but they said I was. This was my first experience of crowd psychology or what Aldous Huxley names in his appendix to his book, "The Devils of Loudun," herd intoxication or crowd-delirium." At the end of the preacher's very emotional address he invited those who wanted to be saved to come out to the rostrum at the front. People went out from seats all over the hall and I followed. After some prayers we were told that the act of faith we had made should be sealed by an open testimony to the fact that we had taken Jesus Christ to be our Saviour and that we knew that we were saved. We all had to say this before the hall filled with people. Some of the newly saved people could hardly be heard, they were shy of speaking in public, when it came to my turn I tried to speak up like I had when I had been on stage with some of my father's shows and this was my initiation into public speaking, preaching, lecturing and, what I now look back upon as my showmanship for the Church for over forty years. But what hooked me then was the music. They had hymns and choruses with lively jiggy tunes like the popular songs of those days. Our hymns and psalms at the church were so dreary. I played two or three musical instruments, one of which was a Wheatstone English concertina, a better type than the cheaper harmonica kind. The Wheatstone in the



Victorian age was the young ladies' drawing room instrument. If you were not clever enough to play a harp or lute you could soon learn an English concertina, they were designed for the genteel young lady. But by time we had reached the Edwardian age the country had been flooded with the cheaper kind of upright pianos massed produced in Germany and France, and one of these was installed in almost every drawing room of the better off, and in many homes of the poorer classes. Concertinas went out of fashion and two or three of them could be seen in the windows of almost all the pawn shops in London. My elder brother and I bought ours from a pawn shop, mine for £1. That amount of money then was about half of a working man's weekly wage, but of course, I was working with Sir Andrew Duncan and earning my own money. As soon as the people at the Mission knew that I could play they had me out with their open air meetings twice a week, on Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons, on a corner near an open market. I enjoyed it, oh, how I used to let it swing ! Then it would come to my turn to speak and I would hold forth like the man I had seen preaching communism near Clapham Junction. But what did I tell my listeners ? Just the same clichés and texts taken at random from the Bible. At the meetings in the Mission they just pumped into us their pet doctrines and we just turned them out again at the open air meetings. It was all cut and dried and God was all tied up in a little package of doctrines. They did not tell us what the Bible really is, they just kept repeating that it is the inspired word of God from cover to cover and every word of it had to be taken literally. I for one was given the impression that there were special men in times past who were more holy than us and God asked each of them in turn, "will you write this down for Me." Then they listened and wrote down exactly as God said. Then one day when all the books were written they were put together and God said "now here is a Book and it is called the Holy Bible, it is all true and it is all I am going to say to human beings on the earth for ever. I do not want one word added to it or one word taken away, and nobody must dare to question what I have said." I believe at first I even got the impression that God only spoke English, but, at least, we were told later that the Old Testament books were written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek and that later the Hebrew was translated into Greek and later still the Greek, both Old and New Testaments were translated into Latin and finally in the fourteenth century John Wycliffe translated them into English. But we were given to understand

that the holy fathers of old who put together the order of the books even in our English Bible were given their instructions direct from God. The true picture of what really happened way back in the history of the Christian church was never taught to us. However, what the folk who instructed us at that Mission did not know was that before I ever set foot in that Mission I was already paying visits to our public library and reading books on subjects that interested me. I spent quite a bit of my time in the reference library some evenings and on Saturday afternoons until the Mission used me for their open air meetings, then I could go only when the weather was too wet to hold a meeting. I have always had an enquiring mind. From a very small child I have always wanted to know why this and why that and how things work. Most of all I have always been interested in how the human mind works and a number of the books I read in the libraries were on psychology. Maybe today some of those books would be considered out of date, and yet I have one here by my side as I write this, which I found on a second hand book-stall when I was a young student, entitled The Groundwork of Psychology by G.F. Stout, M.A., LL.D., published by the University Tutorial Press in the year 1908. I also have one of the latest publications on child psychology and although the new has inevitably moved on from the old - for the universe is so created that progress will continue in spite of many setbacks, yet the groundwork of both has not changed anymore than the inherent nature of man has changed, and all history proves this. So, although I was being brainwashed by the fundamentalist Christians at Speke Hall it did not quench my urge to want to know, and when I knew also to make known. Inevitably it created a conflict in my mind. Take for instance when I picked up the first popular book by Sir James Jeans, published in 1919, entitled The Universe Around Us, and in reading it, was transported away from this little planet out into the vastness of the universe, I could not make it match up with what the Church had been telling us that this world had been created in seven days and that the sun, moon and stars had been fixed up in the heavens to give light to this earth. I discovered that there were many other suns vastly bigger than our sun. If it were possible our sun could be put into one of them like a small marble and be totally lost. Again, in the vastness of such a universe how could it be possible that God could be like an elderly gentleman with a long white beard

sitting up in heaven with a large book in which are being written, on one side all the bad things we do and on the credit side all the good things we do. Then on the great judgment day the good and bad are totalled and a decision is made as to where we shall go after this life.

This was the sort of thing taught to us as children and our education being as basic as it was, we had no knowledge of even the subjects taken in a Secondary school apart from those at a Grammar school. I knew nothing of Copernicus or Galileo and their conflicts with church doctrines and that today some sections of the Christian church still teach some things that are at least four hundred years out of date. The fundamentalists only made matters worse. They said if we were not 'saved' we would go to hell anyway, for on the great judgment day any good things on our record would be ignored because we could not qualify for heaven by any good works, only by faith. That faith, it seemed, was the acceptance of certain dogmas supposed to have been taught by Jesus Christ, Who made an atonement for our sins by paying the price God demanded as a propitiation. All I had to say was "yes Jesus, I accept and thank you for what you have done on my behalf and I take you as my Saviour." Of course, I had to believe what I said and then immediately a record of that would be made up in heaven and my name would be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I thought of it as a kind of insurance policy into heaven which, when I passed from this life will be waiting for me. When we went out to our open air meetings, besides the random texts we recited we would ask "is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?" We would claim we knew ours were, then I would sound a chord on my concertina and we would sing :

When the roll is called up yonder .....

When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.

I had not received sufficient education then to be able to question what they were telling me. If any doubts came into my mind, and I certainly did have my doubts, they said it was the devil who put those doubts there to side track us away from the Word of God. They discouraged the use of reason, they told us to soak our minds in the Word of God, which meant reading in the scriptures ancient Jewish writings some of which date back to the time of the primitive Sumerian tribes just emerging from the rituals of blood sacrifices made in a cruel way, and the making of other offerings to

appease the gods, even the sacrifice of human beings. Then a more enlightened man, Abraham, arose who learned that God did not want humans to be sacrificed, He would take a substitute of an animal instead, in his case a ram - still believing that God required some payment because men had broken His laws. Then gradually, over a period of many years, came a development of a very involved religion, centring around a covenant they believed they had made with their God, Jehovah, who promised to protect them so long as they kept certain religious rites and a higher moral code than other tribes around them. This higher moral code was later set out by Moses their great leader and law giver. The folk at Speke Hall did not tell us this, they gave a literal interpretation and a spiritual message in every sentence in both the Old and New Testaments and most of us treated the Bible like a book of magic from which we could get messages that told us the answer to our problems or what course of action we should take. Later, when I became a student, we used to tell a funny story about this method of divining from the Bible. It was about an old lady who, when she wanted to see what the Lord had to say to her, used to stick a pin anywhere between the pages, then open at that point. One day she stuck her pin in and opened to the text "and Judas ..... went and hanged himself." "Oh dear," she said, "that can't be for me." So she put the pin in a second time and opened at "go thou and do likewise." She shut it at once, then thought "well, third time lucky," so put the pin in once more and this time read, "what thou doest, do quickly." After that she gave it up. But they were all relevant texts within their own contexts. The Bible cannot be used as a book for divination, or as writings where every word printed was uttered by God just as it is. The documents in our English Bible extend over a period of about six thousand years and we must study them historically before we can begin to understand what they are all about. When we come to the New Testament we have a bigger problem. This part of the Bible has been misunderstood and misinterpreted more than the Old Testament. Jesus is seen to have come to proclaim a new religion which would supersede the old. He never did intend to found a new religion and an honest reading of the Gospels alone will show that He was anti-religion and that is why the Jewish religious leaders had Him put to death.

When they discussed religion with Jesus Christ, He said to them, "you have all the religion you need, you have Moses and the prophets, you have the highest moral code ever given to any nation, you have the law and the prophets and believe me," said Jesus, "not one jot or tittle of that will be destroyed, but what you fail to do is to apply it in daily living."

He made it quite clear that not all the observances of any religion could bring them nearer to the Kingdom of God, and it is not up there, nor out there, nor in any heaven in the skies, for He said, "the Kingdom of God is within you." But this is something I came to much later in my life so I will not dwell on it at this point, I am trying to show now what those folk at the Mission programmed into our minds.

But, of course, in fairness to those people, I must say that there were some good things they put into our minds. Even with their particular interpretation of the Scriptures, in the process of just reading them we would inevitably come across some gems of wisdom. One of those things impressed upon us I can see today had great psychological value.

It is not enough they said to be 'saved' and be forgiven by God for anything done wrong in the past. If our wrong was against any other person and it was within our power to put that right, then bound up with God's forgiveness to us, was an act of restitution to the person wronged. We would never have peace in our minds until we had put it right. There was one thing that

had been troubling me for some weeks. Now in these more enlightened days most of us know that the health of our bodies depends on daily renewal.

Regularly we discard all dead cells and waste matter and renew the chemical balance by taking in the right kinds of foods and drinks, by breathing sufficient fresh air and having enough of the right kind of exercise.

All children learn this in their biology classes. But not enough

importance is given to the same kind of renewal for the mind, and if there is something festering in that which is not discarded it will upset the chemical balance of the whole body. Another gem of wisdom in the

scriptures is "let not the sun go down on your wrath." Anyone who has gone to bed fuming about somebody who has upset them or some supposed injustice done to them, will know only too well that after lying awake turning it

over and over until well after midnight, you wake up in the morning like a piece of wet rag. Ordinary general practitioners today know that a very high proportion of the illnesses suffered by their patients have a psychological cause. So, as I see it now, the move I was led to make as a religious requirement, resulted in psychological benefit to myself when I was a teenager. This was what was on my mind.

Just after the war ended and the men were returning and industries reorganising, the government brought in new schemes for shipbuilding. Some of the recommendations were opposed by the men unless they were given assurances of better conditions and rates of pay. For one whole week the unions met the employers in our boardroom under the chairmanship of Sir Andrew Duncan. Each day the newspapers had splashed across their front pages all that was being debated in the shipbuilding industry and also all day long there was a crowd of reporters on the steps outside our front entrance. Although I was then in the statistical department, it was still my job to take important papers to government departments, Sir Andrew did not change that when he promoted me, probably because I was known in the various Whitehall offices as well as to the policemen on the public entrance of the House of Commons. On the occasions when I had to go out to deliver something, the reporters would crowd around me asking if I knew what was going on in the board room. I pushed past them assuring them that I had not been in the board room and had seen nothing that had been reported. But all this extra activity meant that we were having to work longer than our normal times each evening. It came to Friday and the union men had departed in the early afternoon but there was still a lot for those of us on the staff to do resulting from the discussions. The younger ones of us were a bit fed up with having to stay late each evening, we still had to come in on Saturday mornings then, and we could not see why we could not get away at our usual time on the Friday evening. It was December, a little more than a month after the armistice and being winter it got dark early and our electric lights were switched on about three thirty in the afternoon. It was only possible to work late if the lights were on. Now in those days ordinary folk did not know anything about electric fuses

and if anything went wrong an electrician had to be sent for.

Our firm had an electrical contractor that did our system. But in those days our electrical installations were so elementary and also, I think, dangerous, that if one fuse blew all the lights in our offices would go out. We had, at that time, a young fellow who had worked with an electrical firm before he joined our staff, he was a couple of years older than me, his name was Barnett. He knew, not only how to put fuses in but how to blow them. I also had been working with an electrical firm before I joined Sir Andrew and I knew how to blow fuses, indeed I had already blown one accidentally at one firm while I was experimenting and had not only put the ground floor of a large building in darkness but got my first experience of a hefty electric shock. Mr. Tilburn was away, I had our office to myself. Barnett came in and said to me, "it's easy isn't it, if we don't want to stay late tonight?" He pointed to a two-pin socket on the wall by the side of my desk. I knew what he meant. We discussed it. He said he would do the job if I would stand by my door and keep watch for anyone coming along the corridor. I took up my position, Barnett went over to the socket, I signalled to him that all was clear, a shower of sparks came out of a fuse box almost over my head and out went all the lights. It was 4. 30.p.m. and we knew they would not be able to get an electrician until the morning. There was a bit of fuss and bother going on in all the rooms and people calling out "what's happened?" Somebody went down to the caretaker for some candles. The head of the staff told the rest of us we had better go home. Now when young people do these things for a 'lark' as we called it then, or for a 'kick' as they say today, we never think of the possibility of further implications. The next morning the electrician came before we arrived, went over the whole system, put in a new fuse, then reported that there was absolutely no reason why the fuse should have gone, it must have been done deliberately. Before long word was sent around to all the younger men and lads that Sir Andrew wanted to see each of us in his office one at a time. At a distance Barnett made a sign to me not to say a word and I signalled back with a look and slight shake of my head that I would not.

But in spite of my putting on an air of confidence, my mind was in a turmoil. I could not let Barnett down, I could not squeal on him. Besides in doing that I would implicate myself, I kept watch for him. Yet I did not want to lie to Sir Andrew, he was the very last person I wanted to lie to, he had helped me, had confidence in me, what could I do ? I did not have much time to think, it was my turn to go in. He asked me if I had anything to do with the fusing of the lights and I said I had not done it. Then he asked, "but do you know who did ?" and I replied that I did not. He did not question me any more but asked me to tell the next person to come in. But I had not got away with it and knew from that moment something had gone. I was too young and unenlightened to explain what it was. Outwardly things seemed the same, my work was the same and Sir Andrew still chose me for his personal errands, but something was quite definitely different. Now, in my old age I know what was different. I had severed a relationship, I had destroyed a right relationship to another human being by a lie and the only thing that could restore that relationship was the truth. But I was to carry that on my conscience for over two years before I finally put it right and restored that relationship.

As I have said, this incident happened a few weeks after the war had ended. I pushed it down into the bottom of my mind hoping it would all be forgotten. The next year, 1919, came and we had not gone far into the year when the news got around our office that the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George had given Sir Andrew a very important appointment. It soon became official, he was made Coal Controller and his new offices were further along Victoria Street in the Hotel Windsor. That hotel is no longer there today, in place of it is built the larger complex of New Scotland Yard. As soon as I heard of the new move I felt very disappointed. I thought Sir Andrew would now have a new staff and would no longer need me for his personal errands. But I need not have worried. Although he would no longer be Chairman of the Shipbuilding Employers Federation he remained on the board as Vice Chairman and still kept in touch with our offices. While <sup>he</sup> did not now have journeys to the



shipyards, he had instead journeys to the coal mines. It was only a short while after he had settled in the new offices when he 'phoned over to our secretary, who came to me to say that Sir Andrew wanted me at the hotel. It was another journey to his home for his case and I was pleased to know he was not using anyone on his new staff but still retaining me. As I said a little earlier, the post of Coal Controller lasted only one year and in 1920 Sir Andrew returned to his old office with us. As I understood things then, it seemed that his new position as Chairman of the Advisory Committee of Coal Mines Department could be run just as well from our offices. Sir Andrew was still acting in an advisory way to the shipbuilding federation and both these positions had government backing, so he used his old office for both, the temporary offices at the Hotel Windsor were closed, and the civil servants who had been loaned to give a start to the new appointment, returned to their offices in Whitehall. I felt much happier now that Sir Andrew was back with us. It was in the Autumn of that year - 1920 - when I was caught up in the religious experiences of the Speke Hall folk and a few months later, in the Spring of 1921, when I decided to put right the wrong of telling a lie to Sir Andrew about the fusing of the lights.

In common with most office staffs in London, we commenced work at 9.a.m. The bosses in most offices came in about 10.a.m. But not Sir Andrew Duncan, he was always first in, in fact at 8.a.m. when only two women cleaners were already in the offices. I decided I would get in before Sir Andrew arrived as I wanted to make sure I saw him alone before anyone else arrived. Just before 8.a.m. I arrived and as I walked in, the senior cleaner opened her eyes in surprise, "what are you doing in as early as this?" she asked. I usually got in just as she was getting ready to go. I told her I had to see Sir Andrew. I was terribly nervous, my heart was beating fast and I paced up and down in the little telephone room, from where I knew I would hear Sir Andrew come in. I was determined to go through with it whatever it cost. Right sharp on time I heard the swing doors go, then his footsteps across the corridor, his door open and then close. I did not give him long, I did not want him to start any work.

Now, one of the things which helped me to make my decision to confess to Sir Andrew that I had lied to him, was that Barnett who had fused the lights had left the Federation about three months before. So I knew I could not do him any harm now. I knocked at Sir Andrew's door he called "come in," and looked surprised when he saw me enter. "You are in early, John," he said. "Yes, sir, I have come in especially to see you." He asked what about and I told him I had a confession to make. I cannot remember my exact words now but I told him I had lied to him when he asked if I knew anything about the fusing of the lights. Then I said, "I can tell you now, as he has left us, that it was Barnett, but I helped him by keeping watch for him." Sir Andrew looked at me for a moment, then said, "he told me before he left that he had done it." My eyes opened wider and he read the look in them. "Oh, it's alright, he did not give you away, he did not say anyone else was involved." I knew then that Barnett besides me had been bothered by a bad conscience about telling a lie to Sir Andrew. Of course, we should not lie to anyone but there are some people more than others who make us feel very guilty if we are not straight with them. I think it is because they are the kind of folk who by their relationship to us, generate respect for themselves. The word respect does not really describe what we feel, it is something which goes much deeper. Then Sir Andrew asked me why I had decided to tell him the truth and I told him in my simple way that I had given my life to Jesus Christ and that one of the requirements was restitution, if there is anything that is within our power to put right with our fellow men, we must put it right. Sir Andrew listened as though he was summing up all that I was saying, then gave me some advice. After saying he was glad I had decided to follow a better way of life he advised me not to be extreme, to remember that while we strive to aspire to things spiritual, we are human beings in a material world and will always have to live as humans while we are here. I cannot now remember all his exact words but the thoughts and ideas he put into my mind then have remained with me all through my life. How very important is this early programming of our data processing function within the mind, once

ideas have been programmed they are there for the rest of our lives. The mind of each of us is responsible for what we store, the brain is the physical mechanism in which the mind functions. The mind is the etherial unseen part which thinks, experiences and motivates. The brain has been examined minutely by brain surgeons and scientists and its functions are known, but nobody knows exactly what mind is. But it would appear to be the spiritual part of us, the real person. What I am outlining are not theories but processes which have been proved in laboratories and operating theatres by eminent brain surgeons and scientists. There are books published for the the general public on their results, written in every day language. I am interested in the subject because I think it is very important that we should understand that everything in our lives happens first in our minds. So I get the books that inform me. One notable person in this field of science is Dr. Wilder Penfield, a neurosurgeon from McGill University, Montreal, who in 1951 began to "produce exiting evidence to confirm theorectical concepts which had been formulated previously." Dr. Thomas Harris M.D., in his own book, gives an account of some of the findings of Dr. Wilder Penfields's experiments. Some of which he records as follows. "During the course of brain surgery, in treating patients, Dr. Penfield conducted a series of experiments during which he touched the temporal cortex of the brain of the patient with a weak electric current transmitted through a galvanic probe. In each case the patient under local anaesthesia was fully conscious during exploration of the cerebral cortex and was able to talk with Dr. Penfield. In the course of these experiments he heard some amazing things. Evidence indicates that everything which has been in our

conscious awareness is recorded in detail and stored in the brain and is capable of being 'played back' in the present. Dr. Penfield found that the stimulating electrode could force recollections clearly derived from the patient's memory." Then in this account he follows with a number of examples. He shows how patients had things brought to mind that they had long since forgotten, some of them so far back in childhood that they did not know they were there. Not only could memory be restored but the atmosphere of it too, the emotional feeling, the sounds, the colours and even the odours connected with the incident. One of Dr. Penfield's conclusions was that the electrode evoked a single recollection, not a mixture of memories or a generalisation, which would seem to show that every thought, word and deed of ours is recorded in sequence and resides in its own minute part of the physical brain. When we bear in mind that the scientists tell us that there are at least twelve billion cells within the brain, we can see that there is plenty of room for a life-time of experiences to be programmed. I am taking time and space to include this from the experts books, because I want to show how that, in spite of the peculiar beliefs and ancient myths those fundamentalists programmed into my brain, they also sowed some very important truths. This idea that one should put right with one's fellow man any wrong one has done to him, is psychologically sound. We may push down into our subconscious things of which we feel guilty, thinking they will all soon be forgotten and finished with. But not so. Had I not taken that step to put right with Sir Andrew the wrong I knew I had done, it would have festered down in my subconscious for the rest of my life. It would have caught up with

me ultimately. I have had to help a number of people since then in the course of my work as a minister, who when sick and facing the end of their lives have been much troubled by the forgotten past coming back to them after it had gone from their consciousness. I am glad the Speke Hall folk at least put that truth into my mind. When I came out of Sir Andrew's office that morning I was elated, I felt on top of the world. John Bunyan would have described it in his picturesque language as having a great burden lifted off his shoulders. I felt it as something vital that had happened deep inside me. This too, I have learned since those days, was inherent in all that Jesus of Nazareth taught. He dealt with people on the inside, how they thought within themselves. He said we are what we think inside. One of the Gospel writers makes this remark about Jesus, "He knew what was in man." Of course, in these early days I am describing, during the first stages of my journey through life, I had not learned then what I have since by years of experience. But I was on the right track in those days, I was heeding the exhortation of Jesus to think, look, observe, consider everything we get from the experiences of life, from everything we see around us. It was not so much book knowledge then, in fact we were encouraged only to read one book, and that was the Bible, every word of which we had to accept literally. But I was learning from another source. I was a good listener when young and I had a vivid imagination. When older people told me of their experiences, I listened to every word, and my imagination would take me right into the situation they were describing. These theories about mind and memory, came to me first through listening to an actual

human experience. The experiences came first, the theories later, but when I got the latter through my studies, I knew I had understood the experiences. There was an elderly man who was a member of the Mission who occasionally came to help in our open air meetings. He was always well dressed in a tailor made suit and trilby hat and looked a real gentleman. But when he spoke he spoiled the picture, he was as broad cockney speaking as I had been before the ladies at our office had worked on me. His name was Mr. Dearman and he had been at Speke Hall for about twenty years since his conversion. If he gave a short speech at our meeting, what he called his testimony, it was always the same, and the way he phrased things showed he had never had any formal education. Indeed, he told me that before he went to Speke Hall he could not read nor write. He told the people he had been a bad man but after he gave his life to Jesus Christ he was changed and been happy ever since. But at no time did he ever say what led to his conversion. One day I met him in the street and as we walked he told me his story. He had been a bargeman on the barges on the river Thames from the Wandsworth jetty down to the mouth of the river. They were tied up at Wandsworth one day, and while he was handling some cargo, slipped and fell overboard. He could not swim and nobody saw him go over. When he came up the first time he tried to shout but was choking with water and went down again. When he came up the second time, a man the other end of the barge saw he was missing, ran along the narrow edge of the deck, grabbed a pole with a hook at the end, and just as the drowning Mr. Dearman was going down for the third and last time, caught him with the hook and held him

up to the surface of the water, then shouted for help. Mr. Dearman was a big built man and it took three men to haul him on to the barge where they gave him artificial respiration. Then they got him to hospital where they kept him because he was suffering from shock, but a couple of days later they found he had pneumonia and he was in hospital for two or three weeks. There was something else bothering him but he could not tell the hospital staff about it. He kept thinking about it, wondering and worrying. Then a lady from the Mission visited the hospital to distribute religious tracts and pamphlets and went to his bed. He asked her if she could help him. He told her he had been a bad man, a heavy drinker, often in fights and a terror to his wife. He said he wanted to change his life because a very extraordinary thing had happened to him as he went down into the water. He told her then, exactly as he told it to me on the day I walked along with him. As he went down for the second time, just before he went unconscious, something came flashing before his eyes. He said it was like a kaleidoscope or a film in one or two seconds racing past his eyes and in that flash he saw the whole of his life. He emphasised to me, not parts of his life but every single bit from babyhood to the moment he was in the water, things he had long forgotten about, <sup>e</sup>verything he had said or done. He was presented with every moment of his life in that flash. At the time Mr. Dearman told me that I was nineteen years of age and up to then I had never heard of any experience such as that. I had been reading books on psychology but they had not dealt with processes like that, they were mostly to do with teaching and at that stage of my life I wanted to be either a teacher or a preacher. Since then, of course, I have read official records of this same thing happening to people who were drowning, but it was new to me then and I remember thinking, "well, if there is a record of our lives being kept up there, what about the one that is being made down here, and nobody has shown me anything in the Bible about that?" Of course, I dare not express any doubts because they immediately told me it was the devil who was putting those doubts in my mind. They said we must never heed things that man has discovered by his unaided reason because God's word is a revelation and we can know only that which God reveals to us.

To give authority to what they taught us they chose texts from anywhere in the Bible that appeared to support what they said. In this instance to prove to us that nothing can come by man's own reasoning, they always quoted from St. Paul's words in his letter to the Corinthians, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? .... hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? He goes on to say that the Jews seek a sign but the Greeks seek after wisdom. We did have one preacher who in dealing with this, did explain that the Jews had the Law of God in a book, and that nothing must be added or taken away from that Law, it was final. But the sign for which they looked was the Messiah, who one day would come and set them free from their Roman occupiers and rule over them in peace and prosperity in the Holy land as God's own special people. With regard to the Greeks the preacher said their wisdom was contained within the teachings of the old philosophers who lived and taught during the few centuries before Jesus. The preacher should have continued, if he knew, that the philosophers still lived and taught in the days of Paul himself, for he was born and brought up in the city of Tarsus which was one of the important centres of learning. One of the ancient historians of that time tells us that Tarsus was "full of famous teachers of the Stoic philosophy." Now the one great philosopher of St. Paul's younger days was Seneca, he and Paul were contemporary. It was obvious that he knew what Seneca taught, and some of the more popular ideas of Stoicism can be seen here and there in Paul's epistles. But although Paul, like most other Jews of the dispersion, were influenced by the Greek culture and philosophies, he differed from Seneca on one very important point. For three hundred years before both Seneca and Paul, the Stoics had taught that 'Reason' was the highest gift of God to man by which man could know a right way of life. But Paul denied that, he said God scorns man's reasoning, it is foolishness to God. So in place of reason as being a way of discerning the meaning and purpose of life here, Paul said that God had given a revelation by sending His Son to earth to be a sacrifice for the sins of man to pay the price required by a Righteous God and all who accepted that payment as a way back to God would be justified by God and live henceforth in His wisdom. Who was this Son of God? Paul said it was the Jesus whose followers he had been persecuting, not the Jesus of Nazareth, for Paul admitted that he had never met Him, but



in place of the historical Jesus he created a Jesus of mythology and called Him the Christ, which was a Greek term for Messiah, or one appointed and empowered by God. In all Paul's writings he never mentions Jesus without adding Christ. At Speke Hall they never pointed out the different title given to Jesus in the Gospels, where He is only called Jesus, sometimes Master or Teacher meaning Rabbi, which history shows He was, and I was too young and unenlightened to notice that the Jesus of the Gospels and the Jesus Christ of the epistles are two different persons, and that on one occasion in the Gospels when some folk asked Him if He was the Christ, He discouraged them from using the term. But young and naive as I was, I did notice that the Jesus of the Gospels did implore people in his teaching to very much use their reason, to look, think, and evaluate what they see all around them. "Consider the lilies of the field," "Behold the birds of the air," "See the sower and his seed," and other things they were to observe in God's creation. If I raised any query like this, the folk at Speke Hall told me not to be side-tracked by the devil but read the Word of God just as it is in one complete book, and I thought God had dictated it all to holy men of old, word by word, and also, at a later stage, supervised those who translated it into English. As I look back today, I realise that those years of mine under extreme fundamentalism greatly inhibited my intellectual and spiritual advance. It was not until much later when I was reading "A Short History of the World," by H.G.Wells, that I discovered my first clue in seeking the Truth about this very vital matter. Wells, in his chapter on the Development of Doctrinal Christianity, introducing Saul of Tarsus (Paul), shows how he was not only influenced by the Greek culture, but his own Judaism had absorbed much from the Mithraism and Alexandrian religion of his day, then says, "He carried over many of their ideas and terms of expression into Christianity. He did very little to enlarge or develop the original teaching of Jesus, the teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven." This was my introduction to reading the history of the Christian Church where I was to see all the additions the Church Fathers made to what Paul had started, the conflicts, schisms, sectarian divisions, and even violence among the followers of Paul's Jesus the Christ, all in the name of God.

We were not encouraged to read history other than that in the Bible itself. The intention was to make us people of the Book, or as they said the "Word of God," as though God had said all He was ever going to say for all time there was nothing else. They did tell us it contained sixty-six separate documents, but they did not tell us that they were chosen from many scores of other documents from which these sixty-six were chosen, all written over a period of over a thousand years from about the eighth century B.C., to the second century A.D., and that some of those were at one time included in the Bible, but later taken out by some ancient Church Father and his council. Then in course of time a new Church Father arose who put some of the books back and took others out. This happened several times before our present Canon of Scripture was decided. Another thing which was not made clear to us was the great difference between the Jewish followers of Jesus of Nazareth in His own country, known as the Holy Land, and the Jews in the pagan countries outside the Holy Land, who had been born and brought up under the influence of the Greek and Roman cultures, while retaining their own Hebrew Book of the Law and their Hebrew rites of worship. It was not so much the Jews in those pagan lands that Paul was concerned about, although he did convert some of them to his new Christian religion, but says quite frankly that he had been chosen by God to take Christianity to the gentile nations of the world. Now while Paul seems to be quite sincere in believing that God was doing this work through him, beginning with his extraordinary vision on the road to Damascus, which gives us grave doubts, for he tells us he was a sick man suffering from some incurable complaint, and that he was travelling at noon when the heat would have been too unbearable for any ordinary traveller to venture out, then when he describes how he was caught up into the third heaven, which was in the dome of the sky over a flat earth, we begin to wonder how that Christian church grew to be such a vast political-religious establishment propagating fear and superstition over so much of this world. When we compare the kind of life style Jesus taught and the Way of Life his early disciples followed after His death within the Holy Land but believing they too had been told to preach their Gospel to the world, if Paul's Christianity had not taken over, who is to say that they would not have built up a world-wide

following of those who shared the vision of Jesus of Nazareth of the Kingdom of God on earth, instead of that which Paul created, and which has been established, a world wide religious authority which through nearly two thousand years of its scandalous history, has accumulated so much power and wealth, by propagating nothing but myth among the masses of mostly unenlightened people. This is not the place nor purpose of this book to go into this matter in depth now, but I had to show at this point why, when I first began to be indoctrinated in these religious beliefs, I was warned by those more knowledgeable than myself, not to be gullible, not to swallow everything I was told without examining it. First there was Sir Andrew who advised me not to be extreme in my enthusiasm, then another wise and intelligent gentleman came to our office soon after I had my talk with Sir Andrew. He was a Mr. Briscoe who had returned to England from Barbados and came to us temporarily before he retired. In talking with him one day I was repeating the propaganda that had been fed into me, he listened patiently for a while, then said, "John, don't be too enthusiastic about your cause, remember that the Church has always been the very last to accept new ideas or progress." Then he gave me a couple of examples. He said that when the typewriter first came out, there were people in the Church who said God had given men hands to write, and to get machines to do men's work was wrong. Then when the telephone was invented they said it was an instrument of the devil. It was only a couple of years after that when I had occasion to discover by personal experience what he meant, and I knew then that he had not exaggerated. It was after I had left Sir Andrew's service in order to enter a Missionary Training establishment to prepare for work overseas. While I was away from home studying, the caretakers of Speke Hall retired and my parents were appointed to take the position in their place, which meant being in residence in the house attached to the Mission. When I had time off, going home with my parents meant going to Speke Hall. My younger brother had his bedroom at the top of the Mission house, and our mother put an extra single bed in there for me. It was at a very interesting time in this world's history, a new invention in communication.

94.

( FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE )

My brother Frank was just completing his apprenticeship as a telephone engineer with the General Post Office. In those days the telephone service was part of the post office and not a separate industry as it is under Telecom today. When the telephone system changed from the old manual operated exchanges to automatic they decided to install the first new exchange at Holborn in London. My brother was one of the first of the students they chose to be instructed by the American engineers who came over to introduce the system into this country. Being a student of electronics he was also one of the first to experiment with the new "wireless" which is what radio was called then in the nineteen-twenties. I watched him with the crude apparatus of the crystal, coil and 'cats whisker', with the head phones through which we listened to voices and music coming out of the air from the West End of London. Then when the first thermionic valve came out, he built up a more advanced set and when I was there on vacation, or for an occasional weekend, we would lay in our beds with a pair of head phones each listening to dance bands from the Savoy Hotel and other places put out by 2LO, London, and to us these new discoveries were making life so much more interesting. But, the ladies of the Mission got to hear about it. Oh, dear ! This newfangled wireless was quite definitely the work of the devil, and what a sacrilege, we had installed this devil's instrument in the holy precinct of the Mission itself, and we were listening to 'worldly' music and entertainment. They always made the distinction between what was worldly and what was holy and I got the impression that God did not like this world very much. So they organised a special prayer meeting for myself and my brother to pray that we would be delivered from the wiles of the devil. My brother, of course, was an apprentice in electronics, but I was a missionary student, devoting my life to God's service, so it was much worse for me, besides I had already been suspect before, when they had discovered I had been reading books on subjects they did not sanction. My mother told us about the prayer meeting the day after they held it, and my brother packed away all his electrical equipment, but he told me later that he still experimented in secret while he was still living there. Within a year from then I was accepted for a post overseas and as the

Missionary Society wanted a married couple in the position, I was married in a hurry to a young lady several years older than me - it had always been impressed upon us that God did not want us to marry anyone outside our own sanctified order, however, that is another story for later. We were abroad for two years and in that time great strides were made in improving radio reception and in most of the homes in Great Britain new radio sets were installed in designs to match the interior furnishings. When we returned, plus a new baby daughter, my brother had his own home where we saw his own up to date radio set. I asked him about the mission people who had prayed for us and he assured me that everyone of them without any exception had radio sets in their own homes. We went to visit one of the families to show off our baby daughter and we saw there the radio set in a prominent place. I remembered Mr. Briscoe's words that the Christian Church is the last to accept new ideas.

The training establishment I had entered, had then quite recently been founded by Captain B. Godfrey Buxton, M.A., M.C., who was a son of the well known Reverend F. Barclay Buxton of Tunbridge Wells. There was a fashion among young parsons and others entering various orders in the church in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, to emulate the great Missionary explorers like Doctor Livingstone and Sir Henry Morton Stanley and spend the early years of their ministry as missionaries overseas. That was quite easy then as the mighty British Empire which ruled over so many parts of the world, opened these places to missionaries. F. Barclay Buxton with other parsons founded a society to work in Japan and was a missionary there himself for a number of years, then came home to England and took the living at Tunbridge Wells. His youngest son, B. Godfrey Buxton was also destined for the Church but the first World War came just as he was finishing university, so he took a commission in the army and was badly wounded in the fighting in Flanders. After some months in hospital he was discharged but from then on always limped with the aid of a stick. He married the daughter of the founder of Speke Hall, Miss Dorothea Reader Harris, and I got to know about his Training establishment when he brought his students to Speke Hall on

some weekends to get evangelising experience in the poor working class area of Battersea. On my first contact with the students I found they were mostly from the upper stratum of society, in fact all the first students taken about a couple of years before I joined were young ex-army officers Captain Buxton had converted and, as they were at a loose end in civilian life, not knowing what they were going to do, he had enthused them with the idea of going out to some unevangelised part of the world to convert the heathen to Christianity. When I began my first term, there <sup>were</sup> some new students who had just missed being called up for military service, but at least half of them had been educated at some of the well known public schools, I was one of very few from a working class background, but, of course, I had spent five years in Westminster and had become quite at home with the upper classes. As the years went by at that missionary training establishment, fewer of the upper classes came in but more of the lower.

Captain B. Godfrey Buxton was our principal. Although he kept his army rank we never called him by it, among ourselves we used his initials, we called him 'Bee Gee Bee' but in addressing him personally we usually said Sir. He had taken a large old Victorian house in its own extensive grounds at the top of Beulah Hill, Norwood, which had been used by the military during the war and had become a bit overgrown. The area had not been built up then, and before the war was exclusively for the very rich, all the properties had large gardens and woodlands and there were masses of trees all around. It was like living in the country and I saw my first cuckoo after I had been there one week. The name of the establishment was The Missionary Training Colony and was intended to be inter-denominational but had more of a Church of England influence. Just before I finished at the Federation, Sir Andrew had to go away so a presentation was made to me ceremoniously a day before I left, while Sir Andrew was there. My last day was Thursday 31 May 1923 and I was given an official testimonial from the organisation on that day. The presentation was made in Sir Andrew's room with just the chiefs of the departments there and Sir Andrew gave to Miss Michie the task of presenting the gift with a short farewell speech and wishes for my future.

The gift was a solid silver watch and chain. In those days men always wore waistcoats that had watch and chain pockets in front, the wrist watch had not then become popular, except for young ladies who wore them as bracelets. Silver in those days just after the first World War had more value than it has today and I was proud of my gift, especially as the watch was of a very good make. I entered the Colony on Saturday 2nd June, 1923 and just had a month to get used to the routine and settle in when we started off on a two months trek. This was part of the training to prepare pioneer missionaries for long treks through the jungles of Africa, South America and other places. We were divided into groups of ten students, the group I was in had a two months trek to Liverpool, going via Buckinghamshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire and returning through the Peak District of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northampton, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire back to Norwood. We carried on our backs an army pack each with our essentials, and our larger things we packed in our kit bags and rolled up two blankets in a rubber ground sheet and these larger things were carried on a trek cart which we took in turns to pull, four of us together, changing two of us at intervals. Also on the trek cart we carried a large bell tent into which we could just fit ten people. We had to put the tent up each evening in any field where the farmer would give permission, for there were no public camping sites then, nor any rules and regulations about camping. Organisations such as the Scouts, Guides and Boys Brigade had their own camping sites around the country. Individual campers got in where they could and I think it was more fun because with all the modern facilities and hygienic conditions today it is difficult to get away from crowds of people. We were quite alone, we dug our own toilets, fetched our water from the farmer's barn and usually obtained some of the farmer's own free range chicken eggs and milk still warm straight from his own cows. I grant there was some risk in drinking the milk like that before pasteurisation and other tests were compulsory, but I seem to have survived. I went to that sort of life straight from office work in Westminster and I thought it was a great life. We started off in a heat wave which

lasted that summer for several weeks. Our hottest walk was the first day going through the suburbs of London to Uxbridge, which was quite a country district then. People all wore too much clothes in those days, thicker and heavier materials than now. We all took off our jackets and put them on the trek cart but we still had on collars and ties and I had on my waistcoat with my silver watch and chain. I also had a new pair of heavy leather army boots which I had not broken in, so on my first day I arrived at Uxbridge with badly blistered feet. Our first stretch was arranged so that we could stay for the weekend at Uxbridge and every other weekend was arranged with churches and chapels in the towns through which we passed, so that we could use church halls instead of the tent, and at those places we had to conduct meetings and take part in the church services. We had an old fashioned motorcycle and side car which one of our students had to ride as far as Uxbridge in case any of us were casualties on the first day out. He was then to leave it with the church at Uxbridge once we were out into the country. He checked up on us at various points and when we got to Hounslow for a break, I was limping so badly that our leader decided I should go the rest of the way in the side car. When the two of us arrived at the large house near the Church hall, we were shown into the bathroom and after a refreshing bath were given a good meal while our fellow students were plodding through the extreme heat of the day. When they arrived they were absolutely exhausted and obviously dehydrated, as fast as we gave them mugs of cold water they grabbed for more, they could not drink enough. I ran up to the bathroom and filled the bath with cold water then got them up there. They got in two and three at a time and as soon as they were in, the water warmed up with the heat of their bodies. I kept the cold tap on and arranged the waste plug so that there was a continual stream. After they cooled down they were given a meal and the next day being Sunday we all had a chance to rest and recover. On Monday we set out for the next stretch which was Wendover. The weather seemed hotter than ever. When we reached a point between Amersham and Wendover we saw a nice field beside a pond into which a stream was trickling and it looked clean enough for a swim.



After a cool off in the pond we erected the tent, this being the first occasion on this trek that we were using it and it was my first time in a tent. When I had been to camp with the Boys Brigade and later the scouts we had used either the territorial huts at Whitstable or the army redoubt near Dymchurch on the sea front. As my parents could not afford to pay much towards the cost of my camping with the brigade, I had been only once to both of those places, to the redoubt in 1913 and to the territorial camp at Whitstable at end of July 1914 and we had been at this latter place only a few days when on the fourth August 1914 the war was declared and we had to vacate the camp as it was needed to train soldiers for the fighting. So I had a very short holiday that year. Now I was enjoying some camping in peace time, this time under canvas. Being very hot we rolled up the flap around the bottom of the tent and decided to leave it up all night. At the training Colony at Norwood I had slept out in the open in our grounds on one or two hot nights, some of us thought it might be a good preparation for the trek, so I did not mind being half in the open on this first night under canvas. But, that night the heat wave broke with a terrific thunderstorm. When torrential rain came down we all rolled down the flap as quickly as we could, but there was one thing I had overlooked. I had made my pillow of my army pack with some of my underclothes in it, but by the side of the pack I had laid my waistcoat with my new silver watch and chain in the pocket. When I pulled the pack and waistcoat inside the flap, on rolling it down, I did not notice I had left a bit of my rubber groundsheet projecting outside. The floods rolled down the tent and into my groundsheet and in the morning I found my head was just above a pool of water with my waistcoat and watch floating in it. Watches were not waterproof in those days, I opened the back and poured out the water and then laid it in the sun which was shining once more after the storm, but not as hot as it had been over the past two weeks. I had to carry the watch another couple of days before Captain Buxton came out in his early Bentley to see how we were progressing and I asked him to take home to my parents my damaged watch and chain. It was another two months before I arrived home to take it to a watchmaker at Clapham Junction and he showed me that

while it was a very good make of watch, the works were entirely rusted and useless. He said the only value it had was the solid silver case which he was prepared to buy for the weight in silver and, as I have already said, it was a more valuable metal then than it is today. I did not let it go at once as I did not like the thought of my present from Sir Andrew and the staff being lost to me so soon. However, in a couple of weeks I decided I would keep the chain and get a bit of cash from the watch, like most students I was frequently dead broke and needed the money. There came a time many years later when I was urgently in need of cash and had to sell the chain while silver could still fetch a fair price. We did not roll up our tent too soon on the morning after the thunder storm, but let it dry out first in the sun. So we were a bit late in starting off and by the time we reached Wendover we could hear in the far distance the thunder rolling around again. So we decided not to go further but put up our tent while we still had a piece of ground reasonably drained. The storm did not come back our way but we could hear the thunder constantly rumbling to the north of us. We visited some of the houses in Wendover in the afternoon to distribute our literature then, after cooking and eating an evening meal, walked up to the top of a hill in the Chilterns and leaning on a farm gate looking northwards, we were held spellbound by what I still think was the most amazing scene I have ever witnessed in England. Westward there was a wonderful sunset, all the colours of the spectrum, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet, stretching along the whole skyline to the left of us and reaching up to the dome of the moving clouds above us. Away to the north, which in the distance formed the centre of the picture, was pitch black and across this vast dark backdrop was a fantastic pyrotechnic display of various forms of lightning, sheet lightning, fork lightning, branch lightning sending out showers of sparks from the ends of the branches, wisps of wildfire, a spectacle that no man-made firework display could ever hope to copy. Then to our right eastwards, the sky was a dark grey and stretched over the grey background was a gigantic rainbow repeating all the colours of the magnificent sunset in the west. Indeed the whole of this extraordinary panoramic display was illuminated by the colours of the sunset, not only on the dark background but on the various greens of the fields, trees and shrubs in our foreground. I have seen many wonderful sunsets even as

I have seen, in my long life, many lightning displays and gorgeous rainbows, but that is the only time, on that day in Wendover, when I have seen all three together. After this, for the whole of the two month's trek, the weather was very good, I think we had just a couple of showers and when we returned to London we were all very sun-tanned.

Our Autumn term began at the beginning of September and immediately things looked as though they were going to be very interesting to me. My first month there was in the summer and was leading up to the trek so it was mostly physical training. We began the day with a cold bath, then running and physical exercises which usually Captain Buxton took, although he could not run himself because of his damaged leg. Later the camp adjutant took charge of us. He was a missionary returned from Africa whose name was Leslie Sutton. The Africans called him 'Suto' so we called him 'uncle Suto' and that was all he ever <sup>was</sup> called during my time there. I got on with him well from the beginning, but one of the things, I think, that helped me was that I was the only one out of all those young men who could play a musical instrument. I took my Wheatstone concertina with me and it was a great asset on trek. Uncle Suto was the leader of our trek party so I got to know him quite well. So as the Autumn term unfolded, while there was one subject in which I was greatly interested, I was nevertheless disappointed in the academic side of the training, and after being bored for a few weeks, I was able to have a talk with uncle Suto about it. When I left Speke Hall to enter the Missionary Training Colony I thought I would get something more than the fundamentalist way of interpreting what they termed the Word of God by taking out of any of the documents of the Bible a certain portion and squeezing from it a spiritual message. I thought I would get something of an academic theological course along the lines of the course a young fellow I knew was getting who had entered a Methodist College to prepare for the Methodist Ministry. I had seen one of his books and when I was next in a second hand bookshop and saw an old Methodist theological book by a Rev. Dr. Banks, written sometime during the reign of Queen Victoria, I bought it for a few pence and took it with me when I entered the Colony along with one book on psychology.

Those books I put on a shelf over my bed but nobody questioned me about them. The morning lectures were given usually by B.G.B., himself. We were encouraged to make some preparation for half an hour before lectures by what was called our 'quiet time.' That meant prayers and Bible reading privately. Then came a very boring hour and half when B.G.B., gave us, what he admitted himself, were the thoughts he had been building up in his own 'quiet time.' The folk at Speke Hall gave some most peculiar interpretations of the scriptures, but all of B.G.B.'s lectures were enigmas, to me they were unintelligible, what he had read at university I do not know but it certainly could not have been theology. It is difficult to make clear to any reader of this exactly how those folk did interpret the scriptures. I will give this as a simple example. I can take a text from the Old Testament such as "Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead." To me that is a straightforward historical statement, and if I wanted to study it in depth, I would want to know what the reign of Jehoshaphat had been like, had there been any great advance or had there been a recession, had any new prophet arisen during that reign, was <sup>there</sup> progress in their understanding of how their God Jehovah related to them as a nation. Then when the king's eldest son Jehoram succeeded him, was his reign better, etc. Things like that would have given me a better understanding of what these ancient historical documents are all about. But the fundamentalists saw the whole collection of books in the Bible, not as God revealing truth through history, but as the word of God in a special Book that contained hidden spiritual messages. So B.G.B., would work away with a text like I have just given and finally come up with something so abstruse and far-fetched that, not only could I not understand what he meant, but which had no connection with the context of the text itself. Then B.G.B., would tell us it was God's message to him that he had to pass on to us, and I was perplexed because I certainly had not got the message. I did not want to offend B.G.B., he was a charming fellow and seemed to be sincere, although I think sincerely wrong. I suffered it for about three weeks into the autumn term, when it was announced that an American minister, the Reverend Dinwiddi, was visiting London and had

been asked to give two mornings lectures to us. What a difference they were. The Rev. Dinwiddi was a very interesting speaker and gave us a lot of useful information and I made copious notes during those two lectures. The evening following those two lectures about six of us had to go to a meeting in Croydon, uncle Sato came with us and I sat with him on the 'bus. This gave me a chance to express what I was feeling. I began by saying how interesting the Reverend Dinwiddi was and from that I was able to say what I felt about B.C.B.'s lectures, and when uncle Sato asked me to explain what I meant I said that B.C.B., was only giving us 'second-hand quiet times' and I told him what I thought we should be getting. I knew this would get to the ears of B.C.B., and although he never said anything to me the routine changed a bit from then onwards. It would have changed in any case because the subject I was really interested in started at that time. We all had to take a Missionary Medical Course especially arranged for those going to out-of-the-way parts of the world where there would not be any doctors within reach. It was mostly on tropical diseases but began with basic human physiology and some European diseases. The course was held under the Honeyman Gillespie Trust and while it was not directly part of the curricula of London University, the lectures were held at King's College in The Strand by arrangement with the Dean. On the first day of the course some of us arrived early and after seeing information on a notice board inside the entrance directing us to the lecture room, we walked along the corridors to find it. I paused for a while on my own and looked around, then said to myself, "well, here I am, and once again I am in it but not of it !" I had been for some years in and out of the highest government departments in Whitehall as well as frequently in the House of Commons yet always knew I was not part of the establishment. The civil servants I got to know personally took it for granted that I was one of them, but I knew I was not and even when I was working with Sir Andrew Duncan and held an official position, I was still operating only on the perimeter as far as the establishment was concerned. Of course, I always looked the part with my bowler hat and smart suit and carrying my rolled umbrella and brief case, for when I

put off my government uniform at the War Office, I never wore one again, except some years later in the second World War when I served six years in the Royal Air Force. But as far as ever hoping to go to University, for anyone of my class in those days it was almost impossible. There were no grants for pupils from Elementary schools then and although it was possible to reach a secondary school, parents of pupils would need to have a fair income even to put their children to a grammar school. Students to universities would need to have parents able to pay for them.

At least three of the students with me at the Missionary Training Colony had already been to universities before joining us and there were others who had been to public schools. I must admit I envied one or two who, like myself, became very interested in our medical training. They went on to the Livingstone College to be fully trained and became fully qualified doctors, for they had the money to pay. I was the only student at that time who came from the poorest class and could not raise a penny for further study. However, I learned much from those medical lectures. Our lecturer was Dr. Anderson, M.D., of London and Paris. He was, in his earlier years, an assistant to Sir Ronald Ross when he carried out research on the cause of malaria and his discovery that it was transmitted to man through the Anopheles, the female of a certain species of mosquito. Later, Dr. Anderson was sent to Panama and Cuba to study the cause and cure of Yellow fever, which also is transmitted through a mosquito but through the type known as *Aedes aegypti*, so, as can be expected, when we took both Malaria and Yellow fever he was very knowledgeable and inspired us with his enthusiasm. So at least those two tropical diseases I knew quite a bit about by the time I had finished that course. But apart from tropical diseases, Dr. Anderson gave me an insight into something very important that has affected my way of life ever since. In fact I would say I got far more from Dr. Anderson that has been of practical help on my journey through this life, than I did from all the Bible studies with the peculiar way the fundamentalists interpreted them. When Dr. Anderson explained to us the habits of bacteria, the ways of viruses and micro-organisms, he opened to my mind an entirely new universe.

What came as a revelation to me was the fact that each of us is a god in our own right, ruling over a world of our own. There are millions of inhabitants, all of them with their own tasks to fulfill in working for the well being of the little world we call "me." There are those whose job is to protect us from invaders who would harm us, there are warriors who are immediately called into combat if any of those invaders should penetrate the defences, many of them losing their own lives in helping to repel the invaders. Then there are those whose tasks are to repair any damage caused by the attack and build up what has been broken down. Apart from these more evident workers, there are unseen hosts of biologists and chemists in laboratories within us which, when seen under a powerful microscope, look like fantastic scenes in T.V., plays on other worlds. Those scientific workers are constantly at work manufacturing and distributing certain chemicals which must be maintained at a correct balance. Then there are those who maintain the communications and power lines running through the whole of my little world, along which messages of instructions are being flashed far quicker than I can blink. Over all this I sit as a little god in my control room operating an amazing computer. If I want a happy contented little world I must rule my inhabitants wisely. There is a certain pattern and rhythm which, if maintained, will keep my little world revolving in its correct orbit. There are rules and regulations that must be kept. I must supply my workers with the right amount of fuel and power. Most importantly I must see that I take in sufficient oxygen not contaminated with pollution, for whereas I could go on living for some time without fuel by way of food, I would survive for no longer than four minutes without oxygen. Now while it may not be my fault if other humans pollute my oxygen, it would be my fault if I polluted it, say with the tar and nicotine of tobacco smoke, all the inhabitants of my world would suffer by being impaired and impeded in their normal work. Or if I take in the wrong balance of fuels by way of food or drink, say for instance if I took an excess of alcohol, immediately those workers responsible for the chemical balance would be called upon to do overtime, they would be worked harder than they should be. Eventually they could rectify what went wrong,

but if I took in another excess of alcohol too soon I would put a further burden upon these workers trying to do their normal jobs and before long I would tire them, they would become exhausted and pack up functioning and I would not have ruled my kingdom wisely. Because, in our ignorance we are not always sure what is a permissible balance, I have had a good rule for myself which is quite simply "moderation in everything." But the reason in relating the foregoing to show what I learned from Dr. Anderson and his medical lectures, is to make clear the fact that while after all these years I have forgotten almost all of the medical and technical terms, I have retained very vividly the impression I got that we are largely responsible for the understanding and regulating of all that happens within our own bodies. The same applies to all my years of reading theology and philosophy. In communicating with my fellow men, I long ago discarded all the involved theological, philosophical and literary terms, which mostly had an origin in Greek and Latin, with the metaphysical terms which the early Church Fathers, following upon what Paul had originated, incorporated into the Christian doctrines they developed, which terms they took from the philosophies of Alexandria and Greece. As a young student it sounded very knowledgeable if I explained to a congregation the difference between Christ's human nature being described as either "hypostatic" or "enhypostatic," or of Origen's incorporation into Christianity from the Alexandrian philosophy his famous doctrine of the "Logos," or an account of the greatest controversy that ever raged in early Christendom between Arius and Athanasius and their schools of theology as to whether Jesus was of the 'same' essence as God, or of 'like' essence. It did not take me long to learn that the folk I was seeking to enlighten did not want to know about these doctrinal differences, they needed help in their daily struggles to exist, they wanted to know what was the meaning and purpose of their lives, they needed some assurance of what was the end of it all. So for the rest of my long life I have always addressed myself to my own people in their own language and my own language and explained things to them in thought forms that are both theirs and mine. This is exactly what Jesus did, He was one of the people, born among them, brought up among them, in modern parlance He was from the proletariat, understood them, spoke their language, they did not understand the complicated jargon



of the Scribes and Pharisees nor the very complicated multiplicity of laws, rules and regulations all evolved by the bureaucrats of the Temple and added to the basic Mosaic Law. But they understood Jesus and it is recorded that when they heard Him they said among themselves "never has any man spoken to us as this Man, .....for He speaks with authority and not as the Scribes." So if Jesus encouraged His people to ignore all the complex paraphernalia of the religious regulations as well as the meaningless rites and ceremonies of the Temple, and seek to follow the simple way of the Kingdom of God on earth, the Kingdom among them, the Kingdom within them, then, I decided I would discard all the doctrinal theories and creeds that I had been feeding into my mind and which were irrelevant to the way of life of the people among whom I was working and I would adopt the style of preaching and teaching that Jesus used.

The course of medical lectures was for one and half years and included midwifery, the knowledge of which I found very useful when my first child was born while I was abroad. Additional to the course we took dentistry at the Homeopathic Hospital in London. Dentistry there, was the same as at any orthodox hospital and although I never had to use that training in a practical way, I did find it useful in the second World War when I spent half of my six years in the Royal Air Force in the Dental Branch.

My course of training at the Missionary Training Colony was for two years from May 1923 to May 1925, and during that time I still had contact with Speke Hall, during vacations and on occasional weekends. It was during that time when I witnessed the first of two tragedies that occurred in connection with Speke Hall which were the direct result of the dangerous fundamentalist teaching with which impressionable young people were being indoctrinated. There was a family of five who were members of Speke Hall, father, mother, twin daughters in their twenties and a son of twenty years. They were a quiet, refined, reticent family, a unit withdrawn from the rest of us, who gave me the impression that they were a highly spiritually minded family. We knew them as Mr. and Mrs. Blowers, the two Misses Blowers and Bernard, the son being the only one whose Christian name we knew, although we never spoke to him and I never saw him speak to anyone else. They all came in quietly together on Sundays and to any week-day meetings, and all went out again quietly, with just a nod

and smile to any other members who were near to them. The only one of that family who had anything to do in that Mission was one of the two genteel young ladies. She was the pianist who played for all the services and for the important of the week-day meetings. After each meeting she quietly joined her family again and they moved sedately as a group out of the Mission. The twins were not identical and the one who was the pianist was better looking than the other and had an intelligent appearance. The first time I ever heard her play, it was a piece that could be described as of a semi classical and devotional nature, for they would not have what they called worldly music in that Mission, and Miss Blowers was giving a short voluntary while the people were coming in to the service. Now music was my passion and as I could afford it I was acquiring records of classical music for the more advanced types of gramophones being made in the early twenties. I was rooted to the spot when I heard Miss Blowers playing that piece, I knew at once she was a professional pianist. For the remainder of that service she played only gospel hymns and choruses and accompanied a soloist who sang one of Mrs. Alexander's sentimental hymns. I did not hear much else of that service, my ears and eyes were on that young lady and the lovely grand piano she was playing. After the service I asked my mother, "who is that young lady playing the piano?" "That is Miss Blowers," said my mother, then she said, "they tell me she was trained at the Royal College of Music in London, but they did not want her to play for the world but only to give her service in music to the Lord." In my mind I thought it was a pity and I wondered who "they" were. Did Miss Blowers make her own decision to play only in the Lord's service, or did her parents make the decision, or even the Speke Hall authorities and, although this is not directly part of the tragedy I am about to recount, I think it was a tragedy in itself that such talent should be lost to the world of music which is as much God's as anything Speke Hall was propagating. But this is the family who were involved in the tragedy. Mr. Blowers was retired and he and his family lived in a house in what was then a middle class road near Wandsworth Common. When we had meetings where anyone could join in, perhaps give a testimony or a prayer, no member of the Blowers family ever said a word and only occasionally did I see them speak to any

other member of the Mission then only briefly. So while Bernard was the same age as the group of young fellows I was with, he never joined us nor spoke to us but stayed with his family, so I knew something unusual must have happened when one Saturday on a weekend home, I went to the meeting and when it was open for anyone to speak, to my great surprise Bernard got up and almost excitedly and without the usual reticence we had always noticed, began holding forth on how the Lord had come into his life and had saved him and was revealing great things to him. I noticed Mr. Blowers was holding his sleeve as though he was restraining him or trying to make him sit down. Now this happened only two or three weeks before my parents moved into residence at Speke Hall to take over as caretakers. So when we got home I spoke to my mother about it and while she thought it was wonderful how the Lord was bringing him out, I said I did not like it, I thought there was something wrong. But my mother insisted that Mr. Blowers had been taking him over to a Revival campaign being held in South East of London and that Bernard had become converted there. The campaign was for two weeks, so I arranged with my brother and our friends that I would get the evening off at the Colony on the following Monday and we would go to the church where the Rev. Douglas Brown was holding the campaign. He was the sort of evangelist whose methods were like those of Billy Graham today, and I had a liking for that kind of preaching then and tried to emulate it, not knowing then the harm that kind of crowd-delirium can do. I was in my second year at the Colony so had a bit more freedom to come and go. I kept my push-bike with me and it did not take me long to travel between Norwood and Clapham Junction. We went to the revival meeting on the Monday, the place was crowded, but as is usual with those special meetings, mostly with members from other churches with a minority of friends and relatives who had been persuaded to attend in the hope that they would be among the converts. We got seats in the gallery upstairs and had not been seated long when one of our number pointed out among the crowded main part of the church below, Bernard and his father. I already had my doubts as to whether it was wise to repeatedly subject Bernard to the atmosphere of these gatherings where the emphasis was continually on our guilt and on God's condemnation if we were not saved.


Bernard was of a very critical age. At the time I joined Speke Hall he was 18 years, at the time this distressing occurrence took place he was 21 years and I was 22 years. During the years we had seen him at Speke Hall, I was convinced he was being unnaturally suppressed and restrained. Our religion, in any case was nothing but prohibitions. In order to become holy we had to deny all natural instincts, we must "crucify the flesh....that we may live in the spirit," - you see, it is that man Paul again, they are his words ! With all my mother's early religious impressions on my mind, at least we were much nearer to earthy things in our rough area, we were knowledgeable of all the basic things of life even if they did come to us in a sordid way. But Bernard was very sheltered and was passing through adolescence to manhood, he was inhibited, suppressed and frustrated. While I also was having these highly spiritual and holy ideas fed into my mind, I also was reading books on psychology and I thought I knew what was wrong with Bernard. In one of my books I had seen the comparison given of how, if a stream flowing in flood has a dam laid across, that flood will rise and burst its banks in another place. Bernard's suppressed flood was at bursting point. Two days after the Monday when we attended the revival meeting, my older brother contacted me at the Colony. Now my brother had only recently been discharged from the Royal Air Force, having served in it from boys' service in the original Flying Corps, then signed on for a couple more years in mens' service. When he came home our mother persuaded him also to enter for missionary training, but in another school in Birkenhead. He was home waiting for things to be finalised. So on the Wednesday he contacted me to ask if I would come home that evening as Bernard wanted to have a talk with us both together. This surprised me because we had never had any conversation with Bernard before. At the time arranged he came to our house and we took him into our front room. He began by talking strangely about his visions. I asked him what kind of visions he had. He was very vague and said he went into his room alone and had to turn the light down very low so that it was almost dark. Now up to that date we still had gas lighting in our homes with the small inverted gas mantles covered with a glass globe.

The gas tap could easily be turned up or down to the amount of light required. I questioned him a bit more about his visions but he seemed to have difficulty in explaining what he saw and heard, besides what he saw he also heard voices. Then he said he had really come to see us to ask us about our sister and as soon as he said that I thought we would now have the clue to what was Bernard's trouble. Now our sister Grace was then 20 years old and was a very attractive girl. He said he thought he would ask my brother and myself first to see if there would be any objection, but it was obvious that because of his reticence and inhibitions he had not got the courage to approach our sister himself and was hoping we would ask her for him. We said that while we had no objections it was entirely up to our sister, how she felt and that we would talk with her about it. But I knew in my mind that it was hopeless while he was in his present condition, he was almost incoherent in some of the things he said, but assured us the Lord was doing wonderful things for him and that when he was getting his visions they were wonderful times. He did not ask us to do anything in particular with regard to our sister, he just wanted to know her and did not know how to go about it, yet we had always had the impression that he was an intelligent chap, but very inhibited. I returned to the Colony and came home again in my usual way on Saturday afternoon. As soon as I arrived home my brother said he was going to the Blowers' home as Bernard wanted to see him. About an hour later when I was reading in our bedroom on the ground floor I heard my brother come in and pass my door on his way to our living room where my mother and sister both were, and as he went by I could feel a horrible atmosphere that came in with him. Now let me make it quite clear that I have always been of a practical turn of mind, I believe there is a natural explanation for all things that happen in the human realm and I have never been given to hearing voices or seeing visions, even Joan of Arc's voices have a natural explanation, but I definitely felt a horrible atmosphere come in with my brother. Then I heard my mother ask, "what have you got there?" and my brother said, "Bernard's jacket." "What for?" asked my mother. Then my brother explained that he had to lay it on the floor

and Bernard had said that our sister Grace had to jump over it three times and the spell on Bernard would be broken. I rushed out of the bedroom and shouted "stop that, you must not do it !" Now my brother Alec, from his early boyhood had always been a happy-go-lucky type, nothing ever bothered him, a bit careless and unimaginative. He was intelligent, indeed he became an ordained minister of the church and eventually a head master of a London School, but when young quite slaphappy. He said if it would make Bernard happy let us do it and he would take the jacket back. I said it savoured of witchcraft or sorcery, and he was not to involve our sister in it. I said to Grace, "you are not to do it," but I could see she did not want to, she seemed scared of the jacket. When my mother saw I was emphatic she backed me up and told my brother to take the jacket out of the house and back to Bernard. As soon as that jacket went out of the house, the horrible atmosphere went with it. No doubt an expert could explain the symbolic meaning of the act which Bernard wanted our sister to perform, I have my own theory but I am not a professional psychiatrist so refrain from stating it here. I will permit myself only to say I think it has a sexual connotation, but it was abnormal and evil. That was on the Saturday before the final Sunday of the revival campaign of the Rev. Douglas Brown. We did not go again but Mr. Blowers took Bernard. The misguided father may have thought he was doing the best for his son, but it was stupid, really senseless to keep subjecting his son to further, even greater doses of the very thing that was driving him insane. Every time the preacher shouted his condemnation of sin it only exacerbated the conflict in Bernard's mind between the claims of his own developing normal functions and the censure of the beliefs with which he had been brainwashed, that it was his own inheritant sinfulness. The meeting ended, it was Douglas Brown's last word to Bernard, it could also have been his last time on earth. The crowds moved out of their seats and Mr. Blowers did not notice Bernard slip away quickly among them, neither did he know what Bernard had concealed in his jacket. He made for the vestry to which the Rev. Douglas Brown had retired. Fortunately one of the church stewards was in there with him. Bernard entered the vestry, drew from

his jacket pocket a sharp kitchen knife, grabbed hold of Douglas Brown, raised the knife and said, God had told him he was to make a sacrifice of the Minister in the same way as Abraham wanted to sacrifice his son to God. The Rev. Brown struggled to push Bernard away and the steward came from behind and held Bernard then shouted for help. Another steward came in and also helped to overpower Bernard who was a big built fellow and strong with the strength that insane people have when they get a mad fit. Somebody ran for the police, who fortunately were near by, being on duty to control the crowds attending the campaign. I was still home when someone came that night to tell us Bernard had been arrested and was being held at the police station. Before he was charged a doctor examined him and also a psychiatrist was called in. Bernard was certified insane and was committed to, what in those days, was termed a mental asylum. I saw him only once, a long time after he had been committed, when his parents were allowed to have him home for an occasional weekend. He was out walking with his parents and looked much older and sadder. They did not see me and as I did not want to embarrass them, did not make myself known. The parents and the daughters were older than me, so probably by now have all departed. With the coming of new and more skilful methods of treating the mentally sick, I can only hope that poor Bernard had a few years of a more normal way of life in this world before he departed to the next.

The second and equally tragic case came several years after Bernard's, but while I am on this subject I think it will be best to relate them both in this part of my story, although chronologically it did not occur until about ten or eleven years after the case just recounted. It was the case of Cecil Newman. Now Cecil was quite a young boy during my time at Speke Hall. I knew him and his older brother and also their parents who were a very nice couple. I left the Mission to go overseas and when, after two years abroad, I returned, I settled in a position in London, lived at Roehampton, and very rarely went to Speke Hall, except now and again to visit my parents, those occasions being when there was no service or meeting in progress at the Mission. So I completely lost touch with the folk I had known at Speke Hall. I kept in touch only with

two of my brothers and my sister when they came to visit me in my home or I went to visit them. It was a year or two before the second World War when a young fellow with whom I had been friendly at the Mission and whose views about fundamentalism were similar to mine, came to see me. With all that was of interest to me in the news about Speke Hall, he told me of Cecil's problem. His parents had sent him away to some friends at a little village in Hampshire named Church Oakley, to which a lady member of Speke Hall had retired after her husband had died. It was the husband who had a second hand bookshop where I used to find some of my books. The lady took with her a younger sister who was sub-normal, so it would not appear to have been the best environment for Cecil with the problem he had. His problem, like Bernard's began when he was developing in adolescence, and his parents had taken him to their doctor because they said he was frequently masturbating. The young fellow who came to see me considered that Cecil was no worse than the average lad of his age, but, of course, Cecil had the disadvantage of being constantly in the highly spiritually charged atmosphere of Speke Hall. Indeed his parents went to seek the help and advice of two elderly spinsters who had a leading part in the work of the Mission. They were the two who organised a special prayer meeting for my brother and myself when we were experimenting with the new-fangled radio which they considered an instrument of the devil. They both wore  bonnets which had been, in the days of Reader Harris, the uniform head dress for ladies belonging to the organisation. The older ladies still wore them, they were a cross between the bonnet Queen Victoria wore and those that the Quaker ladies wore years ago. Of course, at Speke Hall anything to do with sex was taboo, it was considered all so sordid and sinful. You were permitted sex in marriage but only for the procreation of children, not for pleasure. Then we were told we must only marry a partner from our own faith, what they termed a believer, in the case of Speke Hall a "sanctified believer." We had a special speaker come on one occasion who, we had been told, was very good at giving talks to boys. He took our lads' class in seclusion in a room upstairs in the Mission, gave us each a pamphlet which explained the dangers of the sin of self abuse which



if practised would lead to softening of the brain. This gave the impression that it was part of God's punishment for this particular kind of sin. The speaker explained that it was really the cause of the fall and decline of the Roman Empire. I did not like the look of the speaker, if I may use a modern euphemism, I thought he looked like "one of them." I got the impression that he enjoyed an erotic pleasure in talking to boys about sex, and indeed, I was to have a very unpleasant personal experience of this very thing with someone who will have to be mentioned later in this book because of the importance of his position. Anyone who has studied the history of Christianity will know of the many cases where the fear of sex or the belief that abstinence in sex leads to a higher spiritual life, (the reason why priests and nuns have taken the vows of celibacy,) have led ultimately to sexual aberrations and excesses on the part of those who tried to live a spiritually higher way by the denial of normal sex. If anyone doubts this, I would advise them to read Aldous Huxley's "The Devils of Loudun," and while this treats of events in the seventeenth century, plenty of documentary evidence can be obtained covering other centuries. This will, I think, give some idea of the background of Cecil's upbringing and the ideas and beliefs that surrounded him. What advice the doctor gave I do not know, but when all the prayers and advice on the way of deliverance from sin, on the part of the elderly spinsters and others were of no avail, they decided to send him right away from his old environment to the quiet and peace of a little Hampshire village - how utterly misguided they were !

The Second World War came while he was there. People were evacuated from London into the country and a man I had known at Speke Hall, knowing the lady who had retired to Hampshire, through her help was able to rent a small cottage near to her in Church Oakley. He was in his early fifties, working class, practical and a down to earth cockney like myself. I was in my thirties by then and as I had joined the Royal Air Force for the war, I evacuated my wife and three young children with the retired lady in Hampshire. They arrived there a few months after the tragedy of Cecil had happened. I had heard about it in London but did not know all the details until I got a weekend off and was able to visit my

family at Church Oakley. I saw Mr. Guy, which was the name of the man I had known at Speke Hall and he told me the story. He appeared to be quite upset because he had not been allowed to do something for Cecil himself, the spinsters at Speke Hall were still keeping charge of things and instructing Mrs. Darke, the retired lady, in what she should do. Mr. Guy was emphatic. "What do those women know about a lad that age, why didn't they leave him alone and let me deal with him." He assured me that Cecil was no worse than any lad who met with his mates on the street corner in any town and whistled to the girls as they passed and had their coarse jokes about sex. He said he would rather Cecil had been in that environment, he might still have been alive today. With the constant emphasis on his guilt, Cecil had got to the point when his sins had heaped up over him, he felt hopeless and no longer fit to live, he decided he would end his life.

I walked with Mr. Guy half a mile along the country lane from where Mrs. Darke's cottage was to where the lane crossed a brick built bridge over the railway line down in a cutting. We stopped by the side wall and Mr. Guy pointed to the railway line down below to the spot where Cecil died. "He knew the time the express train would be coming," said Mr. Guy, then told me how he came when it was getting dusk, went down a track by the side of the bridge to the line and put his neck across the rail as he heard the train coming, his head was severed.

I must now return to a chronological sequence of events and am now at the point when I have completed my courses at the Training Colony and both the medical and dental courses. I decided I would like to apply for service with a Missionary Society in Japan. I filled in the application form, asked Captain Buxton to send his official report on my work and suitability. In a few weeks I was instructed by the Missionary Society to attend their medical officer, a Harley Street specialist, for medical examination. They made all the arrangements, I had just to attend. It so happened their own doctor was away but had arranged with another specialist in Wimpole Street, a Dr. Ernest Young,

and this once again was fortunate timing for me. Dr. Young appeared to take some interest in me. No doubt he felt he would be helping the Missionary Society in the offer he made. When the doctor's report was received by the Society, they called me up to their head office in Gower Street, London. They told me that while the doctor said I had no organic trouble and was reasonably healthy, I was under weight, thin, and he doubted whether I would be strong enough for the rigours of the Japanese climate. But, he considered I could be considerably improved with the right treatment and he offered to treat me free of any cost to the Missionary Society or myself. When the Secretary of the Missionary Society saw that I was ready to grasp the chance of free treatment by a Harley Street specialist, he made a further offer to me. He said they would be losing the young lady who did their main office work at the end of July, they would need someone with general office experience to start at the beginning of July to learn the routine and be in charge when the young lady left. He said he would arrange with the specialist to begin my treatment at the beginning of July and as I would have only to attend the surgery once each fortnight, I could walk round to the doctor and return to the office afterwards. This was all very convenient and I could hardly believe my good fortune. It was the end of May, 1925, when I had this interview with the Secretary of the Missionary Society, so I still had one month to fill in with something as I finished with the Missionary Training Colony at the end of May. I went back to the Colony after my interview to begin packing my things to go home and I got talking with another student who was leaving at the same time. He was one of the two or three at that time who had come from a working class background. He came from Liverpool and during the war had been a lorry driver there. Not many working class people could drive a mechanical vehicle then as few could afford to own a car, but if a man drove for an industry he would be given instructions and a licence. This student, whose name was Albert Wood, had just been given some work with an outdoor mission that worked along seaside resorts during the summer months, taking open air meetings on beaches and distributing literature among the holiday makers. They worked from a caravan and

118. ( FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE )

needed a driver. They also required qualified students to give their summer vacation time for which they would be paid enough for their keep. I wrote at once to the address given me by Albert Wood and in a couple of days had a reply to say I could start with him. The outdoor mission was a Quaker organisation based at Colchester in Essex and the one in charge was a Mr. George Fox, a direct descendant of the famous George Fox of the early Quaker period. We had to start at Clacton-on-Sea and had permission from a farmer to camp in a field just outside Clacton. Our caravan was converted from an old Daimler lorry which had been used as living quarters for officers belonging to a headquarters unit in France during the first World War, and after we had been on it for a week or so, travelling backwards and forwards to the sea front, I said to Albert Wood I would like to learn to drive it. He told me to get a licence then he would teach me. We drove into Chelmsford, I went to the Licences department at the Council Offices, paid five shillings and came out with my first driving licence for one year, dated 13 June, 1925 my address being given as c/o Mr. George Fox, 1, Ivy Cottage, Colchester. I still have that licence today and from it have obtained a series of many driving licences down through the years, at the time of writing this, nearly sixty years. The only driving test I have ever taken was in the Royal Air Force, during the second World War, when I had to drive a Fordson six wheeler mobile dental surgery. The Daimler I learned on with Albert Wood was very ancient, I had to push my back hard against the seat-back and shove hard with my left leg and foot to get the clutch in, <sup>then</sup> scrape the gears in with a gear lever nearly three foot high. But I soon got the knack of it and we never travelled at more than about twenty to twenty-five miles per hour. After Clacton we went further along the coast to other places. I enjoyed that June, there was a heat wave in London, indeed over most of England but we did not feel it as they did in London as we spent quite a bit of our time in the sea cooling off. I started at the offices in Gower Street in July 1925 and for my periods of consultation with Dr. Ernest Young. He explained to me that I did not get from my food all the nourishment I ought, quite a proportion was undigested and lost. He gave me some particular exercises to do, quite unlike the exercises we had done at the Training Colony, and also gave

me a prescription for something I had to take with my food that supplied something to assist my gastric juices and enable me to get more from my food. Each fortnight I went to the doctor I had put on weight. The course was for three months and when I got to the second month I had improved so much that Dr. Young told me to continue what I was doing and come to him finally at the end of the third month. When I went he said I need not attend again but if I ever felt I needed the prescription to keep it and renew it. It was something that could only be obtained from the well known chemist manufacturers Parke Davis, but my local Boots chemists always got it for me. Had I so desired I could have pursued my application to the Missionary Society for service in Japan, but at the end of September I had a letter from my brother who had gone out to Riga in Latvia to work with an organisation supported by churches in both England and America. The work of the organisation was ostensibly relief of suffering among Russian refugees along the borders of Soviet Russia in the States known then as White Russia. However, it was quite clear to me when I attended meetings in London and heard speakers, both clergy and Christian laymen, that the real purpose was to spread Christian propaganda among the people fleeing from, what was then called Bolshevik Russia, they also intended eventually to get into Russia itself. By the year 1919, the Western governments were supporting several expeditions that were invading Russia, and other groups of insurgents and raiders were encouraged, armed and subsidised. There was a British Expedition at Archangel, Japanese in Eastern Siberia, Rumanians with the French in the south, and a Russian Admiral and General of the old Tzarist regime were supported by the French fleet in the Crimea. In spite of all the difficulties and opposition the Russian government was successful in its struggle against foreign intervention and, as part of its new social order, encouraged the peasants to produce much needed food by cultivating the large areas that had been devastated by the war, particularly in the south-east provinces. Then in 1921 came a severe drought and a great famine. Millions of people starved. By the end of that year both Britain and Italy ceased armed opposition and made some recognition of the Communist rule. Then responsible folk in Christian churches felt we should do something

of a practical nature to alleviate suffering in Russia and the bordering states. There were others in the church who were more concerned to use the relief organisation as a means through which we could evangelise the Russians. We had not got a clue, in this country, <sup>as</sup> to what had been going on in Russia for many years. All that was printed in our press came by way of our diplomatists, and their attention was directed always to the Russian Court rather than to Russia. They were even ignorant of the Russian language, the diplomatic language of the Court was French. If they knew anything of the unendurable miseries of the Russian people under a corrupt and rotting Tzardom, they kept them from us. We were fed with stories like those of the rascal monk Rasputin, a fanatical religious imposter who had worked his evil way into the Court, chiefly through his power over the Tzarina. When the people grasped the chance of an end to their sufferings under a new republican government set up under Kerensky, and later under Lenin's Bolshevik socialists, our press just fed us with lurid stories of murder and intrigue by some atheistic leaders of hordes gone wild. My statement seems moderate in comparison with what H.G.Wells records of that period, I will quote from his Short History of the World, ".....the press set itself to discredit and the ruling classes to wreck these usurpers upon any terms and at any cost to themselves or to Russia. A propaganda of abominable and disgusting inventions went on unchecked in the press of the world; the Bolshevik leaders were represented as incredible monsters glutted with blood and plunder and living lives of sensuality before which the realities of the Tzarist court during the Rasputin régime paled to a white purity." H.G.Wells records history, I can record only what I have observed in my personal contacts with some of those very people.

My brother was for a short time only at the Training school when he got the chance to go out to Riga with the relief organisation which, out in the Baltic States was known as The British American Mission, but in England as The Russian Missionary Society. After he had been there a few months he was told they needed someone to be responsible for the English accounts. They needed a married couple, for the wife was needed as a typist and the male as a Book-keeper, as it was then termed.

My brother knew I was qualified as I had received my training under Sir Andrew Duncan. He also knew there was a young lady at Speke Hall who had been "throwing herself at me" for some time. She was several years older than me, indeed there were a number of these older young ladies at the Mission trying to win the younger men for the reason that the war had caused a shortage of young men in their own age group, so many had been killed in the war. It so happened that the young lady who was after me, had a friend the same age who had already hooked my older brother, and at the time he wrote to me from Riga, she was preparing to go out to him to be married there. So it is quite clear that she thought not only that it would be fine if the two brothers could be together in the work out there, but the two lady friends also, both of them married to the brothers. So she persuaded my brother to impress the Director of the Mission in Riga that we were a very suitable couple and were both qualified for the jobs. Of course, we had to go before the Russian Missionary Society committee in London for their acceptance as they would have to make all the arrangements to send us out. However, when I got to know the Director in Riga, who was known as Pastor Fetler, I realised that the committee members in London were just puppets, he dominated everything. He was a Latvian who spoke several languages, including English, fluently. I heard him before we went to Riga when he was in London and preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, known as Spurgeon's Tabernacle. That was being used as the reception centre for bales of clothing and other goods being sent in for despatch to the Russian relief workers in Europe. When I saw Pastor Fetler with his Russian style beard and piercing eyes and fiery way of preaching, he made me think of the rascal Rasputin. He was not as evil, but when I worked with him in Riga I saw other comparisons. Everything was arranged in a hurry. We went before the committee in October, were officially accepted, became engaged immediately, date of the wedding fixed for 28 December 1925 and travel arrangements and tickets the following day 29th December. There was not much romance about it, no question of falling in love, but then Speke Hall approved

of the marriage, indeed they insisted on having the reception there. They were not registered for marriages so, as I was a confirmed member of the Church of England, and as Captain Buxton and one or two others from the Missionary Training Colony were to attend, it was decided we should be married in the local Anglican church then, to Speke Hall for the reception. The following day 29th December, 1925 we set off by train from London to Dover for the ferry to Ostende, then boarded a Continental train which went all the way to Riga. We arrived at Berlin by night where many people alighted from the train and others boarded, but a tip to the guard ensured that we kept our compartment to ourselves so that we could sleep, one on each side, on the long seats of the compartment. By that date the boundaries of the Baltic States had been determined by the American President Wilson's scheme under the League of Nations, and Poland had been granted only a narrow corridor out to the Baltic Sea at Gdansk, so we were not long going through Polish territory. Latvia at Christmas time was already in the depth of winter, but when we arrived at Riga on the evening of 30th December an unusual thaw had set in, my brother who, with his wife, met us at the station, said everybody was amazed, they had not had anything like it for years. As we went out of the station the snow was slushy under foot and streams of water were running along the gutters. The sleighs had gone off the roads and droshkys (Russian cabs) which would not normally have been seen again until the Springtime, were plying for hire. My brother called one, it was a four seater, and the driver managed to pile our trunks and cases on it as well. I was surprised to see one horse pull all that load. But I was soon to see human beings almost equal what the horse could do. Porters with cradles strapped to their backs on which were piled trunks and cases and other loads. In fact when the droshky driver was loading our luggage, I moved forward to give him a hand with our heaviest trunk, but my brother said, "don't bother he'll manage, you watch !" and he heaved it up quite easily. My brother's flat was in the Russian quarter of the city where we were to stay with him and his wife until we could find a suitable flat. The thaw lasted only a couple of days when the weather returned to normal.



When we awoke on our second morning there, I saw out of the window that a fresh fall of snow had come down in the night. All the houses and flats in that part of the world were fitted with double doors and double windows. On blocks of flats the double doors are at the main entrances only, the front door to each separate flat is single as it opens to the warm air inside the main building. The inner windows are fitted in for the winter only and taken out for the summer. This ensures, not only that every dwelling is warm during the very cold winter months, but keeps out much of the noise from the streets as well. But when we went into my brother's and sister-in-law's dining room facing the street, I could just catch the sound of sleigh bells. We were on the second floor and looking down I saw a horse trotting along pulling a sleigh with the driver and a passenger. There was no sound other than the sleigh bells for the sleigh gliding over the snow made no sound at all. Then another came from the opposite direction and then still another and with each one the horse had a white nose. I remarked on this to my brother and he said the temperature must have dropped again to below zero. He said I would see when I got into the street, told me to put an extra pullover on under my overcoat and a thick scarf around my neck. He and I were going out for some shopping while the two wives cleared up. Going downstairs he told me to turn up my coat collar. The practise was, when going through the inner door, always to make sure it is closed before opening the outer door. When we were between the two doors I noticed it felt much colder but as soon as my brother opened the outer door and I walked out, it was just as though someone had slapped my face. Apart from my cheeks stinging, each time I breathed in I felt icicles form in my nose and each time I breathed out they cleared. We had gone only a few yards along the street when I noticed the fronts of my upturned lapels were white with the moisture from my breath as it froze on them, just like the noses of the sleigh horses. But I soon got used to the cold in that part of the world, it is a much drier climate than in England and once I had learned to dress correctly for the winters, I never felt the cold there as I do when we get the worst weather at home.

Our first task was to find a flat for my wife and myself, so after reporting to the headquarters of the Mission and being introduced by Pastor Fetler to the Treasurer, a young American, Paul Peterson, under whom I would be working, my brother took us to the German quarter of the city, to an address we had seen among the advertisements in a Baltic German newspaper. Latvia, with its capital Riga, has changed hands several times in its checkered history. The Latvians trace their history from Baltic tribes known as the Latgali, the Zemgali and the Livi. In the 12th century these tribes and the lands they occupied attracted the attention of both German landlords and the Teutonic Knights. The conquest of the country began under the guise of converting 'pagan tribes' to Christianity. In 1196 the Pope proclaimed the Northern Crusade against the Livs, and in 1201 the Livonian Bishop founded the fortress of Riga which became the main stronghold of the German invasion. After a bloody struggle which continued until the end of the 13th century, the Archbishop of Riga became sovereign of the Baltic provinces. However, while for many years things were fairly stable, in 1558 Ivan the Terrible in his efforts to gain access to the Baltic sea, declared war upon the Livonian order and, having reached Riga, soon defeated the Knights. Later the area was claimed by Poland, Sweden and Denmark, and compelled Russia to withdraw, while the three countries divided Livonia among themselves. But later Latvia changed hands again and for some time it remained part of the Russian Empire until the 1917 Revolution. Throughout all those years business, trade and commercial affairs were conducted in the German language and still were when we arrived and I took over the English accounts and responsibility for all the English side of the administrative work. However, as the Banks and main trading houses in Riga conducted their business in the German language at the time we were there, I had to learn that language as soon as I started at the Riga headquarters of the Mission. All the missionaries who went out from England and America had to learn Russian, for the aim of the Mission was to penetrate Russia itself and it seemed to me that the hope was that with the famine, poverty and great need in Russia at that time, the Russian authorities would welcome help coming from richer countries and as material gifts were allowed in, the agents of the relief mission

would also take in, and spread, their propaganda. It never happened, and none of us got any further than Latvia. So, as I had to learn German, we decided to live in the quarter of the city where Baltic Germans still lived and where we would get more chance of using the language. At our headquarters the majority of the staff were Latvians who mostly spoke their own language, but everyone who had been born in the country had learned at least two languages from their childhood, usually Russian as well as Latvian, and quite a number knew the three languages. Everything was posted up in three languages in the city, in all the main shops and stores, businesses and government offices and all road signs and street names were up also in three languages one under the other. Then, Latvia had self rule, so the top language was Latvian. When the Russians had ruled over the state their language was on the top, then German and lastly Latvian. When the Russians were driven out the Latvians put their language on the top, German second and Russian on the bottom. Just before we set off to see the first of the advertisements we read in the German paper, I learned a few words from my German language lesson book. My brother, in the months he had been there, had learned quite a bit of the Latvian language, as it was the tongue mostly spoken all around us. He was also learning Russian, so we managed with a mixture of all three languages. The first flat to which we went was on the first floor of a block similar to that in which my brother lived. As we rang the bell I noticed a small grill covered by a flap which opened on the inside. My brother had one on his door but as he never used it in the couple of days we had been with him, I did not ask him what purpose it had. A few seconds after we rang the flap opened, a pair of eyes peeped through and a voice asked what we wanted. My brother lifted the newspaper up and pointed to the advertisement and in his mixed languages explained that my wife and I were an English couple who had come to work in Riga and needed somewhere to live. The lady behind the grill did not open the door but said the rooms had been let. We had been told at our headquarters that there should be no difficulty in getting a place as English people were very much in favour in Riga. It was through British support that rival factions

126. ( FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE )

were driven out of Latvia in 1920, only five years before we arrived. Between 1917 and 1920, Latvia, and Riga in particular, changed hands several times. Even after the independence of Latvia was proclaimed on November 18, 1918, when a government was formed by the leader of the Farmers' Party, Karlis Ulmanis, the Soviet Russian government challenged it, claiming that Latvia had been part of the Russian Empire since 1721. They established a Communist government for Latvia, headed by Peteris Stucka and the Red Army, which included some Latvian units, took Riga on January 3, 1919. The Ulmanis government moved to Liepaja (Libau) on the Baltic coast, where it was protected by a British naval squadron. But there was also a German commander, Gen. Rudiger, Graf von der Goltz, who intended to transform Latvia into a German base of operations against the Soviets and the Allies, and to form Baltic regimes faithful to both imperial Germany and Imperial Russia. He was supported by the Baltic German barons who created a Duchy of the Baltic. It was an Allied military mission under the command of a British general, Sir Hubert Gough, whose troops were Latvian nationalists with some Estonians, that defeated the Germans with whom General Gough negotiated an armistice. The Germans had to abandon Riga, to which the Ulmanis government returned, and that government was in power during my time in the Baltic States. In the meantime, the Red Army, finding itself attacked from the north by the Estonians, from the west by the Latvians, and from the south by the Lithuanians, had to withdraw from most of Latvia. During all these conflicts and changes many atrocities were perpetrated and that was the reason for the grills we saw on many of the doors to flats and houses. At night a knock on the door would be opened by an unsuspecting resident, armed men would push their way in, arrest whoever they were seeking, take them outside and push them on a waiting lorry. The largest and longest main thoroughfare running right through Riga was known as the Brivibas street, it has now been renamed by the Soviet authorities, Lenin street. For most of my time there I lived in a street running off that main thoroughfare. I was assured by more than one Latvian friend I made, that along that main street could be seen on several occasions, lorry loads of prisoners

under armed guards being driven out of Riga by that main highway, to a secluded spot lined with pine trees, where they were made to dig their own graves, then were lined up and shot down into the trenches they had dug. By what I could make out from very confused information, it seemed that both sides carried out such atrocities. While we in Great Britain were no doubt getting exaggerated stories of the terrible things happening in Bolshevik Russia, from what I saw myself and was told by reliable Latvians and Russian with whom I worked, there was evidence that isolated cases of inhumanity did take place. Later in the summer, on the first public holiday, my wife and I, with my brother and his wife, rode out of Riga by 'bus along that same highway to a lakeside spot where people went for picnics. A couple of miles before our destination, my brother pointed to the place just off the roadside where the atrocities were perpetrated. The new regime had fenced off the area as a cemetery and had erected memorial stones in memory of the many unknown victims of the killings. So I learned why most residents of Riga had grills fitted to the front doors of their flats and houses. As the first flat to which we had gone was already let, we went to the next we had marked off in our newspaper. This was not the tenement type building with one main entrance inside of which was one stairway leading to flats off each side, as were most of the working class and artisan areas of the city, but a middle class block with a newer design. Instead of one main door into the building, it had lofty double doors in an arch that led into a courtyard with a decorative stone work centre in which were shrubs and flowers. The blocks of flats were around the four sides of the square and were six stories high. The arch through which we entered extended under a flat on the first floor and the doors to each block of flats could only be reached from inside the courtyard, and when the double doors of the main archway entrance were locked, there was no way at all one could get into any of the flats. On the right hand side of the arch going in, near the courtyard, was a door of a security man's office, which had one window looking out on the courtyard. As we went in he was standing outside his door. He wore a revolver in

a holster on a leather belt around his waist. Once again it reflected the insecurity in this part of the world. In London it was usual to have a caretaker resident at most blocks of flats, but in this city of Riga it was necessary to have an armed guard. As we walked in through the gates he looked at us with that silent, wary, immovable look that a guard dog gives when a stranger walks into its territory, it does not bark, nor growl, nor even move, but just looks without a flicker of its eyelids, and you feel that suddenly it will spring at you. My brother Alec, with his usual confidence, walked up to the human guard dog and held out the newspaper to him as though offering him a piece of sugar. Then pointed to the advertisement giving the address of the flat. Pointing to a door in the block of flats to our right the guard growled something neither of us understood. My brother smiled and thanked him in Latvian and the three of us went to the door. My wife, at that time, did not know a word of any language except English. I knew Flemish which had some words and phrases similar to German and my brother had his mixture of Latvian phrases and some Russian. But, while this was the Baltic German quarter of the city, with the changes over the past few years, people of all languages now lived in these flats. Inside the door at the bottom of the stairs was a board with the numbers of the flats and the names of the residents. The number we wanted was on the third floor and we noted it was a Jewish name. We rang the bell and the flap in the grill on the door opened and eyes peered through. I queried in my mind if the grill was necessary, as there was an armed guard on the main doors. In another few more minutes I was to learn that those main doors were locked every night at half past ten, and any resident who was not privileged to have a key, must ring the bell, the night guard would open it, and even if you were a resident you would have to make a small payment to him to let you in. The voice that spoke behind the grill was that of a young lady. We explained that we had come about an apartment to let, and that we were English, and as soon as we said that the young lady spoke in very good English and opened the door. Inside we saw that the flat was nicely furnished and decorated. There was only one furnished room being offered with use of the kitchen and bathroom.

My wife and I were glad to get anything reasonably suitable until we had settled in our new work, we could then look for something larger. The room was good, the kitchen roomy with all conveniences, so we said we would take it and would move in the next day. The young lady who made the arrangements with us was in her early twenties and she had a sister with her a couple of years younger. They both spoke good English and read whatever books they could obtain. I could see they were glad of the chance to improve by having conversation with English people. By that time my cockney speech had improved and my wife had been brought up in a different environment from mine, so the girls would get a fairly general English accent by conversing with us. Their parents were Jewish business people in Riga who went together into the city each day. The girls stayed at home where they did most of the office work connected with the business, and also prepared and cooked the meals for the family. Like many of the middle class Jewish business people they never did their own menial work, but as labour was cheap among the peasant classes, they employed daily helps and maids to do all the cleaning and washing, from among the Latvian women and girls. But the girls did cook most of their own meals after the maid had prepared the vegetables. My wife and I were out all day, each working day, as we both worked at the mission headquarters, where we had our midday meal with the staff and workers all seated at one very long table, presided over by Pastor Fetler. The head office was walking distance from our flat, so we were usually home about 5.30.p.m. each working day. Being newly arrived from England our first weekends were arranged for us. We had to travel each Saturday with an interpreter named Redins, to an outlying country town, where I had to preach in English and Redins interpreted in Latvian - or as it was sometimes called in those days Lettish. The railways were so built as to take as straight a line as possible through the country. There were two main lines, one direct into Russia to Moscow, the other through Estonia to Petrograd, later renamed Leningrad. Every so many miles along the track there would be a station but no town. It would have the name of the town painted up, but it would be some miles away, the railway did not go to the small towns, they had to come to the railway. So on arriving

130. ( FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE )

at a country station, there would be waiting just outside, in the winter, two or three horse drawn sleighs, and in spring and summer wooden carts with one hard wooden form along the centre on which the passengers sit on each side, back to back. There were no springs on any of the carts on which I rode, just four wood wheels with iron rims, fixed on the outer edges with their axles bolted directly on to the floor of the cart. The roads in the country districts were mostly stone and gravel surfaced and in some parts not much more than dirt tracks. There were pot-holes here and there and the rides from station to town or village were always very bumpy. But not in the winter when the sleighs were operating. It was exhilarating gliding silently over the snow with just the sound of the little bells on the harness of the horse in rhythm with his trotting. Our weekend trips into the country districts were mostly during the first two or three months after arriving in the country and the purpose was that the peasants in the small church groups scattered throughout the country should see the new missionaries who had come out from England, and that we should see all the work that was going on as a result of the money being sent out from England and America. In Riga Pastor Fetler worked on a much grander scale. Whenever he preached, he arranged a gathering at one of the larger Baptist churches in Riga, got congregations from other churches in the area to attend, so that he packed the building with people until it was standing room only. He would have all of us English members of his staff seated up on the platform both sides of him to show what a great number he had from England to support him, with combined choirs from the churches behind us to lead the singing. All the church music was vocal only, as it was, and still is, in the Russian Orthodox Church. The only instrumental music those people had was when my brother and I took our concertinas with us when we went on our trips into the country. Pastor Fetler would hold forth like Billy Graham at one of his evangelistic campaigns, there would be much singing and praying and the highly emotional charged atmosphere would work some of the people up into an ecstasy. But I was in that work out there only a few weeks when I began to realise that something was not right, things were not as we had imagined before we left England and



before very long I was to find it was left to me to do something about it. The first thing I discovered when our monthly salaries were paid, was that we were all on half pay. Our rate of pay had been set by the committee in London, and by British standards, compared with the average wage or salary, it was low, but because the foreign currency rate of exchange was in our favour we could live on the salary quite well in Latvia, at least to maintain a reasonable standard of living. But Pastor Fetler had made his own decision to cut the English salaries down to half. My wife and I both worked at the headquarters so were each paid a single person's salary and living together we could manage. It was now my job to keep the English account books, there were separate funds, each in their own accounts. I looked through the accounts and saw that amounts from the salaries account had been diverted to two other accounts, both of which had been created by Pastor Fetler. He, of course, was the director on the spot and could arrange things as he thought advisable, but he was not authorised to cut down the English salaries by half, that rate had been set in London, particularly as he was diverting that money into two projects that I did not think London had authorised. After a midday meal session I took some of the English workers aside, my brother was away as he did not work in the office but his wife was a typist there with my wife, and I asked them how long this salary cut had been and what reason had been given. They said Pastor Fetler had told them the amount would be restored when more funds came in and they seemed to have been annoyed about it for some time but afraid to say anything. Then they told me that from time to time when anyone had suggested something that went counter to Pastor Fetler's plans, even if it were not outright opposition, he would call a meeting of all the English workers in his office and harangue them for over an hour, he would go through name after name of people who had left him, resigned from his committee in London or withdrawn their support, because they did not share the vision he had for the work, they were always well known names he listed. It was soon to be my turn to be called in to one such meeting. Whether someone had overheard what our English group were discussing, because some

of the Latvians knew English, but I could not think of any other reason why he should have called the meeting. This time he harangued us for about one and half hours and I listened to all the names he quoted as being people who had let him down. They were some very well known business men in England, some leading members of various branches of the Christian church, and also one or two in the political world. It was really boring to listen and when at last he dismissed us, he hoped we would all remain loyal to him. I had been thinking back to the time in London when I first saw him and compared him in my mind to the rascal monk Rasputin and I was thinking now that I was not far wrong. When we all walked out of the office I called them all into another empty room. Then I asked them if they knew who all those folk were whose names he had listed. They said they did. I reminded them that everyone of those who Fetler claimed had let him down, were men of good standing, intelligent, educated and respected, and did they believe that over the past years Fetler had covered, all those good men, in every case were wrong and only Pastor Fetler in every case was right? Of course, they knew that could not be so, then asked me if I could do anything about the matter. I said I would talk with Paul Peterson, our treasurer first. He was not called into the meeting. He always worked away quietly in his office which was next to mine, and in the evening went home to his wife. He handled the remittances of money from England and America, signed cheques and payments jointly with Pastor Fetler and made some other payments which I knew nothing about until later they were turned over to me. I went into his office, told him about the meeting from which I had just come, told him what all the English workers felt about their pay cuts. There was only one other American couple working with the Mission, they were missionaries away in a little country town near the border with Soviet Russia and I had the impression they did not have pay cuts. Paul was a very nice chap, not the forceful type of American but thoughtful and quietly spoken. He listened to me then said there was nothing he could do, then gave me a very big surprise, "I am leaving," he said, "we are going home in the summer." I asked him why he was going and he said he did not think he could do anything

more useful in Riga, whereas back home in America there was some good work waiting for him. I took the position in without asking any more questions. He was not the type of chap to argue with Pastor Fetler, if he did not like what was going on he would leave it and go away. He said, when he knew what Fetler wanted him to pass over to me, he would explain it all before he went. It was just coming up to spring-time and the only ship going direct from the port of Riga to America which took passengers, was not until beginning of August. Somehow I did not think I was going to wait until then before I put right the matter of our half pay.


Then my wife gave me another big surprise, she was expecting our first baby and, as was the case in those days, she wanted to leave work at the headquarters and stay home at the flat. We knew we could not have a baby in the one room we had, so looked at once for another apartment. By then I knew enough German for us to do our own flat hunting. We got one quite easily with a Baltic German landlady, a widow with two grown up children, a girl of 20 years and son 18 years. Fourth floor of a tenement block in the street off the main Brivibas street I mentioned earlier, two good rooms in front with use of kitchen and bathroom, quite a good place where the baby could be born. We told the new landlady that we would have to give a week's notice to our first landlady, for while we got to know the Jewish parents quite well and liked them, the girls took our rent and attended to that side of the business. But before we left my wife gave me the first bit of trouble which set the pattern for the rest of our married life together over the period of thirty years.

Looking out of my office window I could watch the progress of a very large building that Pastor Fetler was having erected. It was in that project where much of our money was being diverted. It was to be a grand auditorium for services, meetings and other functions, with other rooms attached, and the building was to be known in the Latvian language as the Salvation Temple. It was one of the things the missionaries, including myself disagreed with. We knew that the people in the little towns and villages in the country were appealing for little meeting houses to be built where they could meet as churches, each in its own village. They were wooden buildings constructed from the pine trees that were plentiful

in the country. Small wood built churches or meeting houses could have been erected in villages all over Latvia at a fraction of the cost of building a huge Temple in Riga which could never be filled. Not all of Paul Peterson's work was turned over to me, so I never knew anything about the American connection at all. But one account was given to me which I found gave me very little additional work at all. I had only to make occasional entries of money credited and monthly payments made, but I did not handle the bank transfers or cheques that came in nor the monies that went out. It was a special salaries account quite separate from the missionaries and staff in Latvia. It contained a list of names, mostly Russian, of men who were missionaries or evangelists inside Bolshevik Russia itself, with two or three in Poland. They were just names to me. I asked Paul Peterson how we got the payments into Russia to pay these men, seeing that the Russian authorities then had banned any communication between established church organisations outside Russia and the churches and people inside Russia. Paul said it was something we had to keep to ourselves and not disclose to anyone outside our office. He said it was Pastor Fetler himself who got the cash in by way of the Latvian diplomatic bag. All such bags that pass between governments and their embassies abroad are sealed and have immunity from customs examination. I knew that for some years in Russia and in some of the states bordering Russia, during their troubles and changes, the only way often that things could be done was through bribery and corruption, but I never believed a Christian organisation would have any part in it. Somebody must have been bribed to convey surreptitious payments to Christian agents inside Russia. Every now and again Pastor Fetler would come to me and ask me to delete a name from my payments account book. He would say that so and so had disappeared, or that one of the men had been imprisoned. Most of those reported to me during my time there, were said to have just disappeared. Then there was another account book Paul Peterson did not pass to me, Pastor Fetler had a new Latvian office created and gave that office the account book. It was for a fund supporting the printing, production and distribution of Christian literature, chiefly in the Russian language, although I saw very little Russian literature at our Headquarters

but, naturally, I saw plenty of Latvian literature, including Bibles, New Testaments and Christian books and pamphlets of all kinds. Although the Mission was started as a relief organisation, by the time we arrived in Riga the distribution of goods seemed to have been discontinued. Apart from the few bales I saw when we first arrived, I did not see any more unless they were sent to any other receiving centre. The one thing Fetler was always needing was money. The builders who were constructing the Temple wanted payments for each stage. They also knew the cash was being sent from England and as they required new materials so they demanded a part payment for them. The largest bank was the Bank of Riga, they handled all our funds, but they would only advance payments consonant with what was regularly flowing in from London. I went to the Bank about once a week, the clerks all spoke German but there was one I usually sought if he was available who spoke very good English. There were times when Pastor Fetler himself had to see them and I knew it would be about a loan or because he had overdrawn on the building account. What bothered me was that I knew there was enough coming from London to cover all that we were doing in Latvia, even to cover our full salaries, if it were not for the diversion of money to the big building costs which were unnecessary. Now there was one business man who had not deserted Fetler, he was the well known chemist Charles Phillips, the one who created Phillips Milk of Magnesia. He was the Treasurer of the Mission in London and the one who briefed me when sending us out to Riga. He came to us once while we were there, but occasionally Pastor Fetler would make the journey to London to see him. Charles Phillips seemed to fall under Fetler's Rasputin influence. There were a few other ministers of religion and church officials who formed the committee of the Russian Missionary Society in London, but we were not known by that name in Latvia, it was more than Fetler dare do to advertise that he was going penetrate into Communist Russia, we were known as the British American Mission out there.

One day the building funds were low and the builders were demanding another payment. Half way through one morning Pastor Fetler came to me and said he was going to London and would be taking the night train from Riga, would I get some statements ready for him to take showing the state

of our finances, the payments made to the various funds expenditures including payments made to the builders etc. This was all very short notice for me but it was typical of Fetler, he was a very erratic man, would suddenly get an idea in his mind and would blast off on a new venture and want to carry everybody else with him. When I started at the office I was given an assistant, a Latvian girl named Miss Kadik. She spoke perfect English, was a very nice girl and very efficient. By the time we had cleared the morning work we were doing, we did not start Fetler's statements until after midday, but then kept going at it. By the time it got to 5.p.m., my usual time to finish, I still had quite a bit more to do, so knew I must stay on. It was the first time I had worked over my time since we had been in Riga, but I knew my wife would be alright because we were then still with the Jewish people and the English speaking girls were with her. We kept at it, and it was about 5. 45.p.m., when I heard someone shouting outside my window. I was on the first floor and the shouting was coming up from below. The next second or so I heard it was an English voice, I opened my window and looked down and there was my wife, face all tear-stained, shouting all hysterically at me, why had I not come home at my proper time? For a few seconds I was bewildered, why was she shouting from down there, she knew where my office was, she had worked in the building. It was embarrassing for me, there were still Latvian workers about and Miss Kadik was in my office. From my window I said to my wife, "I'll be down in a minute." I showed Miss Kadik where I had got to in my statement and asked her if she would finish it and take it all up to Pastor Fetler. I went down quickly to get my wife away from the building, I did hold a position of authority at the headquarters and this was humiliating. As soon as I appeared downstairs she started shouting at me and continued to do so as we turned out of the main gate and along the street, in spite of my efforts to explain that Pastor Fetler was going to London and I had to complete some work for him, but she just shouted I should not have done it for him. As we walked along the street towards our flat I had in my mind the many times when I was young in the poor areas of London and had seen a man go home with his wages and instead of taking it  to the wife, would go into a pub' and spend it in beer, and the wife

would go to the pub' and shout inside at her husband and when he came out she nagged him all the way along the road. She, of course, had a justifiable cause, I was getting the same treatment because I had to work a bit longer on this one occasion. I should explain that in those days there were no telephones in the homes of ordinary people, even in England only those who were financially better off would have one. In the Baltic States they were far behind England for many things and only the top business houses had telephones, we had none at our headquarters and neither was there one at our flat, so there was no way I could contact my wife to let her know I would be a bit late. When we entered our flat the girls heard us come in and they came into the hall. The older one said to me "we told your wife you had only been detained at the office," and although I was annoyed, that phrase amused me, because it sounded as though they had read the romantic novels that English girls read in that age, being "detained at the office" was a stock excuse a man would give to explain his absence. But my wife did have these two girls with her who tried to console her, and her hysteria was unjustified for such a short period of my absence, I could have been only half an hour late before she set out to bring me home from the office. Besides, we were supposed to be Christian missionaries sacrificing all to bring the Gospel to the unsaved, and here was I being treated like a drunkard in the pub'. Soon after that incident we moved to our new flat and within a couple of weeks it was Easter. Pastor Petter had arranged one of his special gatherings for Easter Sunday and for Monday a trip by train for all the staff to a place in the country, but Good Friday and Saturday we had free. So my brother and his wife arranged an interesting day for the four of us on Good Friday. My brother Alec was a keen fisherman, in fact whenever he went on his evangelising trips into the country, he usually took his rods and tackle with him, while we were all there as "fishers of men" he liked also to catch the real thing ! On the Wednesday before Good Friday they outlined the plan to me in my office and when I got home I told my wife what had been suggested and was careful to emphasise that it was her friend Mabel, our sister-in-law who had suggested it. We were now into Springtime and the solid ice covering the great river Daugave ( R. Dvina ) had broken up and fishing had started. The plan was

that my brother and I should go fishing in the morning, while Mabel would stay with my wife at our flat. At midday we would bring home our catch and as most people ate fish on Good Friday, the two women would cook them, then in the afternoon we would take a 'bus trip out to a pretty spot in the country and enjoy the spring sunshine, the weather being more reliable in those parts than in England. As soon as I told her the plan immediately in her authoritative manner she said "no, you're not going out with your brother ! " I asked why not and she replied "because you're staying here with me." "But Mabel is coming to be with you," I said, to which she replied, "she may come if she likes but you are staying here as well." I tried to make her see that we were only going for a couple of hours, then we were all going out together, but she was adamant. The next morning, Thursday, when I arrived at the office, I went into my sister-in-law's typing room and my brother was with her and I told them what my wife had said. My brother said, " well, you've got to do something about that or you are going to have a rotten life of it if you don't." When I was a little boy, he was my big brother, much tougher than me and used to protect me from the big bullies in the street, so in a tone of mock authority he said, "you are coming out with me tomorrow - and that is final !" Mabel agreed with him and said I could leave my wife in her hands, she would make things alright with her. Then with a shrug added, "well, of course, I've always known she is like that, she has always been very self-willed and awkward." I did not say, but thought within my mind, "now they tell me, now that I am tied up to her for life !" For the Christian fundamentalists had brain-washed us into believing that divorce is a terrible sin, that what God had joined together, no man may put asunder. So began a conflict in my mind that lasted for thirty years. Turning over and over in my head, how can we know ? How can we know what God has joined together ? How can we know if He ever wanted to put it asunder ? It is assumed that God has joined a couple together because it has been done through the agency of the Church in a solemn service, but it was a man who pronounced them joined together. However, no such provision is made in the event of God deciding to put a couple asunder. It seems that the church establishment is saying, if God wants to join a couple together we will pronounce it for Him, but if He decides to put them



asunder He will have to do that alone, and in the mind of the established church that has always meant one thing - death of one of the partners. It was much later in my life before I learned that we blame God for much that is man's doing and that we expect God to do things which he has already put within the power of man himself to do. The Life Force we call God, said Jesus, the greatest Teacher, is not up above looking down into this world, God is here in this world, among us, within us, and whatever God does for the benefit of mankind, He does only and entirely through men and women themselves. Pity St. Paul changed what Jesus taught.

When I arrived home on the Thursday evening my wife was surly and hardly answered my greeting. For some time she said nothing and I said nothing, but as the evening wore on she could not wait any longer and in a tone like a school teacher said, "well, what is happening tomorrow ? I told her they would both be coming in the morning and we would discuss things when they arrived. The next morning they arrived at 9.30, my wife opened the door, they both came in all bright and breezy and while Mabel was greeting my wife my brother came through to me carrying his rods and tackle, greeted me, "hello brother, here's your rod, this is your bag and your tackle is in it." "Have you got your hat and coat ?" Right, let's go." As we went out he called out, "we'll be back by 1.p.m." Before my wife knew what was happening we had gone. It was a lovely sunny day and although we did not catch very much, we enjoyed ourselves. When we got back with our few fish, there was a meal already cooked, my sister-in-law had brought fish with her from the market on the river-side, apparently not being optimistic about our fishing expedition. My wife was still annoyed because she had not had her way, but the next day, Saturday, we were alone, so I asked her to choose what she thought we should do, so we went around the main shops and stores in Riga to see their Easter displays, then to other places of interest in the city. After Easter <sup>when</sup> we returned to work at the headquarters, I decided I would have my interview with Pastor Fetler, because there was something else besides our salaries being diverted to the building fund. We had a small room stacked with literature, books pamphlets, tracts, some Bibles and New Testaments. All this was mostly in Latvian and some Russian.


Latvia was, and still is, only a small country. In my time there the total population was no more than about two million. Their language has a limited vocabulary and is not used outside the country, so all the Latvian literature in that store room had been printed in Riga. The few Russian Bibles among that stock had been obtained through the British and Foreign Bible Society in London, but it is doubtful whether they had been printed in England, as in those days printers in Great Britain would not have the Russian alphabet. There was one package of Russian New Testaments which had been printed in Prague in 1922, I still have one of those today. Being printed soon after the first World War when some commodities were still in short supply and paper was of a very poor quality, the pages of my Russian New Testament have gone brown at the edges but the print is still clear. Those Testaments were intended for distribution inside Russia and it is possible that some of them were eventually taken in. But most of the literature at our headquarters was in the Latvian language and had been produced by a printing firm in Riga originally. Then Pastor Fetler got a new idea, and again it was my brother who discovered what he was doing. Fetler never discussed his projects with any of us on the English staff, he had an entourage of Latvians always with him when he appeared at his gatherings, and two or three of the privileged ones were his henchmen who helped him in his grandiose enterprises. So now my brother had discovered that he was going to produce all his own literature in future, and to that end had purchased some property in Riga where he was setting up his own printing works with a bookshop in front. My brother was walking through the streets of Riga when he passed a shop in the window of which was a poster making an announcement. My brother knew enough Latvian to read that shortly a bookshop was to be opened for Christian literature and music and wondered what this new Christian organisation could be. The name that had been newly painted over the shop appeared not to have any connection with our Mission and my brother did not know what it meant. Being inquisitive my brother peered through the window and could see almost to the back of the premises, and there he spotted Robert Fetler, Pastor Fetler's brother, with a couple of young men on the Latvian staff at our headquarters. My brother did not go in, but later in the day when

the young Latvian workers returned to our offices, my brother asked one young man who spoke English, what was going on at the shop he had seen. The young man seemed surprised my brother did not know, they always took it for granted that what Pastor did was sponsored by the London committee of the Mission. They knew Fetler went to London every now and again and that one or two committee members occasionally visited Latvia. They knew Great Britain had freed their country from the occupying powers, first by driving out the Germans and later by forcing back the Russian Communists. They were under the impression now that money was being poured in from Great Britain to set them on their feet, they seemed to have no idea that there was not enough money in our funds to cover the cost of projects such as the large Temple which was not needed and now the printing works and bookshop. The young man my brother asked was all enthusiasm for it he thought it was a great idea to produce all our own literature, but had no idea that there could never be enough sales of that kind of literature to bring in sufficient income, even to pay the wages of the workers besides paying back the loans needed to finance the initial plant and materials. One expensive undertaking was burden enough without launching a second at the same time. I could see more clearly then what those entries in my account books really meant. I understood those where money was diverted from a fund to the building project, but where I saw amounts transferred to literature I had thought it meant to the purchase of Bibles or New Testaments or hymn books in whatever language was needed, whereas it was for this foolhardy scheme which could never pay for itself nor pay back the loans needed to start it, and much of the initial money was being taken out of the missionaries salaries fund, that is why we were on half pay, I knew I would have to see Pastor Fetler immediately. Where did the Latvian folk think the money was coming from? The British Government was not sending it in the same way as they had sent the Royal Navy with arms and ammunition to equip a force to drive out occupying powers. I had seen where the money was coming from, it was coming largely from relatively poor people in churches in various parts of Great Britain. I had been to speak to some of them about the work before I left England. Some of them were poor old ladies in women's meetings who collected their pennies and sometimes even sacrificing a sixpence, because they believed

they were helping to get the Gospel to the people of Russia who had been taken over, so they had been told, by cruel atheists whose intent was to wipe out Christianity. The fact was that very little benefit from their money ever reached Russia. For a time, as I have already said, some cash was sent in through the Latvian diplomatic bag to be passed on to a few Pastors and evangelists inside Russia, but I never saw any confirmation that they actually received it. I had names but I did not know who they were, I sincerely hope they did receive the help. But it was a very small amount of our total income, most of the money coming from England was spent in Latvia, and some of us thought it was being spent on the wrong things. I did not know about any financial support coming from America, I did not handle the U.S.A., accounts. It is possible that Pastor Fetler included some of their support in the income shown in my accounts, it is difficult to know after all these years. But what happened to it all in the end? At the time I left to return to England, which was soon after the Temple in Riga was completed and officially opened, Adolph Hitler was making himself known in Germany and was forming the first units of his S.S., and within a few more years the Soviet troops, in 1940, entered Latvia, Pastor Fetler fled, with his family to Sweden and one of the first things the Soviet authorities did was to commandeer the Temple and station their troops there. When that news came to me I felt annoyed that I, with my English colleagues, had helped to provide them with that accommodation with a large amount of our salaries, in my case over the period of nearly two years, but others much longer than that. However, one afternoon after Easter I asked Pastor Fetler if he could give me some time the following morning to discuss some matters with him. He asked what it was about. I said about the accounts but that I would need some time, it could not be discussed in a few minutes. He agreed to give me a half hour or so the following morning. When I entered his office he looked at me suspiciously and asked me to take a seat. I began by saying I had been asked by the English workers to act as their spokesman - immediately before I could say another word, "what about?" he snapped, glaring at me with his Rasputin eyes. But I just looked steadily at him,

I knew I would have to spar carefully, waiting for the right openings, and also let him beat the air for a bit. I had seen how he always did all the talking and after a long harangue, without giving anyone a chance of a word in edgeways, dismissed everyone at the end, mentally exhausted. He was not going to do that with me, that is why I needed time with him. In answer to his question, what did the English workers want me to see him about, I said, our salaries cuts had been on a long time now, when could they be restored? He said everyone knew he had been compelled to make the cuts because not enough funds were coming in, to which I replied that the cash for the salaries was coming in regularly because I had a record of all the bank transfers from London. That set him off on a long tirade which I endured patiently, how that I knew the builders were demanding payments, also that he had to pay the Latvian workers, and I must add that numerically they were four or five times greater than the English members, how that we were making things difficult for him by not being loyal and not being prepared to take cuts, and other things which I cannot remember now. I waited until he finished then said "our rate of pay is set by the committee in London." He jumped in again at once and said, that they allowed him, as the man on the spot, to know the position and change things if so required. To which I replied, "but the London committee does not know that our pay has been cut down to half for all these months." That gave him a jolt and by the way he looked at me I could see he thought I had been in touch with London about the matter. I wanted a quick settlement and at the same time I wanted him to know I had not gone over his head to London, so while he was trying to find an answer to what I had said, I continued, "if London had wanted to help him with other projects and knew that the only way they could do so was by asking us to take a lower rate of pay, they would have officially communicated with us and quoted to us a new rate." While this assured him I had not yet written to London, it also left him with the feeling that I was prepared to do so. He hesitated a bit and grunted then said, "I'll tell you what I will do. I'll put the pay up from half to two thirds, will that satisfy everybody?" I said, "I think so, we are not unreasonable people, we are prepared to help and we can just about manage on two thirds pay." I had got what I wanted, so although

he continued his lecture on being loyal and helping him to accomplish what he wanted, I just listened patiently and went down stairs afterwards to tell the members of the English staff that we would be receiving two thirds of our pay from the next payday. Our pay was based on British sterling, so as the rate of exchange was in our favour, we received enough to give us a reasonable standard of living. But I think Pastor Fetler thought there might be some trouble brewing, because only a few days after that interview with him, he came to me and said he was going to London again. It was only about six weeks since his last trip when I had been nagged all the way home for being late at the office. Again he sprung it on me, said he was going by that night train, would I get statements of all the accounts prepared for him. With Miss Kadik, my assistant, we started in the morning this time, but by the time we got to 5. p.m., we were not quite finished, so I had to go on. By time it was 5. 20.p.m., I was expecting to hear a shout downstairs and by the time we finished just before 5. 30.p.m., I asked Miss Kadik to take the papers up to Pastor Fetler, grabbed my hat and coat and fled out of the office. I wanted to be well clear before my wife arrived. This time, we were in our new flat and once again the daughter of the landlady spoke good English. Elly, the daughter, worked near the home and returned in the evening about a quarter of an hour before me. Also by this time I had taught my wife quite a bit of German. We shopped in the local shops where they had got to know us, and as my wife learned the names of articles I would let her ask for them and the shop keepers themselves would help her, so now she was going shopping alone while I was at the office, and even sometimes with our landlady who was a very helpful woman in her fifties. So when I turned in the street and she was not there, knowing her circumstances were different, I felt relieved that I would not have trouble this time. I relaxed and slowed to my usual pace along the lengthy street that led into the main road, where I would turn right with another five minutes along to our street on the other side. Then I suddenly decided to do something different - what makes us do these things? we all do them and do not know why. When I reached an opening on my right I turned along it and took the next on my left which was parallel to the street I usually took, also reaching the main road. I had never been this

way before, why did I choose it this time ? I had only got half way along when I saw a droshky coming along, the horse trotting at a leisurely pace, as it drew nearer I saw there was a passenger in it and when it was nearer still, behold, it was my wife  who seeing me coming had just turned the tears on again. Anyone at the flat seeing her in tears would think she was worried or hurt. I had already learned that she could turn on the tears to order. She always cried in anger if she could not get her own way about anything and she was always angry if her very rigid routine was upset. She laid down immutable rules and regulations which had to be strictly kept. She was the centre around which everything else revolved. She did not come to you, you had to go to her, and because I had broken her rule about coming home from the office strictly to time she had to come to me and was very angry, so the tears were all ready to turn on the moment she saw me. I stopped the droshky and paid the driver, my wife got out and said, "and where have you been ?" I told her Pastor Fetler was going to London and needed the financial statements, to which she gave the same reply as last time and nagged me the rest of the way home. I was getting tired of it but she was pregnant now so there was not much I could do about it. I did my best not to annoy her and this was only the second time that Pastor Fetler had asked me to prepare for his trip to London. She did not want me to go away on weekend preaching trips with our interpreter Redins any more. I had to keep one that had already been arranged with him, then told him I could not go any more until after the baby was born. My wife stayed with Mabel that weekend. Mabel's husband, my brother, was away often for a whole week at a time, but she did not mind a bit, she knew it was all part of his work, my wife expected my work to fit in with her requirements.

From time to time, at our headquarters I met one or two interesting people who had come out of Soviet Russia. One was a young man who had taken a commission in the Red Army. He was a Latvian whose name was Vagars and who was with the Soviet troops when they were driven out of Latvia by the Latvian Nationalists under the command of General Sir Hubert Gough. In Russia he became disillusioned with the way things were going and managed to escape back

into Latvia again and came to Pastor <sup>Fetler</sup> who accepted him as a student in the Bible School that was attached to our headquarters block. It was a recognised part of the Mission work and was to train young men to become pastors and evangelists and some of them eventually as Baptist Ministers. The lecturers were mostly Baptist Ministers who came in from churches around Riga and there was one resident lecturer in charge. There were about thirty students altogether and Vagars was one of them. His English was fairly good and as he wanted to improve, he asked me if I would give him half an hour occasionally. He told me of some of the things that happened in his part of Russia and how he managed to escape. He was stationed in Petrograd, which is now known as Leningrad and was where much of the early conflict took place when the people, after many years of subjection and suffering under the evils of the old Tzarist regime, sought their freedom from oppression by a people's revolution against the old established authority of the Tzar and the court with its ecclesiastical hierarchy, by the setting up of their own Socialist state. For many years the Church establishment and the Tzar's court had gone hand in hand to form a powerful authority to keep the masses of the people in subjection. The Church was, and still is, the Russian Orthodox Church, although today it has not the same authority. It is known in other parts of the world as the Greek Catholic Church or Eastern Church and claims to be the original Christian church and says that Roman Catholicism is a heretical schism. Of course, both the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches have developed their dogmas, rites and ceremonies from the myths and mysteries that date back to the Mithraism and Alexandrian influences of the days of St. Paul who incorporated them into early Christianity when he formulated the first Christian dogmas. For some years now the best scholars in this field, theologians, religious historians, men whose names are world renowned, men like Professor A. Harnack, and the theologian Paul Tillich, have discovered and laid bare the fact that St. Paul took the symbolism and rites of the Hellenic mystery cults and created a Christian religion from them. Even one of the most brilliant scholars of the Catholic Church, Fr. Hugo Rahner, S.J., Ph.D., in his book, "Greek Myths and Christian Mystery," acknowledges this fact but uses it to "interpret the pictures evoked by Greek mythology in terms of



Christian fulfilment," and takes the whole of his book to show how that all that the Greek philosophers aspired to in their philosophies and mystery cults, all that was permanent in their philosophies, was elevated and had fulfilment in the mystery of Christianity. But what he does not say is that the great Teacher Jesus the Galilean, who was always down to earth when communicating with His listeners, never once used any of the symbolism from the Hellenic mystery cults. It is said of Him in the Gospels that He never spoke to the people without using a parable, and all His parables were of every day things very much part of this earth. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church have continued all down the years to use the mystery symbolism, with the result that other symbols, legends and mysteries have from time to time been added to them. For many generations the Russian Orthodox priests had indoctrinated the millions of uneducated peasants with legends and superstitions and one of the first tasks the early communists saw as necessary was to disillusion these very superstitious people by showing them they had been made to believe things which were not true. Vagars, the young student I am at present recording, was a Latvian whose parents were Baptists. That denomination throughout the states bordering on Russia proper was fundamentalist, so it would not be difficult for Vagars to carry out what he did in St. Peter's Cathedral in Petrograd when he was a Red Army officer, because fundamentalists do not accept the legends of the Orthodox Church. Vagars himself had no deep religious convictions and having joined the communist movement was prepared to abolish all religion. Petrograd meant the City of Peter and was so named because of St. Peter's Cathedral. The Russian Orthodox Church has always claimed that St. Peter was the disciple who had been given the authority by Jesus Christ to found His Church on earth, the Roman Catholics claim the same, and both denominations ignore the fact that neither in the New Testament nor in any historical record whatsoever, has it ever been proved that St. Peter even made a single journey to Rome, nor ever founded a Church there, whereas the New Testament, in the book known as the Acts of the Apostles, has recorded the historical fact that St. Paul, after a very difficult and hazardous journey, arrived at Rome and finished his life there, and the end of the Acts of the Apostles states that Paul dwelt there "two whole years in his own hired house."

St. Peter's Cathedral, being in the capital city of Russia, as Petrograd was then, would seem to Orthodox Russians as being the right place to bury their attributed founder - well, not exactly bury him but have him in a coffin and put him on display so that pilgrims might come and pay their respects and receive a blessing from him. One should not question whether after hundreds of years, his body, even if embalmed, might have decayed, because the miraculous has always played a big part in the history of the Orthodox and Catholic churches. So the supposed St. Peter was put into the coffin and put in a protected part of the Cathedral with the usual lighted candles giving subdued and awesome atmosphere, and there he stayed for many years until the time of the Russian revolution of 1917. When the Communist troops were driven out of Latvia, Vagars retreated with them and when they arrived at Petrograd he was put in charge of a squad of soldiers to patrol the streets, keep order and clean up anything that was counter to the Socialist revolutionary regime. He told me that one of the first things he did was to gather a crowd of citizens outside the Cathedral, tell them he was going to take them in and show them how they had been made to believe things which were not true. He led his soldiers in followed by the crowd, then holding his pistol at <sup>the priests</sup> ~~the~~ ordered them to open the coffin of St. Peter so that the people could see what was inside. They said it was sacred, they could not do it. He threatened that if they refused he would order his soldiers to take all the priests outside and shoot them. They gave way and opened it, he looked in, then ordered the people to line up and file past and see what was inside. He told me there was no skeleton, just some bits of old rag and a few animals bones, certainly nothing human. This was part of the systematic attempt to destroy the power of the church over the people and besides acts like this, was their distribution of literature into the schools designed to teach atheism which they believed was part of the Marxist philosophy. Soon after Vagars had told me the foregoing story, I was shown a copy of the official pamphlet being sent monthly to all the schools. There was wide-spread illiteracy throughout Russia, hardly any of the peasants in the remote parts could read or write, but in the cities schools had been set up to give children some basic education, but without any influence by the church. The title of the pamphlet was printed

in large type at the top of the front page of a four page pamphlet, but most of the information was in cartoon and caricature with captions underneath. The title in Russian was "Bez Bozhnik" literally without God or the Atheist. My brother translated the captions under a cartoon of a young communist climbing a ladder which reached to the clouds. Up on the clouds were the Gods, Jehovah, Allah, Jesus, all kinds of saints, angels and cherubs. The young communist had a hammer in his right hand, below him on one side the old order destroyed and on the other the new order rising up as skyscraper buildings and he was reaching up to the clouds. The caption underneath read, "when we have conquered all the nations of the world, we are going out to fight against God and heaven."

All this determination to wipe out religion was the Russian communists interpretation of what they understood to be the philosophy of Karl Marx. We know of course, from the writings of Marx that he was anti-religion and the one quotation often used by believers and unbelievers alike, taken from Capital, is, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." He also said in 'Capital' that God is the product of man's mind, but that is only a half truth, he should have said the "image" of God is the product of man's mind. Most people today, in spite of our great advances in scientific knowledge, as soon as they hear the title God, think of a gentlemen with white hair and beard in the skies. But because man, in his mind, produces a false image of God, it does not prove that God cannot be the life force of the universe, or the "Ground of our being." However, there are grave doubts whether the Russian application of Marxist philosophy is as Marx himself would have wanted it. It was Lenin who interpreted and added to the philosophy of Marx as applied in Russia today. Lenin's own statement on atheism is, "Atheism is a natural and inseparable portion of Marxism, of the theory and practice of scientific socialism. Our propaganda necessarily includes propaganda for atheism." It would seem that Lenin did to the teaching of Karl Marx what St. Paul did to the teaching of Jesus of Galilee.

This also applies to Lenin's use of violence for the overthrow of the old regime and the establishing of his own brand of scientific socialism.

It is true that Marx, in his work written in collaboration with his friend Friedrich Engels, known as the "Communist Manifesto," used some inflammatory rhetoric, but of course, that work was commissioned by the Communist League, which indulged in exaggerated statements of its own intentions and used dramatic language when stating its position face to face with established society, but Marx never matched that language in his other writings, not even in his major work Capital. Marx appeared to be disposed towards an active approach to Socialism but shrank from any direct personal involvement in revolutionary action. His terminology was one thing, personal activity was another. Some years before the Russian revolution of 1917, several revolutions <sup>took</sup> place in various parts of Europe and all of them failed except for France. In some capitals in Europe, short-lived revolutionary regimes were again replaced by the regimes they had challenged. Marx, before he came to England, was in proximity to all that revolutionary activity but remained a passive bystander, he never took any active part. It is doubtful whether he would have had any part in the Russian revolution of 1917. Russia then would seem to have been the last place on earth in which Marx would have tried out his philosophy. At that time in the whole of the Russian empire, there were about one hundred and twenty eight million people, and only between two to three million of them were known as the intelligentsia, the bulk of the masses were uneducated, illiterate peasants, many of them self employed on small holdings, or casual labourers on the land whose families were independent groups. But the one great power the government of the Tzarist regime had over all those untaught peasants, was the superstitious mythology fed into their minds by the established Russian Orthodox church. Every home however humble, had its icon in the corner of the living room, which although it was a religious symbolic image, acted as a kind of talisman with miraculous power to protect all in the home from harm. There were also many observances they were required by the church to keep on saints days and feast days, there were legends and myths they were made to believe as part of the miraculous working of God through the established church, and in every village and hamlet scattered throughout the vast remote regions of Russia, the local priest held sway, and his authority was delegated by the powerful Orthodox system hand in hand with the Tzar,

the Imperial court and officialdom with its large quota of 'tin gods' and their corruption. Is it any wonder that when the early Bolshevik revolutionaries sought to replace the corrupt Tzarist regime with a Socialist state, one of the first things they saw as necessary was to destroy the power of the Orthodox church over the minds of the people, and with the Orthodox church they included every other denomination. What Marx and the communists did not know, and indeed many people in the Church today do not know, is that what has been taught as Christianity by the established churches for many centuries, bears little relation to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee, nearly two thousand years ago. Some writers have said, and I would agree with them, that Jesus was the first true communist of Whom we have any historical record. He, of course, sought to bring in His kingdom through non-violence and would not have His followers take up the sword. From what He said to the Jews in His day, He was certainly anti-religion, but He taught a Way of Life that rightly related a man to God through a right relationship to his fellow man, and He always kept these two aspects together. It was this very thing that interested Mahatma Gandhi in Jesus. Gandhi was a Hindu who became interested in Christianity. It was when he was in South Africa that he decided to study the Bible to find out what Christianity is all about. Many parts of the Old Testament bored him, and I can understand that, but when he read through the Gospels of the New Testament and saw the Way of Life that Jesus not only taught but lived, he decided that there was little relation between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Christianity of the organised Christian churches, so he decided not to become a Christian but to remain a Hindu, for he said the application of what Jesus taught was nearer to what he was taught in Hinduism than that which he observed in the lives of those within the Christian church. Gandhi, of course, preached and practised non-violence and after much personal suffering won for India and its many millions of citizens, freedom from the rule of the white man and independence. Gandhi was positive, he had a philosophy which he preached and practiced. The mistake made in Russia by Lenin and the early Bolsheviks was that all they gave to the uneducated peasants in place of their superstitions was negative. Vagars and his troops exposed to the people the falsity

of what they had been made to believe in the name of Christianity and encouraged them to adopt the extreme and become atheists. But for the older folk that was not easy, their minds had been influenced for so many years by the teachings of the church and while much of what they had been taught centred around myth and superstition, yet over all that they had imbibed, false or true, was the fundamental truth that God is, that He not only exists but is the controlling Life force of the universe. Then there were the many thousands of Russian Baptists, fundamentalists who were not influenced by the myths and legends of the Orthodox church but had been indoctrinated in the dogmas of the Pauline brand of Christianity. Some of these Baptist Pastors were on the pay roll I kept when they were supported by our Mission in Riga, some of whose names I was asked occasionally to delete as they had "disappeared." Closely associated with the Russian Baptists were the Pentecostals, quite a large number of these throughout Russia, and some of these also were either imprisoned or "disappeared" during my time in Riga. So when we take these various denominations all together we see that throughout Russia at least a hundred million people had been indoctrinated in some form of religious belief, what a gigantic task the Communists had set themselves to eradicate this from the minds of so many people. They soon saw the hopelessness of such a move, so decided they would begin with the new generation of young people and ordered that atheism should be introduced into the schools and the official paper, a copy of which I saw, was their first propaganda. Their next move was to limit the number of church services and pass legislation forbidding any preacher from teaching anything that was contrary to Marxist-Leninist ideology. This meant that a priest or pastor could not say anything of a religious nature in public, for if Lenin had said "Our propaganda necessarily includes propaganda for atheism," then even to mention the name of God in public was contrary to that. So many folk met in each others homes for meetings and services until some members of the communist movement discovered this was happening and informed on some of the groups. Now as I look back on the beginning of all this in Russia from the time of my youth, I ask myself what have the Soviet authorities gained by this compulsory control of the minds of the people? As I write this it is fifty-eight years since I

first went to the Baltic States and witnessed much that was happening as a result of the Russian revolution of 1917. Now in recent years it would seem that the Soviet authorities are changing their tactics. I have by the side of me on my desk as I write this, a small photograph of a newly built House of Prayer (as some of the Baptists refer to their churches) for which permission to build was granted by the Soviet authorities as recently as 1972, at a town named Voronezh south of Moscow. The source from which I got that photograph also receives reports from time to time, of groups of Christians in Russia and some other communist countries. I read carefully through one of the reports to see what I could discover, and after re-reading the details and figures several times, formed in my mind an interesting picture of what is actually going on in Russia today relevant to the religious situation. In one town in South Russia the position is shown like this : "Meeting of Believers Independent of Religious Centres" has a membership of 122. I wondered what that term meant, "Independent of Religious Centres." The report goes on to state that in the same town there is the "(Moscow-centred) Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists" who have a membership of 400, and that the Independent Believers meet independently of the "Moscow-centred" Union. Then another group is listed as a "dissident union" which has 100 members, then separately the "Pentecostals" who have 55 members, and finally a group known as "our Molokan brethren" with no membership shown. So what do we deduce from this information ? The obvious answer surely is, that although two generations have grown up since the Russian revolution of 1917, the need for religion or some spiritual satisfaction is still felt in the hearts and minds of many thousands all over Russia, for the same report states that what is shown for those churches in that one town in South Russia is to be found in many other towns and cities all over Russia. It also shows that the Soviet authorities realising that they can never eradicate from the minds of the people this need, have decided to organise it, to keep control of it lest it goes counter to their communist philosophy. If only the form of communism applied to Russia had been that of Jesus of Nazareth with its compelling philosophy no more difficult to understand than that set out in His sermon on the mount, instead of the communism of Karl Marx with his very involved theory of dialectical materialism which


probably hardly any of the ordinary citizens of Russia can understand. Indeed, even students of far left persuasion in Great Britain, when asked to explain dialectical Materialism, give either an obscure or an evasive reply. It is not a philosophy the ordinary folk can easily understand, apart from the millions of illiterate older people who were in the majority when the Communists came to power. For many generations the two main divisions in philosophical concepts were "idealism" and "materialism." As a young student at university, Karl Marx came under the influence of the teachings of the German philosopher Georg Hegel, who had died several years prior to the arrival of Marx at the university but who had left his permanent imprint on the students. Hegel's philosophy was highly complex but he taught a scheme of historical progression by which mankind painfully ascended to higher and higher stages of civilisation. There were, of course, setbacks to this pattern of progression, but nevertheless, propelled by a force which Hegel dubbed "the Absolute," progress did occur. Borrowing on a system of argumentation developed by the ancient Greeks and known as the dialectical method, Hegel argued that progress in history was achieved by the reconciliation of opposites or "alienations." It is not the purpose of this book to go into this very involved subject in depth, I want to explain enough to show how after many thousands of years when all the various and numerous religions and philosophies influencing the minds of mankind on this planet, have all been of an "idealistic" nature, there came into being at the beginning of this amazing century, through which I, with millions of my fellows have been privileged to live, the first new philosophy which is entirely "materialistic." When Karl Marx formulated and finalised his new philosophy of "dialectical materialism" towards the end of last century, it was immediately adopted by a young Russian revolutionary named Vladimir Ilyich Lenin who, at the beginning of this century began to apply the theory to the daily lives of his own oppressed people. In 1903, Lenin established the movement called Bolshevism with just seventeen supporters. In the year 1917, Lenin conquered Russia with a party of approximately forty thousand members. Today, in the nineteen eighties, Communism, as that philosophy is now called, has embraced about one and a quarter billion people, half the world's population.





Today the figures recorded show that there are in the world today five children in school learning in detail the atheistic doctrines of Communism, for every one child in any school anywhere learning anything about Jesus Christ. Of course, Lenin has adjusted the philosophy of Marx to conform to the needs of his own people in Russia and in that country it is known as Marxism-Leninism. It may be asked how Marx could evolve from Hegelism an entirely materialistic philosophy when Hegel himself was an idealist, who held the idea of an "Absolute," and had an ardent commitment to Christianity. The answer is that there was another philosopher whose teachings influenced Marx at the same time as those of Hegel. He was Ludwig Feuerbach who stressed material conditions and advanced the idea that God was man's creation and for this reason philosophies of history should stress man and not God. Feuerbach had been a theologian who forsook Theism and embraced materialism. His basic slogan was, "Man is what he eats. We are matter in motion, nothing more." Of course, as far back in history as we can go, there have always been materialists, but never before a definite materialist philosophy formulated. Karl Marx formulated that new philosophy by taking the dialectic of Hegel and welding it to the materialism of Feuerbach. When Lenin made the first application of the new philosophy to his own people in Russia, he had many setbacks. There were rival parties each seeking to establish their own brands of socialism and with the uncertainty as to who was governing the country the economic position became very bad. Then came the drought and the terrible famine of 1921 and things became chaotic. Many people sought to flee across the borders into the states known as White Russia. The very many miles of the frontiers were so extensive that it was almost impossible to adequately guard them. When the famine came and people were starving, the authorities shut their eyes to the numbers fleeing, mostly into Poland and Germany where our relief mission had depots and were feeding and clothing as many as they could. Refugees were forming groups and were helping each other over the borders. Vagars, the young Red army officer who led his troops into St. Peter's Cathedral in Petrograd, was becoming disillusioned and felt he had made

a great mistake in taking a commission in the Red army when they occupied Latvia. He had known only too well the evils of the old regime, but he saw now the evils that were evident in the establishing of the new socialist state, and he was part of it all. The Bolsheviks had promised the proletariat heaven on earth once they had established Marxism-Leninism in Russia. Indeed, I had seen myself, when I made a visit to a district near the Russian border, a sign claiming they had already established it. My brother took me up to the Latvian guards, as near as we were permitted to go, where the railway went through into Russia. There were manually operated level crossing gates on the Latvian side, then about a hundred yards of no man's land and another level crossing with the Russian guards. Over the railway line near the Russian gates they had erected a wooden arch on which was painted in Russian, a slogan which my brother translated, it said "Welcome to Paradise." That was their first promise, I cannot imagine they kept that slogan there for very long. It certainly was not paradise then. In the years from 1921 to 1923 it was confusion and suffering. The acute food shortages affected the Red army equally with the rest of the populace. Soldiers were deserting and escaping over the borders. Vagars was an officer, it was much more difficult for him. In telling me his story he said he became very depressed, to the point when he felt if he could not get out of the country he would end his own life. Then the authorities withdrew the arms from the military personnel, there was a feeling of mistrust and suspicion everywhere. Vagars decided one night that he would go to the bridge over the river, drop into the water, and nobody could know where he had gone. Although he had discarded all religion, his mother had given him a Latvian New Testament and made him promise he would always carry it with him. When he reached the bridge, he thought at least, in honour to his mother, he would read some of the Testament. At the end of the bridge was a street lamp, he stood underneath it, took the little book out of his pocket, and began to read from the beginning. Although as a child he had gone to the Baptist Church with his mother, he had never read either the Bible or the New Testament as a book before. He said, he had got through a chapter or two when he began to get interested. It was not only a fascinating story but it brought to his mind some of the

things he had heard at church as a boy. He thought, after all there might be something in this story, so decided he would not end his life but would go back to his room and read right through the Gospels. It was quite late when he put the book back in his pocket and decided he would go back to his parents in Latvia. The nearest border from Petrograd (Leningrad) was that into Estonia, which had also been freed from the Bolshevik army, it was about ninety miles away. He had a civilian coat and hat, so left most of his army uniform behind and walked all through the night. In the light of dawn he saw a peasant's horse and cart going along the road in his direction, with four or five people and some bundles of luggage. He asked if they had room for one more and they took him and his little bag, which was all the luggage he had. He was very fortunate for they too were making for the border. When he was in Estonia he still had to get across the state to reach Latvia, but at least he was in friendly country. The only money he had was just a few Russian roubles, but nobody wanted to exchange those in case they had no value. Finally he got a bank to give him an amount much lower than the usual exchange value. Most of the journey he had to beg his way home. It was easier when he got into Latvia, for there he was a citizen by birth. After his reunion with his parents and he had rested, his mother persuaded him to have a talk with Pastor Fetler at our Mission headquarters. The result was his being accepted as a student in the first entry in the new Bible School opened in 1924. I went to Riga at the end of 1925 when I met him, and in 1926 gave him some English lessons, when he told me his story. In August of that year Paul Peterson returned to America. The day before he sailed Pastor Fetler delivered to me, through his secretary, an official letter appointing me as assistant treasurer but still retaining my duties as book-keeper. He never consulted me about the appointment but as he gave me an additional helper on my staff, I just carried on as before. It was obvious he wanted to show on his records that he had someone officially in Paul Peterson's place, although I never handled any of the American accounts, I presume Pastor Fetler did them himself. I was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his continued juggling with the funds for purposes other than those to which folk at home believed their money was going. There was nothing I could do just then, our baby

was due in October. We had been enjoying the lovely summer that is usual in that part of the world, we could always be sure of sunshine there. In the city of Riga it was very hot during July and August, for there are extremes of temperature, in the winter it could often be below zero - by the old Fahrenheit measure - minus 20 to 30 degrees centigrade, and in the summer often in the eighties Fahrenheit - plus 30 degrees or more centigrade. So our Mission rented a couple of villas at a seaside village, which was one of several holiday villages dotted along the bay of the Gulf of Riga. It was only a short train journey from Riga, so many business people commuted between Riga and the sea during the summer months and those of us on the Mission staff were given a few weeks each to do the same during July and August. But what surprised me most out there was how spotlessly clean all the beaches were, as were also the streets of the city of Riga. As soon as all the winter snow cleared by early spring, each tenant in all the blocks of flats would be on a rota when they would be given certain weeks in the year when it would be their turn to scrub down the pavement in front of their block. It was always the job for the women and every morning when I awoke and looked out of our window I would see down below women here and there with buckets of water and long-handled scrubbing brushes, each cleaning their own stretch of the pavement. Yet when I left London, rubbish and paper could be seen everywhere on the streets, including orange peel and banana skins on which I have seen people slip. There were no litter bins on the streets of London in those days. In the City of London and in the West End, the Council highways department employed boys who ran about the streets with large dustpans and brushes and swept up horse manure as the horses dropped it, for most traffic just after the first World War was still horse drawn, mechanical transport was gradually being introduced and while, at the time when I left London, the buses were all petrol driven, the boys still dodged in between those in the City as they had between the horse buses, for cabs and drays were still pulled by horses. The only litter bins were the large ones on wheels into which the boys emptied their dustpans. The only bins in London then, both in the City and in the suburbs, were sand bins, large metal containers with  sloping tops and flap lids which

were always kept filled with sand. In winter when the roads were icy or at other times when it rained those roads which were cobble-stone surfaced, or others which had tarred wood blocks, could be very slippery for the horses hooves. Then the boys would fill their dustpans with sand from the bins and scatter it over the slippery roads. With the coming of faster traffic, it became too dangerous for the boys to be on the roads, and when they were taken off, moves began to be made to have litter bins installed in the streets, but even today there are people who do not use them and just drop their rubbish in the streets. But as far back as the beginning of this century, there were many places in Europe where this was just not allowed, and Latvia was one of them. The first time my brother and his wife took my wife and myself to the lovely stretches of sandy beach along the Gulf of Riga, we were a couple of minutes too early, for in those days up to 10.a.m.  was for ladies only, and they were allowed to bathe in the nude, so while we were waiting for the last minute ones to come out of the water, we sat on a sand dune at the top of the beach with a stretch of pine woods behind us. My brother pointed along both ways of the ten miles of beach and said, "You see, not so much as a match stick left anywhere, and when everybody leaves here this evening, it will be just as clean." Then he explained that it was not only the law that you were not allowed to leave litter but the people had formed the habit of taking away every last little bit of paper and dumping it in a large bin on the other side of the pine trees. I thought of our beaches at home and how every evening men employed by the various town councils would walk along the beaches with a stick each, at the end of which was a steel point. They would stab it into each piece of paper and after collecting several pieces on the spike, would put them into a sack then continue to pick up more until their sacks were filled, then take them to a dust cart, and start off again with a fresh sack and spike. It took several men all <sup>evening</sup>  to clear the beaches. I also thought of the streets of London I had left with the fish and chip papers, empty cigarette packets, sweet wrappers and all sorts of rubbish being kicked along the pavements and I asked my brother why they told us things at school that were so untrue. They made me believe that our

country was the most advanced in the world. We were told that London was the cleanest capital in the world, with the most advanced sewerage system, that we were much more hygienic than the natives abroad, that we had a water system so pure that we could drink water straight from the tap. It was quite true that we did have in London many miles of sewerage tunnels carrying effluence well away from London, indeed, it was a very good system before I was born. It was also true that we could drink clean water direct from the taps in our homes, but so could I drink it direct from our tap in our flat in Riga, or from the taps in our Headquarters building. While there were places in Europe where you could not do this, I was always able to drink straight from the tap in Antwerp when I stayed with my aunt or my cousins, but, of course, in some places in Belgium it would not be safe, neither is it still today in many places in France. But I can assure anyone that Riga, right back in the nineteen twenties and before that, was a beautifully clean and hygienic city with very good sewerage and water systems and flush toilets in every home and the streets were far cleaner than those in London. I did not go there for a short holiday and see only the best, I lived and worked there for nearly two years and I knew then that some of the things we were taught at school were not true. The pictures of modern Riga today, which I have received from "Intourist" while showing the old city almost as it was when I was there, show also many tall modern buildings, yet everywhere looks as clean and tidy as it ever was, and the coloured pictures of the beaches with their miles of golden sands, show them as lovely as they were when I was there with my wife and our baby daughter. We expected our first child to arrive early in October following our first lovely summer in Latvia. I had been advised to book a Baltic German midwife. I was told that before the troubles and changes, firstly when the Communists took control, then later with the Latvian National government, supported by the League of Nations and military help from Great Britain, this lady had been the Matron of the best German hospital in Riga. She was then working privately as a midwife. Only the financially better off could have afforded to engage her. Our fees were being met from the funds of our Mission and it was

Pastor Fetler himself who had advised me to engage her. The medical course I had taken as a student at the Missionary Training Colony, included midwifery, so I knew all the English medical terms relating to childbirth, I decided to learn them all in German. My conversational German was reasonable by then but my wife could just about manage with her shopping but would not know what the midwife was saying, I would have to interpret. In those days fathers were not permitted to be in the delivery room to witness the baby's birth, and there was a grave weakness in our course on midwifery, they did not actually allow us to see a baby born. We were shown with an ingenious model at the hospital, which came to pieces in sections. Parts of the mother's body with the womb, and when the top section of the womb was taken off, there was the foetus inside which could also be removed. We were shown the correct position it should be born and told what to do if the position was wrong. All the important instruction was in theory only, we did not see it happen in real life. However, I memorised the German terms and about 9.p.m. on the ~~third~~ October 1926, we knew the baby was on its way. Our landlady stayed with my wife while I went to fetch the midwife who came back with me in the droshky I had taken, our landlady retired to her room when the midwife took over and I sat on a chair just outside the open bedroom door and began interpreting, first telling the midwife what my wife was saying, then passing on the midwife's instructions to my wife and there I sat until nearly 2.a.m. the next morning. It was crazy really, I might just as well have been by the side of the bed, as I was many years later after my second marriage and our children were born in England. Then I was not needed as an interpreter, but was present to see our babies arrive into this world, as I am convinced every father should be. We had arranged that if a doctor should be required, I could call one who lived in a flat above my brother. So when, after our daughter had arrived, the midwife came out to me and said, "your wife will need stitching, I shall have to call a doctor," I told her I would go at once to the one with whom we had arranged. Droshkys were always on the roads throughout the night and when I got downstairs I saw one on the corner near the main road. As is usual the driver was huddled in his seat dozing, I shouted to wake him up, got in the droshky and told him

where I wanted to go. It was well after 2.a.m. when I reached the flat, I rang the bell and after a short delay while somebody got out of bed, the flap on the grill opened and a lady's voice asked me in Latvian what I wanted. As most educated people there could speak German, I said the doctor was needed, in German, ~~then~~ then said my brother had arranged with him to attend my wife if he should be needed. She said she was sorry but the doctor was away for a few days, but she would give me the name and address of another doctor near by. I was disappointed especially as it was in the early hours of the morning and I had to get a doctor to my wife as soon as possible. I went to the address given. It was in the Russian quarter of the city. On the doctor's flat door was a name plate with a Jewish name. I rang the bell and after waiting for about a minute got no reply, I rang again, then heard someone shuffling inside, then some fumbling behind the door, the grill opened and a deep Russian voice spoke. I replied in German and told him what I wanted. The door opened and a strong smell of vodka hit me. The doctor was obviously fuddled and only half awake. I told him I had a droshky waiting outside and he said he would get his things. Eventually he came out with his bag and when we got to the droshky the driver was dozing in his seat. So I had a right dozy lot to contend with. On the way back to our flat I told him we were English and he asked me about conditions in England and rambled on in a way that did not exactly sound as though he had everything under control. I hoped the cool night air would wake him up before we reached my wife. The midwife looked at him suspiciously as we arrived. He began to get a suture ready and I heard the midwife say to him "are you not going to sterilise that doctor?" "That will be alright," he replied. She went to the table where he was fumbling with his instruments, picked up a sterilising tray of her own and in a firm voice said, "you are not using those until they have been sterilised, will you put them all in this." He could see she meant what she said, so put them in. There was a jug of boiled water already on the table which our landlady had supplied, the midwife poured some on the instruments in the tray then walked out into the kitchen and put them on the gas cooker. When she came back she said sternly to the doctor, "will you now go and wash your hands doctor, then we can start." Then went



into the bedroom to my wife and newly arrived baby. The doctor went into the kitchen but I did not see what he did, he came back and went to stitch up my wife. After he had gone the midwife reprimanded me for bringing him back, she said, when I found the doctor with whom we had arranged was away, I should have come back and she would have called her own doctor. I told her I was not to know that, I had the impression that the matter was urgent and that I dare not come back without a doctor. However, everything went well after that and we had added the first little member to our family who completely changed our life style from then onwards. I registered her at the Latvian registry and was given a Latvian birth certificate, then went to the British Consul in Riga to register our daughter as a British citizen as we were British subjects. Margaret then had dual nationality. Today, since the Russians have included Latvia in the Soviet Socialist Republics, I do not think that dual nationality any longer applies, for when I enquired recently what would be the procedure if Margaret visited Riga to see her birthplace, I was informed she would have to travel on her British passport. From the point of view of the seasons it was not the best time of the year for a baby to be born. There were only the few weeks of October and beginning of November that we could take her out into the open air. Once winter really settles in it is too extremely cold to take a baby out in a perambulator. But before long the Christmas season was upon us and whereas the previous year we arrived just after Christmas, this time we were there for all the preliminaries. In those states then, and probably now, great masses of pine trees grew everywhere in some of the country areas. Many thousands of them would be chopped off at the bottom, no roots as we often have in England, and they were stacked up in the streets of the city and sold by the peasants for about two pence or three pence each. They were all tall trees, the shortest would be about six feet high, I bought one about eight feet and paid the equivalent of three pence for it. When Christmas is over the trees are sawn up and put with the pine logs in the bunkers at the bottom of the blocks of flats, outside at the back, where the tenants have their wood for heating fuel. Where houses still had no gas supply, they would also cook by wood fuel, but in stoves constructed differently from ours in Great Britain. They were much more economical than ours at home, when

the fire was lighted first thing in the morning, and the pine logs had blazed away until they were a red glow, the door of the oven would be closed. The ovens were brick built and the door was like a small solid safe door fitted into the brickwork. The brick walls of the oven became red hot and retained their heat after the door was closed. No more fuel was added until the evening, when, either for cooking or heating the rooms, a little more wood fuel would be added, but even then when the door was opened to replenish the fire, there would still be a red glow inside. Whether it was a stove for cooking or an oven for heating the rooms, it was of the same construction. We had an oven in our kitchen as well as a gas cooker, but also in our bedroom was an oven into which two other rooms cornered, our living room and bathroom, and all three rooms were beautifully warm constantly even in the coldest of the winter weather, just with one fire damped down all day, it was the brickwork that retained the heat. I have never seen in England any heating arrangement as economical as that, even after nearly sixty years since I was in that part of the world. This is another reason why Riga was such a clean city, there was no coal burnt in any of the homes. Perhaps in one or two heavy industries in a suburb of Riga, some industrial coal may have been used, but I never saw any black smoke belching from any chimneys and we never suffered from the smog that we always had in London in the winter. In Riga when a home fire was lit, at first some white wisps of smoke would be seen, then when the fire had been shut down, just a shimmer of heat haze over the chimney. After Christmas the winter seemed to go quicker than our first winter out there. I had organised myself into a routine in my work, but also I think, because we had now a new interest in our little daughter. But I was still not happy with what Pastor Fetler was doing in the unprofitable projects to which he was diverting funds intended for other purposes. I talked things over with my wife and we decided we would stay out there for one more beautiful summer they always have there and in the autumn we would return to England. We spent the best weeks of that summer again in a villa near the sea in the Gulf of Riga and when it came to our holidays for three weeks in August, she agreed that I should spend the first week saying farewell to our English and American friends who by then were

scattered about in various centres far from Riga and much nearer the borders of Russia. My wife could not make the journey with a young baby and in any case was not too keen to go as the journey was not exactly a comfortable one in those days. The train was reasonable, even with its wooden seats, but from the stations to the country villages by bumpy carts was a bit rough. However, I loved travelling and had been shut up in the office for some months and when at home could not leave my wife alone with the baby to go on any more weekend preaching trips. Of course, she had our very nice landlady during the day time and they used occasionally to go out shopping together. By the sea in the Gulf of Riga she was sharing the willa with three other young English ladies, who were co-workers at the Mission headquarters, so did not mind at all if I went away for a week. My brother and his wife had moved to a little town named Rezekne about half way between Riga and the Russian border, so I planned to make the journey direct to them first, stay overnight with them and then on to the other places nearer the border. An additional reason for seeing them first was because they had just had their first child, a baby boy and I wanted to see him. When I arrived at their home my sister-in-law told me my brother was away at a place named Ludza. It was on the itinerary I had planned so I knew I would see him, but it was typical of my brother Alec, he was still roaming around as he did when a boy, often not coming home at the times our mother had told him for a particular errand she needed him and her having to send me instead. Many times his midday meal would be over a pot of hot water keeping for him and I and my sister would be going back into school when he would come running in all out of breath because he had heard the school bell ringing. But now, here he was as a grown man, and a new father at that, his baby son was only three weeks old. prematurely born, quite yellow when I saw him in his cot. My sister-in-law, fortunately, was the strong, efficient, bustling type, who had already become used to my brother roaming off. Although he worked for the Mission he had a kind of free lance freedom, travelled around to the other workers when he felt so inclined and as I have already recorded, got permission on one occasion to go up to the Russian guards on the border post.

But where was my brother now, had he forgotten I was paying my farewell visit ? The next day I found where he was and what he was doing.

At Rezekne they were renting a logwood constructed house, which was the usual type in those days in those parts of the world. Some of them were made to look quite decorative on the outside and this was quite a nice looking house. Although they are built mostly of wood they are very cosy inside and very warm in the winter. My sister-in-law had a spare bedroom which I used for the night and in the morning I was off fairly early on the cart ride back to Rezekne station to take the train to Ludza. I had arranged in advance to stay at the house shared by two lady missionaries who had worked at our headquarters in Riga when I first was there. When I arrived they first of all gave me a meal then told me where I would find my brother. He was staying at another house where he was renting a couple of furnished rooms. When I knocked on the door he opened it and looked as surprised to see me as he was at Charterhouse when we were lads. He had quite forgotten that I was paying my farewell visit. "Come in," he said, "I'm just getting my tackle ready." I followed him into the room and on a table I saw his gear all laid out. Then he told me he had hired a rowing boat for the day and was going <sup>fishing</sup> on a large lake nearby. He asked me if I would go with him and I said I would for a couple of hours, after which I had a couple of visits to pay. So I knew now why my brother came to Ludza every now and again apart from visiting the Baptist churches in the area. Later that day I made my farewell calls on my other friends then spent the evening with the ladies who were accommodating me for the night. They told me of some of the difficulties they were having from some folk in the area who were opposing them. The established church of Russia and the Baltic States had always been the Russian Orthodox Church and the largest Protestant denomination was the Baptists. In the states along the borders of Germany the largest Protestant church was the Lutheran. There was one Lutheran church in Riga, but throughout the country generally in Latvia Protestants were Baptists. The members of the Orthodox church in Ludza, seeing the way the English missionaries were seeking to build up and expand the Baptist church, objected and began to make things

difficult. At first it was an annoyance in a mild way, the younger folk would be sent around an open air meeting being held by the Missionaries with some of the local Baptists, and the opposition jeered and made rude remarks, or when literature was distributed it would be torn up and burnt in the street. But when they found that this did not deter the English missionaries they began things of a more personal nature. They came in crowds outside the missionaries houses and made threats and smeared the windows and doors. Then only a few days before I arrived the two ladies where I was staying heard noises in the early morning and when they went to look outside found a load of swill and rubbish from the village dump had been piled on their doorstep. The same had happened to the missionaries some yards down the road. Without my knowing anything about this I had already assisted them that afternoon, when I returned from the fishing trip with my brother, in conducting an open air meeting in the village, and there was no sign at all of any opposition or trouble. For one thing it was a very hot day, as it often is at that time of the year. We all stood out in the sunshine, in fact I had a white-washed wall behind my back which was reflecting the strong rays of the sun on me and had to put a hat on the back of my head as the heat was burning my neck. I saw groups of people here and there in shady spots looking on as though they were very interested in fact some looked as though they were fascinated, and it was not until the ladies told me of the trouble they had been getting and were amazed at the fact that they had not had any trouble at the open air meeting, that it suddenly dawned on me. Of course, I had played my concertina at the open air meeting and they had never seen or heard an instrument like that before. Most of our meeting was singing which I accompanied. In the big cities in Russia like Moscow or Petrograd (Leningrad) the Russian type piano-accordion was popular, but in the country districts the peasants then had no such instruments, except an occasional balalaika or Russian five stringed guitar if anyone was clever enough to play one. Most of their music was vocal and folk harmonised well, in the churches both Orthodox and Baptist, the choirs were very good. But my concertina was something new and if, as the poet says, "music hath charms to soothe a

savage breast," at least my concertina music on that hot afternoon was sufficient to keep the people in a peaceful frame of mind.

The next morning I said farewell to the missionaries in Ludza and took my place on the cart going to the station where I was to board the train going back to Riga. About a dozen of us got on the cart including a Jewish lad of about eighteen years. He kept looking at me and I thought it was because I was a stranger or maybe he saw me playing my concertina yesterday, but I appeared not to notice. When we reached the station we had about twenty minutes to wait for the train so I sat in the waiting room. The Jewish lad came in also, sat opposite and kept looking at me. I was debating in my mind whether I would speak to him when he came over to me and asked in German if I had any literature. He spoke more Yiddish than German but it was understandable. It occurred to me that he must have seen our folk distributing literature and thought I had some. I told him I had not got any as I had only come to visit my friends, but that I had some in Riga and would willingly send some to him when I got back. I asked him to write down his name and address and handed him a pencil and piece of paper. I asked if he would prefer some booklets in Yiddish and he said he would. He still hung about as though he was expecting something. The train came in and I walked out of the waiting room to the platform and he followed behind although he was not getting on the train. There were about twenty to thirty people up and down the platform most of whom were boarding the train and a few were alighting. I stepped up into the train walked down the centre corridor to a seat near a window on the platform side. As soon as the Jewish boy saw my face appear he walked along to where I was and continued to look, first at me and then along the platform as though he was expecting something or someone. The train went out and I thought no more about it and perhaps it was as well that I was quite ignorant of the real reason why he was there, I was as blissfully unaware as I was the day before at the open air meeting, not knowing they had trouble on the last occasion. It was quite late when we arrived at Riga, so I went to our flat to get a bath and change of clothes and pack some clean things to take in the morning when I was to join my wife and baby for our final week by the sea. I put the promised literature in an envelope ready

and posted it the next morning on my way to the railway station. We made the most of our last week on that lovely beach, then returned to our flat in Riga to begin packing for our voyage home to England. My brother had arranged to come up to Riga and stay with us for our last week in Latvia, his wife could not come on account of the newly arrived baby, she had come up to say farewell to us only a couple of weeks before the baby arrived not knowing it would be premature. My brother asked me if anything unusual happened when I stayed with the missionaries at Ludza for he had returned to his own house at Rezekne and had not seen the English missionaries since I had payed them my farewell visit. I told him that nothing unusual had happened. He asked not even when I went to help them with the open air meeting? I said, "no." Then he asked if I knew the trouble they had been getting from the mobs sent by the Orthodox church and also some from the Jewish religious community. I said the missionaries had told me all about it but I had not witnessed any of it myself. Then I told him about the Jewish youth who followed me to the station and hung about as though he was expecting something to happen. My brother said, "Oh, I expect he thought there was going to be a repetition of the previous week and he wanted to see the fun." I said, "What do you mean the previous week?" "Oh, didn't they tell you about that?" he asked. Then he told me what happened when two other missionaries went to Ludza with two or three students from the Riga Bible School and joined with the local Baptists in open air meetings and distributing literature. Apart from the usual barracking and burning of literature in the street, when they returned to the railway station a crowd followed them. Although the missionaries took the cart as most train passengers did because of their baggage, it was only two miles to the station, which was nothing in those days, there were no 'bus services in the country then and people were used to walking for many miles. I have been to gatherings of people in the outlying districts where people have been told the English missionaries were coming and groups of folk have been pointed out to me who have walked as far as twenty-five miles to attend, they have started off in the early hours of the morning to make sure they were with us by midday and after meetings going on right until late that night, they have

slept on the floor of the log built church over night and started off back again home in the early hour of the next morning. So it was no hardship for the Ludza crowd to walk two miles to the station and back again for the fun they would get from it. I would add here that some country towns and villages I visited in those parts were as far as eight to ten miles from the railway station and some form of transport was necessary, a cart in the summer or a sledge in the winter. However, when the crowd arrived at the station on the Sunday evening before my visit, they found the missionaries already distributing pamphlets among the people on the platform and in the waiting room. Some of the mob began at once to snatch the pamphlets away and tear them up, they grappled with the missionaries and students, pushed and punched them and when the train came in they tried to prevent them boarding it. The train guards and station officials had to intervene to get all the passengers on board. I went alone the next week and only one Jewish youth followed me and, of course, I did not distribute any literature. Maybe that was why the lad asked me if I had any pamphlets, he wanted to see me start distributing. But I had gone only on a farewell visit to my friends and I carried, with my small weekend case, only my concertina in its case, I never went anywhere without that. Nevertheless, while I was grateful that I had been spared rough treatment on my visit, the fact of such forceful opposition by members of the Orthodox church set me thinking once more and asking questions in my own mind. What is all this Christian religion really about? I could understand some opposition from the Jewish community, they had suffered so much for many years through the pogroms both in Russia and in Poland, and the church had been responsible for those anti-Jewish outrages, in some cases massacres accompanied by plunder and arson, the Orthodox Church in Russia and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. We began our first two months in Riga by living with Jewish people and we liked them. As a student I gave some time of my practical work experience working with the Barbican Mission to Jews in the East End of London. I knew the East End well, where my own father was born when his parents were on their first migration to London. I too was born only a couple of miles further out, in East Ham and brought up all my boyhood near Canning Town, where we were often in the Mile End Road and Whitechapel.



I knew a number of really good Jews and could never understand why some gentiles had to be anti-semitic. Yet when the church authorities stirred the mobs to punish the Jews by violence, they gave as their sanction for it a text from St. Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate in order that judgment might be given that He should be put to death and Pilate washed his hands of the matter, the multitude of the Jews cried out "His blood be on us, and on our children." Now while it is true that leading theologians have affirmed the two Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John to be strongly anti-semitic, those passages that give that impression are purely of a dogmatic character, the conflict of the followers of Jesus with the Jewish religious leaders of their day. There is absolutely nothing that by any stretch of the imagination can be read to give sanction to ordinary men and women to take the law into their own hands and mete out punishment in the place of God. I had already formed some unfavourable impressions of the Russian Orthodox Church under the old Tzarist regime from what Vagars the young Red Army officer had told me. Now from my missionary friends in Ludza I had learned that the same Orthodox Church enjoying the freedom and protection of the State of Latvia, was stirring its members to the same sort of belligerence towards members of another section of the Christian Church as they had previously meted out to the Jews. I do not think the Jewish community at Ludza had much to do with the annoyance given to my friends there, they were there, I believe, as onlookers enjoying the fun and no doubt felt some satisfaction in seeing persecution directed against others instead of themselves. In Riga I used occasionally to go into the large Russian Orthodox Cathedral just to hear the music. As I have already said, it was all vocal. The priests in those days were all trained singers, in fact one of the qualifications for the acceptance of a young man as a novice was his ability to sing. Among the students at our Bible School in Riga, besides getting to know Vagars I also got to know another young man who was the son of a Russian Orthodox priest. He also had been entered and was being trained for the priesthood. But he disliked it and did not want to

follow in his father's footsteps. When with the Russian revolution the Bolsheviks occupied Latvia, he saw his opportunity, left the Orthodox Church and joined the Communists. He soon witnessed things he did not like, with the excesses of those early days, and when the liberating forces under the British Commander drove the Communists out, he took refuge with members of our Mission and later was accepted as a student in our Bible School. He had a fine tenor voice and was often used as a soloist with the choir formed for the new Riga Temple when it opened. Until the Temple was completed he sang at services we held in other churches in Riga and away in the country. But the choir in the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Riga was superb. If, when I was passing on my way to the Riga Bank on Mission business, I heard them rehearsing, I would step inside the door, which was always open to the public, and listen. On some occasions I went in during a Sunday service to witness what was happening. The peasant folk were very simple illiterate and superstitious in their form of worship. No hymn books or prayer books were used but in any case many of them could not read, but even for the educated worshipers there was nothing to do but just stand and witness the spectacle being performed. It was all very theatrical. Over all could be heard the singing of the choir, which was never seen. It was up somewhere on a gallery concealed in the arches of the great dome of the cathedral and the sound came down from the dome like a choir of angels singing in heaven. That was the impression I used to think they were giving. Then before the people's wondering gaze a very colourful spectacle would take place. Hand bells rang and priests emerged from doors each side of the elaborately decorated altar. Servers standing ready by the altar swung incensories on silver chains towards the priests and the aromatic smoke from the burning incense wafting around the priests had some symbolic meaning. This, of course, was a relic from ancient pagan religions long before the time of Jesus Christ. There was constant movement between the priests and the servers while rites were performed with silver platters and a silver chalice which contained both the bread wafers and the wine for the sacrament of Holy Communion. All the while prayers were being intoned between the parts sung by the choir. Then at a certain part in the service more hand bells were rung, the choir singing rose to a

dramatic crescendo, a door opened near the altar and into the chancel came the Metropolitan, majestically in all his regalia. But grandly though he is attired, his robes are not sufficiently splendid for such a sublime ceremony as this, he must be even more dignified and imposing. So as the Metropolitan stands forward near the chancel steps, two priests stand one each side of him to act as dressers and the servers parade forward each one holding a different vestment or garment over his outstretched arm. The dressers take off from the Metropolitan the white cloak he was wearing when he came in, then slowly with great dignity they clothe him with a white cassock and surplice, then a coloured cloak, followed by various stoles of different patterns and colours, each apparently signifying something symbolic, and lastly a long white silk stole with gold braid woven and embroidered upon it. When he is ready, the hand bells ring again and the priests begin moving among the people who are standing in no particular order in the spacious nave of the cathedral, for there are no seats anywhere, and to each person a priest will give the elements of the Eucharist, also known as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This they do by lightly dipping the thin bread wafer into the wine and putting it on to the tongue of each recipient. This is the only part any of the worshippers took actively in any of the services I witnessed, they just opened their mouths to receive the wafers given by the priests. The poor superstitious people were overawed by the mystery and magic of it all. When I saw this for the first time, in my mind I compared their way of dispensing God to the people with what Jesus of Nazareth had said nearly two thousand years before when He told the Jews that God was not overawed with all the grandeur and paraphernalia of their Temple. He chided them because He said while they were meticulous in observing all the rites and ceremonial of the Temple, they omitted the weightier matters of their law, things which had to do with their relationship to their fellow humans and the relief of the needs of those in want. I watched the simple people as they went out of the cathedral believing they had received some blessing from the Metropolitan as he moved among them so that they could kiss his hand or the hem of his garment. Then as they left they went up to a large oil painting of Jesus Christ near the main doors and kissed the feet of the

crucified Christ and I saw that this had been repeated by so many people over a number of years that the oil painted feet were almost worn away by the kissing. Yet the untaught simple folk believed that the priests who fed them with these superstitions, held some mystic power and had imparted to them something that acted like a charm to help and protect them through another hard working week until they could attend the next sacred service. Who were those priests, what kind of men were they? Like priests and ministers of religion in all religious denominations today, some are good, some are bad, and the majority are in between. Those priests in those days were just the same, they were only ordinary human beings. I must qualify this statement at once by revealing that for most of my working life I have worked professionally with many of them so have had plenty of opportunities to know. Even as actors when on stage take on the characters of persons other than themselves, and each actor as he portrays his part relates himself to that other person by speech, actions, and in his imagination until for his space on stage he becomes that other person. Then when the play is over he becomes himself again. When my wife and I have been to see either of our two actor sons in a play, in the case of both of them it has always been the same experience. As either of them has been playing his part, his speech, his actions, his looks, have convinced us it was not our son we were watching, it was someone else. Then when the play was over and the grease paint and costumes were off, our son - on some few occasions both of them - would join us and take us to the bar to meet their friends, and they are our sons again, the character which either of them had portrayed was left behind on the stage. So too is it with priests, ministers of religion, preachers and pastors of all religious denominations, particularly when the service centres around the Eucharist or Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper as the Fundamentalists call it. The Priest or Pastor is the leading character in a dramatic display and he displays something other than himself. He claims to be in the place of God or Jesus Christ, that he administers God to the people. The drama of the service builds up around him as he manipulates the rites and the people's response to him in those rites. Then with the service ended the paraphernalia is packed away, the vestments are taken off - or the cassock and surplice in the simpler orders - and the

Priest or Pastor has hardly disrobed in the vestry before the very human conversation between him and the church wardens or stewards begins, "I say old chap, did you watch the Test match on T.V., yesterday?" Or someone asks, "Will you be able to attend the dinner at the King's Head on Wednesday evening?" "Well no, actually I've already committed myself to an indoor bowls match that evening." Sometimes it is a more serious conversation about a member who is ill or who has died. But the mystery and magic of the sacred drama just performed in the church has already gone, all those who took part are down to earth again. The priests of the Orthodox church have one advantage over those in the Roman Catholic church, they are allowed to marry and have families, so their priests do not suffer the strain that compells some Roman Catholics to keep a mistress somewhere secretly. Today, the Vatican under the leadership of the present Pope does not permit this, but it is common knowledge that for many years it has gone on, particularly in some European countries. So some priests today find solace in other ways. I can speak only of those I have known personally. They love their wine, indeed some are real connoisseurs of good wine. But this would appear to be the case among Orthodox priests also. I was returning to our Headquarters from the Riga Bank one day, it was about midday. I turned into our street, which was long and straight and the building to which I was going was almost at the other end. At that time of the day there was hardly anyone about, just two people in fact besides myself and they were approximately fifty yards in front on my side of the street, near enough to see they were Orthodox church priests in their late twenties or early thirties, with their long black gowns sweeping the pavement and broad black cape tops around their shoulders. They were hatless with long shoulder length hair, which was usual when they were not dressed for a service in church, but they were a strange sight, in fact they looked ridiculous, for they were both quite drunk, swaying from side to side of the pavement, occasionally bumping into each other as they staggered along the street. Now if priests want to celebrate on special occasions and have a few more than is good for them, it might not be so bad if they kept it to the sacred precincts of their abbey or rectory, friary, vicarage or whatever, but to be seen staggering about

in broad daylight by the ordinary people to whom they represent God, is not helpful to those who look to them for spiritual help. These same Orthodox priests were sometimes responsible for stirring up opposition towards the Baptist fundamentalists who, while their presentation of God was much simpler, were at least more consistent and genuine, and their daily lives did match up nearer to their moral beliefs. But I had learned much in those parts before we returned home to England, things that had compelled me to ask questions in my own mind about the religion that had been fed into my mind from early childhood, leading up to the extreme form of fundamentalism at Speke Hall. My Christianity was stamped with the hall-mark of the British Empire, it was the sort to be shipped overseas with the missionaries to be taught to the natives as being far superior to anything they had. It was true that I had been sent out to Latvia with a society that had been formed in the first place as a relief organisation, but at the time I went out in 1925, there was very little of that work still being carried out. I did learn from other workers that there was some distribution of food and clothing still in Poland and one part of Germany where thousands of Russians had fled to escape from the Communists. But all I saw at the headquarters of the mission in Riga was propaganda, the distribution of Christian literature and Bibles and an attempt to get some of that literature into Russia itself. I have no doubt that if Pastor Fetler got cash into Russia by way of the Latvian diplomatic bag he would also have included literature. The money I knew about, as I had to enter it in my ledger, but I had no proof of the literature. However, one thing I began to learn in that first appointment abroad, was that Christianity as taught by the established churches is divisive, it separates human beings from each other, it is the cause of the many schisms, sects and denominations many of them in conflict with each other, and the divisions are always doctrinal, differences in what one is required to believe. Whereas if the Way of Life preached by Jesus of Nazareth in His proclamation of the Kingdom of God on earth, could be applied to all nations as He intended, it would be the greatest unifying force this world had ever witnessed, and among all nations at last would be peace. As far back as we can go in the history of this world there have been more years of war than of peace, and most of those wars have been

religious, for even where powerfully armed nations have subdued smaller nations simply for territorial gain, the occupying powers have taken with them some members of their religious hierarchy who, in some cases by cruel means have compelled the conquered people to accept their beliefs and dogmas. History has many records of this but to quote one instance. When in the sixteenth century Velasquez led his conquering Spaniards into Cuba, when the conquest was accomplished and they had taken captive the brave old warrior chief Hatuey, for no crime other than that he had resisted his European conquerors, he was lashed to the stake and sentenced to a cruel death. As his Spanish tormentors approached with torches to light the faggots at his feet, the priests drew near and implored him to embrace their Christianity, the Catholic faith of the Spaniards. He refused. So they told him if he died as he was, his soul would go to hell, but he had only to kiss the crucifix to show his acceptance of Catholic Christianity, and his soul would be admitted into heaven. The old chief asked, "and will the souls of the white men go to heaven?" "Most assuredly," replied the priests. "Then," exclaimed Hatuey, with great dignity, "I will not be a Christian, for I would not go to a place where I shall find men so cruel!" The Christianity those Catholic Priests were propagating was quite foreign to the Gospel as preached by Jesus of Galilee. So too what I had observed during my time in the Baltic States had set me thinking and caused me to ask questions. When I left London, after a hurried marriage, to go out to the work in Riga, I knew nothing theologically, historically or politically other than I had imbibed from the very narrow fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity. All I knew was that I was going out as a member of the Christian Church and that our main task was to help save people from a great evil power called Bolshevism which through cruelty and bloodshed was spreading atheism throughout Russia. I had not been in Riga long when I realised there was very much more to this serious problem than I had been told in England. I had not got a clue as to what Bolshevism or Communism was all about. I knew there was a man called Karl Marx but I had never read any of his works, so knew nothing of his philosophy, and even if I did not agree with all he said, at least I should know what he taught. Also I knew nothing of the kind of Christianity they had for years been taught in Russia. I decided when I returned home I would begin to find out.

We left Riga by ship at the end of August 1927, on the S.S. Nordland a passenger ship belonging to a German company that sailed regularly between most of the countries in the Baltic area, Sweden, Finland, Russia, the Baltic ports on our side of the Baltic sea including the Polish port of Gdansk, the home port being Stettin in Germany.

We left Riga in the morning, slept on board that night and arrived at Stettin in the early afternoon the next day. Travel was slower in those days than it is today. My wife had the baby to carry so we sent most of our luggage in advance to London and I carried one suitcase with all the things we would need for our one night on the ship and another night with some friends in Berlin and a third night sleeping on the train from Berlin to Ostende. I also carried a small basket with the baby's things. Our Mission representatives in Berlin were a Mr. and Mrs. Niendorf whose office was originally the headquarters of the Mission when the relief work among the refugees from the Russian famine first operated. It was arranged that we would stay overnight with them. I telegraphed them from Stettin to say what time our train arrived in Berlin and they met us at the station, then took us by taxi to their home. It was evening by then so it was left until the following day before showing us around Berlin, as we would have all day for sight seeing and then take the night train for Ostende. Mrs. Niendorf looked after our baby while Mr. Niendorf took my wife and myself around to see all the important places. We had then only a Brownie box camera but I was able to take some black and white snaps of buildings which have since disappeared in the bombing of the second World War. I took one from the top of the Sieges Saule of the old Reichstag building before it was burned down. One thing we saw in Berlin which we had never seen in any city in Great Britain up until then. On all main street crossings and intersections they had traffic lights operated automatically just as they are today in almost every city in the developed world. It was something new to us then, but we had been home only about a year when we saw the first traffic lights being installed on all main crossings in London. We arrived home at the beginning of September, 1927 and went to stay with my parents who were still caretakers at Speke Hall and had a couple of spare rooms in their residential quarters. My first move was to get



a position in a Christian organisation where I could be engaged in work for which I had been trained. I had not long to wait. The little lady who was deaconess of Speke Hall, Miss Williams, who had initiated me as a youth into the doctrines of John Wesley, brought to me a periodical in which was an advertisement appealing for young men who were needed as London City Missionaries. Now, before the first World War, the London City Mission was still being organised and conducted along rigid Victorian lines. It had only a few dozen agents known as City Missionaries, who were very poorly paid and required to do many hours of work each day under difficult circumstances in very poor slum areas. In the early days they were required also to live in the areas where they worked. They had many restrictions put upon them. But the terrible first World War was responsible for changing many things and I had seen the first moves being made to bring about changes just after the war while I was working as an assistant to Sir Andrew Duncan in Westminster. I had seen the riots in Whitehall as thousands of men marched towards the House of Commons to protest to Parliament about jobs, wages and conditions. I had seen the police, both foot and mounted on horses, with truncheons drawn, attempting to prevent the protestors reaching Westminster Palace. The men tearing up the tarred wood blocks which formed the surface of the road then, to hurl as missiles, the police charging them wielding their batons, horses with riders going over into the road. On one occasion when I was taking papers to Whitehall, I had to run down Downing Street to the entrance to the Foreign Office to escape the scuffling men who had surged over on to the pavement with blocks and bricks coming down everywhere. On another occasion I was going home in the evening towards Victoria station, when a procession of men who had formed up elsewhere after being driven back from Whitehall, came marching down Victoria street towards Westminster, the police met them just when they were level with me. Fighting broke out, a horse and policeman went down in the road right near me and as the missiles came down I ran into a shop porch but the proprietor had locked the door. I pressed myself into the corner until the worst of the struggling crowd had pushed its way further down the street. All this protesting and violent demonstrating reached its climax in the General Strike of 1926. But I was out of the country for that, I was in Riga and knew

through letters sent from home and a couple of English newspapers obtainable in Riga, although one or two days late, something of what was going on at home. We returned to London more than a year after the General Strike and found the economic condition of Great Britain had deteriorated. Unemployment had increased considerably since I had left my position at Westminster. I decided that while I was waiting for the right position in an established church organisation, I would get an office job somewhere in London, similar to those positions I had previously held, but I was in for a bit of a shock. When I last applied for an office job in Westminster the war was on, there were plenty of vacancies, jobs were easy to get. Of course, today I realise that even so, I was very fortunate indeed to get the position with Sir Andrew Duncan during my early, important, formative years, when I had his great help and influence. However, when I went up to Westminster this time to that same Labour Exchange (Job Centre) what a difference I found. There was not a single job available anywhere. So I tried the City of London only to find things were just as bad there. When I returned to our temporary home with my parents at Speke Hall, after my second day of fruitless seeking for work, I found little Miss Williams, the deaconess, with my mother. She was waiting for me with a London periodical in her hand. She showed to me an advertisement asking for candidates, men with Christian convictions who could become London City Missionaries. I studied it carefully while Miss Williams explained to me what she knew of the work and methods of the organisation. Apparently they were reorganising now that the war was over, they had a new General Secretary, the Reverend W.P. Cartwright, M.A., and another new Secretary responsible for the training of the candidates while on probation, he was the Reverend Bourne, but other details about him I cannot now remember. They claimed that the rates of pay had been brought into line with what then, in 1927,<sup>was</sup> the average rate of a working man, £3 per week, but there were some additional benefits such as a two weeks holiday in the summer for the man and his family paid for by the London City Mission and also arrangements for sick pay additional to the state National Insurance sick benefit pay. I applied to the society, went before a candidates examining committee, satisfied them that I was suitable and accepted. One thing they emphasised to me. They needed men from among the people to go to the people, I certainly was from the proletariat but did not look

like a working class person, I looked as though I had come straight from the Stock Exchange in the City, in my dark jacket, pin striped trousers, spats (worn then by all City people), bowler hat and brief case - although I hasten to add that in those days working men sometimes wore bowler hats when dressed in their Sunday best. The gentlemen of the committee seated around the large boardroom table looked very important and formidable, they were mostly business gentlemen, one or two whose well known names encouraged donations to the Mission funds from large businesses in London, and there were also two or three clerics, but while the society claimed to be inter-denominational, the clergymen who were secretaries were both Church of England. One of the gentlemen asked me if I was prepared to work in the slum areas of London, I might also have to live in them. As a matter of fact, whereas in the old days a missionary was expected to live among his people, when I entered at the end of 1927, we were allowed to live away from our districts so long as we had not too far to travel to our work each day. In reply to the gentleman's question I said I was born and spent all my boyhood adjacent to a slum area and while in our district our houses were a little better, we were a working class area with some of the poorest people in London. Today many of the houses of my boyhood have been demolished and blocks of flats and new houses have been built, the district looks quite different. I was accepted by the London City Mission and for my first appointment they said they were placing me with the Church of England in the East End of London. Although my mother was a Methodist and I had been instructed in John Wesley's doctrines, I was still a confirmed member of the Church of England. When I had entered the Missionary Training Colony, that too was mostly Anglican influenced. The Rev. W.P. Cartwright explained to me that there was a shortage of Curates and that Vicars were asking for City Missionaries. If one was placed with a Vicar he would then apply to the Bishop of the diocese for a lay-reader's licence. Once he had obtained that the missionary would have authority to preach and conduct services and the Vicar could use him in place of a Curate. The war, of course, was responsible for the scarcity of young men entering the Church. While the war raged the best of Britain's young manhood was being killed or maimed at the war front. Now that the war was over the outlook on life among young people during the nineteen-twenties with their desires and aspirations was changing. Religion was being rejected

and most churches were more than half empty. So, what with the manpower shortage caused by the war and the changing attitudes of young people now that it was over, young men were not taking the church as a vocation.

The London City Mission had entered me as a confirmed member of the Church of England so the first appointment they gave me was to an Anglican church in the East end of London, All Hallows, Bromley by Bow. The Rector in charge was the Reverend J.W. Fitkin, formerly Secretary of the Church Pastoral Aid Society and it was no doubt because of his influence in that society and his personal knowledge of influential people who controlled the finances of that society, that he was able to get grants in support of his own more than adequate number of members on his own staff.

When it is borne in mind that in those days a Vicar or Rector would be adequately staffed if he had a Curate, a Deaconess and one or two voluntary helpers from his parish council, it can be seen that All Hallows was very fortunate in having besides myself as the City Missionary, two Church Army Captains, a Deaconess, the Rector's own wife in charge of the Women's work, and one or two ladies of her committee who gave voluntary help. There was no need for me to obtain a lay reader's licence at this church, both the Church Army Captains were licenced and I was not required to take any active part in any of the services of worship held in the church. What I was needed for was, in those days, the real basic work of the City Missionary. In any parish like ours in the East end of London, it was the most difficult work, often quite unpleasant, occasionally hazardous, but, I was to learn, when I had become experienced, frequently the most rewarding. Our work was to visit the homes of the people daily. House to house visitation on some days, getting to know the people, then from those visits we formed a list of those who needed more frequent visits, sick folk, those with problems that required legal aid, women we could join up with our women's meeting held weekly at the church hall, for while attendances at churches had fallen very much during the first World War and have never really recovered over the years since, we could always find good attendances at the women's meetings at most of the church halls especially in the poorer districts of London. There was nowhere else for the ~~women~~ to go to escape from the drudgery of their dreary homes, their surroundings were depressing, the chores of their

daily lives were all bound up with their struggles to exist, there was no relief from their degrading existence except the local 'pub' and what they could afford on drink, but as many of their men folk indulged in that way, sadly depleting what little income there was for food and housekeeping, there was little left for the women to do likewise. Younger folk could go to a Cinema in the locality - silent films only in those days - even as I as a child had gone occasionally with my brothers to a Saturday penny matinée to see a Charlie Chaplin film or Cowboys and Indians. Children could escape from their monotonous environment for a while each day by going to school and learning interesting things. The men when they had work could get away to a different atmosphere until the evening. The women who were tied to young families were just prisoners and slaves in their own dreary homes. That is why they were glad of the opportunity to get out to the Women's meeting at the Church hall with other women from the locality. They had speakers who came to give talks on various subjects, show how to make things, to sew and knit and given recipes on foods they could bake and cook for their families. There was no doubt that the women's meeting was the high-light of the week for many women in those poor areas of London. At the time when I was given this first appointment by the London City Mission in the autumn of 1927, the new radio, or wireless as it was then called, was only just becoming popular and while in the better class districts many people had installed one in their homes, most of the homes I visited could not afford one until the cheaper sets became available. Television, of course, had not even been invented at that time. Today, with all the entertainment in our homes, this generation has no understanding of the dreary kind of lives poor people lived in the industrial areas of this land in the early part of this century. This kind of environment was not new to me, the district where I had been brought up for the whole of my boyhood was adjacent to Bromley by Bow and our houses were only very slightly better. The homes of the people where I had been sent to work I would describe as ranging from poor down to one area of slum hovels. They are no longer there today, with the coming of the second world war, many of the homes I visited in the East end were destroyed by enemy bombing and after the war when the housing authorities demolished whole areas to rebuild, they made the tragic mistake

of erecting blocks of high rise flats. The object, no doubt, was to supply homes for as many people as possible in areas limited for space, but not enough was known by the authorities as to the adverse effects on the mental and physical health of the occupiers of those flats that would result from imprisoning them in such an unnatural and restricting environment. Today, many years too late, this is recognised, as also is the fact that much of the vandalism and violence among young people in our large cities has a cause in their feeling that they have been abandoned to a form of imprisonment where they are forgotten and unwanted. The environment of my childhood was depressing enough but at least we had some freedom to run about in less restricted surroundings. Too late also the housing authorities have discovered that the architects and builders of many of those high blocks of flats did not have enough experience of their construction and a number of the blocks have been found structurally unsafe and have been demolished after a comparatively short time in use. Some have other faults that make them unhealthy in which to live. While the demolishing of many of the slums in which I had worked, and for a period lived, was begun in the destruction by enemy bombing in the Second World War, and the clearing up in the post war years, not all that replaced the old bad conditions proved to be a beneficial advance. We are slow in learning. However, at the time I was appointed to All Hallows, Bromley by Bow, the slums still existed, although we also had an area of a slightly better type of working class houses, but they were arranged in monotonous, dreary rows both sides of narrow streets, one door, one window, one door, one window, one door, one window, and so on, unvaried, dark grey, grimy and sooty from the deposits from the factory chimneys near by. How polluted was the atmosphere I discovered not many weeks after I had settled in the work there. I was appointed in the Autumn of 1927 soon after we had returned from Riga. When Christmas of that year came we still had not recovered financially from our move. The salary paid by the London City Mission only just supplied our basic needs, there was nothing to pay for the extra things we had been used to buy for Christmas. On Christmas Eve I was walking home to our flat in Grove Road, which was a semi main road off the Mile End road along which trams ran then, and I had to go along Devons Road past the Bow cemetery which was next to the gas works.  
near

The cemetery had high iron railings and growing behind the railings were holly bushes. Here and there the holly had grown through the bars, overhanging the pavement along which I was walking. It was Christmas and we had nothing extra, just the usual small weekend joint for my wife and myself, our little daughter was only one year and two months, still being fed on baby foods. I decided that at least we would have a bit of holly hanging up, for however poor people were they usually had some decorations up in their humble homes for Christmas and it had always been the custom in my home. I stopped beneath a branch of holly, took out my penknife and cut off a spray. As I did so my fingers were blackened by a sooty deposit on the stalk. I looked up at the clouds of thick smoke belching from the gas works chimney adjacent to the cemetery. The holly leaves were a dark grey green. I wiped the tip of my finger along a leaf and produced a lighter green line where I had wiped off the deposit. So I took the small spray home and after washing it thoroughly found there were reasonably green holly leaves beneath the grime. There were no berries anywhere on any of the cemetery holly bushes, just dark leaves, but at least I had something up in our new home to show it was Christmas. But this set me thinking and once more asking questions in my mind. If the pollution in the air had covered what was evidently a newly grown shoot sprung out of the bush during the summer just gone, and had covered the green leaves with a dark grey coating in that short time, then we who were living and working in that atmosphere must be breathing it constantly. Was it right that any human being should be compelled to live in such an environment? Of course, I had been out of such an atmosphere for a few years since leaving the east of London, for although we had gone to Battersea where the streets were no better than those we had left, we were within easy reach of Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park and beyond the park in those days was almost all open country. The air was so much cleaner, the scenery so lovely. I used to breathe deeply there and say to myself, this is God's environment, but where I was born and brought up was made by man and those who created it did not live in it themselves, they lived surrounded by trees and green grass and flowers, where the air was clean and sweet smelling. Then I would remember what had been impressed on our minds as children, chiefly in what we were taught at Church, that wherever we found ourselves in this life that is where God had placed us, whatever our

station in life, that was God's purpose for us and we should be content with our lot and seek to do the best we can in it. There was one hymn for children we often sang which began with the words "We are but little children weak, nor born in any high estate ....." and the remainder of the hymn told us that there was plenty to do where we were, plenty to live for and "a constant war to wage with sin." But I always had the same feeling when we sang that hymn, a feeling of hopelessness and depression, here we were, it was God's will for us so here we would have to stay and make the best of it. The the hymn went on to say "we may check the hasty word" and "we may stay the angry blow" and "give gentle answers back again, and fight a battle for our Lord." I was never quite sure how I could be gentle and fight a battle at the same time, but I thought about that hymn on that Christmas Eve by the cemetery in Bromley by Bow as I plucked that filthy piece of holly from the bush. I felt angry, not because we had not any of the extras for Christmas, that did not bother me or my wife. We had both been indoctrinated at Speke Hall and among the many ambiguous things we had been taught was the belief that the festivities of Christmas had been adopted from pagan festivities far back in the history of the Christian Church and incorporated into Christianity in order to retain the heathen peoples they had converted. Yet strangely enough they taught the doctrine of the incarnation, that God took on the form of man in Jesus Christ, which theory also included the virgin birth. So while they recognised that historically much of the Christmas story was incorporated into Christianity at a later date, they overlooked the fact that also historically the virgin birth was added to Christian dogma at a later date. However, the actual celebration of Christmas did not mean all that much to me then, so I was not angry because we could not celebrate it. I was angry because it was some years since I had escaped from the East End of London, away from the unhealthy depressing conditions, and absolutely nothing had been done to better them, in fact they seemed to me to be worse. It was Christmas 1927, more than nine years since the First World War had ended and Lloyd George had promised "To make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in." But now Lloyd George no longer held power and he had resigned in 1922, and only the year ~~3~~ before my appointment to Bromley by Bow the General Strike had taken place in Great Britain, while I was out of the country in 1926, and



when that General Strike ended after only nine days, when the Council of the T.U.C., surrendered unconditionally, without obtaining any concession, the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and his government immediately proceeded to break the miners, who alone remained on strike, <sup>they</sup> repealed the Seven Hours Act of 1919, refused to comply with the suggestions of the Samuel Report, reduced the miners' wages, lengthened their working hours, and victimized their leaders. Things got worse and worse for the working classes, the unemployment rate had reached over two million by this time and kept going steadily up until it reached its peak in the world financial crisis of 1931 of over three million. Here I was in the East End of London again with things worse than they had been in my boyhood, and the environment, atmosphere and outlook as hopelessly depressing as it had ever been. I thought of that hymn again, that damned depressing hymn, but this time the words that stood out were "and fight a battle for our Lord." "Yes," I told myself, "I will fight a battle for God, but I can only fight it for God if I fight it for myself and my fellow men and women." What could I do? I had no power, I was only a London City Missionary propagating the Christian Gospel. So I decided I could start by making my own personal protest. No human should ever live in these conditions, so I would refuse to live in them. Quite willingly I would come back to work among my own people, to give them all the help I can, but I refuse to let my children live in that environment in which I had been compelled to live as a child. I will make my protest first to my headquarters, I will tell them that it is morally wrong that any human being should be compelled to live in such an environment, therefore it would be morally wrong if I allowed my children to live there. At that time we had the one daughter who was born in Riga, but my wife had just discovered she was expecting our second child. We were living in the borough of Bethnal Green which was a Socialist borough and had established free medical care for expectant women with an up-to-date antenatal clinic. My wife had just begun to attend there, she liked the professional people who attended to her there and felt more confident than she did when we had our first daughter in Latvia. There they had no pre-natal care for the women and no state medical services at that date. We just booked a midwife and my wife depended on my basic midwifery knowledge which had been part of my medical course taken as a missionary student.

She also relied upon my knowledge of German when purchasing the necessary things from the chemists and when she needed things explaining to the midwife. But in Bethnal Green she could manage without me, she took our little daughter along to the clinic at regular intervals, where they also kept my wife checked up for the second child she was expecting. So when I told her I was going to tell headquarters we were going to move back to the Clapham Common district where we had previously lived and that I would travel to Bromley by Bow each day, she said she wanted to go back but not until after the baby was born as she was in the hands of the antenatal workers at the clinic and wanted to stay with them. They obviously knew what they were doing, for my wife's neurosis was not improving and I was to have evidence when the baby was born that they had taken note of it. I believed that as a Christian I had to be patient and bear with it, but she continued to make things very difficult for me. The clinic had told her the baby would be born the following July, she was only in the early stages of pregnancy. So I decided I would have to leave my protest until the springtime, then give them advance notice that we were moving after July. In the meantime I would get on with my work and do my best to help any I could. After the few days Christmas break I met with the other members of the staff at the Rectory for a staff meeting with the Rector. After outlining future activities, the Rector asked me if I would stay for a few minutes as he and one of the Church Army Captains wanted to ask me if I would do something on the following Sunday. For the past weeks the Captain had endeavoured to hold a meeting for boys at the Church Hall further along Devons Road. It was a large corrugated iron hall looking as though it had suffered from the wear of past years. It was dark grey coloured, but that would not have been its original colour, it would have been painted at some time but since had been covered with the pollution of the atmosphere. During the First World War it had not been used at all for while it had previously been used for children's work, during the war there was nobody to carry out such activities. The Church Army chap told me that during the past two months he had tried to run a Sunday afternoon boys' meeting and that when it had become known around the district that something for boys was going to take place there, scores of boys had turned up, had created a hell of a noise outside and when the door was opened all rushed in,

climbed over the long wooden forms, ran around the hall and made a terrible din, he said it was like bedlam. He got on the platform and tried to get order, he tried to get them to sing a chorus, but they all started singing their own songs and the noise was worse still, so after about twenty minutes of trying he turned them all out and locked the door. That, he said, happened every Sunday he had tried it, would I like to have a go next Sunday. I said I would and he gave me a time to meet him at the hall. The next Sunday afternoon, before I reached the hall I heard the noise and as I approached I saw the Church Army Captain coming in the opposite direction, he had a large key in his hand with a brass tab attached to it. As we pushed our way through the shouting, milling crowd of boys, he said "I'll give you this key when I show you how to open the door." I saw the door had a sheet metal plate bolted to it and a large padlock through a thick metal staple. He said, "we had to do this they broke the original lock and nearly wrecked the place." He glanced at a box I was holding by a handle but he did not ask me what it was. I thought he was coming in with me and he would see what it was, but as he opened the door the wild boys stampeded through it almost pushing us over, he handed the key to me shouting over the uproar "I'll leave you to it," then turned and went. But I had come prepared, I had been thinking as I planned in my mind, that if I had to have the noise he told me about, then I would try to organise the noise, I would make it all make the same noise. I pushed my way along the corridor between the wooden forms and mounted the platform, went to a small reading desk fixed in front, faced the crowd and held my box up before my eyes and stared at it as though I was trying to see through it. A few boys in front noticed it and stopped their noise and looked. Most of the others were milling about. I said nothing but slowly lowered my box to the desk and moved my hands over it as though casting a spell. A few more boys near the front quietened down and looked. Slowly I pulled up one of my sleeves and then another like a conjurer about to perform a trick then slowly lowered my hands to the box and opened the lid. The hall got quieter gradually towards the back as the boys realised I was performing something. I circled my hands over the open box as though I was charming a snake inside, then lowered my right

hand into the box, looped my thumb into the thumb strap of my concertina, put my fingers on three notes to make a chord and slowly raised it. As the air entered the belows through the notes being held open the belows extended something like a snake and played a chord at the same time. All the noise in that hall had stopped and before it could break out again I took the other end of the concertina in my left hand and began to play and sing, "Oh my darling Clementine." Immediately everybody joined in, it was a terrific roar, for in those days Cockney boys did not sing their tunes they shouted them. It was one of the results of crowding so many people together, to compete with each other they had to shout to be heard. I followed with other choruses then after a while I got to a point when I could say, "here's one you may not know," and I sang them a jiggy Gospel chorus. It was easy to learn as it was one phrase that kept repeating and they all joined in, over and over again. But I was quite satisfied as I had got one little bit of propaganda programmed into their minds that would remain there for the rest of their lives.

However, a couple of days later the Rector said to me, "I'm afraid we will have to discontinue the boys meeting." Then he explained that not only were they there half an hour before their time creating a terrible noise and nuisance, but when the singing started it could be heard halfway around Bromley by Bow and there were men living nearby who worked very hard during the week who liked to get a nap on a Sunday afternoon and that was impossible. So a deputation from the neighbours came to the Rector and said it must stop.

However, as I said earlier, my chief work as a London City Missionary, was to visit the homes of all the people in our parish as well as any sick folk the Rector asked me to visit, either in their homes or in hospital. So began a new and important stage in my development, educationally and spiritually, the beginning of my understanding of my own race or genus, homo sapiens, the Latin meaning man as a reasoning species. Until then my understanding of education was the acquiring of knowledge which lifted us above the mere animal existence and gave us a more dignified way of life. This, up until then, I was getting mainly by way of books and, of course, books continued to be my chief source of information and still do at 82 years of age. Incidentally the occasional mention of my age in this record of my pilgrimage, shows how slowly it is taking book form, my age

advances each time I mention it, but then I always have in mind a proverb I saw as a young man, carved on a wooden plaque, in old English, on a village wall in Surrey near the North Downs - "No man workeneth well and hastilie, but leisurelie and perfectlie." So too, all that I have learned in this life has come gradually. It is quite usual, at least among the folk I have known, to think of one's education as something that happened at the beginning of life, then as a teenager, when qualified for a job, we begin work, which continues until we retire at the end of working life. Even those of my acquaintances among the more privileged people, although they might have had a better education, have followed a similar pattern. Beginning at Preparatory school, then to boarding school until teenagers, then on to university, some of them graduating with a degree, then when they were qualified they obtained positions where for the rest of their active lives they had to commute each day to the office, or to whatever places their professions took them, and back again each evening. There are those from all classes of society who have felt the urge to go on studying all through life, realising that education is never complete, it is always progressing. I was one from among the working class possessed with the urge to know and make known, and probably there have been many more of us from the under privileged class because we have always felt the limitations of our basic education and wanted to know more. But as I look back now in my old age, I thank God I did not follow the pattern of the privileged. As a child I used to think I was missing a lot because I could not go to a public school or college. But later in life as I gained friends and acquaintances who were ex-public school pupils and heard their stories, I realised that with all the dignity they appeared to possess, there were other processes in their mental development which went counter to all the discipline and character building those schools have claimed. From time to time some of them have said they hated their time at boarding school or public school. At a young age they were taken from their parents and the security of their homes, just at a time when they needed their parents most, and imprisoned in a strange environment among people they did not know, they were lonely, insecure, and very homesick. Instead of this being recognised and some sympathy or help being given, it was considered <sup>good</sup> for them to be subject to the rigid


discipline of the school. Older boys who had been through it all in past years now got some sort of redress by bullying the new boys and making their lives a misery. Form masters and house masters sometimes humiliated them, the matron was often brusque and impatient. I am of course describing things as they were in my young days when I worked with ex-public school pupils from whom I got this information, they were also the days when I wished I could have been educated at a public school, not knowing what it was really like for those privileged (?) boys. They also worked very hard at their studies and after their lessons during the day had to give some hours of their evenings in revision, and at weekends were compelled to take part in rough sports they hated. But my disillusionment with this system of education really came to me when two of those former pupils told me of their becoming involved in homosexual practices at their schools. That came to me, not only as a surprise but as a real shock. I had thought that the people in the upper stratum of society were above this sort of thing and that it was only talked about among the coarser people who lived nearer to the animal way of life. The fact that this practice did take place at those schools was confirmed to me later in life, indeed the last time it was discussed with me was much nearer to the present, it was in the nineteen-sixties when I was Assistant Warden of a residential school for apprentices of between 16 and 20 years of age. My colleague, the Warden, had been sports master at two well known public schools, the names of which it might be prudent not to mention now, and it was in regard to measures he wanted to take at our own school that he discussed the matter with me, and I understood such measures had already been taken at the public schools where he had been master. It irritated me very much when I saw what he did for I thought it quite unnecessary and so degrading. He got our gardener-handyman to go along the rows of lavatory doors in our ablutions and saw off a large corner from the bottom of each door, so that if he walked in to check up, he could see right up to the bottom of each lavatory pan and note if there were the feet of one boy there or two. The first time I walked in after it had been done I felt it had lowered the tone of the school, it suggested something sinister, abnormal, it made every lad who used those lavatories feel suspect, took away his right to privacy and robbed him of his dignity. From that time whenever I was on duty and the lads were there, I refused to go into those

ablutions, I did not want to be part of such action, I had always had the respect of each lad and I respected each one of them, I wanted to keep it that way. Of course today, at the time of writing this, homosexuality is not only condoned but accepted as being normal for certain types of people, both male and female. This is not the place to discuss the subject now, I will have to come back to it later in this book when I record a more serious matter, it has been mentioned here as it has related to the stage to which I had come in my progress through life. This may seem to be another of my leaps from the past into the present, but I should think by now any reader of this book can see that I am writing by subject rather than strictly chronologically, although I am quoting all my dates correctly and have gone to a lot of work to check them. So then the stage at which I had arrived when I was given my first appointment with the London City Mission, at Bromley by Bow, was, that through my books I had gained more knowledge than I had when I left school, after my basic education, but that it was still only in theory; that what I had longed for as being a more dignified way of life which came by a more enlightened system of education enjoyed by the privileged people, was a blind alley, it did not lead me any nearer to an understanding of the meaning and purpose of life, for my doubts had come after my disillusionment with those who had been through that system and who were no more enlightened than I was, and less practical, for at least I had been taught to use my hands and make things; that from my two years in the Baltic States I had learned that all my early education was too insular, we had been made to believe that the British Empire ruled over most of the world, we were a superior race and other nations were far behind us in our advancement, and closely associated with this I was beginning to doubt what we had been taught by the Church that we were God's chosen race and that He was using us through our missionaries to spread the Gospel of Jesus around the world. Over and above all these processes forming in my mind, was the thought that Sir Andrew Duncan had planted and which came back to me from time to time, that my ability was within myself, not in any system I might choose. I was with the London City Mission for twelve years until the coming of the Second World War when I volunteered for the Royal Air Force and spent the six years of the war in that service. Now as I look back on my years with the London City Mission I know that what I learned during

that period, I learned only as I related myself to my fellow man and women, as I identified myself with them in daily life. My search for the meaning and purpose of life could not be just for myself, none of us can discover what life is all about unless we relate it to all other human beings. None of us can go forward in isolation, we are all part of the race that produced us, part of their history, we are interdependent. The mistake many people have made all down through the many years of the checkered history of the established Christian Church, is that they can get nearer to the unseen and become more spiritual by living a cloistered life, by shutting themselves away from the world and their fellow men, their main concern was their own holiness. Fortunately there have also been men and women all down through history who have been more concerned with their service to mankind than their own spiritual advance and they have done more to make this world a better place than they would have done by many days of the recital of creeds or prayers. There are many names of outstanding people that could be mentioned, but to name one only who is serving humanity now in our own days, Mother Teresa of Calcutta who has done many times what some of us would shrink from, rescue an abandoned baby from a filthy drain in India, hold it to herself and nurse it and love it back to life so that it has been enabled to live as a normal human being. Unfortunately the established Church itself has not changed much in two thousand years. In my days with the Church particularly, the priests and ministers were up on a pedestal, looking down and talking down to the people below who,            in the poor districts of London, looked upon the Christian religion more in the nature of a superstition. If you were on your way out of this life and the priest came to visit you on your sick bed, he would recite some verses of dogma from the book, say a few prayers, make the sign of the cross over you, recite the absolution, absolving you from your sins, and you were alright for the next world, you had got your passport into heaven. The same superstition was held about newly born babies, they had to be baptised as soon as possible in case they died. They referred to it as christening. If a baby was not christened and died it could not be buried in consecrated ground, but only in unconsecrated ground, which infers that it has no admittance into heaven. But if the priest had performed his rites and given the absolution, the baby would be admitted into heaven. But the priest would have to know that



the baby had already been baptised before he could perform those rites and bury it in consecrated ground. I must make it clear that this doctrine applies to the Church of England as well as other established churches such as the Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox church, but not to the Non Conformist denominations such as the Methodists. I, of course, was brought up in the Church of England and was working with them when the following example took place. We were to have at All Hallows a special weeknight service for young people to commemorate an occasion which I cannot now remember. Young people from another church in an adjoining parish were coming to join with our young folk. Our main church hall was attached to the church building, all part of one large brick built building. The main doors of the hall opened into the street, there was another small door that opened into the church and another the other end of the hall into the rectory garden, and that was the door I used when I had to go into the hall. The main doors were always kept locked when there was no meeting being held in the hall. I was in the hall arranging pamphlets and books for the order of the service and the hymns. Everything was quiet while I was working, when suddenly there was a furious loud banging on the main door, I had no key to that door, it was in the rectory. I went to the door and called "who's there ?" A very agitated woman's voice shouted, "can the rector come quick and Christen the baby it's dying !" I could tell by her puffing breathlessness and agitation that she had run from the house to the church because she was terrified that the rector might not get there in time before the baby died, and then the poor little thing would be shut out of heaven. What a distressing view and censure on the character of God, so absolutely opposite to the understanding of Him that Jesus of Nazareth taught, yet the church is supposed to be propagating the gospel of Jesus, instead of which for centuries now it has systematically propagated myths, legends, and superstitions, all with the purpose of instilling fear in the minds of the untaught masses. I asked the woman for the address, said I would be quick, "wait there a moment", I shouted as I went, not because I also believed in her superstition, but because I wanted to allay her agitation. I was back in a matter of seconds and told her the rector was on his way, and I saw him go with his cassock and surplice and little portable font, I don't know if he took holy water with him or if he

used the tap water of the house and turned it into holy water by saying a prayer and making the sign of the cross over it. The reader of this may think it ludicrous and farcical, but I can assure anyone that while what I have just narrated happened fifty-seven years ago, the established churches still teach and carry out the same ritual today, only in a few branches of the Christian church have there been any moves forward in keeping with the acquisition of new knowledge. Of course, I was still influenced by fundamentalist teaching in those days, but I was learning, and now, with my years in the London City Mission and my work intimately among the working class masses, I was learning  no longer by the Book, but from the lives and experiences of my own people. What help could I give to someone with a tragic problem? What comfort could I give to a very sick man on his death bed? Recite the creeds and dogmas of the church to him? Oh, no, I was already discarding them. Quote portions from the Bible to them, chunks taken from ancient documents recorded by primitive peoples, in some cases thousands of years ago? No, they are often very boring and have little relevance to the way humans live on this planet today. What could I say? If the Bible had been given to me as my Book of reference for all that I was required to say to my own people by those who employed me as a City Missionary, then I had noticed something in it, I had noticed the great difference between the way Jesus of Nazareth talked with the people and taught, and that of the rabbis and scribes of the Jewish nation with their ancient dogmas, rigid rules and regulations, laws, and involved rites of their Temple worship. Jesus gave all of His teaching in simple stories, easily understood quotations, and intelligent observations. As children we were taught both at church and school, that the stories Jesus told were called parables and that a parable was "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." This is not strictly true. Why does the teaching of the Christian Church always seek to separate this earthly life from the heavenly life, this world from another sphere where God reigns? The stories Jesus told were about life here and now, for people involved in living here and now. Parables were used in the Old Testament but the form of them is different from parables in the New Testament. Scholars tell us that Jesus originated a new form of story telling to the

people of His generation. From just reading them in the Gospels of the New Testament we see that He never used any theological or philosophical language, nor any abstruse words or phrases. He spoke to His own people in their own basic language and used illustrations from things in their every day lives, and yet it is recorded of Him, "they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes." So I came to the conclusion that if I was to communicate with the ordinary folk where I had been sent to work, I would use only the words spoken by Jesus of Nazareth Himself. Then came the problem, how can I know exactly what He said and not what the early writers said He said, how could I know the things He did and not what they said He did. I decided that if things were repeated in more than one Gospel they might be reasonably accurate and authentic, taking into account that they had all been written at different times by different people, unless of course they had all been copied from another source which they had all used. It is so difficult to know after so many years, and the most brilliant and sincere theologians, down through the ages have been struggling with this problem. I, in my humbler way have been pursuing this matter for over fifty years. However, I decided when I was in the Eastend of London that I would use only those stories or parables of Jesus which had an authentic ring about them, the teachings of which were confirmed in other writings about Jesus all down through the years, from the early fathers onwards, and which agree that what was taught must have been at the core of the teaching of Jesus. There is one story in particular that, to me, stands out from all the others, and even after the many years I have known this story, it still has a powerful appeal to me every time I read it, I have it here beside me on my desk as I write this, not in the Bible where it is usually found, although I have that on my desk also, but this story, a parable of Jesus' is included in a one volume collection of the "Great Short Stories of the World," collected and edited by Barrett H. Clark and Maxim Lieber and published by William Heinemann Ltd., of London. The editors point out in a note underneath the title by which it is usually known that, "There is no title to the story in the original." Often I have wondered why they have called this story the "parable of the Prodigal Son," he is only a minor character in the story. The one who stands out in all his grandeur, who holds and moves me to tears,

who is so kindly, loving, forgiving, that heart-broken old man, the prodigal's father. But then I am a father, and it was not until after I had touched something of the suffering of that grieving old man over the loss of a dearly loved child, that I began to understand what that story is all about, what Jesus tried to convey to His listeners, and from the moment I understood what Jesus meant by this story I could never again think of God as a grey haired old gentleman in the sky, looking down on us and noting everything we do and say, very strict, very severe, punishing us or rewarding us according to how we behave. The erring son in the story was away having what he thought a good time, he was quite ignorant of the love and suffering of his father, knew nothing of the terrible aching void in his father's heart that will not go away and cannot be described, it is only known to those who have suffered it. Every day that grief stricken old father was up on the flat roof of his eastern house, straining his eyes into the far distance, hoping, longing that one day he would see his son coming home again. Then one day on the far horizon a small figure appeared and as it got nearer the father recognised his walk, "it's him" he cried, "it's my son, my son !" Then what did he do, like some human fathers ? For we must remember that Jesus was describing God. Did he say "right, now we will see what the little devil has got to say for himself ?" "I'll wait to see what his attitude is before I decide whether to let him in ?" "I'll make him humble himself ?" No, he was not that kind of father. Said Jesus, "but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and hugged around his neck, and kissed him." That father did not want to humiliate his son, did not want to degrade him further, it was punishment enough that he had got to the point in his troubles when he knew he needed his father's love and help. This was the reply of Jesus to the Jewish religious leaders who criticised Him because He befriended the outcasts of society, the traitorous tax collectors, the harlots, the beggars and those who dozed down on the pavements at night. This said Jesus, not only in this most beautiful of His stories, but in all His teaching, is where God is. He is not up there nor out there, and if anyone says to you "Lo here, or lo there, go not after them, for the Kingdom of God is among you, the Kingdom of God is within you." So it was quite evident to me when I first saw this, that what Jesus taught was that God who is unknowable and

cannot be described, can only be experienced and known by human beings in love and suffering, and love as Jesus meant it, is not self gratifying not self getting, but something that gives from the very depths of our inner selves until it hurts. God, said Jesus, cannot be found in creeds or dogmas, cannot be communicated through religious rites and ceremonies does not need to be appeased by our offerings, and all the laws, negative commandments and religious prohibitions can be superseded by one positive creative act "you shall love." "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and you shall love your neighbour as yourself."

When I saw this clearly for the first time, about half way through my life, and began to understand what Jesus really had taught, I was confirmed in my mind that I had made the right decision, when working in the Eastend of London, that I would only ever quote the actual words of Jesus when visiting the people in their homes. But as I have said, at the time when I was appointed to All Hallows I was still influenced by the fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity because that had been programmed into my mind from early childhood to youth. But I was increasingly becoming disillusioned and puzzled. Apart from what I had been gaining from my studies in the libraries, I had only just returned from two years along the borders of Soviet Russia and had met people who had come out and given me information that had shown me quite clearly the reason why the new communist regime had discarded all religion and were propagating atheism. The powerful Church establishment combined with the court of the Tzar, had subjected the millions of peasants to serfdom, by propagating fears and superstitions contained in the tenets of their religion which they claimed was the religion of Jesus Christ. It was nothing but a pagan religion centred around a distorted figure of Jesus, certainly not Jesus of Nazareth. But the picture of Jesus in my mind, which had been built by the Christian church in this country was not much more than a superstition and I was beginning to see this. What could I say to distressed and needy people into whose homes I was going? I knew Jesus was a definite figure of history. H.G.Wells had said that from wherever we get our sources of information about the life and teaching of Jesus, one is obliged to say "Here was a man. This could not have been invented."

Also, some years before H.G.Wells, Emerson had said, "The name of Jesus is not so much written as ploughed into the history of the world." Of course, the world today is vastly different from what it was in the days of Emerson. He died in the Victorian period, in 1882. Since then the human situation on this planet has changed. In Emerson's day statistics showed that one third of this world's population had heard and been influenced by the teachings of Jesus Christ. I have read statistics recently that tell us that today with a greatly increased population over the world, more than half this world's population is living under the influence of the teaching of Karl Marx, and that most of those people are living in established communist states. Both those world leaders were Jews, both preached a system of communism. The philosophy of Karl Marx is difficult to understand and those of us who have had to read through his major work "Capital" have found it heavy going, it is doubtful whether many communists today really understand his dogma of dialectical materialism. It is doubtful whether any country has applied the philosophy of Marx exactly as he formulated it, they have modified it to suit the needs of their own countries, certainly Lenin adapted it to the Russian situation. They did worse still with the philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth. Soon after Jesus had been put to death someone arose who, either did not know, or else ignored what Jesus had taught, and created from what happened to Him a new, very involved, and largely erroneous religion. This was Saul of Tarsus, later renamed Saint Paul. He patterned the new religion on the Roman and Greek religions and myths with which he had become familiar from his youth up, besides being a Jew of the dispersion who kept the Hebrew form of worship and rites. Being a Roman citizen he was privileged to travel freely in any part of the Roman Empire and this enabled him to spread his new religion and build up his churches quite quickly almost entirely in the gentile world. He named his new religion Christianity, a name Jesus had never heard before He was put to death. It seems strange that people who have claimed to be followers of Jesus have called themselves Christians, when Jesus Himself was not a Christian and a study of His teaching can show that He would never have claimed such a title. Both these great movements have had a similar history in what accompanied the spreading of their propaganda and influence, by conflict, wars and bloodshed. One need not go back in Christianity any further than the terrible inquisition


or the conquests of the Spaniards in South America, to see the cruelties and carnage that accompanied them. So too with the spread of Marxism, the history of the spreading of that is still continuing within our own lifetime, indeed, so far the whole of it from the beginning has happened in my lifetime, it too has been accompanied by revolutions, imprisonments, force of arms and killings. So there was my problem in beginning my work among my own people of taking the Gospel of Jesus to those who were already at the rock bottom of human existence and who needed help and comfort.

I decided that if the simple stories and declarations of Jesus, such as those in the Sermon on the Mount, had brought enlightenment, understanding, and help to me and to many folk since the time He first uttered them, I would read them or quote them to anyone who needed help or comfort, but would refrain from using those parts of the Bible I was not sure about. I had many opportunities for I visited many people in my twelve years with the London City Mission and if I were to write of all the interesting people I met and to whom I gave some help, this book would develop into several volumes, so I can only record one or two examples here and there, for I have still a lot to tell of what I have learned on my journey through life. When I reported to the rectory one morning the rector said there was a man he would like me to visit who was very ill, in fact he was not expected to live much longer. His wife, a little woman, had recently joined the women's meeting, the deaconess had been to visit her once and had seen her very sick husband in bed. The rector said they were a Mr. and Mrs. Thomas and gave me the number of Devons Road where they lived and said they lived in one room on the top floor. He said he thought it best if I went to visit <sup>Mr. Thomas,</sup> then he said that one of the Church Army captains had been to see him, and repeated, "but I think it might be best if you go to see him." It just flashed through my mind, "what can I do that the others cannot do?" But I also remembered what some of my fellow missionaries had told me, that the City Missionary is expected to go to places where the minister or priest sometimes could not or would not go. But in this case I was going only to a humble home, albeit a one room home. When I found the number in Devons Road it was in the middle of a row of shops with four floors of dwellings over them. They were dingy shops, not all selling goods, some were store places and one or two

were empty and locked. Each shop had a door by the side which was the entrance to the dwellings. They were not exactly flats but single rooms and while the person on the first floor, I remember, had two rooms, they were separated by stairs going up from one to the other, one room in the front over the shop, up some more stairs, and another room at the back, and so on up to the top floor where Mr and Mrs Thomas had their room high up over the shop in the front. As I went up the first flight of stairs I took hold of the bannister hand rail and it came towards me. I let go, it was so rickety I could have pulled all the bannisters right out, they were like it up all the flights of stairs. Two extra doors I noticed on the way up, near the back rooms, one down below and one near the top which were the doors of two lavatories all the rooms had to share. When I reached the top there was an old gas cooker on a narrow landing just outside the Thomas's door, I had to brush past it to knock on their panel. Inside each room was an old sink with one cold water tap fed by a lead pipe coming up from the floor. Mrs Thomas had to prepare her food near the sink, then take her pots and pans outside her room to the gas cooker. If anything had caught alight they would have been trapped, for there was nothing around that cooker but old wall paper peeling <sup>off</sup> and old dried wood, there was no lino on the stairs, just bare wood. There were no fire precautions checks of these dwellings in those days. I knocked on the door which was opened by a little woman who recognised me because she had seen me in the church hall, but I had not met her before. I said I had come to see Mr. Thomas, "oh, come in sir," she said, "there he is sir," pointing to the bed against the wall. As I approached him she said, "he can't speak, sir," In those days when folk called me sir, I used to feel embarrassed, I knew I was only just one of them, just an underprivileged cockney boy. Of course, I had been away in a new environment for some years, including the years in the Westminster atmosphere of government departments and the House of Commons, where I wore a dark grey jacket and pin striped trousers. Now working with the Church, where I was expected to wear a moderate and subdued form of dress, I was not being paid enough salary to buy new clothes, but, fortunately had kept in good condition my former Westminster suit which I then wore with my missionary job.



When Mrs. Thomas said that her husband could not speak, I asked her what he was suffering from, she said T.B., that being the way people referred to Tuberculosis in those days when it was still a fairly common disease. Today, by early detection and effective treatment, tuberculosis is no longer the danger to health and life that it was, thanks largely to the BCG Vaccination of school children. Mrs. Thomas went on to tell me that the doctor had said that the T.B., was so advanced in Mr. Thomas that, as she put it, <sup>it had</sup> "eaten away" his throat and larynx. She said, "he is also nearly blind, so he will not see who you are, sir." Then when I asked her if he would be able to hear me, she told me he only heard her if she put her mouth close to his ear and shouted in it, then she continued, "but he's worrying about something, sir, I don't know what it is, but I know he's worried about something and he can't tell me what it is. That is why I wanted someone to come from the Church to see him, but he can't hear what anyone says." I said, "I think I know what he is worrying about Mrs Thomas." She said, "oh he's not been a bad man sir, he's been a very good husband to me." I said, "I'm sure he has." She said, "he's not been a Church goer but he has been a good man." I knew then that Mrs. Thomas had an intuition of what her husband was worrying about and she was worried with him. I told her I thought I might be able to help him and that I would like to talk to him as she did by shouting in his ear. She was obviously pleased that I was going to try to communicate with him, and said, "oh yes please sir, you try." Mrs. Thomas bent over to her husband and shouted in his ear "the missionary from the Church has come and he would like to talk to you." Mr. Thomas turned his head weakly in our direction and opened his eyes which were bleary and blurred, he probably could only just catch a dim outline of me. He seemed too weak even to try to look, closed his eyes again and turned his head back. I took one of his hands into mine and held it, he was too ill to shake hands, then with my other hand I took out from my pocket my New Testament, put it into his hand so that he could feel it then shouted in his ear, "in this book I have the words of Jesus, I am going to read some of them to you." Immediately he began moving his head forward as though trying to shake it to say "yes please, I want you to," there seemed to be a sense of urgency in what he wanted

and I felt I had rightly sensed what he was worrying about. He knew he was dying and was not sure what was coming hereafter, did he qualify for a place up there ? I knew that my job was to allay his fears and give him the assurance that he was equally accepted in the unseen beyond this mortal life with the rest of us, whoever we are and whether we have been to church or not. For none of us can qualify, whatever happens in the hereafter is by the Grace of God alone, and I would have loved to read to Mr. Thomas as my authority for this, that wonderful story Jesus told of the sublime old man, the loving father of the prodigal son. For in that story Jesus told, He revealed more of the character and nature of the One we call God than in anything else He taught, although, of course, all His other sayings did support what He revealed in that one story. It is symbolic language, of course, Jesus was really describing God the Supreme Father, Who loves all His creatures equally, even those who have neglected Him or strayed and who, like Mr. Thomas, have left it a bit late before realising that they will have to leave this mortal sphere, they have come to an end of this brief span and must go out into the unseen, what will the One who begat them say and what will they say to Him? By the time Mr. Thomas had got to the stage of near panic he was ready to say anything, like, "please forgive me that I've not really bothered about you for years, I've always found my time taken up with the struggle to live, I've not had much education so I have never been able to read much about religion and the few times I went to church when I was young, I didn't really understand what they were talking about." "But please let me in, I know I'm not worthy to be called your son." "But could'nt You make me like - well - sort of one of your hired servants ?" "I don't mind what it is but please let me in". Only to find, when he passed over that the One who was Supreme Love was already there to greet him, or using the allegorical language of Jesus in His parable, "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran....., and kissed him." For this is exactly what happened to Mr. Thomas, and when it was clear to me what had happened, I knew I had got it right about what Jesus meant in His parable. Now, may I remind the reader of  what I said at the beginning of this book, that everything I would recount, in it would be true, that every person mentioned would be someone who had lived or still lives. I have kept to this, the facts without any embellishments

and without exaggeration, and I will keep to this until the end.

So this is the story of Mr. Thomas. I could not read to him the parable I have just outlined, as he could not have concentrated so long, I could shout only short sentences in his ear. I took my New Testament from his hand and he knew I was going to read from it. I could, of course, have recited the texts by memory, but I wanted him to be aware of my authority, it was not what I said, but what Jesus said. I shouted in short bursts enough for him to take in -- Jesus said, "Come unto me you who are weary -- and I will give you rest." -- "That means you, Mr. Thomas." -- "In case you have any doubt, listen to this." -- "God so loved the world..." "you belong to this world don't you?" -- He nodded, yes -- "God loves the whole world, everybody in it, including you." -- "God so loved that He gave" -- "He gave His only Son" -- "That whoever believes on Him" -- "should not perish" -- "but have everlasting life." Then I went on in short bursts to explain that God loves and God gives and He does not want anything in return except us -- ourselves -- He does not need any payment, -- He does not require our prayers -- He does not even demand our penitence -- He only wants -- us -- "and that means you as well" I said to Mr. Thomas, "do you believe that?" He nodded, yes, so I said, "well you are alright then, because that is all He requires from you -- just believe," -- "for I have another story here of a man who was afraid" -- "he thought he had left it too late" -- "he called to the followers of Jesus" -- "what must I do to be saved?" "and they said, -- believe on the Lord Jesus ... and you will be saved." I asked him, "do you believe?" He nodded, yes. I said, "Well you have nothing to fear then" -- "absolutely nothing to fear" -- "and all that is waiting for you beyond this life" -- "is the love of God." Of course, today I do not think I would use that last text from the Acts of the Apostles, it has been so distorted by some sects of fundamentalists who have had it painted on banners displayed on street corners, while in their street preaching they have shouted out texts taken from ancient Old Testament writings, such as, "the wicked shall be turned into hell," all mixed up with strange dogmas incorporated from pagan religions down through the history of the Christian Church -- but I cannot deal with this now, I am narrating the story of Mr. Thomas and am keeping to facts, and the fact is I did read that to Mr. Thomas as I have recounted above.

He was very weak and I did not want to tire him, I said, "I'll let you rest now and I will come and see you again." He lifted a hand as though to say thank you. Then I had a little chat with Mrs. Thomas. She told me that nobody came to see her husband, the doctor said it was only a question of a short time before he went and there was no purpose in giving him medicine as he could not take it and it would make no difference. She told me she had to get food from the shops in the street below on occasions, but she did not like leaving him alone, "I go as quickly as I can," she said. "But I'm worried about tomorrow, sir." I asked why. "Well, I have to go to the R.O., tomorrow and it will take a long time." The R.O., as I have already explained when writing of my childhood, was the Relieving Officer, and the only income this couple, in their late fifties received, was from that local government department. I said, "that's alright, I'll come and sit with Mr. Thomas while you've gone." "But I'll be a long time, it usually takes me over an hour, it's nearly twenty minutes walk from here, and I always have to wait a long time there," she said. "Don't you worry about that," I replied, "I'll bring a book along and I'll sit here as long as you like." She said she had to be there by 10 a.m. so I said I would be with her at 9.30 a.m. to give her enough time. When she opened the room door to me the next morning, before I could ask her how Mr. Thomas was, she said, "he had a much better night, sir." "He seems more peaceful, he doesn't seem to be worrying any more." Then she explained, pointing to a glass of milk beside his bed, all you have to do, if he signals with his hand, it means he wants a drink, you lift him up and hold the glass to him. After Mrs. Thomas had gone out I opened my book to read, every now and again lifting my eyes towards Mr. Thomas. I sat there for about twenty-five minutes before he stirred, then lifted his hand, so I went close to him and called in his ear "do you want a drink?" He nodded, yes, so I took the glass of milk in one hand and slipped my other hand under his back and felt a bony skeleton through his white night-shirt. As I lifted he went up as light as a baby, there was nothing of him. After a few sips of the milk he looked at me as though to say he had drunk enough and I laid him down, then close to his ear I reminded him of what I had said the day before, said I hoped he had understood that it was only a matter of a simple act of faith, just believing what Jesus had said.

about God and our relationship to Him. For the first time he smiled and seemed to be indicating that he had understood and that he did believe. I did not keep his attention too long, told him that I would be sitting with him until Mrs. Thomas returned, that if he wanted anything he was to signal, then tidied the sheet and blanket across his chest, gently patted his hand and sat down again with my book. It was only a little more than an hour when Mrs. Thomas returned, I told her what I had done, we talked for a bit while Mr. Thomas appeared to be sleeping. I said that he seemed to be a little happier, she said she knew he was and that he did not seem to be worrying any longer. I told her I would come again the next morning to see him, but that visit was not to be. When I arrived at the rectory the next morning the rector said "Mr. Thomas passed away late last night." Then he said <sup>Mrs. Thomas</sup> ~~^~~ came to him and asked if he would 'phone the doctor for her as she was sure Mr. Thomas had died. The doctor certified him, and then contacted the undertakers who sent the horse-drawn closed wagon they used in those days, to convey the body to their own chapel, as, where people lived in only one room, they could not leave the body there, especially if they had died of an infectious disease like tuberculosis. Then the rector said, "she wants to see you, she wants to tell you what happened, it is obviously something that has had a tremendous effect on her, she seemed to be quite elated about it, if you can go along she will tell you all about it." I told him I would go at once. As soon as Mrs. Thomas opened the door to me I could see something had happened, her face was transformed, no longer the look of concern and worry I had seen during my previous visits, she was radiant, smiling and happy, "Oh sir, it was wonderful, wonderful to see the way he went, I know he is happy now, I shall never forget it." Then she told me what happened. It was late in the evening and she was in her armchair dozing - that was how she spent all the nights of the weeks when he became desperately ill, it was impossible to share the only bed with him - and although for some time he had been unable to speak a word, or see anything, and could only hear with difficulty, Mrs. Thomas awoke thinking she heard some sounds. As she looked at her husband, he sat up in the bed, looked up to the wall opposite and held up his hands as though to greet someone, and quite clearly said, "Jesus, Jesus !" "He was smiling as he said it, then fell back on his

pillow and was gone. "I'm sure he saw something, sir," said Mrs. Thomas, "It was wonderful to see him go like that," she added. I was sure she recounted to me exactly what had taken place, she was a simple and uneducated woman, but not the type who could have imagined anything like that, she was too concerned with her husband departing from this life and going out into the unseen. He had not been able to speak for sometime, but she heard him speak as he went, he was nearly blind, yet she saw him gazing up at something towards which he stretched out his hands, was it something, or Someone? She also saw the look of rapture on his face, and this was the man who had been worrying because he was dying and was not sure of where he was going. The experience had a profound effect upon Mrs. Thomas, she became a changed woman after that, and I kept in touch with her until I was transferred to another district, then my successor took her under his pastoral care. Now in my old age I look back to that incident, and to other cases like it in which I was personally involved, and with the knowledge and understanding I have gained since then, I try to find reasoned explanations for them. At the time I helped Mr. Thomas with what I believed then Jesus taught, I was still influenced by the fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, with all its myth, magic and superstition, its fantastic imagery imbibed from the ancient Hebrews and Hellenes. Although I was beginning to understand through my studies, how the human mind works, I was still ready to accept the miraculous and believe that unusual things did happen in the spiritual realm of the unseen. Of course, remarkable things do happen which we cannot yet understand, but it depends whether we see those things through the untaught mind of primitive man, or with the mind that has become enlightened with new knowledge and understanding. To give a simple illustration. Ancient man believed the thunder was the voice of God when he was angry bellowing to the earth, and that lightning flashes were His arrows which He shot in His anger: II Samuel, 22, verses 14 and 15 - "The Lord thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered His voice. And He sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them." Today with the knowledge man has acquired of his planet and our environment, we know what causes thunder and lightning and how necessary they are for maintaining

the right balance and mixture of the gases which make up the air around our world which we breathe to live. So too, while we still cannot fully understand or fathom the depths of the human mind, let alone understand the Supreme Mind of the One we call God, yet we have seen the great advances that have been made by those scientists who have specialised in investigating the human brain and mind, and whose findings have given to us ordinary folk a better understanding of how our minds work. I have been guided by what they have discovered, but mainly, I think, I have gained my knowledge of these matters through my personal relationships with my fellow men and women who, because it has been my calling in this life, I have been enabled to help, particularly those by whose bedsides I have been when they have been passing from this life. As my active life in that full time work was not less than fifty years, I had many opportunities to observe. Mr. Thomas was my first case of ministering to a man on his death bed, this is why I have dealt with it fully. What do I think about it now? What do I think he really saw as he passed over?

Laying aside all scientific findings, I would take you back to the incident in the life of the Thames bargeman, Mr. Dearman, recorded earlier in this book, how when he fell from his barge into the river and could not swim, and was going down for the last time, everything that had happened in the whole of his life came before him from beginning to end - that is, up to his age then, in his forties. He emphasised that nothing was left out, every incident was there, for it had all been programmed into his brain and could be recalled. Now Mr. Thomas also had his record programmed into his personal computer, and if he also had that record come before him as he was passing over, what was the very last thing programmed into it? I am quite sure in my mind that I programmed the very last thing into his mind. When I went to him he was lying half conscious most of the time, or else asleep. When in his brief moments of consciousness I shouted those words into his ear, I gave him as favourable a picture of Jesus as I could, I wanted to remove his fear and give him comfort. I told him he had nothing to fear because Jesus had made it clear that he, Mr. Thomas, was equally loved and wanted by God as any other man or woman living in this world, whoever they were or whatever they had done, all he had to do could be done then on his sick bed, just believe in Jesus,

it was as simple as that. There was nothing else this very sick man could do, he had nothing to offer, all his life had been taken up with the struggle to exist, he and his wife had no comforts in this life and knew nothing about the life to come. Anything to do with God and religion was the function of the establishment, they and the governing powers were all one, they were up there, but Mr. Thomas was one of the millions of us, in those days, very much down below. Then I came to him, one of his own class, one who had shared in his way of life and had suffered many of his problems. But who was I, and what authority did I have? No authority of my own, but I had felt instinctively from my earliest days, and more particularly in my young adulthood, when I began to give myself in studies more intensively to discover who Jesus of Nazareth really was and what He really taught, that whenever I read any words of His that appeared to be quite genuinely His own utterances, there was always a ring of authority about them, and the people to whom He spoke noticed this, indeed, as I have already mentioned, they said of Him, "this man speaks with authority and not as the scribes." So for the whole of my life, as I have sought to bring enlightenment and understanding to those among whom I have been working, and particularly those passing out of this life, I have always quoted in the first instance the words of Jesus of Nazareth. So having read the words of Jesus to Mr. Thomas, they had gone from me to his mind with the same ring of authority, and as I had emphasised to him whose words they were, a picture of Jesus was immediately thrown up on to the screen of his mind. For let us remember that when Mr. Thomas was born towards the end of the Victorian period, it would have been almost impossible for him not to have seen many times, pictures of Jesus Christ as they portrayed Him in those days. Even if Mr. Thomas had not gone to a Sunday School, he would have seen a picture of Jesus on a wall in his day school, or when he passed a church in the street he would have seen a sculptured form of Jesus Christ on a church wall. But mostly, in those days, almost every home in Great Britain, however humble, would have on its living room wall a copy of Holman Hunt's famous painting entitled "The Light of the World," the original of which has hung for many years in St. Paul's Cathedral. There could be no doubt that Mr. Thomas already had a picture of Jesus Christ processed in his mind that the words I quoted to him would



immediately recall. This then would have been the very last thing to be processed into his mind just before he passed away. So, if when humans pass from this life, and at the point of leaving, the whole of our lives come before us as on a screen, then the very last thing Mr. Thomas saw was a picture of Jesus Christ. At that point of time in my life, I believed that miracles could have happened far back in the history of the Christian Church, although we did not see them happening in our own generation. I also accepted that God could do as He liked in His own universe, although we never saw anything unusual happen without it having an explanation within the natural laws. That experience with Mr. Thomas happened at a time when I was beginning to query some things in my own mind, and when Mrs. Thomas told me what had happened, which obviously had such a profound effect upon her, and without doubt dispelled the fears of her dying husband and gave him peace as he went out from this mortal life, I wondered, did Mr. Thomas really see into the unseen, did he see the real Jesus as he went, or did he see that picture of Jesus he already had in his own mind? I had no ready answer to my query then, nor did I have for some years to come, for the simple reason that the experience of Mr. Thomas was repeated from time to time, in the passing of other folk to whom I ministered on their death beds. After so many years and having visited so many people since then, it is not possible now to pick out cases in order of time, and as all of them have a similarity in what happened, I will just record one case that happened not so very long after that of Mr. Thomas, when I had been transferred to another area of London. I went to visit an elderly lady who was suffering from a terminal illness. She was living with her eldest son who asked me if I would see her as he had been told by the doctor she had not long to live, and he felt someone from the church should see her. Unlike Mr. Thomas she was able to hear quite well, so I read to her from the New Testament, selecting only what Jesus had said, and I gave her all the assurance and comfort I could. I should say that there was one passage from the Psalms in the Old Testament that people would sometimes ask me to include, the popular 23rd Psalm, which begins, "The Lord is my Shepherd." It is, I think, the fourth verse which appeals to folk who are dying, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." So I read this to her as well and spoke to her as I had to Mr. Thomas, seeking to give comfort and allay any fears she might have as to the life beyond this to which she would soon be going. When I left after my visit, I said I would go again to her in a couple of days, but before I could go a message came to me that she had passed away. So I went to see the son to ask if he wanted any help with burial arrangements. The body of the deceased lady had been taken to the undertakers' Chapel, but when the son invited me into the house he took me through to the bedroom where I had visited his mother, then told me what had happened when she passed away. For several nights he had been sleeping on a couch in the next room with his mother's door open so that he would hear her in the night if she needed attention. He awoke after midnight and thought he heard her talking, went into her room and saw her propped up in bed smiling and talking to someone across the room near to the dressing table. -- he pointed the position to me. When he heard what she was saying and the name she used he knew she was talking to his father who had died some years before. Then she also spoke to his brother who also had died just a few years before. The son said he could not see anyone himself but he was quite sure his mother did. She chatted away, he said, for a while, then lay back on her pillow and passed away. The son was convinced that his mother had actually seen them. But to my mind came the same questioning as before. Did that mother actually see her loved ones existing outside of herself or did she see only those forms of them she had retained within her own mind and which she had occasionally recalled from her memory during the years of her mourning for them. We who are still this side of the veil can never really know what they see, we must wait until the moment of our own passing. One thing of which I am sure having ministered to numbers of people in the hours of their passing from this life into the next, they were always happy in the moment of passing, all fear was gone and some of them smiled as they went, and I have come to believe from my personal experiences with folk who have passed out of this life, that while most of us hang on to this life as long as we can and shun any thought of the time when we will die, and some people really fear death, while for some the process of dying may be very painful, the actual moment

of passing through the veil is a time of great peace for all of us, there is no fear waiting for us on the other side, only Love. I was once by the bedside of another lady who was dying. I took her hand into mine as I spoke to her and she held on to me. She said she knew she ought not to be afraid to die, but admitted to <sup>being</sup> filled with apprehension at having to go out into the unknown all alone. She said it would help her if I would hold her hand as she actually passed away. I said certainly I would be glad to do so, and continued to hold her hand while I talked and prayed with her. While I was praying she closed her eyes and did not say any more. She was breathing gently, her daughter looked at her and said to me, "she is asleep, she might hang on for some time before she goes, you can't be expected to stay indefinitely holding her hand, it might be a long time." Very gently I withdrew my hand from hers, then, in a whisper, told the daughter that if her mother awakened to say I would be coming again the next morning. This first visit was in the afternoon, but the mother did not wake up again, they discovered late that evening that she had passed away. I can only hope that in her sub-conscious mind she felt that I was still holding her hand, for in a spiritual sense I was still holding it. If, as we are passing, the whole of our lives, the record of which has been processed in our minds, comes before us, and I have seen enough evidence of this now to believe it happens to all of us, then the very last thing processed into that dying lady's mind was my contact with her, the help I was able to give her and in particular my holding of her hand, and in that sense I was with her when she passed away, for it would have been the last thing of which she would have been conscious. But why do we all begin by having a fear of death, is it fear of the process of dying or fear of going out into the unknown? It is an indisputable fact surely, both with human beings as with animals, that we are all afraid of what we do not understand. I have often used an illustration in a sermon I have preached in many churches, both in Great Britain and overseas, on this subject. It was something I witnessed during my time in Westminster when I was an assistant to Sir Andrew Duncan. It was an unusual sight indeed to be seen, in those days, in a place like Parliament Square. I was on my way from our office to convey some papers to government departments in Whitehall. The war was over and there were moves being made to bring some normality

back into the life of London. What I saw when I reached Parliament Square was not normal, but I soon discovered its purpose was to announce to Londoners that London's festive life was returning to what it had been before that terrible First World War. A line of camels was being led in caravan style around the Square, each of them with colourfully embroidered banners draped over them with announcements in large print saying that a circus had come to town. I slowed my pace as I watched the procession and at the same time noticed a dog coming down Bridge Street towards the Square. The dog had just reached the corner of Parliament Street as the procession came around from the other side of the Square and turned in his direction. He stopped short, gave a high pitched yelp as if he had been kicked, turned around quickly and with his tail between his legs raced back again towards Westminster Bridge, yelping as he ran and turned round the first corner out of sight. Nothing had hit him and the leading camel was some yards away from him, but he had never seen animals like those before and did not know what they were. He was afraid of what he did not understand, so he fled and he hid. Unfortunately, so many of us humans have had that same fearful reaction towards God and the unseen because of our lack of understanding. The fact is much of the misunderstanding and fear has come about through the erroneous dogmas that have been propagated throughout the world during the past two thousand years in the name of one who has been called Jesus the Christ, meaning the Messiah, a Jewish concept which had for the ancient Jews a different connotation from that which Christians understand today. It is only in this last century of the twenty centuries, since Jesus of Nazareth was executed, this most remarkable century in all this world's history, when we have begun to discover where things went wrong, and while towards the end of the last century sincere scholars by their intense studies and critical examination of documents, in the Bible and from other sources, began to publicise to the theological world, facts which showed that things were not as men had believed them to be down through so many centuries. Now in this our own remarkable century of such important scientific and intellectual advance, new light has been shed upon this very controversial subject. Indeed, half way through this century, when new archaeological excavations in ancient Palestine, Israel of today, have given us some enlightening information. Archaeologists collaborating with

distinguished Hebrew scholars have given us new insights into the kind of religious systems current in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, the political situation and the environment in which He lived. There is nothing in what has been discovered that suggests that Jesus knew anything of the beliefs and dogmas that were built around Him after His death, but there is ample evidence to show that much of what Jesus taught was in line with the tenets of the sect known as the Essenes which had a powerful influence in the days of Jesus, and from whose teaching He drew much of His inspiration, as did also John the Baptist. What made Jesus unique was the genius He had in applying His teaching and making it understood by the ordinary simple Galilean country folk among whom He was born and brought up. He showed them a Way of Life which, in the words of the historian H. G. Wells, if the world took seriously would "essay an incredible happiness." Half way through this century, a remarkable find was made of the Dead Sea Scrolls and at the same time equally enlightening finds were made in the excavations both in Jerusalem and at Nazareth where Jesus lived. At first the new information discovered was circulated among theologians, universities and scholars interested in these subjects, but now they are being made known to ordinary people. The very latest book was published less than two years ago at the time of my writing this. It is entitled "The Historical Jesus - a Scholarly View of the Man and His World," it is by Gaalyah Cornfeld and published by Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. New York. A foreword to this book is by Professor David Flusser of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and I quote part of what he says. "I have found in the book new and fresh aspects which have to be taken into account for a reconstruction of the historical reality. Cornfeld knows very well the recent scholarly contributions to the pertinent problems which are unknown to the broader public. His book is therefore a good source of information, without being difficult to the average reader. Especially important are the archaeological data, because we are able to see how excavations in Jerusalem and in other places elucidate the framework of Jesus' life from birth to his crucifixion. A way for new insights is paved when the Gospel narrative is confronted with archaeology."

But, of course, whatever new knowledge is coming to us today, even where people are prepared to accept new ideas, it will not immediately dispel from our minds the fears and superstitions which for many generations have been built up in our forebears and passed on to us. At the time of my first appointment to the Eastend of London there was a great change taking place in what people were thinking about religious matters, but chiefly among intellectuals, it had not caught up with the masses of uneducated working class folk in the large industrial cities such as London, where I worked. During the second half of the last century, in the heyday of the Victorian period, Charles Darwin, the English naturalist whose theory of evolution revolutionized human knowledge, published his book on the subject entitled the "Origin of Species" which made him many enemies among followers of the orthodox religions and especially in the established Church of England. Today many fundamentalists will agree that we cannot take literally the account of the creation of the world as recorded in the Book of Genesis, yet still hang on to the other myths and legends in the same scripture documents, and from my long experience of many years of full time work in the established churches and my personal contacts <sup>with</sup> many more people outside the churches, I have come to the conclusion that the reluctance to accept new knowledge which would show the falsity of many of our established beliefs, is caused only through fear. That fear is largely fear of death, the fear that when we leave this earthly life we would go out only to encounter a wrathful and vengeful God Who would punish us because we had not kept to the old established dogmas delivered in the long dim past through ancient church fathers who claimed that God had given them special revelations, and in course of time all that they declared was written down and incorporated into one book called the Bible. It can be seen how holding to the old creeds and dogmas gives a sense of security. If you have a certificate showing you were baptised into the church, and a document proving you were later confirmed, and a marriage certificate showing your marriage was solemnised in church, at least you have your cover notes to show you have kept to the church's legal requirements. Then if you attend church fairly regularly and partake in the sacrament of the Holy Communion, or Eucharist as it is

known in some denominations, and recite in those services the creeds you affirm to believe, to have someone come to you with information that proves that much of what you believe has no basis in fact and is built largely on false dogmas, cuts the ground from under your feet and leaves you wondering what comes after this life. So many folk in the Christian Church prefer not to listen, they shut their ears and say it is the devil trying to lead us astray. It is much more comforting to continue to believe something which gives you assurance and also an insurance into the life beyond. If you arrive there only to meet a God vastly different from the One you have been led to believe here, you can plead that you accepted what His representatives on earth told you. But I can assure such folk that once I had given myself to studying these matters in depth and had discovered certain facts that were irrefutable, I would have to be very dishonest to shut my eyes to them and pretend I had not seen them. When I was a young student at the Missionary Training establishment at Norwood, a young graduate from Durham University joined us, and one day I was discussing these matters with him, because I thought he was too liberal in his views and I was then more or less fundamentalist, and quite calmly and with a depth of assurance I had not got, he said to me, "My dear brother, once you have seen these things, you can never again unsee them." He was Roger Woodhams, who became a Church of England parson, I lost touch with him and do not know what he preached during his ministry, but I have had many occasions during my studies, to remember Roger's words and I know he was right. Eventually my desire to be honest about these things led me to make a complete break, resign from the ministry and start my life all over again, but that was not until over half way through my pilgrimage and followed upon the most traumatic happening in my life, the record of that will come later, the point I have reached now is my appointment to the Eastend of London when these thoughts were just beginning to formulate in my mind, stimulated through the conflict I was having between what the Church was teaching and the conditions under which the people of my own class had to live and die in those days. I was only one year at All Hallows, Bromley by Bow, but I learned a lot in that one year and it was the beginning of much more I learned in the twelve years I was with the London City Mission visiting the homes in the working class areas.

In the spring of 1928 I carried out my intention to refuse to live in unhealthy conditions, even if I was prepared to work in them. I went to see our general secretary, the Rev. W.P. Cartwright. He was an intelligent man and made no difficulty at all at my request to be permitted to live in the Clapham Common area and travel to the Eastend each day. However, he suggested that as he had received requests from a number of churches in that area to place a City Missionary with them, he would place me with a church near to where I would be living. He understood we would have to wait until after our second baby was born in the July, and arranged that we should have our summer holiday early in June. The London City Mission sent a number of its Missionaries to their holiday home at Eastbourne, all expenses paid by the Society. It was our first visit to Granville Crest, a large house in the posh Meads area of Eastbourne in those days. It was an excellent holiday. On Friday the 13th July, 1928, our second child was born, a son, and we named him Peter John. We lived in an upstairs flat in Grove Road, Bethnal Green, and I sat this time alone in our front room while the midwife attended to my wife single handed. I heard her once or twice going back and forth to the kitchen for hot water and other things, then when she closed the bedroom door I did not know what was happening. After some time she came out to me, breathed a sigh of relief and said, "do you mind if I have a smoke?" We were not, in those days, aware of the great danger to health of smoking. She sat down near to me then said, "now my boy, I'm going to have a talk with you," lit her cigarette, and once more prefaced what she was about to say by addressing me as "my boy." I was used to that form of address, for I looked much younger than my age and it was usually older or middle aged women who used that motherly way of addressing me. In my visitation of the homes, if a woman felt some barrier because I was from the church, she would call me sir, but most older women seemed to take to me instinctively and always said 'my boy' this or 'my boy' that. Then the midwife continued, "you have a very neurotic and highly-strung wife and you are going to have a hell of a life with her unless you are very firm with her." It was all so blunt and forthright and it occurred to me that she had not had an easy time delivering the baby. For our first daughter born in Riga I had sat



just outside the open bedroom door and acted as interpreter between my wife and the German midwife. The delivery of our daughter was not easy and my wife was somewhat hysterical at times, but that was her first baby, I thought the second would be easier, particularly as there was no language barrier, and my wife knew what to expect. The midwife went on to impress on me how that with a neurotic person one had to be very firm and continued to give me advice, then paused, as she suddenly remembered what I was waiting to hear, "Oh, of course, it's a boy !" The fact that she had not given me that news first emphasised to me that she had had a hectic time and was relieved it was all over. However, in the years that followed I had reason from time to time, to remember what the midwife told me.

My new appointment was at Summerstown near Tooting and the vicar was the Rev. Galpin. He had no curate and made it quite clear from the start that he wanted the City Missionary to carry out most of the duties of the curate. He also made it clear that he had his own whim or doctrinal quirk. A large sign in black and gold letters outside his church announced that it was the Church of England, Evangelical and Apostolic. He spent some time during our first meeting explaining to me that he knew historically that the Church of England was in direct descent from the Apostles, we never did inherit any authority from Rome or the Pope. But he was a high churchman as distinct from the low church I had just left in the Eastend of London. The London City Mission working only among the working classes, appointed their men usually to low churches where there was a minimum of religious rites and paraphernalia. I thought at first that it would not make any difference to my relationship with the people I visited in their homes around the parish, but before long I found the vicar was determined to make a difference. Each Sunday he gave to me the duty of preaching the sermon at the morning service while he preached in the evening. We shared the prayers and I could pronounce everything except the absolution. Which one of us was not giving the sermon read the scripture lessons. This was all O.K., by me and I was prepared to put up with his eccentricities, until he began, in his sermons on Sunday evenings, taking the theme upon which I had preached in the morning, and bit by bit pulled it to pieces before the congregation. I made no protest because I decided I had my job to do and he had his,

but before long a new turn brought things to a head. There were some Alms Houses not far from the church, for elderly ladies. They belonged to the Parish Council and although they were not a Church concern, being in the Rev. Galpin's parish they asked him to be the visiting chaplain. Now that I was officiating as his curate he asked me to take the one service held each Wednesday afternoon for the old ladies. I went early on my first visit so that I could meet the Matron and get some general idea of what was required. When I told the Matron I was a London City Missionary she was delighted and immediately opened up to me. None of the old pensioners in the Alms Houses liked the Rev. Galpin's services, there was not one among them who was Church of England, they did not understand what the vicar was talking about and they did not know his hymns. The Matron herself was Non-conformist and so were some of the pensioners, one or two had attended Mission Halls and they all knew the Mission type Sankey and Moody hymns and choruses, she pointed to a pile of Mission hymn books besides which were a pile of Church Hymnaries and another pile of Prayer books. Picking up a Mission hymn book she said, "they would rather sing these." Alright I said we will use those and immediately I sensed trouble and I knew why the vicar had so emphatically briefed me in the Vicarage before I left for the Alms Houses. He told me there was a cupboard in the chapel in which was a cassock and surplice, I was to put them both on as I did in church for the services on Sundays and that I was to use the Church of England hymn books and prayer books. I now had a choice and a decision to make, was I to conduct a service for the elderly ladies or for the vicar? I told the Matron what the vicar had said to which she replied that it was why most of the pensioners did not want to attend. So I decided to compromise, I put on the black cassock only, because that was more like the academic gown worn by some Non-conformist ministers and Pastors, and said we would sing the hymns from the Mission hymn book and take the prayers from the Anglican prayer book, whereupon the Matron mustered up almost every occupant of the Alms Houses. There was a small reed organ but the lady who sometimes came could not attend that day. I said it would be alright because I could play and would both conduct the service and play for the hymns. I asked the ladies to chose

their own hymns and between them they selected their favourites. Most of that service was taken up singing hymns and choruses and it was obvious they all really enjoyed themselves. Afterwards the Matron said that if I was going to hold that kind of service each Wednesday she knew they would all attend quite gladly. When I arrived at the Vicarage the next morning I was told the vicar had gone to a Church meeting or synod at Southwark, I did my usual visitation and did not see him until the next day, by which time he seemed to have forgotten about the Alms Houses. It got around to the following Wednesday when he reminded me I was to take the service there and then asked if I found everything there last week and whether many of the inmates attended. I said, yes, the Matron had put me right about things, and he did not pursue the matter further, much to my surprise. Two days later on the Friday, he said he was going to hold an open air service, that he had asked the choir boys to attend on Saturday afternoon, that we were to go in procession from the church, carrying the Cross and banners to the street where the service would be held. Then said I was to put on the robes I wore in church for the Sunday services. I asked in what street did he plan to hold the service, when he named it, I said I have visited a number of homes in that street, the people knew me and they knew me as a City Missionary going to them in my every day clothes, if I were to dress up in my robes and go down among them I would put a barrier between them and myself, they would be embarrassed and would not come near me. I will willingly attend the service I told him, but as a City Missionary in my ordinary clothes. Immediately he raised his voice almost shouting at me, he was the captain of this ship, he was not going to have any member of his crew flouting his authority, he was giving me an order I was to put on the robes - then he paused, something had occurred to him, "did you put on the robes at the Alms Houses as I told you?" he asked. I replied, "I compromised when I found they were all Non-conformists, I wore the cassock only and let them sing their Mission hymns." He raised his voice again, "I told you to wear all the robes and give them only the church hymns and prayers, they don't have what they want, they have what I think is best for them." Then he continued, "Alright, if you will not put on the robes for the open air service, I will tell the London City Mission that

I do not want you with me any longer and I will tell them the reason. Knowing that I was on safe ground I quietly replied, "yes, I think that will be the best course." I knew, of course, that the Mission was a Fundamentalist concern working with all Christian denominations, although it was largely under Church of England influence, it had stated on all its official papers that it was Inter-Denominational. They had also emphasised when they engaged me that they wanted men from among the people who could go to the people as ordinary men, but with an important message and influence. Usually I went to the Vicarage on Saturday mornings for a couple of hours, but when I turned up the next morning and rang the bell the vicar opened the door and immediately said, "I don't want you here, you can go away." It occurred to me that he had hoped I would be worrying about it over night and would come back ready to give in, and when I asked him if he had 'phoned the London City Mission and he replied that he would be writing to them, I knew he was giving me time to surrender. I said, "well in the meantime I will just carry on with my duties." "No," he said, "go away I don't want you here any longer." I walked away from the Vicarage and went straight to a telephone booth and 'phoned the Headquarters of our Mission and fortunately the Rev. Cartwright was there and I told him the vicar did not want me there any longer and explained all that had happened. He replied, "Well, you have your studies to do"- for I was on my second year of a two year course every Missionary had to take, attending Headquarters on certain mornings - "so go home for a couple of days and we will contact you when we decide what to do." Within that couple of days I had a message to go to Headquarters where I was told that one of the senior Missionaries had been taken ill and would not any longer be able to continue his work. "We think this is just the job for you," said the Rev. Cartwright to me. It was to be in charge of one of the Mission's own centres. Some years before they had purchased an old Congregational Chapel near to the river Thames at Putney, they placed a Missionary there who, after some years good work, died at the beginning of the first World War. Not being able to replace him because of the war and the manpower shortage, they asked one of the leading members at the Mission to supervise the work. He was John Hedges, the manager of the depository and removals section of the large department store in Putney known as Mathias and Company. After the war another Missionary was appointed

who remained there until his illness just at the time I was expelled by the Rev. Galpin from Summerstown. I began at Putney in 1929 and was there until the beginning of the second World War in 1939, when I joined the Royal Air Force. My years at Putney were the happiest of those spent with the London City Mission. I was my own boss, accountable only to Headquarters, and the folk there never bothered me, I went up once each month with other men in my division to Bridewell Place, where our H.Q., used to be. The building had been converted from the old Bridewell prison into the London City Mission Headquarters, I used to think it was symbolic, for the job of each City Missionary was to convert those down at rock bottom, and the Society had begun by converting a jail into the Mission headquarters. The last time I went up to Blackfriars, I went to see if the building was still there, but it has gone and in its place stands a modern office block with no character as the old building had. Our Divisional meeting took the form of a short service to which a speaker was invited who usually gave us a sort of pep talk, we handed in our journals, which were our log books in which we recorded an outline of our work for the month past, noting any particularly interesting cases, we received another journal we had left the previous month, drew our monthly pay - which was what most of us had really come for - then returned to our districts. I always had the feeling that nobody ever bothered to read our journals, but they were always there if they wanted to check up and I do not think it was anything in my books that was the reason why, after a while, I was asked occasionally to undertake what they called 'deputation work.' That meant having to leave my own Mission for a Sunday and going to some large church in another part of London, and sometimes as far as Sevenoaks or Tunbridge Wells, where I would be the speaker at one of their services, informing them of the work of the London City Mission, towards which a donation would be given from these more affluent churches. I think I got those appointments, which earned me my travelling expenses and a little extra pocket money, through my own colleagues, other Missionaries who knew me, talking among themselves. It began with one asking me if I would be the special speaker at his Mission anniversary, when he would have not only his usual little flock but the parents of their Sunday School children, a really full house. I went and thoroughly enjoyed myself, as indeed I used to when I preached

my sermons at Summerstown or at any other church. But when I was asked to preach at a church or mission anniversary I always got the right atmosphere where I could really get a response. I got to hear that some of the Missionaries were spreading it around to each other, "if you want a really interesting speaker for your special occasions, you ask John Gilbrook, he has some good stories he tells." Well, now in my old age I may never see any of those chaps again, most of them may be gone by now. But as I look back with much more knowledge and experience, if I were to meet any of those Missionaries now, I would want to be honest and frank and say, "my dear brother, it was only show business, I loved to put on an act, of course I was sincere enough in the message I sought to put over, but I know now I was quite ignorant then of the real Jesus of Nazareth, Who He was and what He really taught ." But how I loved the dramatic, I was a born actor, I inherited it from my father and he encouraged it when he put me and my brothers on the boards at church concerts and for charity efforts. The fact that today I have two sons who are actors, although I tried to discourage both of them from taking it up professionally, is because they inherited it from me. However, I had ample opportunity within the church for my acting and even if my understanding of the Gospel of Jesus was not what I understand today, yet many things I said I could still say today for they could not but have a beneficial effect upon the minds of those who received them. The old chapel to which I had been appointed in Putney was known as the Platt Chapel, it had always been known by the name since it had been built in 1803, and when the London City Mission made a Mission of it everybody in the district kept to the old title. It was in the old part of Putney which was mostly a poor class area, with some streets of the artisan type houses, some of poorer quality and on the periphery of my district some middle class houses where some of my voluntary helpers lived. So my visitation of the homes of the people was much as it was in the Eastend of London. My ten years there up to the second World War was a great help to me in a more practical sense. Being my own boss I was able to arrange my times so that I could have a few hours each week for a side-line job. The salary paid by the London City Mission was not really enough to keep a small family, although our summer holidays were

provided with all expenses paid. We were told that the scale of our salaries was set on what a London 'bus conductor was paid in those days, and that was Three pounds per week. After some years service we were given a small increment. The salary just about kept us in food and paid our rent, and our children being young we were able to get articles of clothing and shoes from Marks and Spencers for them. But there was never enough to provide clothes or shoes for either my wife or myself, I earned that cash occasionally by my sideline job. Other missionaries got to know that I was brought up with a knowledge of the musical instrument trade and that I could tune and repair harmoniums, American organs and pianos. They all had these instruments in their Mission centres and chapels, some of them a bit worse for wear. They got their repairs cheaper when I did them and I had my fares paid with a bit of pocket money for myself. Although my father showed me how to repair stringed instruments, for there were always some of those in our home, he had been apprenticed to the organ trade and he first showed me how to make and repair reeds both brass or steel. But when I finished my missionary training at Norwood and had the temporary office job in Gower Street, which I have already mentioned, I got to know an old reed maker in a shop in a street off Gower Street, and used to go to him occasionally in my lunch time. He took an interest in me when he found I knew something about the trade and showed me much more skilfully how to make and tune reeds, he even showed me how to cut my own steels from stiffeners in ladies old corsets. The better class garments had whale bone stiffeners and later lengths of woven thin wire mess flattened were used, but the original steel was like the spring steel of clock springs in long flat lengths, just the right thickness for reeds. ( ) I became known among my colleagues, not only as an interesting speaker on special occasions, but as one who could put right their musical instruments and before long I was getting occasional piano tuning as well. ( ) John Hedges, the manager of Mathias's depository had an occasional accident with pianos in store, sometimes a grand piano, and he engaged me to put right the damage, the firm paid a bit more than the missions could afford. Then one day John Hedges saw me in a room upstairs in the Chapel painting scenery for a play being put on by our young people from the Sunday School and Youth Group, and noticed I was

painting, not as a scenery painter would, dabbing colours on that looked effective from a distance, but meticulously working my oil paints as I did on my art work. It gave John Hedges an idea. His removal men had been careless and made a gash in an expensive original oil painting in store. It would have cost a lot of money if he sent it to professional restorers in London, he asked me if I could repair a work like that. I said I had never attempted it and had no idea what techniques the restorers used, but if it were one of my own paintings I had damaged I know what I would do. I had repaired many musical instruments and what I did not know I usually made up. When I finished that job he was very pleased, he could not see where I had repaired it. That was the first of a number of such restoring jobs I did for him during my years at Putney. But for my last four years there he gave me some work that really helped me with my extra Christmas expenses for each of those years. As far as the large stores were concerned, Christmas in those days did not start in November as it does today. About three weeks before Christmas the children would expect Father Christmas to appear in the well known department stores. A retired member of Mathias's staff used to act as Father Christmas each year, but he was taken ill and died suddenly. John Hedges had to find another man to take his place. He asked me if I would take it on. It was a full time job six days each week and I would be paid the proper weekly wage for those three weeks. At the Chapel there were the usual Christmas activities going on but they were in the evenings and John Hedges suggested that if I was there most evenings of the week I might as well take time off during the daytime. As I have already said, I was my own boss and could arrange my times and as I and my family were really living from hand to mouth I was ready to take the three weeks' work. But I said to John Hedges, "Father Christmas is usually a well built old gentleman, and I am only a thin strip of a bloke." He assured me they would pad me out and that nobody would know who was behind the grey whiskers and red robe and hood. The first time I went I had only to be in the grotto in the toys department and hand out free gifts to the



first thirty children who came rushing through the doors as soon as the stores was opened, then for the remainder of my time up to Christmas Eve talk to the children who visited the grotto with their requests telling Father Christmas what they wanted delivered on Christmas Eve. But the following Christmas the boss of the stores had a new idea. He hired the old stage coach, drawn by four horses which used to run on special occasions - such as the Charles Dickens anniversary run from Richmond to Rochester - with the crew rigged out in early Victorian clothes and the rear coachman blowing a longpost horn. I sat up with the driver in a position where I was very much in view and waved to the people as we drove through the main shopping streets. Here and there I would see children and adults who were members of my Chapel. They had no idea that hidden behind the grey whiskers, the Father Christmas to whom they waved was their City Missionary. To me it was a bit more show business and I loved it and was paid for it. Then when we arrived at the Department Store for the spectacular opening, the local press photographers took one picture of me on the stage coach and another opening the main doors with crowds of people ready to rush in. Those pictures were published, but as far as I know, nobody ever asked "who was Father Christmas?" However, whatever I earned in this way, not only helped with the Christmas extras but was the only means I had of being able to buy clothes as I needed them. I always shared my earnings with my wife, giving her half for whatever she needed. It was one thing I felt was my duty to be open and honest about these things, in spite of the gradual worsening of our marriage relationship, I believed she was dependent entirely upon what I earned. When I was paid by the London City Mission I gave her the bulk of the cash for the month and she managed the housekeeping quite efficiently. I went round to the housing office and paid the rent. All extras I got occasionally I shared with her. It was many years later, indeed in my old age before I learned she had not been as frank and open with me. I knew she was a secretive type of woman but I never suspected it with regard to money, because I have never been preoccupied with money. As long as I had enough for basic needs I was happy. As a child we lived hand to mouth and now in my old age

living on an old age pension with a couple of ancillary state payments my wife and I are just above the poverty level, although we are both grateful that conditions are much better today than they were when we were children. My second wife is much younger than me, but life was as hard in her childhood as it was in mine. However, in the days I am recounting, I was a young man with plenty of energy and was able to take on additional part time work to supplement my small monthly salary, and it was by means of that extra cash that I was able to clothe my family and myself. It would not suit the purpose of this book to recount in detail all that happened during my ten years in charge of the Platt Chapel, Putney, I would mention only those things which made towards my progress and had some bearing on the course I was to take later in life. My time at Putney gave me the opportunity to pursue some studies of my own choice apart from those set by the London City Mission, which were compulsory for all Missionaries for the first two years of our service with that society. Their theology was of the fundamentalist Christian variety, my own studies were from the works of modern liberal theologians as well as books on psychology and I suppose it was inevitable that something from my private studies would eventually show up in my papers written for the fundamentalists at the City Mission, although when my first conflict came with those authorities I confess I was very surprised, indeed I was quite staggered, for it seemed to me then, and still seems to me today in my old age fifty-five years later, such a trivial matter and almost childish. I had gone sick with a bad attack of influenza and could not leave my house for three weeks, which meant I could not attend the two mornings each week at headquarters for the lectures, so I missed a complete section of the studies which was on the 'Inspiration of the Scriptures.' When I recovered and attended the next 'Divisional day' at headquarters, I was told by the Rev. Bourne, who lectured us, that the terminal examinations would commence the following week. He reminded me that I had missed the one subject and I said I would read it at home from my books. Usually we only took home from the lectures typewritten notes supplied by the lecturer. As I have said earlier in this book, although I was officially Church of England, my theology had largely been influenced by the Methodists. I had among my books an old theology by Professor Banks, D. D., a theologian well known in the Victorian era.

Today Professor Banks would be considered among the fundamentalist school of thought but at the time when I read his main theological work he may have been thought by some traditionalists to be a bit liberal in some things. However, I decided to be guarded in my replies to the questions on the examination paper handed to me by the Rev. Bourne. On the question of how God conveyed His Mind so that certain individuals put into writing what they thought God wanted other human beings to understand, I said that God co-operated with men as human beings, used their personal experiences. He did not say "now sit down and write exactly what I tell you," then dictate word for word as the man copied it, just as a shorthand typist today would take down notes from his or her boss. I elaborated upon this and showed how that when God used the prophets in the Old Testament and the Evangelists in the New Testament, in every case the personality and individuality of each man who wrote came through in his writings. Each had personal experiences of certain things they felt and suffered which brought to them understanding which they believed other human beings should know. I did not think I was being heretical in putting this in my exam replies, I thought it was common sense, besides it was Professor Banks, D.D., who had put such ideas in my mind. But when I went up with other Missionary students for our results, after the Rev. Bourne had given his speech about the results and told us we collect our papers from a long table by the side of his platform, where we would see our marks and the grades at which we had passed, then added, "but before Mr. John Gilbrook collects his, I want to see him, please." I thought, "good heavens! - why me, what have I done?" When I went up to his desk, he had only my papers on the one subject, the Inspiration of the Scriptures. He pointed to them, "do you know what this is?" "It is rank modernism!" I opened my eyes in feigned surprise, then reminded the Rev. Bourne that I was off sick and could not attend his lectures for that subject, neither was I given any of his notes of the lectures, so I had used all that I had at home which was Doctor Banks' theology. He said, "it is modernism get rid of it!" Then he told me my other subjects were alright but he could not

give me any marks at all for that subject. As I walked away from his desk I felt very annoyed, it seemed so unjust, I had put a great deal more into that subject even than into the others, because I had missed the exam through sickness I had been allowed to sit for it alone, had studied it quite as well at home, including the bits from Professor Banks, then gone to the quiet exam room, which I had to myself, and had really put a lot into that exam. There was much in my paper which was in line with the Rev. Bourne's fundamentalist views and at least he could have given me some marks for the care and effort I had put into it. I began to wonder if, losing the whole of the marks for one subject, my overall marks for the other papers would be sufficient for a pass. However, when I saw them I found I had high grades on each of them and my aggregate was well above that required for a pass. However, as I had now passed I had no further lectures to attend and I felt free to pursue my own studies. But the incident set me thinking again. It was not long since I had the disagreement with the Rev. Galpin, when he refused to have me any longer as an assistant at his church. When he was shouting at me and ordering me out of the vicarage, my mind went back to my boyhood when I held the parsons of our church in awe. As a child I thought those gentlemen who wore 'dog collars' and long black gowns had some special contact with God which we knew nothing about. When they preached to us and spoke with such authority, telling us what God demanded of us, I thought they had been in conference with Him and He had instructed them as to exactly what they had to pass on to us. Of course, then, as a child, I never dreamed that I would become a parson myself, wearing the clerical collar and long black gown, as a child I thought that was impossible for me because I was born of an ordinary mother and father in the Eastend of London, whereas we were made to believe that our parsons were in direct descent from the Apostles, and I knew who they were, we had pictures of them in the coloured stained glass windows of our church and pictures of them on the walls of our Sunday School. They all wore halos around their heads and I thought they were not ordinary human beings like us, they were especially created by God and sent down to earth with authority to instruct us in God's commands and requirements

and this picture in my young mind of God contacting human beings on earth only through these especially created beings was confirmed in the main theme of the Christian Church's teaching that God accomplished our salvation by sending down from heaven His own Son in the likeness of a human being, and that when He announced this fact to Mary the mother of Jesus He sent an angel down to her. When the very puzzled Mary said, "how can this be because I have never had sexual intercourse with any man,?" the angel replied, "Oh well, you see God is going to make a special creation, God's own Spirit will overshadow you and the baby will be the very Son of God." Then when the baby was born, an angel appeared in the dead of night to shepherds keeping their sheep, then suddenly a host of other angels appeared in the heavens singing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Everything taught to us about God communicating to humans was always through the supernatural, so I, as a young child had the feeling about priests and parsons that they were in touch with something we knew nothing about. But now in adult life I was beginning to discover who these parsons really were. The early days of my move away from the environment of my boyhood, took me among the top people in the Civil Service and I found among them occasionally those I named the 'tin gods.' Now, in my work in the Christian Church I was discovering we had a few 'tin Gods' there too. First, Pastor Fetler who, when I was with him in Riga, was diverting funds sent for relief in Russia, to set up a great Temple as well as a printing and publishing business in his own country. Then the Rev. Galpin who sacked me because I would not accept, nor would I impose upon reluctant folk, his strange high church rites and paraphernalia. When I stood in the vicarage looking at him while he shouted at me to go away and not come back again, I said to myself, "what does this man know about God?" "He does not know anymore than the simplest little child in his Sunday School, his only claim to speak for God is all bound up with his mythological rites and dogmas." Now this third Christian 'tin god' the Rev. Bourne, with his naive views on the verbal inspiration of the scriptures, that God had dictated all of it word for word in the Bible - all in English I suppose? Not one letter of it must be altered, not one dot or comma taken away. It reminded me of

an incident when, as a young student, I was taking part in an open air meeting at Hyde Park Corner in London. One of our speakers was holding forth and with his Bible held high in his hand he shouted "I believe this is the Word of God from cover to cover." A voice of a heckler from the crowd shouted, "including the preface to King James ?" The version of the Bible in general use then was the Authorised version also known as the King James version. I do not think many of the readers of that version ever bothered to read through that grovelling preface addressed by the translators to King James I, when they presented it to him in the year 1611. Of such a character was the Rev. Bourne, he reminded me of some of the Charles Dickens characters in those remarkable stories of his I enjoyed when young. Bourne was rotund with a ruddy complexion and in the presence of rich donors who visited us occasionally, wore an affected ingratiating smile. His only concern with us appeared to be that we should not offend them by uttering anything heretical or modernistic that might cause them to withdraw their money. They gave their financial support so that agents might take a simple message to simple people. But there were others besides me among the missionaries who were more concerned to take the truth and enlightenment to our own underprivileged, needy people. Among the wealthy donors were both ladies and gentlemen with well known names, and some who were directors of large financial concerns in London. One elderly lady was a wealthy widow, her husband had died a couple of years before I entered the L. C. M. The Rev Bourne was a bachelor in his forties at the time he lectured to us. He did not seem to be the marrying kind of man, somewhat aloof, did not appear to be able to give himself to people, he had the atmosphere of a Roman Catholic priest who had taken vows of celibacy. We certainly would never have connected him with the wealthy widow, she was at least sixty years of age but wiry and chirpy. She was asked occasionally to give a talk to us and chatted on            about all kinds of things. If she had ever had any feminine charm or attraction her years had robbed her of it. Her only attraction now, for some men, was her wealth. Imagine my surprise when I went to a Divisional meeting one day. As I entered the building there were the usual groups of my colleagues talking, but this time there were grins on their faces and some sniggering and a few

rude remarks being bandied about. "Heard the news?" one chap asked me, then pointing to the missionary who had just brought            in that news, told me he was travelling in a train in South East London a couple of days before, walked down the corridor and was about to enter a compartment when he saw in the corner a couple with their arms around each other cuddling and cooing and was surprised to see it was an elderly lady and a middle aged man, then the next second saw it was the wealthy supporter of our Mission and the Reverend Bourne. They did not recognise our colleague for there were about four hundred missionaries in the L.C.M., then and Bourne could not know everyone of them, so <sup>the missionary</sup> A went into the next carriage. He said it looked so peculiar and out of place. I suppose in those days it did look incongruous, but, of course, in these modern days there is no age limit on love making. Within a few weeks the engagement was announced and date of the coming wedding officially announced. But, of course, inevitably the talk was going around that nobody could have married an old lady like her for anything else than her money. However, I thought now the Reverend Bourne would entirely forget about me and my heresy, but I had another think coming! Within a couple of years I had evidence that he still had his eyes on me, 'big brother' was still watching me. What prompted him to take such a course of action I will never know, was it a chance remark I had made in my journal taken to headquarters each month, or had someone in my district made a report about me? In the course of my visitation I included a lady who attended the Chapel only occasionally. I had a regular monthly routine and then there were the additional visits when anyone became sick or went to hospital. On one occasion that lady told me she had a niece who had just started work as a typist at our headquarters. I had forgotten about this and it was a year or so later when on the usual visit the lady asked me in, then said, "I did not tell you this before while my niece was still at your Mission headquarters, but she has left now, so I can tell you." The Reverend Bourne, knowing the niece lived in Putney, asked her if she would attend one of my Sunday evening services and take down shorthand notes of what I was preaching and type a report for him. The niece refused to do it and a couple of

weeks later handed in her notice of resignation from her job.

The Reverend Bourne was second in command at headquarters, he was responsible for the training of the missionaries and their general pastoral care. After I had finished his course of studies I had no further personal contact with him, and I cannot remember ever having even any conversation with him during the following years I was with that Society. But I had quite a bit of contact with the General Secretary, the Rev. W.P. Cartwright, M.A., who had overall command of the London City Mission. He was a very intelligent gentleman and one who made me feel relaxed and comfortable when speaking with him in his office. We liked it when it was his turn to speak to us at our meeting on Divisional Day, he was interesting and knowledgeable and we did not yawn and fidget as we did when Bourne addressed us. One day the Reverend Cartwright said he had something interesting to tell the younger men who were still on their two years' probation. This just included me, for while I had completed my compulsory studies I had a bit longer before my two years were completed. He told us they had granted the use of a large room at the top of Bridewell House, our Headquarters building, to a lady who had been well known in the late Victorian period, had now retired from her profession but wanted to keep contact with some of her clients, and because of the facilities granted to her by the London City Mission was prepared to give free tuition to the younger men coming into the Society. She was not only an expert on voice production but a specialist on the respiratory system. The Reverend Cartwright listed the names of some of the greatest Shakespearian actors of the past who had received their voice production and elocution tuition under this lady whose name was Miss Hicks. Then he mentioned names of top people in government and other politicians including David Lloyd George, and as soon as he mentioned this name I was interested. As I have said earlier in this book, Lloyd George was a great man in my eyes when I was a boy and he happened to be the first leading politician I actually saw in person and also it was he who had created a job for me with Sir Andrew Duncan by bringing him down to Westminster at a crucial time during the First World War, if Lloyd George, that fine orator, benefited under the tuition of Miss Hicks



them so would I. The Reverend Cartwright said it was not compulsory but he advised us to take advantage of this generous offer by Miss Hicks and said we would be getting tuition that other people paid high fees to get. About fourteen of us started and she took us as a class doing some exercises together, but she began with a talk which she illustrated with charts showing the respiratory system, the heart, and the muscles relating between them. She impressed one thing upon us from the beginning that "breath is life," and if we breathe correctly we would live longer. She showed how if the voice is used wrongly in either speaking or singing it could damage the heart muscles, and explained how cockney barrow boys shouting in the markets through tense throats, died early in life through heart attacks. Then each of us had to breathe in in and out and utter certain consonants and vowel sounds, and Miss Hicks showed us where we were wrong. She started on me first, I was the smallest built one of the class. "Mr. Gilbrook," she called across to me, "we measure air in gallons, but you take it in in spoonfuls." She was a typical Victorian Dame of the intelligentsia, she could wither you with a word and could reduce you in size with a look, and yet I felt there was something good in this remarkable lady. She gave us exercises to do each day and when we returned the following week, she lined us up and each in turn we performed a breathing exercise she had set us. She stood near me watching me as I did mine. Then we had each in turn to utter the sounds as she had shown us. When I finished she said to me, "you did your exercises every day, did you not?" I replied, "yes, Miss Hicks." "I can see you have," she said. We were then shown new exercises for the coming week and had to repeat them before her when we returned. We lined up and each in turn had to utter sounds we had practiced. I was on the end of the line and she started with the chap on the opposite end. When it came to me and I uttered my sounds she smiled and then said to the class, "Mr. Gilbrook has the smallest capacity of air but gives the greatest capacity of sound." "Why?" she asked, "because he has been doing his exercises correctly." Some of the missionaries thought it was a waste of time, but I thought it was beneficial. Within a few days after that second week I received a letter from the Reverend Cartwright asking me to go up to his office.

He told me Miss Hicks was pleased with my response to her advice and the exercises she had given and that she felt I could benefit from some private lessons she was prepared to give me free of any cost to either myself or the Society. The lessons would be of one hour on one day each week for about six weeks, and they would be additional to the classes I was already attending with the other missionaries once a week. The Reverend Cartwright said I was very fortunate and privileged and reminded me that many notable people had paid high fees to receive tuition from Miss Hicks. What thrilled me was the fact that I was being given the same professional advice and help as had been given to Lloyd George by this very remarkable lady, for he was still the hero of my boyhood. One thing in which I know I have been fortunate all my life, that while I have never had much money, nor have I really sought it, yet from time to time I have had influential people who have taken a liking to me and offered me help. Up to this point the most outstanding were first Sir Andrew Duncan, then the Harley Street specialist Dr. Ernest Young, and now Miss Hicks. There have been many others down through the years of my long life and I am very grateful, for I have not missed much by never being financially well off. On the other hand I have suffered the reverse, I have had my conflicts, and if I may refer to what I said when comparing myself with John Bunyan in his "Pilgrim's Progress," my adversaries have not been hobgoblins nor foul fiends, but real people as will be seen in the further unfolding of this story of my pilgrimage. It would seem that people have either loved me or hated my guts, fortunately there have been fewer of the latter and in my pastoral work I have had for many years a good and happy relationship with most of my people. I continued the exercises taught me by Miss Hicks for some years after I left the London City Mission and recently, in my eighties, I recommenced a simple but beneficial breathing exercise I was shown by her. She proved in her own person her theory that "breath is life," for when she died during the second World War, we thought she must be in her seventies, although she looked younger, but when her obituary was published she proved to be ninety-three. My ten years at Putney, out of the twelve years I was with the L.C.M., before the second World War, gave me many opportunities because at the

Chapel in Putney, away from headquarters, I was my own boss and with few limitations could arrange my own times. It was during this period that I renewed my contacts with certain Civil Service friends in various departments in Whitehall. Since my days at Speke Hall I had kept in touch with one friend who was either at the Home Office or the Treasury, I cannot now remember which. He may still be alive and because of a very unfortunate incident in his life, he will be the only person in this book whose name I will not disclose. I promised at the beginning of this book that everything recorded in it would be true and every person a real person, and I am giving the real names of all the people mentioned herein from beginning to end, except that of this one friend of mine. So I will refer to him as 'Harry X' and if he ever reads this book he will recognise himself and will see that I still appreciate the happy hours we spent together in our common interest in our young days. That common interest was classical music. He had an excellent collection of classical records in his bachelor flat near Clapham Common, where I spent an occasional evening with him while I was at Putney. Apart from those musical evenings, we used to go, quite regularly at one period, to the old Queen's Hall in London, near Broadcasting House, to the Symphony concerts during the winter months and to the Promenade concerts originated by the late Sir Henry Wood, during the summer months. The old Queen's Hall was destroyed by enemy bombing in the second World War and these concerts are now held in the Royal Albert Hall, but I spent many happy hours in the Queen's Hall, not only with Harry X but by an extraordinary coincidence when I was appointed to the Platt Chapel, I found two other civil servants already established in the work of the Chapel. One was Leonard J. Harris who held a fairly senior position in one of the departments in Whitehall. He was quite an aloof type of chap, very proper, always polite but quite unemotional, I never really got to know him, he was as cold as an iceberg. But he was keen on classical music and there were some concerts to which I went with him when I was not with Harry X. Being mostly young people at the Chapel we called each other by first names, but not this rigid civil servant, he was always Mr. Harris, but among ourselves we referred to him as L.J.H. He was a bachelor and has remained so throughout all his life. I never knew what his work was in Whitehall but I am sure that once he was

away from our atmosphere at the Platt Chapel and back in the atmosphere of the Civil Service, he was a consummate, double-dyed "tin god." I apologise for continuing to use a term which I said, earlier in this book, I would drop and use another, but I confess I do not find any other term which expresses anything like that which was programmed into my mind as a boy. However, in fairness to L.J.H., I must say he was very good with the children's work at the Chapel, he put a lot of time and effort into it as well as some of his own money and built up quite a large Sunday School for a small Chapel. Not being a family man and appearing not to have any interests away from the Civil Service, our children's work became his hobby. I never saw him show anything like affection to any child however young, nor can I remember him ever patting a child on the head or hand, he did not seem to be to be able to give himself in that way, but when he addressed them collectively as a group or gathering, he was quite good and could always hold their attention. He carried on that work all through the second World War while I was away in the Royal Air Force, and some years after the war, when the Wandsworth Borough Council rebuilt that area of Putney and demolished the old Platt Chapel to erect a block of flats, they gave him a small Mission construction near by, where, although he is now retired and as old as me, he still continues that work today; all power to your elbow L.J.H. !

The work in which I was keenly interested was the new Youth Clubs schemes being organised in various centres in and around London and I began a mixed young peoples' club at our Chapel in the Autumn of 1929, and in that work I had the invaluable help of the other two civil servants I found already at that Chapel when I took over. One was Muriel Hunt who was Post Mistress in the House of Commons and had personal contacts with most of the Members of Parliament and government officials in those days. She was a charming young lady with such a lovely temperament, so sincere and intelligent. She was also a very good pianist and often played at our functions. In the days when I used to go into the House of Commons with documents from Sir Andrew Duncan, I saw most parts of the Houses of Parliament that visitors from the public can get permission to see. There was an older Post Mistress there then and I did not know her. But there were places there I really wanted to see and one of those was to go up the many steps of the tower of Big Ben and go behind the clock face and see it working when

the chimes are striking on the hour. That privilege was not given to ordinary members of the public, only M. P's or officers of the House could get permission to take up a party to the clock face, and it was a real thrill for me when Muriel did just that. She also took us to other parts of the Palace of Westminster which I had not seen during all my visits to the House of Commons in the course of my duties. The other young lady whose help and encouragement given to me during my years at Putney I will always remember, was not a civil servant when I was first appointed to the Chapel, but became one a few years later. She was Florence Cox, who when I first met her was on the staff of a well known Insurance company at Euston, London. Her parents were working class folk who worked hard to bring up three children, Florence being the eldest. She was one of the brighter pupils of Secondary School who worked hard at her books and ultimately passed what would be called today the Oxbridge entrance examination. However, her parents could not afford to send her to university, grants were few and far between then and not sufficient to keep a student at university without additional financial help from the parents, but they needed Florence to help bring in more much needed cash into the family budget, so further education was out of the question and the exams she had passed qualified her for the post she held with the Insurance company. However, for some time moves had been made in government for an improved National Insurance scheme but this did not begin to take shape until during the second World War, in 1942, in the Beveridge Report, which was further developed in the White Paper published in 1944. This was given legislative form in the National Insurance Act of 1946 and as part of an all-embracing scheme the government offered to buy up those Insurance companies who chose to become part of the National Insurance organisation. The company to which Florence belonged was one that did this, and those employees who were considered qualified were retained by the government and became civil servants. Florence was qualified and was sent to a new government office near Regent's Park. She was not only a great help to me in the work among the young people, but over the years quite often was our baby sitter when my wife had to accompany me to a function where we were both expected. My wife did not enter much into my work at the Platt Chapel. She was a singer with quite a good solo voice and

was a member of the South West London Choral Society. There was one rehearsal evening per week, when I stayed home with our children, and periodically a concert open to the public, usually at the Tooting Central Hall, and I always attended those concerts. Their works were of high standard and they engaged well known professional soloists and I always went because I was keenly interested, and not just because I was expected to go. There were also a couple of evening functions per year organised by our headquarters when wives were invited and it was on all these occasions that Florence was our baby-sitter and our children loved her. There were occasions at the Chapel when Florence would be present as well as our two selves, then sometimes my mother, who lived within reach of us, came and once or twice my youngest brother and his wife. Through all those years I had to keep up appearances, my job in a Church organisation was such that in those days no one must suspect that things were not right between the missionary and his wife. The fact was things became much more difficult and particularly after my wife, in fits of temper, began to use physical force on me. The first time she struck me was when I considered she was being quite unreasonable in some demand and would not agree. I had my back to her and did not see what was coming, when with clenched fist and gritted teeth she struck me hard on my face. It took me by surprise, I looked at her, then said, "why did you do that ?" then walked away. My younger brother came to see me the next day when my wife was out shopping and I told him about the incident. He said to me just as the midwife in Bethnal Green had told me, "my dear brother, you have got to be very firm with her or you are going to have a hell of a life." Then he told me that after our wedding reception at Speke Hall, a group of them remained behind when we had gone to finish packing our cases for the journey to Riga, some of the young ladies who had known my wife from her early girlhood expressed some doubts as to whether I would be happy with her, they said she had always been very self-willed. I thought it was a bit late to tell me then, the religious contract had been arranged in such a hurry for a married couple to go to Riga, that I had not had time to discover what my wife was really like until it was too late. I hated violence, what was I to do if I were to have any life of my own ? Soon she was to be violent again and I made a quick

instinctive decision in a flash which I have never regreted. My wife was a stickler for a rigid routine, and in some ways I felt it was a good thing. For instance I had learned in my medical studies as a young student that regular meals are very beneficial, and the Harley Street specialist, Dr Ernest Young, confirmed this to me. But my wife seemed to be almost fanatical about these things and she was a tyrant when I, whether my fault or not, did not keep to her rigid routine. However, although I did my best to keep to her times, I had a job which did not always permit this. So this was an occasion when my own routine had to be altered. I was making a round of visits in my district when I met a woman who was regularly in my congregation. She asked me if I knew another woman member - mentioning her name - had been taken into hospital a couple of days earlier. I said nobody had reported this to me, so she gave me some of the details and told me the name of the ward in Putney Hospital where this member was. It was almost midday, but because the woman had been in hospital a couple of days and would not have had a visit from anyone at the Chapel, I decided to go at once. Putney hospital was walking distance from the Platt Chapel and I thought I could get that visit in and still be home about my usual time for my meal. However some visits to hospital ~~take~~ take a bit longer than others and this was one I found I could not hurry. After the visit I rushed off home but it was a short 'bus ride away and I had to wait for the 'bus. By the time I got into my house I was about half an hour late and was just saying, "sorry I'm late - " and was going to explain why, when my wife shouted like a school teacher of the old order, "well, where have you been and why are you late ?" I said I had an urgent visit to the hospital but before I could explain properly she shouted "you didn't have to go, it could have waited until this afternoon." I tried to explain the details as I have recorded them above but she continued to shout and would not listen to me. She was washing up in the sink of our kitchen-cum-living room and I saw my cooked meal on the grill over the gas cooker. I walked over to it and stopped near the cooker to switch on my, what was then termed 'wireless' set, because every midday meal time there was a programme of classical music which I enjoyed, and relaxed after the meal until the concert finished. As soon as she saw me switch

on she shouted much louder, "you're not going to have that on if you come home late!" I quietly replied, "you know I always have music with my meal," and continued to tune in the programme. Immediately I heard her grab something from the sink and a handful of cutlery scattered all around past my head, hitting the radio set, yet amazingly not one piece hit me. I turned towards her and when she saw that nothing had hit me, she raised both her clenched fists and with eyes glaring like a mad woman came rushing at me as though to knock me to the ground. Like a flash things rushed into my mind, what the midwife had said, what my brother had said, I knew I had done nothing wrong and that I was late only in course of my duty. I knew too that I was physically tougher than my wife and as she came up to me I grabbed one wrist gave a sharp twist and put her down on the floor, put my one knee on her uppermost leg to stop her kicking and with my other knee I knelt on her other hand I was not holding. She kept shouting "you're hurting me!" I said "I'm going to keep you here until you calm down and as soon as you are calm I will let you up." Then she said "call yourself sanctified?" Now this was the weapon she often held over my head. If I disagreed with her about anything or would not give way to what I felt was unreasonable, she usually said "call yourself sanctified?" Now I would have thought she would have known more about that doctrine than me, for I did not go to Speke Hall where they taught that until I was eighteen years old, whereas she was almost literally born there. Her parents were both members and when she was born she was dedicated there - they did not baptise babies. Yet she did not apply the doctrine to herself but used it as a weapon over my head, that if I dared to disagree with her I could not be sanctified. So now as I held her on the floor and she shouted "call yourself sanctified?" I replied, "no, I'm not sanctified, and from now on I give up any idea of that doctrine, in future you will never again be able to hold it as a weapon over my head to force me to your will. God has never given you the right to live two lives in one body, yours and mine as well, from now on I want first of all to be a human being in my own right, a husband and father in my own home to think and choose for myself, so the doctrine of sanctification must go until I am a free man



to do what I think to be right in the sight of God." By the time I had finished my little speech she had calmed down, so I let her up and from that time for the rest of our years together she never tried physical violence on me again. However, things did not really improve, for she still used her tongue from time to time. Art was one of my best subjects from my school days, and as now at the Chapel we frequently put on plays by the children and youth club, I painted the scenery as well as some small oil paintings to hang in the Chapel. The large canvases I painted at the Chapel, the smaller pieces I began in my own home, until my wife began nagging about them, "have we got to have this trash here?" she would ask in such a cutting tone. So as there was a large room upstairs in the chapel, with plenty of cupboard space, I made my studio there. Then, as I was improving my piano playing at that time, I would sometimes sit at our piano to run over some numbers we were going to use in our plays, and she would say, "have we got to have that noise?" Yet she would sit and play her pieces occasionally and nobody made any remarks. Her playing was about the same standard as mine. Fortunately for me, at the chapel we had a grand piano, an upright piano and a very good organ, so I did all my playing there, but this was only driving us further apart. From time to time I did make a real effort to improve our relationship so that it would not be just a matter of keeping up appearances in my work, and in December 1933 our third child was born, a lovely adorable little daughter Christine. I was very close to my three children for I was in the happy position where I could often be with them during the day when most fathers are at their work. If I had an evening engagement when I would be at my official work up to 10.30 p.m., I would take time off in the day. Also as my two older children became old enough to join the children's activities at the Platt Chapel, on the evenings they attended they walked down with me in good weather or rode on the 'bus if the weather was bad. On Sundays they accompanied me there and back twice, and there were extra times when we put on plays. My wife went only on special occasions or when she was invited to sing. But there were the occasional evenings, as I have already said, when I<sup>was</sup> without my family at a symphony concert or 'prom' with either L.J.H., or Harry X, but it was the latter who got me back into the atmosphere of Whitehall. Civil servants were permitted

in those days to take an accompanying friend to lunch at the Civil Service restaurant which, if I remember rightly, was on the top floor of the Treasury. Departments have changed since those days, the Home Office is now a short distance from Whitehall and the Foreign Office has been enlarged to take in the larger department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It could be the restaurant is still in the same place as it was when I lunched there with Harry X. It was asked of members of the Civil Service that they did not overdo the privilege of being able to invite a friend occasionally, so I went once a month for some time. Although I had known Harry X from the time we were teenagers at Speke Hall and thought I knew him fairly well, I would never have guessed he could be capable of the act that brought him into conflict with the law. The nature of his deviation from the straight and narrow path was such that I never thought he would remain in the Civil Service any longer. From a small boy I had grown up with the belief that those who moved in those high and exalted places in Whitehall, were like the parsons in the church, quite incapable of the guilty deeds I knew took place among my own people on the lowest levels. Harry X was the first among others I was to discover who gave me to understand that those exalted folk were as human as the rest of us. In my work in the Church I had already discovered that there were those who held office and authority who, apart from the 'tin gods' in that establishment, could reveal something quite contrary to holiness. Now in the Civil Service too I was to have more revelations as time went by. A couple of years before the second World War I began to see Harry X less frequently. I was much more involved in the increased activities of the young people's work at the Chapel. I had three weeks holidays each summer in the London City Mission, two of them I spent with my wife and children at the Holiday Home at Eastbourne and the third week I went alone on a cycling tour. Every fifth year instead of going to Eastbourne we could chose a grant instead and go to somewhere of our own choice. One of my fifth years fell on the year 1938 and I wanted to go and visit my cousins in Antwerp who I had not seen for some years, and then to make a cycling tour into Germany and along the Rheinland. Three young cyclists in Putney belonging to a local club with whom I rode occasionally,

wanted to tour the Rheinland but had never been abroad before and did not know the German language, asked if they could come with me. I was quite willing and told them I would also arrange for them to stay with my cousins in Antwerp overnight and we would start our tour from there and stay there again on our return from Germany. The cousins I usually stayed with when visiting Antwerp were two married young ladies who, with their husbands and children, had two houses next door to each other in a suburb of Antwerp. Now in that year of 1938, Adolf Hitler was beginning to make himself a menace in Europe. Shortly after our time in Riga Hitler began to make himself felt. First through his organised army of thugs known as the Stahlhelm, but by the time we reached 1938 he had built up powerful armed forces and was threatening his neighbouring countries. In March 1938 he invaded and took over Austria, the land where he had been born and which had been independent for centuries, then in September the same year he invaded the German speaking part of Czechoslovakia known as the Sudetenland. My cycling holiday to Germany was in August of that year. I had arranged with my wife that I would have two weeks for the tour in Germany and one week with her and the children when I returned. She was quite ready to agree to the arrangement as she was keen to go to her aunt who had a small boarding house at Felixtowe, so she and the children would have three weeks there altogether. It is hard to believe today that fares to the continent were so cheap in the nineteen - thirties. Taking a train from Liverpool Street station in London to Harwich, then a sleeping berth on the night ferry boat across the North sea to Flushing in Holland, then up the river Schelde arriving in Antwerp in the morning. The return fare for that trip was just £2. As is the case with British Rail today, a bicycle taken with a passenger was conveyed free of cost. When we were with my cousins in Antwerp, they tried to persuade us to spend some of our touring holiday in Belgium, telling us that the Belgian Ardennes going south to Luxembourg was just as lovely as the Rheinland. But then I knew they had no liking for the Germans after the first World War. There were two older lady cousins of mine both of whom lost their husbands in that terrible war. One did not die in the fighting but returned home after the war a chronic invalid. I saw him on my first visit to Antwerp

as a teenager shortly after the first World War. He could hardly move about and had great difficulty in breathing, his shoulders heaving up and down constantly. They told me it was the result of cruel treatment by the Germans when he was a prisoner of war. In the depth of winter they were made to strip naked then were marched out on to the snow and in the biting winds and drilled up and down. Some of the men became ill and died in the prison. This husband of my cousin's was ill with pneumonia when the war ended, was brought home to a hospital in Belgium. After he was discharged he was constantly under care and treatment, but they knew he would not live very long. He died before I returned the following summer. My relations in Antwerp always became very angry whenever the Germans were mentioned, they seemed to have an intense hatred of them. On this subject I had to be circumspect and careful of what I said. I could not tell them that I had lived in the home of a Baltic German lady and her two teenage children and that they were exceedingly nice people. Our first daughter was born in that home. We also had stayed with some good German friends in Berlin on the way home and that we still corresponded with these good people. There were others too we knew in Riga and they were good friends. But I thought my cousins and other relations in Antwerp would accept it if I told them the real reason why I wanted to visit Germany in 1938. Back home in England we were getting disturbing reports of what Adolf Hitler was doing in Germany. Among many things, besides persecuting the Jews, he was subjecting the established Christian churches to his political aims and ideology. Many good people had fled from Germany. The great theologian Paul Tillich had gone to America to continue his work there unhindered. Dietrich von Bonhoeffer had also taken refuge in the U.S.A., although he returned just before the second World War started, believing he could be of more use to his people if he stayed with them and shared their persecution. It cost him his life before the war ended. However, I remembered how that during the Russian revolution in 1917 and for some years after, we were being fed through the press with stories of atrocities and terrible things that were taking place in that country. Then when I spent nearly two years in Latvia and met people who were coming out of Russia because of the extreme economic difficulties, I discovered that much of what we had been made to believe were gross exaggerations, in some cases untrue. I wanted to

see for myself as much as I could what was going on in Germany, by quietly cycling through towns and villages and keeping my eyes and ears open. My cousins, of course, did not want another war on their territory and were suspicious of what Hitler was doing and they appeared to accept my explanation. Our first day's cycling was the stretch from Antwerp to Liege, where we put up at a small hotel for the night. The next day's journey was not so long but took us over the boarder into Germany, arriving at Achen before midday. We booked into a hotel for bed and breakfast and also arranged for an evening meal there when we returned after a tour around the city. The first place we sought in the shopping centre was a restaurant where we could get a midday meal, but we had only just got outside the hotel when I had my first surprise. There was a church near the hotel where a week's festival was being held and pilgrims were arriving from all parts of Germany. Coach loads were constantly drawing up, disembarking crowds of people who immediately joined a long queue stretching from the door of the church along to the street, on the corner of which our hotel was situated, turned up that street and passing underneath the windows of the rooms on the first floor which we had booked, continued into the distance. We were to find, after going to bed that night, that coaches were still arriving all through the night and from time to time I awoke to hear a coach drawing up in the street below and the voices of the people as they alighted to join the queue to the church. We were told it was the festival of John the Baptist, after whom the church was named. Within the church were hanging some garments, brought from some place of security where they were usually kept, and which were claimed to be the very vestments that John the Baptist had actually worn before he was imprisoned and later executed. Of course, the Roman Catholic Church establishment worldwide, down through the ages had been adding to its strange beliefs, from time to time, many legends and miracles, and these garments of John the Baptist were reputed among catholics to have been miraculously preserved for nearly two thousand years and in some mysterious way transported to where the Roman Catholic hierarchy keep them in safe custody. This festival at Achen took the same form for all those who attended. The church was filled to capacity with those on the front of the queue, the doors then closed while a short service was held, then

the pilgrims slowly filed past a roped off part of the church where the garments hung just to gaze on them as they passed. They could not touch them, lest because of their great age they would disintegrate, but by just gazing on them, they were told, they would receive some blessing. This festival went on for several days and no doubt coaches were still disembarking their passengers during each night as well as on that one night when we stayed in Achen. This is what surprised me, for I had the impression from our press and radio at home that Adolf Hitler was systematically curbing all religious activity except that of the state church, certain sections of which he had persuaded to support his national Socialist movement. However, there was a large movement of resistance to the Nazi regime which was centred in what was known as the 'Confessing Church' and one of the most influential Protestant theologians, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was one of its leading spokesmen and up to this time, when we visited Germany on our cycle tour, had been open in his public protests against the regime particularly its anti-Semitism. Hitler and his Nazi henchmen devised an insidious form of persecution against those who opposed their vicious movement and one or two of the leading theologians found it necessary to take refuge in America. The eminent 20th-century theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich found it necessary to continue his work in New York, and when the second World War came in 1939, Dietrich Bonhoeffer also went to take refuge in the United States but returned after only two weeks in New York declaring "I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people." Despite the restrictions imposed on him, he was able to continue his work for the resistance movement until he was arrested on April 5, 1943, and imprisoned in Berlin. Following the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life on July 20, 1944, the discovery of documents linking Bonhoeffer with the conspiracy led to his eventual execution at Flössenberg on April 9, 1945. So while the reports we were getting of Hitler's religious persecutions were true, at the time we were visiting Germany in 1938, the Roman Catholic Church appeared to be getting away with big festivals such as this at Achen. But soon we were to have evidence of

anti-Semitism which certainly was taking place in Germany under Hitler at that time. There were reports that it was not so evident in the Rheinland as in other parts of Germany, so we did not see so many cases as we would have done had we gone further inland. The first we saw was a shop with windows smashed and boarded up with the word JUDE scrawled across it in paint. Later, as we went through other small towns we saw this on one or two shops in the main shopping areas. Of course, there was too much evidence coming out of Germany at this time for us not to know that it was not just propaganda being fed to us about Hitler's anti-Semitism, but it was not until after the second World War that the real horror of what was going on became known to the world. At the time we visited Germany in 1938, we knew many of the poorer Jews were being deported and that many of the intellectuals and more affluent among them were making their own ways out, but when Hitler and his Nazis were defeated and Germany was occupied by the Western powers and Soviet Russia, the world discovered that Hitler had become impatient with the slow way the Jews were being eliminated and devised means to exterminate the whole race. So the terrible tortures and carnage carried out in the extermination machinery of his concentration camps became known to us all and names such as Auschwitz, Chelmo, Belzec, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, Majdanek, and Treblinka are all part of history today. Another surprise for me was to discover the presence of highly organised and trained German soldiers in the Rheinland. As part of the severe restrictions imposed upon the German nation at the end of the first World War, was a limitation of their armed services and on the weapons they could possess and one of the restrictions laid down was that there should not be any German forces occupying the Rheinland. Now as I have already said, by 1938 Hitler, in spite of the restrictions laid down by the Allied conquerors, had built up a mighty armed force, had, on March 11 that year invaded Austria and announced that it was "a province of the German Reich," and shortly afterwards made moves to "free" the German speaking people of the Sudeten land and take their territory away from Czechoslovakia. Hitler hesitated a bit before actually invading

because he was not sure if France and Great Britain would give any military support to the Czechs if they resisted Hitler's dismemberment of their territory. Our own prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, had already told the French statesmen in April of that year, that he believed Czechoslovakia should be urged to surrender some territory to Germany. In the meantime Hitler was not losing any time, he kept up diplomatic pressure and agitation within Czechoslovakia and at the same time began quietly to strengthen his own borders along the Rheinland, which, of course, were close to the frontiers of France, Belgium and Holland. He did this under the pretence of army manoeuvres but it looked like a move to have his forces in good numbers near to the French boarder in case of intervention by France and Great Britain. We were told at the customs barrier when we crossed the frontier between Belgium and Germany that we would find manoeuvres in progress but the road we chose happened to go right through the middle of them. There had been talk of war back home in England, if Hitler went on making his claims and threatening to take territories by force of arms, but when we cycled through the thick of all the military activity it seemed we were already at war. The German troops were in battle gear with their familiar steel helmets and equipped with rifles and machine guns and occasionally there would be an armoured vehicle with heavier weapons mounted. But what interested me was the new method Hitler had introduced of conveying his troops quickly from one point to another, there was none of the old 'foot slogging' of the infantry as in the first World War. There were fleets of troop carriers, they were like large open lorries with nothing but rows of seats in them upon which the soldiers were seated about six deep all sitting bolt upright facing the front, row after row from front to back of the vehicle. From a short distance away they looked like rows of toy soldiers, tightly packed and motionless when the carriers were parked on the roadside or when they were moving along the road. To me, brought up as a child with a father who was a soldier before he married my mother and who became an army instructor in the first World War, with the books and pictures in our home of the campaigns in India, the Afghan War, the



Zulu Wars, the Boer Wars, the battles of General Gordon of Khartoum and Egypt, then as a young teenager I had gone through some of the horrors of the terrible first World War. These toy soldiers sitting in upright rows with their expressionless faces under their steel helmets seemed ridiculous to me. I did not feel so comfortable when we cycled along a straight, mile long road, with fruit trees at intervals on both sides, and saw to our right the helmets and faces peeping over the top of a ditch on the other side of the grass verge, which ran parallel to the road for its whole length. The soldiers were taking cover in the ditch with their rifles and machine guns trained across the road and it occurred to me that some fool, bored at not having a real target, could accidentally press the trigger just as we were passing, had they got live ammunition or just blanks ? Within another year when Hitler used his "blitzkrieg" methods in the real war, we saw he had a good reason for wanting to convey his troops quickly by means of those troop carriers. We saw in those manoeuvres some other methods of lightning warfare he had devised, among which were fleets of motor cycles with side cars on which were mounted machine guns with the gunners seated behind. It occurred to me as I considered them that they relied on good roads and a surprise attack if they were to be effective, but that once opposing forces had blocked the roads they would be considerably slowed down, they would not be much good over rough terrain. When we got into the area along the river Rhein we were away from the manoeuvres and found a wine festival in progress. Crowds of holiday makers in colourful fancy dresses who had been sampling the various wines were having an hilarious time with music and dancing. Yet even there among all the happy revelry, on two occasions there came, riding through the crowds, a line of armoured motor cycle combinations with driver and gunner on each. Whether it was done to impress the holiday makers that there were more serious things taking place, or just two units making their way towards where the manoeuvres were, I would not know. Altogether we travelled over eight hundred miles in the two weeks of our tour before returning to Antwerp, and saw quite a lot of Germany under Hitler. The national socialists were erecting large slogans in all the main towns and cities and everywhere people were being stirred to excitement over the new

movement under Hitler and the Nazis. It was very hot weather and as we cycled through the villages and towns in our shorts and shirts only, having everything else packed in our paniers, we looked like any of the many German groups being encouraged to take up physical fitness, and several times, as we passed groups of boys playing in the streets they called out to us "wir sind Jugend ! " After this happened a couple of times my companions asked me "what are they shouting ?" I told them the boys were telling us they belonged to the Hitler Youth Movement. It was eleven years then since I had stayed with our friends, the Niendorfs, in Berlin, and had sensed on that occasion a subdued and struggling Germany suffering under the very severe reparations imposed by the Allies after Germany's defeat in the first World War. Now in 1938 this was a different nation, everywhere people were clutching at what Hitler was offering them, saw their hope of rising to something better. But I did not like the atmosphere, I deplored it even more than I did the atmosphere I found in Berlin and north Germany during the two years I worked in those parts of Europe. It was the atmosphere of arrogance that I hated, people spoke arrogantly, acted arrogantly, everywhere was an arrogant upsurge. But since then I have learned that this is what happens in human nature when punishment is meted out too severely. As a minister of religion I did a little prison visitation, but after I resigned from the ministry I taught in an "approved" school for ten years. An approved school in those days was the stage before Borstal for lads up to fifteen years of age. They no longer exist today, there is an entirely different system. In the school where I worked they were London boys, they were my own class and a number of them came from the very districts where I was born and brought and later worked. There was, every now and again, the boy who was considered almost unmanageable. Occasionally he would abscond, would be found by the police and returned to the school. He would then be suitably punished and further restricted. The boy would be defiant, would be beaten by a master but would not willingly submit and only displayed arrogance. It is part of a human beings defence mechanism, it can be compared to a wild animal cornered, snarling and fighting for its life, all it wants

is its freedom. The boys at the school where I worked were not cured of their anti-social behaviour, that behaviour had been created by the way society had treated them and if society punished them it would further breed defiance and arrogance. The only cure is enlightenment and understanding. Of course, at that school I had the advantage, not only of having been born and brought up in <sup>their</sup> ~~the~~ same environment, but I taught the one subject they liked -- music. Time and again, in the ten years I was there, the Head would say to me. "I give you some of the most awkward and difficult boys we have, that nobody else seems to be able to do anything with, yet in a short time of being with you they play their instruments so well, and are so enthusiastic they want to play at the open day ceremonies and at the Christmas party." I usually brushed off his compliments with the reply, Oh, well, I make music a pleasure right from the beginning, and not an irksome school lesson that is compulsory, and you know, Headmaster, music still "hath charms to soothe a savage breast." But I knew it was more than that and I would have found it difficult to explain to the Head what I really knew. There are no adequate words in the English language, but the boys framed it in a simple phrase one day for me. We were discussing their futures after they had done their time at the school. It was nothing to do with the music lesson but every now and again they would open up to me. They all considered that their time at the approved school would always be a stigma they would carry for the rest of their lives, most of them considered they could only but follow a life of law breaking or crime, they were frank about what they would do. We had talked like this before but on this particular day I paused and said, "you know lads you always talk freely to me like this and I am glad you do, but you forget that really I am a member of the staff here." Immediately one boy piped up, "Oh sir, but you are different, you are one of us." All the others agreed with him at once, and no boys ever uttered truer words. Of course, I was one of them, I was one of them before they were born that is why they felt a close affinity to me and I would, if it were in my power, have removed the stigma from each of those lads and given them a fresh start in life. This can be compared with what went wrong in Germany after the first World War. When the Allied powers had finished outlining all the punishments they inflicted on the Germans for waging that terrible war, they put a stigma on the head of every German,

and in so doing created the soil in which the beginnings of a further World War was to grow. It took a man insane enough to believe he could do it, for no man in his right mind could have attempted to do what Hitler did. If the world had put a stigma on Germany he would show the world what he would do, he would make of his people the most superior race the world had ever known. He would purge the nation of all foreign influence, get rid of all the Jews and foreigners and create from pure German Aryan stock a Master Race. It was the same mentality as the boys at the approved school. Once they got away from that punishment they would show the establishment, that had branded them with the stigma, who was superior. Criminals are not usually born as criminals, they are potentially normal human beings who are created into criminals through an adverse environment imposed on them by other human beings. I could pursue this subject further but it is not my purpose here, I want to show how that through my visit to Germany in 1938, I was convinced in my own mind that a further war was coming and by the time we returned home to England after our holiday, found that Neville Chamberlain and the government were beginning to think the same and knew, as a nation, we were quite unprepared. The Prime Minister had met Hitler at various places throughout 1938 and discussed his demands for the Sudeten Germans, but found each time he met him that he wanted to add a bit more to what they had last agreed upon. By September 22 when Chamberlain visited Hitler at Godesberg, he was astonished to learn that Hitler now required the immediate evacuation by the Czechoslovaks of all Sudeten areas and the occupation of those areas by German forces by September 26 and 28. Chamberlain made other proposals and finally on 29 September representatives of all the major powers except the Czechs met at Munich and agreed that Czechoslovakia should evacuate all the Sudeten areas starting on 1 October. By now Chamberlain and our government could see that Hitler did not intend to stop in his encroachment of other areas and that Poland was next in line, and as Hitler could not be allowed to invade that country we ought to be more prepared for war than we were. So the government immediately set about recruiting for Civil Defence and also enlarged the territorial army scheme for civilians to train at weekends in readiness if war should be declared. They also decided to have the

same kind of peace time training for both the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. Posters began to appear appealing to people to volunteer for one of the armed services or for the Civil Defence and appeals were also made over the radio. As far as London City Missionaries were concerned, the Rev. Cartwright told us we would be exempt from military service as we came in the category of ministers of religion. It so happened the City Mission had already obtained recognition by the Home Office regarding our official standing because of our peace time work among the working classes. When an official application was made by any person for anything such as a pension, widows allowance, national assistance or anything of that nature, the signature of the applicant had to be witnessed by any of a group of people listed by the Home Office on the application form, such as a doctor, a J.P., a minister of religion or one or two others. In the working class areas of London, by far the majority of the poorest people were known only to their London City Missionary. Those who had occasionally to go to their doctor would be known to him but a doctor would charge for his signature a few shillings and a poor widow who received only a pension of ten shillings a week in those days could not afford to pay a doctor, so this is why the Home Office recognised us as ministers of religion and from the year 1929 when I was appointed to the Platt Chapel, I officially signed myself as such although I was not fully ordained until some years later. However, the Rev. Cartwright, in advising us said if any of us felt we would like to enroll in any of the schemes for peace time training in the armed services, giving a few hours of our time each week, the City Mission would permit us to do so, although those who joined the Civil Defence would be sure of working near their own districts. But I was crazing on flying and used often, on my Saturday afternoon cycling trips, to go to what was then the London Airport at Croydon, to watch the aircraft. There was no way that I could ever raise the cash to pay for a flight, but my elder brother had been in the Air Force at the end of the first World War, beginning in the old Flying Corps, and I knew the ground staff could get "flips" now and again when any pilot would take them up, and I had read on the posters appealing for young men to join the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, that men would be trained at air fields nearest to where they lived and would also serve there in the

event of war. So, having sanction from headquarters to join what we liked, I wrote for the enrolment form and in a couple of weeks was asked to attend at a building behind Air Ministry in Kingsway, London, where with a group of other young men we were sworn in, each of us in turn taking a Bible in hand and swearing to be loyal to "the King, his heirs and successors," that King being George 6th, whose Royal Air Force officer's hat I had put on my head when he was Duke of York and I was a teenager, on the occasion when he came to Sir Andrews office in Westminster. For more than the next six years I was to see many more R.A.F., officers' hats and put a few more of them on my head, although I myself remained in the ranks throughout. We were given a uniform and kit bag but no other equipment at that time, but were issued with note books and some technical instructions and told where we were to attend for lectures on one evening each week. The lectures I attended were mostly on aerodynamics and to me were quite interesting. We were told we would have to attend at an R.A.F., station occasionally on a Saturday for drills, but it never came my way, they seemed to be content with the fact that they had got a number of men in reserve to call up if war should come and we drifted along casually until the following September in 1939 before it all happened. By August it looked obvious that Hitler was about to invade Poland, and on the last day of the month we heard on the radio that our government had ordered reserves to be called up. I telephoned the number we had been given in the event of this happening and was told, yes, I was to report to the building at the back of Air Ministry where we had been sworn in, on the next afternoon 1 September at 3. p.m. in my uniform and with my necessary kit. They included me in a group of about twenty men and gave us a flight number. That did not mean we were going by air, a "flight" was the equivalent of an army squad or platoon. We had already got our own personal R.A.F., numbers allocated when we joined up, and it shows how small the R.A.F., force was, numerically, when war came, when it is realised that they allocated a batch of numbers to the Volunteer Reserve intake that I joined of only six figures, mine was 744616. During the first year of the war men were being recruited in great numbers and by the second year the service numbers had reached eight figures and when by the third year

I qualified for my first long service badge, sometimes called a good conduct badge, an inverted stripe worn on the cuff of the tunic, some of the other airmen seeing my number, thought I was an old "sweat" and asked if I was a "regular" and were surprised when I told them I was only "in for the duration," as they were. When we assembled at the Air Ministry building we were issued with some more equipment, kept hanging about all the afternoon and by time it was dusk we were given a meal, after which we were told we were going to an R.A.F., station at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. By the time we moved off it was already dark and although war had not been officially declared the feeling among our defence chiefs was that Hitler, knowing that we were opposing him in his moves to invade Poland, would now apply his 'blitz krieg' methods to us and without warning bomb London and other cities, so when we emerged from the building into the streets we found London had been completely blacked out and car drivers were being told to turn off their head lights. We made our way to the nearest 'Underground' station and found things still well lighted below ground. The leader of our party took us to Paddington station and when we emerged from below into the station we found it quite dark and dismal with dim lights placed showing the way to the booking office and the platforms. People were moving about quietly and there seemed to be quite a large number leaving London that night. I felt I was back in the atmosphere of the first World War. I knew my wife had arrangements already made with our children's day school that in the event of war the children would be evacuated, but I found myself wishing I could be with them if bombs were going to start dropping, I had been through it all before but my children had not. However, within a day or so evacuation was ordered and my wife and children were in a safer place. Our leader showed our travel warrant at the booking office and the railway official, apparently not knowing where Brize Norton was, directed us to a train that would take us to somewhere that sounded something like it. We were put on a train to Somerset and told it was just beyond Taunton. It was quite late at night when we arrived at Taunton and as the train was going to be in the station for about twenty minutes we all went into the station buffet for food and something to drink. Our leader saw someone

in authority at Taunton Station who got busy with time tables and maps and found there was only one place known as Brize Norton which is in Oxfordshire and there was no railway station there, the nearest station was in the city of Oxford and from there we would have to go to Brize Norton by road. The next station along the line from Taunton was Norton Fitzwarren and apparently it was to there that we had been directed from Paddington. From that day to this, when travelling by train, I always enquire from more than one station employee, I try to get three and if two answers coincide I take it that it might be the correct information, but my wife can bear witness to the occasions in our many years of travelling by train, when I have enquired of three different station employees and been given three different answers. Only a few months ago, at the time of writing this, we were travelling to Aylesbury and arrived at Marylebone station to take the train we usually catch, which is the ten minutes past two in the afternoon. The train usually goes from one of two platforms. Arriving at one we found the gates closed and no train at the platform, but standing near was a man wearing a British Rail uniform holding a brief case under his arm and looking important. He was talking to an elderly couple who were enquiring about trains. The other platform used for Aylesbury trains is obscured from the first platform by a construction around which is a hoarding with advertisements. I went up to the important looking railway official and asked if he could tell me which platform the two-ten Aylesbury train would be leaving. "Ah, well sir," he said, "I can't tell you just at present, things are a bit upside-down, there's been a hold up somewhere, I'm just going back to my office now to see if I can find out, then I'll let you know." He walked past the hoarding and past the other platform which we could not see. My wife and I usually strolled in that direction thinking we would have to wait until he returned, came to the end of the hoarding, saw the platform open with a ticket collector taking tickets, and doors of the train being opened and shut as people got in. I went to the ticket collector and asked from which platform the two-ten Aylesbury train would be going, "this is it, sir," he replied, "any part of the train, may I have your tickets please?" I asked, "is it on time?"



"Oh yes sir, everything's on time," he said, "and no hold-ups?" I asked. "No hold-ups sir, everything normal," he said, in a tone that implied that they were all very efficient on British Rail. The important looking official had only just walked past this ticket collector and the Aylesbury train at the platform. We boarded the train and I sat and began thinking - my wife is used to me going off into deep thought when I get a story in my brain. I thought back to the 1st September 1939 when we were misinformed and sent all the way down to Somerset instead of to Oxfordshire, I thought of all the many times since, when we have been travelling and have been misinformed, and as I thought, it occurred to me that the British Rail staff are not the only guilty people who have misinformed the public. I thought of those early days of the war, after we had arrived at Brize Norton and found that nobody seemed to know we were coming, no preparations had been made, we had to make up beds from old bedsteads raked out from the stores on which were placed three old square hard mattresses which fitted the length of the bed, with three brown coarse blankets each. All these beds were accommodated in the Naafi canteen hall so closely together that there was hardly enough room to put our kit bags and equipment on the floor besides our beds. Other R.A.F., Volunteer reservists had arrived and were pushed in with us. Nobody seemed to know what was happening or why we were there. We arrived in the early hours of the 2nd September 1939 and the next day just before eleven in the morning, a radio set was switched on and we all sat on our beds anticipating that something was going to happen. At 11 a.m. on that 3rd September, the voice of the prime minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, came over the air announcing that war had been declared between Great Britain and Nazi Germany. It had started, now what were we going to do? Nobody knew, so what our officers and senior ranks at that station did not know they made up. All kinds of contradictory information and orders were given to us. Within an hour of the announcement by the prime minister the siren sounded an alarm, it was an air raid warning. We were ordered to put on our gas masks and make for the shelters where we sat just a little way under ground not being able to talk to each other because our faces were covered

with our masks. It was a long time before a sergeant came down and told us we could take our masks off, but stay where we were. There was no sound of any air raid, I had been through them in the first World War and knew we could hear the enemy planes approaching by the gun fire in the distance. There was nothing at all not even the sound of any of our own aircraft. It was a lovely sunny autumn day outside, so still and quiet and I wanted to be out in the sunshine. At last we were told we could leave the shelter as nothing had developed, it had all been a waste of time and from then onwards everything to me in those first days of war was a waste of time, effort and manpower. But what came to me mostly as I pondered in the train to Aylesbury, was the fact that nobody seemed to know anything so we were constantly fed with misinformation. Then, when later I was given a job which had some useful contribution to the war effort, I had to combine that job with being the station film projectionist, the important part of that work was my spreading of government propaganda by way of films from the Ministry of Information and Air Ministry instructional films, only to discover when the war was all over, that much of the information which I had disseminated among so many airmen was cooked up by government department experts who so often made things look otherwise than they really were, many things were not strictly true, and some things were deliberate misinformation, like the information which we received when I was young and which I have already recounted in the early pages of this book, concerning the horrific stories with which we were fed about what was going on in Russia after the revolution of 1917, only to discover, when I went to Riga and met people who had been in that revolution, that some of the facts had been exaggerated and that some accounts were again deliberate misinformation. But what hit me hard, as I mused over these things in the Aylesbury train, was the fact that I had spent so many years of my life as part of what must be the world's greatest propagandist organisation, having been in existence now for nearly two thousand years, from time to time modifying, altering and adding to its dogmas, yet claiming they originated from what Jesus of Nazareth taught as He walked the dusty roads of Palestine,

and I must acknowledge the fact that some of those in this world-wide organisation, known as the Christian Church, who fed me as a child with this propaganda, and those who later in my teens to early twenties so deeply influenced me with their religious beliefs, were sincerely convinced in their own minds that it was all quite literally true. They never questioned their dogmas and they sternly discouraged me from questioning them. They said it was dangerous, it was the devil trying to side-track me and lead me away from the Word of God. So my mind also was closed then to any further discovery of the Truth both for myself in my search, and also for the task to which I had committed my life, the enlightenment of my fellow humans. In the meantime I was disseminating among them ideas which were not wholly true, although I had caught on to one basic truth taught by Jesus of Nazareth which has come through out of all the mass of complex phantasmagoria heaped over what He taught, and I still hold to that basic truth today as giving meaning and purpose to my own life, and when any doubts come, I read again that wonderful story He told and about which I spent some time explaining in an earlier part of this book. By holding to that one aspect of the truth I have been able to help many people both in present living and in dispelling fear when departing this life into the unknown. As for all the other dogmas they have probably done more harm in the wrong understanding they have given of the nature of God and His relationship to mankind. In my old age I regret that I spent the years of my younger life in propagating those dogmas. However, the second World War brought the beginning of my discovery of how false and misleading those dogmas and tenets were. It was the first World War that gave me the chance to escape from my dreary boyhood environment and brought me into contact with those who directed me along the narrow and restrictive path laid down in past ages by the established Christian Church, it was the second World War which took me from that restricted path and opened to me other paths that I determined to explore in my search for some meaning and purpose to this life and my insatiable desire to know for myself and then to make known, the Truth.

Within two or three days of war being declared orders came from Headquarters at Brize Norton that we were to have the usual medical injections given to recruits joining the services, and then be accommodated in a block of dormitories not long built. Everything was more comfortable there, good beds, plenty of space and modern ablutions and showers at the end of each dormitory. But what were our duties to be ? Nobody knew, there were no instructions from Air Ministry, the top people there were concerned with getting what aircraft we had in flying condition and airmen trained to be skilful enough to use those aircraft as weapons against the German airmen. The Germans had a formidable airforce, we had hardly anything in comparison. The Brize Norton station was part of Flying Training Command, so all the effort was concentrated on the trainee pilots. The training aircraft were Harvards and as the standard of both the aircraft and the training in those days was nothing in comparison with the standard today, there were some crashes even in the short period I was at Brize Norton, with both pupil and instructor injured and in one case both killed. However, we, in the R.A.F., Volunteer Reserve, were not to be trained as air crew we were ground staff, so what was our training to be? Still nobody seemed to know, so each morning after breakfast we were marched to a hanger where we had to wait until we were told what to do, but nobody told us. It was a 'hanger' to us alright for all we did was to hang about all the morning, then have a hour's break while we went for a good meal, then return and hang about again until 4.30 p.m., when we finished for the day and could do as we liked. After a few days like this a sergeant decided he would teach us how to splice ropes and wire cables, for some of the training aircraft then, other than the Harvards, were still types where the wings were braced with wire cables. The sergeant got some marline-spikes from the stores and some odd lengths of rope and wire stranded cable and showed us what to do. Within a couple of days we could splice quite satisfactory so that was finished and we were back again to just hanging about. That year

when the second World War was declared, it was a very nice warm sunny autumn, but, of course, by the end of September the days were getting shorter and the evenings cooler and preparations were made for the heating of the buildings. The offices, lecture halls and other larger places were centrally heated, but by the older type of hot water circulating through pipes being heated by a coal burning boiler. Each large building had its own boiler and the offices had open coal fires. The war had only just started so there was a plentiful supply of fuel and in this R.A.F., station at Brize Norton they had their own coal yard with a large heap of coal. However, to convey it to the offices and barrack blocks and other buildings it had to be shovelled into sacks and taken around in a lorry. The airmen who usually did that kind of work were the general duties men and in peace time they also employed civilians for that work. The war was now on and civilians were either joining the armed services or leaving for other work, the uniformed general duties men were now given these menial tasks. Those of us in the Volunteer Reserve who had been posted to Brize Norton had not yet been placed in any trade group for we had not yet been trained for any R.A.F., trade. So we had to start off in the lowest basic trade of General Duties and we were signified by the letters G.D. We also had to start at the lowest rank until we passed a trade test and the lowest rank was Aircraft hand, which was signified as A.C.H., so on our official papers and pay book, showing our trade and rank was stamped ACH/GD. How fortunate for our superior officers therefore, at a time when they were losing their civilian employees, to have such a lot of ACH/GD's sent to the camp who could be shovellers and heavers and deliverers of coal around the camp. We were a motley crowd, but most of us had been office workers, and there were plumbers and carpenters and salesmen, shop assistants, and in my flight two electricians and a motor mechanic as well as others who could do useful work. Of course, our sergeant in charge rightly argued that as none of us had yet passed an R.A.F., trade test and been remustered to a trade, they could use us for what they liked. But nobody did a damned thing about giving

any of us a chance to take training for any trade, there was a procedure already laid down for any airman to apply for entry into one of several trades open to him, but because the war had started things seemed to be disorganised and nobody appeared to know what was going to happen next. We carried on our coal delivering for two or three weeks, when it was decided all the sections were well stocked up. By that time all the autumn leaves were falling and it was ordered that we should keep the paths and roadways clear by sweeping them up. So from being coal heavers we were then to become road sweepers. I was glad of the change for although I was quite wiry I found I could only just heave a half hundred-weight sack of coal up on to my shoulders and after being at it a few hours each day it was getting quite tiring. However, sweeping up leaves and dumping them, although we took our time over the job, got very boring and there were constant moans among us, and men saying in very forceful language that it was a waste of ability and time, and one after another said they could be of much more value to the war effort in their civilian jobs. So when another week or so later nothing had been done to direct the ability of us men into more useful work for the war effort and still nobody seemed to know what was going to happen, I decided I would do something about it myself. I did not tell any of my fellow airmen what I was doing I did not want any of them to know. I decided I would write to my former boss, Sir Andrew Duncan. Now at that time he was Chairman of the Executive Committee of the British Iron and Steel Federation and I knew that because of the great importance of steel in the supply of armaments for the war, the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain and some of his ministers were already using Sir Andrew in an advisory capacity. Within a few months from that time, in May, 1940, Winston Churchill was invited to head a war time coalition government and beginning with his "war Cabinet of five" he soon after made other appointments. Sir Andrew Duncan was elected under the National government as M.P., for the City of London, and Winston Churchill appointed him both as President of the Board of Trade and Minister of Supply, this second post he held for the whole of the war.

I knew his office was at Steel House in Westminster for I had kept in touch occasionally with his wonderful secretary, Miss Michie, who was largely responsible for the efficient running of everything at Steel House. However, I did not want any other person to handle the letter I was sending to him so I addressed it to his home in Beckenham, Kent. When, as a teenager to my early twenties I used to visit his home to see Lady Duncan, in the course of my personal duties for Sir Andrew, their home was at Streatham. It was during my time with the London City Mission that they moved to Beckenham. I told Sir Andrew everything that had happened since we had been called up as reservists, described the men I was with and what their jobs were in civilian life, and how the abilities of none of us were being used nor were we given the chance of training for more suitable work. By this time we had been at Brize Norton over two months and there did not seem to be any change coming. Within three to four days I had a reply from Sir Andrew, written in his own handwriting from his home, a letter which for some years after the war I kept and prized, but now in my old age I very much regret was lost when in the nineteen-fifties my first marriage broke up and my home was divided, that letter, along with a couple of other valuable papers went missing and I never recovered them. I can still remember how he began his letter, "Dear John, I am very sorry to learn of your unfortunate circumstances in the R.A.F., and of conditions as you describe them in your letter ...." Then although I cannot remember his actual words, he went on to say that he had seen the Minister for Air personally and had given him my letter, then finished his letter by saying that I and my fellow airmen would, in a very short while, find things change for the better. Well, I can only say that with my many years of personal experience of civil service departments as well as the red tape of the various offices of the Church establishment, I have never before nor since seen things move so fast in officialdom as I did on that occasion in the early stages of the second World War. Within a few days of the receiving of that letter from Sir Andrew

a flight sergeant came to us and said a signal had come through from Air Ministry to direct that we were all to be posted to St. Athan in South Wales. He could not give us any details but thought it would be so that we could be trained, he knew St. Athan was a technical training station. We were all given a weekend pass to go home and a travel warrant from London to St. Athan. All of us in our flight were from London. We arrived at St. Athan half way through November, 1939. At first it seemed they too at that training station were not quite ready for us, for after formalities on our first day there we were back to just hanging about again for two or three days with nothing to do. Then we were started on a basic course of technical training, irrespective of the various trades we were ultimately to take. It was no doubt just to keep us from being bored until they got going on the purpose for which Air Ministry had directed us there. Then the morning came when we were told not to go to our benches in the training building but to line up outside the headquarters office buildings. An officer came and explained to us what we had to do. Two lines of us in single file were to move slowly into the office and inside we would be directed individually to one of four or five desks at which sat either an officer or N.C.O., with a pile of cards one of which would be filled in for each of us. After the name and number of each airman was entered on the card we would be asked what work we were doing in civilian life and we would be shown by the interrogator a list of trades in the R.A.F., one of which we could choose, and those of us considered suitable for those trades would be sent to one of various training camps throughout Great Britain for training. When the officer addressing us had finished his explanation I knew this was the first move in that which Sir Andrew Duncan, in his letter to me, said would happen. I said nothing to the chaps with whom I lined up, I did not want them to think I was "shooting a line," to use an R.A.F., wartime expression. After all, it was never my way to boast that I knew people in high places, I am disclosing these things now only in my old age to show all that happened along the way of my journey through life. I have always been on the lowest stratum of society



but it has been my lot in life to work with privileged people. When I was with the London City Mission we were considered to be the lowest rank of the pastoral order, now, as just an "erk" in the Royal Air Force, I was among those considered to be the lowest form of life among the R.A.F., species. Why should I open my mouth and make myself look different? I preferred to get on with the good work quietly and say nothing. We were lined up in alphabetical order, so it did not take too far through the morning before it came to my turn. The interviewing officer asked me what I was in civilian life and I said I was a London City Missionary. He looked at me for a few seconds then asked, "well, what are you doing in the Royal Air Force?" I replied that I wanted to do my bit towards defending my country in wartime, and of the three armed services I preferred the Air Force. He said I ought to be in the Chaplains' Branch. I told him I was not fully ordained and that I had discussed the matter with a chaplain at Brize Norton, who told me there was a course on the Air Ministry list for suitable men from the ranks and a successful candidate who passed the theological exams would be ordained by a bishop of the Church of England and given the rank of chaplain in the Royal Air Force. But when that chaplain enquired on my behalf he was told that while that was a possibility in peace time, the course had now been suspended because of the outbreak of war. The interviewing officer asked me a few more questions then said if I would sit where I was for a moment he would go and make some enquiries. When he came back he told me they were not sure at the moment what to do with me, but would I like, in the meantime, to work in that office interviewing the new men coming in as he had interviewed me? I was only too glad of the chance of something interesting to do and at once said yes. It was all simple and straightforward, a card to be filled in for each man, name, number, age, home address, next of kin, then what work they did in civilian life and had they a preference for a trade in the R.A.F., and I wrote it all down in the spaces provided on each card. However, simple as it was I soon had cause for embarrassment, young men coming up to my desk thought I must have some authority and called me "sir" and in reply to my questions

kept saying "yes sir" or "no sir" all through the interview. I tried to ease the situation by smiling at each young chap as he came to me and in a relaxed manner said "take a seat please," pointing to the chair near the desk. Now no officer or N.C.O., in the regular R.A.F., at that time ever said "please." They just barked an order at you and you responded by jumping to the command. As the war progressed and more and more civilians came in for war service a different atmosphere grew and we found things becoming much more civilised. But those of us who were in at the very early stage, were thrown in with the regulars, some of whom joined in peace time because they could not even get a job in civilian life, and even among the few I got to know personally there were some who could neither read nor write. As the R.A.F., was suddenly flooded with new man power the regulars found themselves being made up to corporals and sergeants very quickly and had to drill and order us about. How they delighted in the authority the stripes on their arms gave them and how they bawled and insulted and swore at us, in spite of the fact that it was laid down in King's regulations that no officer or N.C.O., was allowed to use bad language against an airman. However as I have said, as the war progressed that attitude gradually changed, especially after the bombing became more intense throughout the country and there were many casualties, the conflict drew people closer to each other, and after two to three years of the war there was an entirely different atmosphere among people everywhere and certainly in the R.A.F., what was politely referred to as "bull" had gone, we were all concerned with survival and with defending the freedom of our country and to that end we were more ready to help each other. The interviewing and listing of the men in the intake of which I was part, took only a few days and we were put back on the technical training course again to keep us interested. It suited me, we had metal handwork to do, filing, hack-sawing, tapping threads etc., all to create a model which served no purpose in itself other than to teach us how to do each process correctly. I had used such tools frequently in the musical instrument trade I had learned, firstly from my father and later from others skilled in various aspects of the trade. We were well into December 1939 before our superiors began to tell

various groups of us where they were going to be sent for training, but announced to all of us the very welcome news that we were all to be given Christmas leave first, then would proceed to our training stations after the leave. Of course, at that time the war had not developed into anything threatening as far as this country was concerned, we were, in that period, referred to in the records as the "phony war." While most of the men in my group knew what trades they were taking, for some days I did not know what was to happen to me. Then one morning a sergeant came to me and said I was to report to a certain officer at headquarters. He told me they were posting me to R.A.F., Records at Ruislip in Middlesex with the recommendation that I should be placed with the Chaplains on the station. He explained that I would only be an orderly to any chaplain and I would have to remain in the general duties branch, which meant that at any time I could be called upon to carry out any other task given to general duties men if so required. They, of course, were mostly menial tasks such as the coal heaving and road sweeping I had done at Brize Norton, but, the officer explained, the Commanding Officer of any station could give a general duties man any other job he considered he was suitable for, such as clerical work, if he thought it necessary, they were recommending to the Commanding Officer at Ruislip that I should be placed with the chaplain, but it was for that C.O., to decide what other duties I should have. So, after my Christmas leave I reported to the guard room at Records, Ruislip and was sent to the station Warrant Officer. He is the equivalent in the R.A.F., of the Sergeant-major in the army. This chap, however, was not the typical sergeant-major of the old order, he was a reasonable man, married with a family, who had bought a house near to Ruislip and was about to retire from the service, when the war came, and had to remain in for the duration of the war. He had a paper on his desk to say I would be arriving, asked me a few questions about my civilian work, then where was my home address, told me if I lived within a reasonable distance from the camp I could be billeted out as they were getting short of sleeping accommodation and most of the married men on the permanent staff were living out of camp. I told him

I would have no difficulty in travelling to and from the camp as there was a frequent service on the Piccadilly Line between Ruislip and Hammersmith and there was other transport from there to Roehampton where I lived. When, during the period of the 'phony war' no attacks had been made on London, many families returned home for the first Christmas of the war and did not return to evacuation again. My wife and family were back home again and remained home until the air raids on our part of London towards the end of the following summer in 1940. Then my family evacuated to a friend of ours at Church Oakley near Basingstoke and for a while I remained alone at our home, sleeping in a corrugated iron shelter in the garden until the weather got too cold and damp, so then built myself a reinforced nook under the stairs in the house and slept there in the same way as I had sheltered from the air raids as a child in the first World War. But the raids became more intense and I was losing my sleep where I lived. For a period I was on duty in the camp one night in four, it was the only other duty I was given for a time additional to my duties as chaplain's orderly, it was a twenty-four hour period of guard duty starting at 8.o.c. in the morning through the day and night to the following morning. Each of us did two hours guard and four hours rest alternately through the twenty-four hours. This was when the Nazis began to attack Great Britain by air. The belief was that they were going to drop troops by parachute, we had to watch for them dropping in the fields around our camp or along the railway along one side of us. We were lined up outside the guard room, given a rifle each - an old type .303 - shown how to slope arms and order arms and one or two other movements, then given an empty cartridge clip and shown how to fix it, put through the movements of operating the bolt to push one of the bullets "up the spout" as the term was for fixing a cartridge in the barrel ready for firing. When the sergeant thought we knew what we were doing he issued each of us with fifty rounds of ammunition in a cartridge carrier which we strapped over our shoulders and around the waist. On a command we took out from a pocket on the carrier one clip of five cartridges and clipped it into the breach of the rifle. On another command we moved the bolt and shoved one bullet up the spout.

The next command came, "slope arms !" and up went our rifles to the position and at the same time there was an ear splitting bang to the right of me along the line and something whistled up into the air. For a moment the drill sergeant was shocked into silence, but the next second he looked towards where he heard the bang and asked "who was that man ?" and all eyes in the ranks turned in the direction of one chap who looked as though he was trying to sink into the ground. He did manage to say "sorry sergeant, I caught my finger on the trigger." The sergeant recovered from the shock and in his most forceful, explicit, and vicious drill sergeant's language, verbally tore the guts out of that poor airman. Of course, it was dangerous, someone could have been killed and although most of us were amused, it was not funny, but I was getting a further lesson on how dangerous it is to put the teaching of others into the hands of those who are not properly taught themselves. I had begun to learn that in the Church before the war, I was now seeing it in the armed services in the early days before the war had taught them efficiency. Take my own case as an example. This guard duty was not given to us until the war had hotted up in the summer of 1940, by then I had been in the camp for six or seven months of the 'phony war' and was already known to many of the personnel on the station. The lads with whom I shared this guard duty knew that I had come down to the guard room from the sacred precincts of the station church. The lads looked upon that building in awe, as people brought up in the superstitions about God usually do. They also thought about me as being part of the holy atmosphere up there with the chaplain. Nobody thought of asking me if I had ever handled a rifle before, they just handed me one along with the other airmen and gave us about an hour's instruction on what to do, then gave us fifty rounds of ammunition each and put us on guard. I had never discussed with anyone since joining the R.A.F., the matter of using arms, not even the chaplain, so nobody knew that I had indeed handled a rifle before, I kept that as a surprise for later. In fact it was after they had a couple more accidents with unskilled men firing their rifles inadvertently, in one case where the bullet went up through the ceiling into the room above and

narrowly missed a sergeant sitting at his desk, that the Commanding Officer of our station ordered that we should be given proper instruction and firing practice on a range. We had only an indoor range at our station. We were an administration unit and most of our personnel were clerks, except the gunners on the gun pits for the defence of the camp and ourselves as general duties airmen. But right near to us was the Northolt Fighter Command station with some of the finest fighter squadrons of the war, including a Polish squadron with dedicated young men determined to free their country from German occupation, they were very skilful and courageous airmen who were responsible for the shooting down of many German aircraft during the war. On one side of our station was a railway which separated us from the perimeter of the Northolt air field, but there was no way over the railway, we had to go by transport a long way round by road to the main entrance when we were required to go to that station. Arrangements were made that we should use the outdoor firing range at Northolt and each time we went we were conveyed by a shaky old lorry, all of us standing up trying to hang on to the sides of the lorry or each other. I thought of those German troops sitting upright like toy soldiers in rows in their troop carriers, we were very primitive by comparison in those early days of the second World War. My first time over there gave me the greatest satisfaction and much quiet amusement in my own mind. I had very keen hearing in those days before bomb blast later in the war impaired one of them, and I could hear the sly innuendos and half whispered jokes passing between the sergeant in charge and some of the other airmen about the holy Joe from the station church who was going to fire a rifle, they had better clear away from the range until he had finished - never knew where the bullets might fly ! I silently took my part in the comedy by playing the innocent abroad. The sergeant lined us up by the range and put me on the end to be the last to fire. Then to me he said "now listen to what I tell each man and watch what he does." "Okay sergeant" was all I replied to every remark he made to me. We had to fire one clip each of five bullets and as far as I can remember although the other men had some

shots on the target, none of them hit the bull. After each man had fired the sergeant walked with him up to the target to see his result and place another target for the next man. Then it came to me and the sergeant told me to get down to the lying position like the others had done, then said, "now for God's sake keep your rifle pointing that end, we don't want anybody killed." "Okay sergeant." Then he said, "now you see that square of paper with the target on it, well try at least to get some marks on the white paper and I'll think you've done well." "Okay sergeant." Now my eyesight was also excellent in those days, I could see quite clearly every ring on that target with the bull in the centre standing out, inviting me, "come on hit me !" Then I remembered what my Dad had shown me when, as a small boy, he taught me to shoot. He told me always to take my first shot marking at six o'clock on the bull, see where it goes then position my further shots in relation to the first one. I pulled the butt of my rifle firmly into my right shoulder, settled myself nice and comfy, then lined up at six o'clock on the bull, squeezed the trigger and when the rifle fired I was surprised to find it did not kick as much as I had prepared for. The only bullets I had ever fired before were point two-twos, this was my first .303. I was also delighted when I saw the mark on the target, right in at five o'clock on the bull, I had only to adjust very slightly to the left and up. I saw my next shot clip the first one further in the bull and decided to stay in that position, and each of my five after that all clustered around each other. But the sergeant could not see them, either his eyes were not as good as mine or he was looking for my shots where he thought they might go, on the white paper around the target, or even on the large board on which the targets were fixed, or he may have been looking for whisps of dust from the sandhill behind the target board at the end of the range. But it was obvious to me he had not thought of anything going in the bull when he said to me in his authoritative manner, "well, let's go and see if you've hit anything," and I had to walk with him up to the target. Coming up to it he was just about to say something when he stopped short, jerked his head and blinked, then looked again and in his normal drill sergeant's language said, "bugger me ! what's this ?" Then

looking puzzled, he asked me "have you ever handled a rifle before?" That was a question they should have asked all of us before they first handed us a gun and fifty rounds of ammunition. I replied, "Oh yes, sergeant, my father was a musketry instructor in the army during the first World War and he taught me when I was a little boy." In those days <sup>musketry</sup> was the military term for all rifle instruction. However, my father was qualified in that skill before the <sup>First World</sup> War and the circumstances that led to his teaching me were these. At about the time the church officials discovered my father was good at entertaining, they also discovered he had been in the army for some years and was fully trained. Now at this time there was some disquiet among some of our politicians and military leaders in Great Britain at what they observed going on in Germany, the arrogant ambitions of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the threatening noises he was making in Europe, they considered we should be better prepared militarily to meet any threat. Territorial units were organised throughout the country for peace time training of civilians. There were one or two military minded gentlemen who had influence at our church who persuaded the vicar that there should be a boys cadet company formed which, while it would be called The Boys Brigade, would be nothing to do with the Church Lads Brigade movement. It was to be quite openly and unashamedly a military organisation. There was an ex-army officer on the reserve who lived in the better class area near West Ham Park in those days, he was made Captain and formed our new company under his command. When he knew my father was an ex-soldier, asked him to be an officer in the brigade and, as my father had no cash, arranged with the vicar for him to be loaned his uniform and equipment free of any cost in return for his services. As there were two of his sons old enough to join, lent us our uniforms as well, I was eleven years old, my brother twelve and a half. Our company was affiliated to the Sixth Essex Territorials. For our drills and practice on week nights and weekends we had dummy rifles but we were allowed to use the territorials firing range for the real thing. We were formed early in 1913 and for our first summer camp were accommodated in an army redoubt near Dymchurch in Kent, we were thrilled to be in a fort on the sea shore.



The next year, 1914, as I have already recorded earlier, we were taken to the territorial camp at Whitstable, which was a hitted camp but were only there a few days when, on the 4th August the first World War was declared and a couple of days later we were told the War Office needed the camp to train soldiers and we had to return home with only a short holiday that year. Almost immediately our Captain who had formed the brigade, was recalled by the army for war service and not long after that, when Lord Kitchener made his famous appeal, my father rejoined the army and was made a sergeant musketry instructor, and all the other things happened which I have already recounted in the early part of this book. Other things happened at the same time, our Vicar left and another Vicar came in his place, who immediately disbanded what was left of our Boys Brigade and formed a troupe of Boy Scouts. Our Brigade uniforms were handed back and I immediately obtained another uniform by joining the Scouts, my brother did not bother, but I continued in the Scouts until I got my first job as a Scout messenger in the government department in London. Of course, I could not explain all this to the sergeant in charge of our firing party, I just said my father had been a musketry instructor and had taught me. Anyway, as the sergeant walked away with my target in his hand he seemed to be assured that the Holy Joe had not invoked the miraculous by a prayer, but that I had been taught the earthly, human way, and I had learned to shoot straight. The sergeant wrote our names and numbers on the backs of our targets and took them to our camp. The next morning the 'phone rang in the Chaplain's office where I had already established myself as being in charge - I'll explain this shortly - and when I answered it was told the Station Warrant Officer wanted to see me. In his office I saw my target on his desk. He talked with me about my shooting, then said that as a means of improving the standard they were introducing inter-trades and later inter-camp competitions. As I was one of the General Duties section would I be in charge of that team? We would use our indoor range for our own camp competitions and later challenge other camps in our area. Of course, I agreed at once. Now, the General Duties branch did not have trade tests like other trades, our promotions came

with length of service and good conduct. We all start at the rank of ACH/2, which stands for Aircraftsman second class and the first promotion is to first class ACH/1. I had reached my first year in the R.A.F., since being called up at end of August 1939, and had just had my promotion to first class. There was now only one more promotion I wanted if I were to stay in the job into which I had manoeuvred myself. As far as headquarters were concerned I was Chaplain's orderly, but tagged on to that I had got myself quite officially another job which was really a trade but which I did not see listed in Air Ministry Instructions. The Chaplain who was already there when I was posted to Ruislip, had the job added to his duties. It was that of film projectionist. He told me he was given a three day course on the projector, on how all the equipment worked and how to repair and splice films. He had been a padre for four or five years in peace time and when he was posted to Ruislip he was asked to include the occasional duty of showing instructional films to apprentice airmen who were 16 to 18 years old. From that it grew to showing entertainment films at weekends as well. Because of the war situation and the increased movement of personnel that Chaplain knew he was soon to be posted overseas. He considered it would save time if he showed me exactly what he had been taught on his three days course and I could take over the job as projectionist. Just at the time when the Chaplain was about to leave and did not know when a new Chaplain would be coming, the Ministry of Information published some new films on not allowing classified information to leak to enemy agents. They were very interesting and instructive and showed what service personnel must never discuss with anyone, not even one's closest friends. Every station which possessed a film projector had instructions from Air Ministry to show these films and were told how to obtain them from the Imperial Institute at South Kensington, London. All this the Chaplain turned over to me. Then a new development only a few days before the Chaplain departed. The United States of America did not come into the second World War until after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and I did not see U.S., troops in England until well into 1942.

But from the time we in Great Britain went to war with the Nazis there were many people in the U.S., who were concerned to give us some help. Particularly after Dunkirk and later the Battle of Britain, many Americans admired the bravery of our young airmen who defended our land against such great odds. Among those who wanted to give practical help were groups of ladies who got together to knit woollen goods in our R.A.F., colour of grey-blue. They were beautifully knitted and of far better quality than our own. Indeed, the first thing I noticed when eventually the American troops arrived, was the lovely superior quality of their uniforms in comparison with ours, although ours were hard wearing materials, and all their equipment was far superior to ours. The knitted goods the ladies called 'comforts.' At R.A.F. Records we were the receiving station for large sacks of these 'comforts,' and each time they arrived two sacks were allocated to our own station Chaplain. The first sacks arrived just as this Chaplain was preparing to leave. Going through the articles and admiring the lovely pullovers, socks, gloves, Balacclavas, scarves etc., he turned to me and said, "I'll have to leave all these with you Gilly, you know the men who deserve them most." By then I was known to everyone on the permanent staff of that station as "Gilly;" they gave me a nickname which has followed me ever since. When, after the war I was appointed by the Methodist Church Youth Department to organise youth clubs in new areas around London, I was known to scores of young people as Gilly, and even when I became an ordained minister in the church the name still followed me. So, when I first met my lovely second wife it was the only name by which she knew me and in all the very happy thirty-five years we have been together since, she has preferred to use the nickname which she first heard and used. Now in my old age and retirement in our little country town in Sussex, after a number of years as a peripatetic music teacher in two schools, and also among many adults in the Adult Education Centre here, I cannot go far without somebody greeting me with "Hello Gilly." So I can never forget those first three years of the second World War in the R.A.F., when with the start given to me by that Chaplain and my seeing how I could manoeuvre things within the system, I became what probably no other

airman has ever been, virtually a free lance serviceman in the ranks. Officially I was in the General Duties branch. What duties did that mean? Anything of a menial nature, scrubbing and polishing floors, washing down the ablutions, cleaning the offices, road sweeping, coal heaving, and disposing of waste. All these chores I had been given for several weeks, until that paper was sent to the C.O., of Ruislip, recommending that I should be placed with the Chaplain. They could not order it, but only recommend it, for there was nothing in the "Book" for a man like me. Now, I had that book at my command, for there was a copy of it on my desk in the Chaplain's office, it was entitled "King's Regulations and Air Ministry Instructions." It was the Air Force Bible, and as I had formerly studied the Bible of the Church and read it daily, so now I was taking my daily readings from the Air Force Bible, I wanted to know every chapter and verse of it. Of course, it was quite clear that I could have remustered to another trade to which I felt I was more suited and I already had in mind what I would <sup>do</sup> if compelled to change my trade. However, I could see a chance if I stayed at Ruislip, of working within the system and doing work very similar to my civilian work in which I had been engaged for the past twelve years in the London City Mission, and while I could not now, because of the war, take the Chaplain's course and become a Chaplain, I could do, to all intents and purposes, the same kind of work in the ranks, after all it was the same as I had been in the City Mission, just one from the ranks. So far I had been given by the first Chaplain the job of film projectionist, it was not officially entered on my documents, I was the only one after the chaplain who could operate the projector, everybody took it for granted that Gilly organised their film entertainments. Now I was also the one in charge of the knitted 'comforts' from America and made sure the right people got those. For instance, there was the R.A.F., Police sergeant in charge of the guard room, he knew I lived out of camp and knew what time I came in the morning. He usually strutted about in the guard room eyeing up and down the chaps who booked in or out, to see if their buttons were done up properly or if they needed a haircut. I never booked in or out, I walked in or out of the main gate whenever I wanted. So, if I saw the sergeant waiting I knew some more comforts had arrived

and he was waiting to see me, and as I passed him he would lower his voice and say, "more comforts Gilly - don't forget - nice pair of socks, eh?" He seemed to be heavy on socks, I once gave him a good pullover but he seemed more grateful for the socks I gave with it. I always gave priority to the gunners in the gun pits and the R.A.F., Police on the gates and of course the General Duties men who had the unpleasant jobs to do outside. After we had been taken off twenty-four hour guards periodically, the Police took over duty and later when the R.A.F., Regiment was formed a unit of them were stationed with us and it was for them to guard the camp. The only additional duty we had then, that kept me on duty one night in every four, was fire picket, and when the sergeant allocated each of us the part of the camp we had to watch if there was an air raid, when he came to me I just said, "Oh, I'm at the station Church serg." "Oh, are you, what about sleeping?" he asked. When those of us who were billeted out of camp had a night's duty in camp there were a few beds in odd places where chaps had to fire watch, grubby blankets that anyone used. But when he asked me about sleeping and I replied "Oh, I've got my bed at the Church, I sleep up there," he exclaimed in amazement "do you?" He could hardly believe anyone would have the nerve to sleep in the church, such was the superstitious fear these chaps had of churches and things religious. Nobody ever questioned me about these things, I just told them what I did and they took it that these must be my official duties. They were really the Chaplain's, but there was no Chaplain there for a few weeks so I allocated the positions to myself. I decided when I saw that I could work within the system that I would play the part of the old chinaman in the story at the beginning of this book. Like him I would look the part and act the part and they would think I was the part, and even when a succession of short stay Chaplains were brought in, they came straight from 'civvy street' and knew absolutely nothing of service procedure and routine, while I knew it all within a short time of my study of the R.A.F., Bible, so it was my job to guide, advise and inform these rookie Chaplains until they were posted each in turn to other stations.

They were a mixed variety, mostly Church of England, but one Methodist who, to me, was the best of them all and most helpful. However, before they began to come in, during the weeks while I was there without a Chaplain, I got the promotion I wanted and I knew it had come quicker than was the usual procedure because of my being put in charge of the shooting team. As I have said when I had to stay in the camp every third or fourth night I slept in the Church, and this was how I got my bed. The Church building adjoined the sick quarters and medical rooms. A covered corridor ran from a door near the chancel into the sick quarters between the kitchen and the laundry. My oppos with whom I had most rapport were the medical orderlies, one in particular I got on well with was Don Levine, a Jewish chap whose business in peace time was in the part of the Eastend of London where I had lived and worked. He was a ladies underwear representative and we sometimes pulled his leg with the old well worn quip that he "travelled in ladies underwear." But the chap at the sick quarters I had first met was in my own branch, a General Duties airman. He was Robbie, which was his nick name for Roberts. He was placed with the medicals in the same way as I was supposed to be with the Chaplain, to do the menial work. My job according to the system was to clean and polish the church floor and furniture, polish the brasses, clean the windows, run errands for the Chaplain and do anything else he required. Well my first Chaplain required me to do things which he considered were more in keeping with what I had been doing in civilian life. He found I could type, so he gave me his typing to do in his office, and he added the other tasks which I have described and left me to manoeuvre things so that they became recognised as my official work. But then that Chaplain was having a conflict with bureaucracy, and found that I too had been humbugged about by autocrats among the bureaucrats. His autocrats were legal people at Air Ministry who were arguing that he was not on duty when he had his accident, whereas the Chaplain knew that he was indeed on duty all day long on that Sunday. He had taken a morning service in the camp at St. Athan, then gone out to

take another service for ~~personnel~~ personnel and their families who lived outside the camp, the service ~~held~~ held at a civilian church. He took with him his portable communion set. There was no transport provided, he had to walk along a country road, and was on his way back to camp after the service, keeping near to the hedgerow on the side of the road, when a motorist, driving without due care and attention, knocked him down and very badly damaged his leg. After many weeks in hospital he was left with <sup>a</sup>limp for the rest of his life. There were some payments he claimed should have been paid by Air Ministry but they denied liability because they claimed he was not in the camp on duty. He was still pursuing the case when he left Ruislip and I never knew how it ended. However, he certainly encouraged me not to be pushed around by bureaucrats or those who exploited their authority, if I found a useful work under the Chaplain which was in keeping with my calling in life and was of benefit to the men in the ranks, then just get on with it quietly and keep out of the way of those whose satisfaction was in ordering others about. So I made the station Church my centre, used the office as my study, for I occupied that much more than any Chaplain ever did, used the same building for showing instructional films and religious films, and the Naafi canteen for entertainment films, and on the nights when I had to be on duty I slept in the Church as well. Now, if I had gone to the stores and asked to sign for a camp bed, mattresses and blankets, there might have been an officious sergeant present who would bawl "what the hell do you want to sleep in the Church for, there are a couple of spare beds in hut number three?" But when I was in the sick quarters kitchen having a cup of tea or a meal with my oppos~~ite~~ - those of us who lived out and were paid a subsistence allowance, were permitted to eat with the other men when any duty kept us in the camp - I noticed a folded camp bed in a store cupboard, asked my pals about it, they said I could take it, if it was ever asked for they knew where it was, and with it they gave me clean mattresses that went with the camp bed, a pillow, and from their well stocked linen cupboard clean blankets and something no airman in the ranks was issued with, white linen sheets and pillow slip. They were for sick patients but the orderlies

supplied themselves with sheets for their own beds as well. They treated me as one of themselves and I kept those sheets and pillow slip for the remainder of my time in the R.A.F., over five years from the time I acquired them, getting them laundered sometimes at home and sometimes at a laundry, and I left them at another sick quarters when I was demobilised at the end of the war. Now I usually made my bed down in front of the altar because that position was conveniently near an open fire which I kept stoked up hot when I had to be there at night. The long narrow brick building was originally used for some other purpose but had been converted and consecrated as a Church which was heated by only two open fires one at each end. When I was there alone I only needed one.

The windows were permanently blacked out on account of the air raids, but there was adequate electric lighting inside which was always on both day and night when anything was on in the evening. The only time they were switched off was when nothing was being held there or when I went to sleep on my nights there. I had sufficient light with the glow of the fire which I kept stoked up all night. Now one night I was making my bed about 10.30.p.m. had only one single light on and the glow of the fire. I heard the door open at the sick quarters end of the corridor and someone came down to the door into the Church, turned the handle and slowly opened the door a little bit. Two very nervous eyes peered through the gap. It was Robbie, looking very scared at what he saw. "Hello Robbie," I said, and he opened the door a bit more and moved nearer but seemed afraid to come in. Trying to assure him I said, "come in Robbie, come in," and he moved slowly into the Church looking very apprehensively around, at the altar, at my bed, at the glowing fire, "Oo Gilly," he said in a hushed whisper, "you don't sleep here, do you ?" "Sure I do," I said. "What, in this Church ?" he asked. "Of course, it's quite cosy," I said. "Oo Gilly," he shivered, "I couldn't sleep in a Church." "But Robbie," said I, "a Church is my life, I am as much at home in a Church as anywhere else, in fact I can sleep almost anywhere." He thought I slept in the office by the entrance to the church, and I had in the summer weather, but it was a bit



cooler at nights now and I liked my fire, besides there was more room in the Church and I had been so long with the Church organisation that I had no superstitious fears about buildings which had all been created by human beings. The consecration of the building by the Bishop was just a symbolic mythical act which had no effect upon the bricks and mortar or fabrics of the building. I had already formed the same view of things when conducting burial services in civilian life. My folk were from my Mission chapel, they were not Church of England so could not be buried in consecrated ground. On more than one occasion when I have been reading the committal service over the body being lowered into the grave, I have looked at the pile of earth by the side and only a few feet away has been another pile of earth on consecrated soil ready for a burial on that side. The earth on my unconsecrated side looked the same as that on the other side, the grass was the same, the flowers and shrubs no different, but because the Bishop had pronounced the other side to be consecrated he gave the view that God was sitting up above the clouds somewhere, looking down, and He could see His line of demarcation between what was His bit of holy ground and that which was not. This primitive dogma still persisting after nearly two thousand years since Jesus of Nazareth had reproached His own religious hierarchy for their false views of God and chose to relate Himself rather with the outcasts and underprivileged to whom he said, "see the grass of the earth, observe the little wildflower of the field, behold the birds of the air," it is all God's He told them, and "the Kingdom of God is here, it is among you, it is within you." If Robbie did but know there was no more to fear in the station Church as in the sick quarters. If there was anything to fear at all, it would be the superstitions still being perpetuated by the Church. Robbie had come into me full of enthusiasm to tell me some good news, but his fear had knocked the joy out of it all. When he got around to why he had come he asked if I had seen "orders" that had been posted up that afternoon. I told him no, I had not been to that end of the camp since I had come in. "Promotions," he said, "You've got your props and so have I." That meant we could now wear a propeller badge on both

arms, which signified that we were L.A.C's, which meant Leading Aircraftsmen. It was the only promotion I wanted because it gave me enough authority to be in charge of a small group of airmen, such as the shooting team, but assured I could stay where I was in the Chaplain's branch. The compliment laid down for a station like ours permitted the Chaplain to have an orderly from among the General duties aircrafthands, but there was no place for a corporal on that job, and the next promotion after L.A.C., was corporal, which would have meant for me, not only being taken from the Chaplain but also being posted to another station. Now, one of the first things I had done after arriving at Ruislip and being given a living out pass, was to ask for an interview with the Administration Officer, Squadron Leader Smith. I explained to him that on account of the manpower shortage because of the war, it had not been possible to appoint anyone in my place at my Chapel at Putney. I asked that, as I was billeted quite near, could I have permission to conduct the evening service at the Platt Chapel. He said that so long as no urgent duty on the camp kept me there I could certainly take my own service. As things turned out I was free for every Sunday for the whole three years I was at Ruislip, including my leave periods, and took my own Sunday service. On two or three occasions I invited one of my Chaplains to preach the sermon while I conducted the service. There was no compulsory Church parade at the camp and the voluntary service had very few in the congregation, so the Chaplain could manage alone. It also meant that as there was a fair number of people in that building only on the one film night per week, I was able to arrange my cleaning duties to suit the traffic in the place, for I still had to do the chores as well and always kept the place reasonably clean. So now my new promotion gave me that much more authority to continue in the work which was never officially given to me through the system and was not entered on my documents. It was a position I had assumed, helped and encouraged by that first Chaplain with whom I was placed at Ruislip, and when a succession of Chaplains came after him they all took it for granted that the duties I carried out were all part of my authorised official position on that station. In any case none of them were interested in operating the film projector, the apparatus was on the

inventory of things on the Chaplain's charge, but each Chaplain in turn left those matters to me. There were two Chaplains only from all of those I met during the war, who gave me valuable help. The first, who quite unofficially, enabled me to assume the position I managed to hold for the first three years of the war, but who, without his knowing the importance of what he did, started me off on a new line of reading and study which I have been pursuing ever since, right up to this present moment of time, which now stretches forty-five years. He was the Reverend Squadron Leader Dodson. All Chaplains from entry were given the rank of Squadron Leader. The last few days before he left Ruislip he spent turning out the office of the station church and discarding what he considered was of no value. There were four shelves of books which various people had given in peace time, for any of the personnel to read, but which nobody seemed to have an interest in. He told me to take any books of interest to me and do what I liked with the remainder. There was indeed one book among them which I had already been reading during my evenings when I had to be on duty in the camp. I said to the Chaplain "I would like to have that book," pointing to it. He replied, "it's yours, Gilly, you are welcome to it." I still have it today, it is my most valuable book because it started me off on my quest for an understanding of what life is all about, and why man invented religions. The book is entitled "The Story of Religion," and the author, Charles F. Potter, explains in a note at the beginning of the book, that he felt "impelled to the task because of a real need for a popular biographical presentation of the main outlines of what is called 'comparative religion.' This is, therefore, an attempt to contribute something toward what James Harvey Robinson calls "the humanizing of knowledge." This was just what I wanted. For years since I had my initial training at Norwood, there was a constant conflict in my mind between what I had been taught by the fundamentalist Christian establishment and what I observed generally in human life and what we were discovering in the universe around us. I could not make things tie up, there were so many contradictions. Until then, in my own private studies, I had mostly read books on psychology. I wanted to know how the human mind works, but all the books I had read

only partially answered my questions. They gave me clues as to why a man responds positively to stimuli in his environment, but they did not give me certainties. There was no certainty about God or to life beyond this material existence. In one book only were there some clues as to why man created the image of God, when conscious of his inadequacy, he felt the need of someone greater than himself; that book was "The Varieties of Religious Experience" by William James, which did show the scientific way of approaching the subject. Science proceeds from the known to the unknown, and William James' book does give one the opportunity to begin with man and his recorded religious experiences, and study the various phenomena of religion in an endeavour to find out the truth about it all. But, if anything, that book from among the other books on my study of the mind, did bring back to my memory something that had stuck there since my student days at Norwood. There was the occasional student argument going on one day and I was just a listener for a change. One student was denouncing against a well known doctor of divinity as being a modernist. I have never remembered the name of the theologian but the student made just one quotation from him to prove that the doctor was a heretic. The quotation was that "the revelation of God is in the unfolding of history." Now the fundamentalist Christian teaching was, and I believe still is, that the only revelation that God has given to man was in His Son whom He sent down to earth in the form of a man and Who was known as Jesus Christ. That was the mystical Christ created by Paul of Tarsus and other members of the Hellenistic Jewish group to which Paul belonged, as distinct from the Galilean preacher Jesus of Nazareth, who made no claim to be the mystical Christ, but plainly told his people "God is your Father and my Father" and when you pray address God as "Our Father." However, although that student gave that quotation to show that the theologian was wrong, and although I was still in the fundamentalist stage of my religious experience, I had an intuitive feeling that the doctor of divinity was right, and as soon as I opened Charles Potter's book in the Chaplain's office and began to read, that quotation by the student came back to

me and I knew that this was to be my line of study from that time. Of course, I had known from what studies I had made up to that time, the great difficulty in seeking for the truth about these matters because of the paucity of historical material, although there were sources which could have been used but were totally ignored because of prejudice. The controversies which have raged for nearly two thousand years since the founding of Christianity, on the question of who Jesus of Nazareth really was, have centred almost exclusively on issues of faith and have disregarded vital questions that could have been answered and still can be answered from authentic historical documents which have been preserved from ancient times, long before Jesus and since, by Jewish scholars and historians. They were ignored because of the extreme anti-semitism which sprang up early in the Christian church and which is evident from the Church's own writings in the New Testament, particularly the Gospels of Matthew and John. Those of us who have read the history of the world covering the years when the Christian Church was the predominant influence, have been appalled at the terrible things perpetrated on Jewish people in the name of Christianity, and I for one have felt ashamed that I belonged to such an establishment. It was only after the war that I realised that in my own spiritual development it took the second World War to take me out of the circumscribed environment of the Church, back again among humanity in the raw, in order that I might begin again to learn what this religion is all about. Those six years in the Royal Air Force were better than going back to college, although I did take a further more extensive course for the ordained ministry after the war, but that was in another denomination where I knew I would be allowed to express more liberal views. That began with the coming of the first Chaplain to be appointed after Padre Dodson had gone and resulted in my leaving the Church of England and becoming a Methodist. On my R.A.F., documents and stamped on my identification disc that, as with all servicemen, hung around my neck, was the information that I was 'C of E.' That was necessary in case we were killed in the war and they would have to know whether to bury us in consecrated or unconsecrated ground. I never bothered to make the change on my

documents, but half way through the war, when I was posted from Ruislip I officially became a member of the Methodist Church. It came about through my help from the Methodist Chaplain. He was the Rev. Squadron Leader Kenneth MacKenzie, who was popular among all ranks on our station because he was a good fencing instructor, which sport he taught additional to his Chaplain's duties. He saw what books I was reading, asked me about my civilian work and what ideas I had for the future. I told him my mother was a Methodist and that I had studied Methodist theology and he advised me to take studies to prepare for ordination in the Methodist Church when the war was over. In the meantime I made my own studies guided by the history of religion as outlined in Charles Potter's book, with the Bibliography he includes for those who wish to go deeper into subjects touched on in the book. About this same time I picked up from a book stall a second hand copy of "A Short History of the World" by H.G.Wells, and followed some clues I found in that on the history of the Christian Church. By the time I entered my second year at Ruislip I had already established myself as, what I have already described as being virtually a freelance airman. Every Monday morning after entering the camp at 8.a.m., I checked any paper work on the desk, swept and tidied the Church after Sunday, only a few people attended the service, it did not need much cleaning. Then I put two or three 16.mm.films in their cans after checking them, each can went in a square brown fibre box and was tied with a tape, I put the boxes under my arm and walked out of the camp. Every Monday I went up to Air Ministry in Kingsway, checked in the films I had shown and booked out another one or two films I had selected from their catalogue. Then from there I went to the Imperial Institute at South Kensington, to the Ministry of Information film store and did the same there with their films. When I first started that routine, for two or three Monday mornings I just said to the R.A.F., Police chap on the main gate, "going to Air Ministry," and he just said, "Okay." But after they got used to me going in and out like that, if ever I wanted to go out of the camp at any time other than the morning and evening coming and going, I just put a couple of

cans of film under my arm and nodded to the chap on the gate and he nodded back and that was all that was required. All the Police chaps including the sergeant in charge got used to seeing me go in and out with films under my arm and took it for granted that I was on official duty, which, of course, I was on Mondays each week, but I used those films on other days of the week as well on many occasions, so for that reason I always came back from Air Ministry and the Ministry of Information with fresh films so that I had always got some I could use as my pass in and out of the camp, those that went out on those occasions were the same as came back. The entertainments films I showed either on a Friday evening or sometimes Saturday afternoon, I ordered and returned by post from Gaumont British Films, and the cost of hiring and postage was paid from a fund held by the Administration Officer the fund being known as P.S.I. I never did find out what those initials meant, whoever I asked just said, "O that's the sports and social fund," but I could not make that fit the initials, so I have never known to this day what they meant. I remember one morning when I used those films to get out of the camp, it was the morning after the night when German aircraft bombed the City of London with showers of incendiary bombs as well as high explosives. Some of us had looked from an upstairs window across London towards St. Paul's Cathedral and knew it was the old city that was burning with such a huge red glow in the sky that reminded me of the Silver Town explosion in the first World War. It was confirmed over the radio - or 'wireless' as it was then called - in the morning, and I wanted to see what damage they had done to that part of London I had known so well when I had worked there as a lad. So with my films under my arm I left the camp, took the tube line to Earls Court, changed on the Underground to Blackfriars, then walked up Ludgate Hill to St. Paul's Cathedral. As soon as the Cathedral came in sight I was thrilled to see it was still complete, but behind it smoke was still rising from a large area of the old City. The Cathedral itself was closed to the public as it had been hit on one section by a bomb which fortunately had not done a lot of damage and the great dome was untouched, however, it had still to be examined. I walked around St. Paul's Churchyard to


Cannon Street and saw all the buildings were just smouldering shells. Water everywhere, running down the gutters, was evidence that the firemen had been at work but had moved on to other parts of the City, the area of damage was so extensive there were not really enough rescue workers. Some had been working on the blaze all night and had been called off for a rest. An attempt had been made at the ends of some of the very narrow ancient streets to rope them off, they were unsafe because of falling masonry. But there was nobody about that morning, where I was the flames had been extinguished, and the firemen and rescue workers were gone and the one or two I could see further down Cannon Street took no notice of me as I was in uniform.


I ducked under the rope at the end of one of the narrowest of the old streets, I cannot remember now which, as I walked around the whole area, through Bread Street, Watling Street, Bow Lane, Milk Street, Wood Street, and others between Cannon Street and Cheapside - they are all so different today, people of this generation cannot imagine them as they were in the past - I know it was a risky thing to do, but I knew my old part of the City of London was finished, it would have to be demolished and would never be the same again. I felt I must walk through the narrow lanes for the last time. I paused and gazed into the smouldering shells of the very buildings into which I had gone as a lad, and from the dying embers there drifted upwards wisps of white steam and smoke as they expired, and I stood there with tears in my eyes as I paid my last respects while they breathed their last.

It was my old City of London which had passed away, I had always known that it did not belong to the rich City gents who came there every day to manipulate the commerce and finances of the world and then return to their lovely homes in the posh suburban areas near London each evening. It belonged to those of us who were born and brought up and had worked there. My former boss, Sir Andrew, God bless him, was at that very time the member of parliament for the City of London, but while he controlled some things that went on there, the old City was not his, it belonged rather to his little cockney junior clerk and my pals, some of whom, as boys, swept up the manure on the streets from the horse drawn traffic before motor traffic was introduced, not long



before the first World War. Much of the horse traffic was brought back again during that war period to replace what motor vehicles there were for military use. During my long life since those days I have become used to changes, I know now they must come, there is no progress without them, but it is always sad when we come to an end of a period or lose an old friend. I was in the City of London during the first World War when the Germans bombed it for the first time, they failed to do what they wanted. By the second World War they had more advanced aircraft and weapons, but even on this occasion they did not destroy all for which they aimed. Not only St. Paul's Cathedral but others of our famous old buildings and monuments were left untouched, although there was still more bombing yet to come. I never felt any bad conscience about using my self appointed position for getting in and out of the camp, for I was always on some errand I felt to be useful, at least more useful than just spending my war service on cleaning floors, sweeping roads and coal heaving. I did the cleaning at the station church, but I felt sorry for the chaps who had to make that sort of chore the be-all and end-all of their war service. I knew of course that it was open to any of us to apply for a remuster to another trade and I had in mind what I would choose if compelled to do so, but in the meantime my free lance work was a useful job as far as the R.A.F., was concerned, gave me also a chance to study, and kept me in touch with my civilian work. I was soon to discover it enabled me to carry out another occasional side-line job which had nothing directly to do with the R.A.F., and nothing to do with the Church, but once more took me back into the atmosphere of the Civil Service, and for the year or so that I did that occasional work, nobody ever dreamed that I, the Chaplain's orderly, when I walked out of the camp on a Monday morning with films under my arm, had also tucked in my top pocket a special pass given to me personally by an important senior civil servant, to enable me, after going to the Air Ministry and Ministry of Information, to pass through security checks into the Foreign Office to the office of the important gentleman, with documents he had entrusted to me.

The trick of tucking films under my arm to give the impression I was on duty I had really learned from my earlier days when involved with the Civil Service. In those days I always carried either a file of papers or a brief case under my arm. The advice being passed around among us was, "always walk about with a file under your arm and they will think you are on some official business." But it was in the R.A.F., that I began to apply that advice,  with films. When it came to my Foreign Office visits I was covered by an official pass.

I met the important senior civil servant one evening when I was on duty in camp. By then Padre Kenneth MacKenzie had been posted somewhere else and a new Chaplain had come. None of them stayed at Ruislip for long, it seems they were sent to Records when recruited from civilian life, in order to be briefed on service routine, but nobody asked me to do any of that briefing. Yet as far as the paper work was concerned I had to inform every new Chaplain, explain the R.A.F., terms, tell them what the routine was for our camp, because they had other stations for which they were responsible, I think it was another two camps. At the colour hoisting each morning, on one of those mornings on our station the Chaplain had to take a short service around the flag post, it was on his roster among other things. Now the Chaplain who followed the Methodist Padre was a high churchman of the Church of England. I had better explain for any who do not know the several divisions within the church establishment, that the two main divisions are between high church and low church, high church clergy use in their form of worship rites and ceremonies and quite a bit of paraphernalia not used by low churchmen. This Chaplain began by introducing an early morning Eucharist on Wednesdays and while he only ever got three or four airmen to attend he kept it going for a few weeks and wanted me to assist him. Now, in civilian life, as I have already recounted earlier in this book, I refused to enter into any of those superstitious practices and was kicked out of one high Church of England as a result. But I was no longer in the low church organisation of the London City Mission,  was now in the armed services and was manipulating the system to my own ends.

The duties required of me were that I should carry out what the Chaplain wanted, in this case he wanted me to serve at the altar with him. There was a spare cassock and surplice in the office and it did not take long to pick up the ritual, after all there was very little else the Chaplain required of me, he was soon off and left me to run the place. I saw very little of him during the day and on those nights when I was in camp, only once or twice did I see him briefly. Having established myself as a freelance I had got to a point when I never referred to anyone at our headquarters office as to my times on or off duty, so just changed one of my nights on duty to a Tuesday so as to be there for the early morning Eucharist on Wednesday. If anyone had queried the matter I would have replied that it was required by the Chaplain. But it was not to last very long. That Chaplain's religion was contained within his complex rites and ceremonial, not much appeared to be reflected in the discipline of his own morals. One evening on duty I was sitting in the office reading, when the door opened quietly, the Chaplain appeared, put his finger to his lips and whispered "Sssh - Gilly, I'm just going to leave my collar here, I'm going up to town with a friend." While he was speaking he was taking off his clerical collar and stock, then took out from his drawer an air force tie and usual light blue collar worn by officers. Then he took off from his lapels the small gilt badges, one each side, fixed on to show that he was a Chaplain, and put them in the drawer with the clerical collar. "I usually do this when I go up to town," he said, and that told me he had been doing this before on evenings when I was not in camp. By the time he was ready to go he looked like any other squadron leader and nobody could have guessed he was a Chaplain. However, the airmen on our station knew who he was, and some of those from time to time went up to the Westend of London to the shows that were popular with service personnel, and a couple of days after seeing what the Chaplain did, I went into the sick quarters to be greeted by a couple of my oppos with "Hey, Gilly we saw your Chaplain last night with another officer getting into a tube train at Piccadilly Circus, they had a couple of Waafs with them,

they looked as though they had all had a few drinks and were quite merry." Whether the Waafs were girls from our station or some they had picked up casually, they did not know. I knew the Chaplain was a married man with a wife and young family far away in the West Country and before long his superiors caught up with him. Rumours came to me through the sick quarters' orderlies, who got their rumours from higher up the line, that the Chaplain was being posted to a station near to his wife and family, and in a short while he had left our camp and I was alone again for two or three weeks. The succeeding Chaplain came, again straight from civilian life, and was beginning to find his way, when one evening I was on duty and was repairing a couple of broken films - with the old type 16mm films there were occasional breaks, so with the projector all the necessary repair equipment was issued - the Projector and equipment were kept in a cupboard just inside the entrance into the church building and I was working on a small table near, when the church door opened and a gentleman in civilian clothes entered, he was superior looking and had an bearing of importance. He asked if the Chaplain was available and I told him I did not think he was in the camp at that moment, I said I was his orderly and that I was responsible for some of the Chaplain's duties, pointing to the film projector I said, "this is one of them." Then he explained that he had offered his help to the Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Christian Association, to visit airmen in some of the R.A.F., stations near his home and wanted to include us at Ruislip, he had seen our Administration Officer who had given him permission to come in whenever he could but would like to introduce himself to the Chaplain to let him know he was coming into the camp. This surprised me, for I knew of that forces association and in the past had met one or two of their representatives, who were classed as colporteurs and were similar to myself and my colleagues in the London City Mission, whereas this gentleman was, by his speech and bearing, in a class much higher. It occurred to me that he was probably a good Christian who felt he must do some voluntary work among the troops as his bit of war work, but when he decided to stay and talk with me at length and eventually disclosed what position he held, I cancelled that thought from my mind.

There was nobody on our station, however important their work, doing such important work for the war effort as this top Senior Civil Servant. So why did he want to come into our camp to "talk to the boys" as he always put it ? I decided that while he did not need any extra war service, he was probably the type of fundamentalist Christian who thought the boys entering the armed services, being away from the influence of their homes, found themselves in an environment which could lead to the lowering of their moral standards, needed someone in touch with them to keep them under Christian influence. It was about the Spring of 1941 when he first came into the camp and had his first talk with me. On that occasion I told him of my work with the London City Mission and also of my work in Riga with the British American Mission. He asked me what language I used in my work and I told him that, as in those days most business transactions were conducted in German, I had to learn that language. Immediately he began asking me in fluent German if I still spoke it, and I replied in German that I had kept up my reading in the language but the only opportunity for conversation with German speaking people was the year before the war when I had toured the Rheinland and acted as interpreter to my fellow cyclists. It was then that he told me he was the senior translator at the Foreign Office - during the second World War that department had not been combined with the Commonwealth Office - but soon afterwards, when I began my visits to his office at that government department, he told me he was also Librarian of the Foreign Office as well. Officially his position besides being translator was Assistant Librarian, but as the Librarian had retired and on account of the war no new appointment had been made, he was asked to act as Librarian with assistants under his care. But it was the position as senior Translator which was the more important of his two posts that had brought him into contact with heads of States in Europe and other parts of the world as translator at conferences, and involved him in travelling to other countries for the Foreign Office. I told him what evenings I would be on duty in the camp and he arranged his visits on those evenings, but on none of those occasions did he

ever discuss anything of a religious nature with me. He told me he gathered groups of boys together on the stations he visited, but I did not know of any lads on our station who attended any meeting with him. When he visited us he always came to me and the only other lads on our camp to whom he had a chat were my oppos the orderlies in the sick quarters adjoining our church.

Being early in the Spring, the evenings were still a bit chilly and I still kept my fire burning at the chancel end where I made my bed down. On a couple of occasions I was toasting a piece of bread to eat with my evening hot drink I made in the sick quarters kitchen, when he came in to see me. It may have seemed a strange sight to see an airman toasting bread around a blazing fire near the altar, but this gentleman was not bothered with things of that nature, he was not a church establishment type of Christian, but I did not know then and still do not know today, whether he belonged to any particular denomination, or held the position in the religious world that I held then in the R.A.F., a freelance.

His name was Robert Currie Thomson, and his home was at North End Lodge, Pinner, about two and half miles from our camp. On about his third visit he suggested I might like to spend an evening with him at his home. I had told him I had a wife and young family and that I usually visited them for part of each weekend. As the air raids had increased by then my family had evacuated to Church Oakley in Hampshire and my routine for a number of weekends was to travel to them when I left the camp on Friday at 4.30.p.m., stay until Sunday midday meal, then travel up to London to have tea with the caretaker of my Chapel in Putney, take the evening service in the Chapel and then return to my billet which was at Alperton after we had given up our home on the Roehampton estate. R.C.Thomson suggested I could stay one Friday night with him and go to my family on Saturday morning. I said I would arrange it with my wife as soon as I could. The next visit he made to me he told me he could give me some Foreign Office work I could do in my own time and for which I would be paid. It was translation work. The documents were not classified, but were batches of papers that came from Germany through Switzerland at

intervals relating to our British prisoners of war. It was part of the requirement of the Geneva Convention relating to war wounded and prisoners. German bureaucracy was very thorough but cumbersome. All the details of every British soldier would eventually arrive at the Foreign Office. Details of men who were sick; when a man was discharged from hospital and returned to P.O.W., camp, more details, when he was moved from one camp to another, more records about him, if men broke the rules or attempted to escape, or if a man was shot while trying to escape, all these details came on those documents. However, it was not until after the war before we discovered that not all the reports sent out from the camps to the German bureaucrats gave all the facts of what was really going on. However, when the papers were received at the Foreign Office, there was too much work for R.C.Thomson and his assistants to do, so he was permitted to employ some assistants outside Whitehall, and it was some of this work he offered to me and I was glad of the chance to earn a little extra cash. The arrangement he made with me was that when a batch of papers came he would bring them out to me when visiting the camp, and when I had completed the work I could take them with me when going on my usual trips to Air Ministry and the Ministry of Information, then proceed afterwards to the Foreign Office, and to that end he wrote out for me, personally, a pass enabling me to proceed to his office in the Foreign Office building. Now while it has been my lot in this life every so often to find myself back in the atmosphere of the civil service, this time I was actually to carry out some work for a government department and be paid for it. The last time I was in and out of Whitehall buildings was not long before the war when Harry X took me to lunch once each month in the civil service restaurant. Now, it was a coincidence that just about the time when R.C.Thomson met me at Ruislip, I was in Putney during a weekend and ran into a chap I had known at Speke Hall some years before. After exchanging greetings and talking for a bit he asked, "have you heard about Harry X?" He, of course, used his real name and not the only pseudonym I am using in this book. I asked, "what about Harry X?"

He said, "well, at present he is serving three months in prison."

"In prison ! whatever for ?" I asked. "The report in the local paper," he explained, "said he took a boy into a cinema and was caught in the back seat in an indecent act with him, the manager of the cinema called the police and he was arrested and charged. When taken to Court he was given three months imprisonment."

I was shocked, Harry X was a civil servant, I thought his career must be finished now. Of course, I was still a bit naive then and I had a lot more to learn, but from the time I began as a little boy messenger in the War Office I had the impression that civil servants were far above any suggestion of the slightest blemish on their characters, not even a whisper of any impropriety could be heard about them. Harry X was not only a civil servant he was brought up under the extreme fundamentalist, holiness teaching at Speke Hall. Of course, I had seen the result of that in the tragedies of poor Bernard Blowers and Cecil Newman, indeed it was at my time at Ruislip when I had gone to join my family evacuated to Church Oakley, that I was taken to the bridge over the railway to see the spot where Cecil committed suicide. Yet, because of the way I had been impressed as a child I could not get out of my mind the belief that these things never happened to civil servants. It was not many years after the war, however, when the whole world heard through the press, radio and on television, of the traitors within that very Foreign Office, the three most notorious being Donald Maclean, Guy Burgess and Kim Philby, three educated young men from impeccable backgrounds, who not only spied for Russia but two of whom, at least, were homosexuals. Those three young men would have been known to R.C. Thomson, although I am quite sure in my own mind he would never have been pro-Marxist as they were, I thought on some occasions he sounded pro-German, and that was something that puzzled me through the four years close association I had with him. When, on several occasions he told me that when the war was over he would take me out to Germany to meet some very good friends of his, I kept associating those friends with the friends I had met in Germany. Miss Breidenbach who was the head of our German department of our Mission in Riga, lived in Berlin and



arranged with the Niendorfs for us to stay with them on our way home to England, and we had the opportunity to meet other friends in the German section of the British American Mission, and all of them would have been anti-Nazi and supporters of men like Pastor Martin Niemöller who founded the "Confessing Church" in opposition to that section of the National Church which Hitler had brought under Nazi control to support his political aims. Pastor Niemöller was arrested by Hitler's Gestapo on 1 March, 1938, and spent the whole of the war in concentration camps. Later, during the war, the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who also supported the "Confessing Church" was imprisoned and towards the end of the war was executed. Quite naturally I thought of R.C.Thomson's German friends as being sincere Christians like those I had known, for he had introduced himself to me on his first visit to our camp as representing the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Christian Association, so perhaps some of them were like the friends I had met in Germany. However, as things developed stage by stage and Thomson imparted this and that little bit of information to me, I began to think otherwise. Now let me make it quite clear before I go any further, this man is now dead, he cannot defend himself, therefore I will make no direct accusations and I will not press my own opinions. As I have pledged myself to keep to only facts without any embellishments, so particularly in recounting all that happened between R.C.Thomson and myself during those few years when I knew him personally and intimately, I will keep to matters exactly as they were said and done, and then when I have laid bare all the facts I would ask any reader of this, "what would you have thought?"

Who was Robert Currie Thomson apart from being Senior Translator and Librarian at the Foreign Office when I met him? He told me that when he first started as a junior civil servant, having completed his studies to qualify for the position, like many young students in his early days, including myself, he was dead broke, for grants for further education were not available to students as they are today. As soon as he began to earn a small salary he started to save his money for further studies, so he walked every day from his digs in North London to Whitehall and back again in the evenings, and put the fare money in the bank. This he did for a number of years, I forget the mileage but I know it

was far greater than I could have done, with a full day's work between the two daily walks, in all weathers. Stage by stage he moved up the scale until he reached the grade known in Whitehall as a Professional Civil Servant. As far as the war effort was concerned his work was very important. Government ministers and civil service officers depended upon a careful translation of German documents if they were to get a correct impression of what was intended. The German grammar being as intricate as it is, a slight difference in mood or in the declension of a noun could give quite a different meaning in an English translation. R.C.Thomson was multilingual and was responsible for documents to and from other countries in several languages. Of course he had his assistants in all those languages, but he was responsible for all translations and checked all the work. Only once, in all the papers I translated, did he point out to me a sentence where I had given a slightly different meaning. I saw in that one occasion the power that is in the hands of the bureaucrats who rule in Whitehall, not only can they if they wish, feed any member of parliament with what information considered sufficient for him, and withdraw from him anything they think he should not know, but they can even give a cabinet minister a different slant on information if they wanted him to pursue a certain course. No wonder our present Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, finds such interest in the television series "Yes Minister," it is an accurate portrayal of what goes on in Whitehall. If any reader of this considers I am exaggerating, let me tell you of a conversation I had with R.C.Thomson one evening. He had come into the station church and found me sitting near my fire toasting a piece of bread, so drew up a chair and sat with me. It got to a point in our conversation when I said I was pursuing a course of studies in preparation for ordination in the Methodist Church when the war was over. "Why don't you take up politics," he said. "Politics?" I exclaimed, "I know nothing whatever about politics." He replied, "You don't have to know anything about politics, you would be surprised if you knew how little most of the members of parliament know. They know about their party dogmas, but nothing else." Then he went on to explain that some are quite ignorant men who are absolutely dependent upon the civil service.

"We are the experts and have all the expertise at our finger tips, nationally and internationally, we tell them everything, they must come to us, they could never run the country without us." He was emphatic and seemed almost to despise some of those men in the House of Commons who just talked and disputed and knew very little of the things about which they argued. He told me the title and author of a book I should get from the library and read, which would enlighten me about the parliamentary system. I wrote down the title but never got the book, I was not really interested in joining the club at the Palace of Westminster, I preferred to be a freelance where I could be sincere and express in my thoughts, words and deeds, those things I believed to be true. Most of the years of my long life I have been fortunate in being able to work as a freelance within the system, in the Church, in the Civil Service, and for six years of the war in the Royal Air Force. I have never earned much cash and often lived hand to mouth, but I thank God for my freedom. The first visit I made to the Foreign Office with the translation work, I decided I did not want to walk in there with films under my arm, I had a genuine pass signed by R.C. Thomson, so I did not take Air Ministry films that day, there was no urgency on those. I walked out of the camp with only those from the Ministry of Information, took them first to the Imperial Institute and left them and decided to collect the fresh films on the way back from the Foreign Office. Being in uniform I had no difficulty in passing the policeman by the barrier at the end of Downing Street, I took out my pass and said "Foreign Office" and he just nodded me past. The main entrance to the Foreign <sup>Office</sup> then, and probably still is today, was opposite the Prime Minister's residence at number ten. Inside at the reception desk I told the commissionaire I had to go to Mr. Thomson's office and showed him my pass. He asked if I knew where to go and I told him it was my first visit, so he asked another uniformed attendant to take me along. Mr. Thomson put aside the papers I handed him and we sat and chatted for a bit. Then he suggested I might like to see the library and one or two other parts of the Foreign Office, and took me along several corridors. After looking around the library he led me further along past some windows and paused so that we could look through one. We peered into a long room a bit below our level and

looked down upon a long table running the whole length of the room. Thomson said something about its connection with the signing of some treaty. It is so long ago now that perhaps my memory gets things a bit out of focus, but I thought he made some reference to the Versailles Peace Treaty, but I know the table on which that was signed is in the great Palace of Versailles and that Lloyd George was present for Great Britain, with others of our leading statesmen and representatives of the other Allied powers, U.S.A., and France. One thing is clear in my mind, it was signed by the German plenipotentiaries on my seventeenth birthday, 28 June, 1919. Every other detail in this book I have thoroughly checked for dates and details to make sure I have them correct, but when I wrote to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, telling them of my war time connection with R.C.Thomson and asking them if they could check one or two details and dates, they kindly supplied me with the information, and I felt I could not bother them with an unimportant detail such as the long table in the long room. We then went further along the corridor and as we passed some closed doors Thomson pointed to them and told me they were Anthony Edens, the Foreign Secretary's suite,--he had not received a knighthood at that time. On account of the bombing of London, government ministers resided near their jobs, and when heavy raids developed they went down into a shelter below Whitehall. While he was showing me around a thought occurred to me. He had known me only about one year at the time of this first visit to the Foreign Office, had seen me only at the camp on his periodic visits, knew about my work with the London City Mission, through what I had told him, but had not been to my Chapel in Putney, knew that I had a wife and three children but had not met them and never asked me about them. It was only when I made my first visit to his home, shortly after this visit to the Foreign Office that he told me he had lost his wife in an accident right outside their home about four years before I met him, and he never mentioned her again to me. I was under the impression they had no children, he never referred to any. The only people he talked about with any enthusiasm were his friends in Germany and sometimes "the boys" he said he gathered at meetings in the camps, but I never

attended any of the meetings and never knew who those boys were. Why was R.C.Thomson personally interested in me ? I was only a leading aircraftsman in the R.A.F.,and at that time should have been jumping to some sergeant's command in the camp. But I was not and I never did, instead I walked in and out of the camp whenever I wished, went up to Air Ministry and the Ministry of Information each week and never returned to the camp until the next morning, and now here I was strutting about the Foreign Office with a senior civil servant as though I was somebody important. I was not acting the old Chinaman this time, this situation had been created for me and apart from doing some translation work for Thomson whenever a batch of papers came to the Foreign Office, and which my superior officers knew nothing about, I could not make up my mind what his real interest in me was. I was not one of "the boys" who needed pastoral care by a visitor from the Church, that was my profession in civilian life and why I had been placed with the Chaplain. I was puzzled, but my doubts really began to bother me soon after that first visit to the Foreign Office. It was one of my evenings on duty and once again I was sitting near my fire reading a book when Thomson came in, drew a chair up close to me, huddled a bit as though he appreciated the warmth of the fire on a cold evening. We began a conversation and as though in a gesture of Christian affection, he put his hand on my thigh and held it there. Now anything of that nature has always been abhorrent to me, always having been normally heterosexual myself, any hint of homosexuality gives me a sense of revulsion, it is not that I have no sympathy with anyone born with a homosexual make-up, but my instinctive recognition that in relation to the whole of the human race it is abnormal, and any abnormality in any human being needs, not sympathy and acceptance, but sympathy and a cure. I could not be rude or sound discourteous by saying, "do you mind taking your hand off my thigh," I just froze and I think he felt the chill emanate from me, he took his hand off. But a little later in conversation he urged me again to accept his invitation to visit him in his home and stay the night there, so I arranged for the following Friday evening. I went straight from the camp with

the usual weekend case I took when visiting my family and I knew I would be going on to them on the Saturday morning. Thomson had sketched out a plan showing how to reach his house from the railway station, so I took the 'bus from Ruislip to Pinner station. His house was an old Victorian building with a number of rooms I should think he never used. Steps led up to the front door so that the first floor was a little above street level, and there was a shallow basement with rooms below street level. What was in the rooms on the top floor I never knew for on the two occasions I stayed the night there we never went upstairs. When I rang the bell Thomson opened the door. He said his housekeeper was getting a meal ready and she would be going after we had eaten, for she lived in the town near by. He said she was -- as far as I remember -- a Danish lady. When she came into the dining room where he had taken me, he said "this is Mrs. -- so and so --" mentioning her foreign sounding name, she nodded and looked at me with a suspicious reproving look in her eyes, she seemed to be saying "what, another one !" She appeared to be in her fifties and she had the sort of face that seemed to be incapable of a smile, she wore a sullen, reproving look all the time she was there. When Thomson spoke to her it was in English and she replied in a foreign accent. I would not want to be unkind to the lady for I know nothing about her, for all that I know ~~she might have been~~ a refugee from Europe, but she did not seem to be friendly towards me. She washed the dishes after our meal and then left us. We talked about various things during the evening but never anything of a religious nature. I wondered what he talked about with "the boys." About half past ten he suggested I might be tired would I like to go to bed, and explained that his housekeeper had made up a single bed in a small room but perhaps I might like company and share his double bed with him. I said I was used to sleeping alone in the R.A.F., and would use the single bed. He said he didn't think it was very comfortable, and I said I could sleep almost anywhere and upon anything. I knew he had seen me make down my camp bed in the station church on several occasions. He may have remembered how I froze when he put his hand on my thigh and did not

press me further. In that single bed before I went to sleep I turned things over in my mind. I asked myself why he should want me to sleep with him and I decided I was going to get to the bottom of this as soon as possible, in the morning I would steer the conversation so that I could see how he reacted when I touched on one or two subjects. However, at breakfast I did not have to force the conversation, he gave me my opportunity at once. He was more definite this time, he said he knew he would be going to Germany when hostilities ceased and he was sure he could take me with him. Although at the back of my mind I wondered how he knew he would be going I did not ask questions, I was more concerned to find out what his motives were. Of course things were happening then that the general public knew nothing about and Thomson only gave me hints for his own benefit. It was many years after the war, when the records had been published and I read through some of them that I discovered how he knew, and it all fitted in with what did take place. To quote just a little from the published records, "On October 25, 1941. while the United States was still neutral, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called attention to the atrocities being committed by the Nazis in occupied countries. On that same day Prime Minister Winston Churchill associated the British government with the Roosevelt statement and made retribution for these crimes one of the major purposes of the war. In November 1941 and January 1942 Soviet Foreign Minister V.M. Molotov circulated diplomatic notes specifying in detail a number of Nazi violations of the laws and customs of war. On January 13, 1942, the St. James Declaration was signed by the governments in exile of nine European countries that were then occupied by the Nazis. These nations, too, made the punishment of war crimes a principal war aim." It was in the Spring of 1942 when R.C. Thomson told me he would be going to Germany as soon as hostilities ceased and that he would like to take me with him, but it was not until Autumn 1944 before he gave me any details of what he would be doing, and I knew then that the government had already, in 1942, given the <sup>Office</sup> Foreign the task of investigating the war crimes and hunting down the Nazis responsible for the atrocities, and it was R.C. Thomson who had been given the job, when the Allied armies had occupied Germany, to

work with the army authorities in searching for, and examining, what Nazi documents had not been destroyed, to collect evidence to show who were those responsible for the war crimes. On this my first visit to Thomson's home he just said he could take me with him, but it was not until my second visit, a night I will always remember, when he outlined to me what supporting part I would play as his personal assistant, in the hunt for Nazi war criminals. But I must take things stage by stage, for, as I said at the beginning of this account of my relationship with Robert Currie Thomson, I will describe things exactly as they happened and then ask the reader "what would you think ?" That Saturday morning in March 1942, when I sat at breakfast with Thomson and he discussed the matter of going to Germany, one thing that puzzled me was his statement, repeated on two or three different occasions, that he had some good friends in Germany to whom he would introduce me, who were those friends, and how did he know they were still alive after the saturation bombing of the cities and towns of Germany by our aircraft and those of the Americans. I said to Thomson, we could not know if those friends we had both known in Germany had not followed the national hysteria and were supporting Hitler and his Aryan ideology. Thomson replied by telling me I should not be influenced by all the propaganda being spread around, things were not all as we were being made to believe. Now it so happened that the one job which had been given to me officially by my superior officers at Ruislip, was the showing of propaganda films each time I put on an entertainments show, I had always understood it to be an Air Ministry order, and I knew from what I had seen myself in Germany only one year before the war, that it was all basically true. I thought I would be blunt and get to what I was aiming for. I said, "well we do know that Hitler's vision of creating from Germany a superior Aryan race was launched in the beginning by a bunch of homosexuals." At once Thomson came back at me, "pooh, pooh, don't you believe a thing like that !" I said, "well what about Ernst Röhm and the 'strong arm' squads he recruited to use violence in protecting Hitler's party meetings, he chose fair haired, blue eyed boys of Aryan stock with good physique and trained them at his barracks to



form the private army known as the SA (Sturmabteilung), when the homosexual practises going on in the barracks became known, Hitler disapproved and finally gave way to the request of the army leaders that Röhm should be removed and he was executed without trial."

Thomson replied that of course there are always isolated cases and that the same thing goes on in every country including Britain. My reason for pursuing this line of argument was just to see what Thomson's attitude was to this matter, but he told me it was all propaganda. When I left him that Saturday morning I was still

puzzled in my mind but prepared to continue my contacts with Thomson. Returning to the camp on Monday morning a sergeant from headquarters came to me to say that quite a lot of leave was due to me which I had not taken. Of course, I was half of my time outside the camp, had every weekend off, was in touch with my family and also my Chapel in Putney, so had not bothered about my leave entitlement.

However, the sergeant suggested I should take at least one week soon, so I decided on two weeks later. At this particular time I had

no translation work for R.C. Thomson until the next batch arrived from Switzerland, he did not come to our camp every week, he had no regular time, so it never occurred to me to let him know that I

would be away on that week of leave. When I returned after leave an envelope was waiting for me in the sick quarters. In it was a

note from Thomson he had sent by one of "the boys." He always

wrote to me in German, so for that reason one phrase that hit me

looks worse in German than in English. He began by saying he had not seen me lately as he had been very busy, then went on to say,

"I visit the camp twice weekly but seldom on the evenings when you are there." That was a surprise to me, I did not know he was visiting

our camp twice every week, he knew what evening of the week I was on duty and if he wanted to see me he came on that evening. Then he

continued, "I was there once (in the course of last week) especially to speak with you but the Jew Levine informed me that you were

on leave." He was referring to an oppo of mine, Don Levine, one

of the medical orderlies with whom I was on pally terms. I had seen

that very phrase in Germany scrawled in paint over shops that had been


ital

the properties of Jewish people before they had been thrown out and banned by the Nazis. To see it written in German in Thomson's note, "aber der Jude Levine teilte mir mit, dass Sie auf Urlaub waren." That way of referring to Don displeased me intensely - 'der Jude' - only someone who was anti-Semitic would use that term in German. I have kept that note ever since and have had a photo-copy taken to include with this book, readers of the German language can make up their own minds about it, they can also see by the other terms Thomson used in the note that he was a professed Christian. However, I continued my contacts with him, occasionally doing translation work, until early in the Spring of 1943 when my privileged position at Ruislip came to an end. There had been rumours that because of a manpower shortage, Waafs were being put on some jobs suitable for women to undertake so that men could be transferred to work near the front line when the Allies invaded Europe. It occurred to me that a Waaf could easily do my work, although Squadron Leader Smith had promised he would keep me on the permanent staff at Ruislip so that I could be in touch with my civilian work. Then something happened which I know made that officer change his mind. I had always kept on the right side of him because of his promise to me, but nearly every airman on the camp hated his guts, we all referred to him among ourselves as "Smithy." He had been a regular in the first World War new airforce, had finished his time and gone into the insurance business in civilian life, but being on the reserve was recalled for service in the second World War and as with most of the older regulars who came back, was given a higher rank and made administration officer of our station. He was all talk and brag, wore his officer's peak hat at a jaunty angle and walked with a swagger around the camp when he was not sitting behind his desk in his office. At first it was noticed that he was often in the company of the senior Waaf officer, and that could have been because their duties took them together, but before long it was noticed by the chaps who saw them more than I did, that there was more to it than just duty. There was quite a bit of talk going around the camp and course jibes among the men, but in my position I felt it wise to

keep out of it all, to see all, hear all, and say nothing. For one thing the lady seemed to be of a class superior to Smithy, she was a refined intelligent lady with a bearing of dignity, and if there was anything in the rumours going around the camp, it would be because he was such a plausible, persuasive old flatterer to the ladies, he could talk an angel into hell. Probably why he could sell insurance in civvy street. However, for a few months before things came to a head we had a new Chaplain sent to Ruislip, he was a little younger than me and had been a Church of England curate in civilian life and because I had carried out a curate's duties at a couple of churches while I was with the London City Mission, we got on well together. More so because we both liked music and could play both piano and organ, and there was a good American organ in the station church. There were a number of afternoons when he came in for an hour so that we could have what we called then a 'jam' session, we enjoyed ourselves and nobody ever came in, not even Smithy when he was strutting about the camp, in all my three and half years at Ruislip he never once came into that building, on the rare occasions when he wanted me, he either sent someone or 'phoned. It was a great advantage to me that so many people were afraid to go into a church building, I could always be sure of peace and quiet once I had entered and closed the door behind me. So too, that Chaplain and I had a number of uninterrupted music sessions. He was the Reverend Squadron Leader Robinson, known to most of us as "Robbie" as distinct from the Robbie at the sick quarters. Although I had more to do with that Chaplain than all the others, I never once discussed nor even mentioned the rumours concerning Smithy and the Waaf officer. But one day he came into the church and said, "Gilly, I think I have upset Smithy, and decided I had better tell you about it." Apparently it was not only the men in the ranks who had been talking, in the Officers' Mess too Squadron Leader Smith was the cause of annoyance and the talk was so constant both among the officers and the men in the ranks that the Chaplain felt it was his duty to have a talk with Squadron Leader Smith. The Chaplain was not only of the same rank but was responsible for the

spiritual life of the station, he had authority to speak to Squadron Leader Smith. I do not know all the Chaplain said but he told me he told 'Smithy' that the talk going around the station was bad for the morale of the camp. Squadron Leader Smith flew into a temper, cursed and swore, said he could run his life in his own way, he was not going to have his subordinates tell him what he could or could not do. Then he shouted at the Chaplain "I suppose your bloody orderly has been talking to you." The Chaplain said, "Oh no, I've never discussed it with my orderly, he has told me nothing, this has come to me from several other sources." Then the Chaplain said, "I don't think he believed me, Gilly, and I don't think I will be here much longer, I do hope it does not affect you, but I did tell him you had nothing to do with the matter." Such is the power of a man who can use his rank and position to manipulate what he wants. The final authority on the station was with the Commanding Officer, but the administration was in the hands of Squadron Leader Smith who made all the decisions, the C.O., seemed to be just a figurehead and would never override what Smithy had decided. Within a couple of weeks the Chaplain had gone, posted to another station. I hoped it would all blow over, but within another three weeks when I went into the sick quarters in the morning the lads asked me, "have you seen orders, Gilly?" When I said I had not they said, "a lot of postings and you are among them." Copies of daily orders and routine orders hung outside headquarters and outside the guardroom. I went to headquarters and saw that twenty men from the general duties branch were to be posted to Stornoway in the Hebrides and my name was among them. I went straight into the headquarters building along the corridor to the Waaf typist outside Smithy's room and asked "may I see Squadron Leader Smith please?" As soon as I entered his room I could see he anticipated I would come. He avoided looking at me, but while still gazing at some papers on his desk, asked, "what can I do for you?" I said I had seen my name among those posted to the Hebrides and he replied, "the names have come in a directive from Air Ministry." "But sir," I said, "you promised me you would keep me on the permanent staff so that I could be in touch with my civilian work." "It's a command from Air Ministry," he said, "I can't do anything about it." I knew that was not true, for

I had handled signals from Air Ministry and knew that the usual procedure in a movement of that nature, was to state that a given number of Waafs were being posted to Ruislip and a certain number of men in the branches stated in the signal were to be posted to the places shown. The names of those men were usually left to the C.O., of the station to decide whom he could spare. Our C.O., left those matters to Squadron Leader Smith. I told him I noticed on the order that we were to be posted to a 'works Flight', and those flights were usually gangs of labourers on construction work, or laying roads and runways. During the war civilian firms were still used for work of that nature, but with the manpower shortage they found it difficult to get civilians to leave the mainland and go out to the Western Isles, so R.A.F., personnel were sent instead. I pointed this out to the Squadron Leader who replied that as soon as I arrived the other end I could apply for a remustering to another trade for which I was more suited. I asked him why I could not do that now from Ruislip, and he said it was too late now as it would take several weeks and we had to move off within ten days, I could do it only from the new station. Of course, that Squadron Leader had no idea that at the beginning of the war I had written to my ex-chief Sir Andrew Duncan about this same kind of misuse of manpower and that he had immediately taken steps to rectify the situation. However, I had now been in the R.A.F., for three and half years and learned my own way about, I knew the system, and had learned how to work within it, if something was wrong with my position I would rectify it myself, I certainly was not going to bother Sir Andrew this time, the government and cabinet were far too much exercised with the serious war situation. Because we had heard rumours that this kind of thing could happen I had already made up my mind what I would do should it arise. I had noticed, when I was stationed at Brize Norton and at St. Athan, and had seen the same at a couple of camps near us at Ruislip where I had to show films, that while the dental surgery was near or part of the medical quarters, it was a unit quite separate, there was just the dental officer and his orderly who was referred to as the D.C.O., which meant Dental Clerk Orderly, whose duties were as a receptionist with all the paper work, assisting the

dental officer at the chair, mixing fillings, sterilising the instruments, and keeping the dental stores. Our dental surgery was quite separate from the sick quarters, it was on the other side of the camp and I had seen how that D.C.O.'s position was the nearest to my own in the way of being a freelance. The orderly worked ~~entirely~~ with the dental officer during all the hours on duty and was not accountable to anyone else on the station. I worked only with the chaplain who I saw only briefly on most days and on some not at all. Now it so happened when I was a student at Norwood and had taken our medical course, I had taken with it a dental course at a hospital in London, but at the time when I was thinking I might have to remuster to another trade, the R.A.F., had ceased taking men and were employing only Waafs as D.C.Os. It was probably the first branch to make the change. While I was in the sick quarters I heard one of the orderlies say that our Waaf D.C.O., was off sick and there might be some delays in treatments. I made a mental note of that and in the afternoon strolled casually over to the Dental Centre. The surgery door was open and just inside I saw the Dental Officer struggling to open some boxes of dental stores. "Can I give you a hand with that, sir?" I said. He thanked me and said he would be glad of some help. While sorting out the bottles and packets I told him I was interested in the branch as I had had some dental training in the past and would have remustered to it but for the fact that they were now taking only Waafs. "Oh, that is changing now," he said, "there is a new section being formed, mobile surgeries, six-wheeler Fordsons." Then he explained they were to follow mobile airfields to be established behind the troops when they invaded Europe and pushed inland to liberate the countries occupied by the Nazis. He said they required men only for these jobs. Although at that time I did not want to give up the convenient job I had, at least I knew that I could now remuster to the dental branch if changes made it necessary. So when Squadron Leader Smith said he could not stop my posting to Stornoway I knew what I would do as soon as I arrived. It was my first visit to Scotland and when the train got as far as Inverness  on a sunny Spring day in 1943, and wound its way along valleys through the mountains

and along the edges of beautiful lochs to Kyle of Lochalsh, I thought it was the most lovely scenery in the world and wondered why people went to Switzerland for holidays. Already I began to feel glad that I had been compelled to leave Ruislip, and before long I was to find that, getting away from the bureaucracy of Records, where there were only piles of documents, reels of red tape, and the talk mostly in administrative jargon, for the remainder of my service life I was in touch with the real Air Force, and soon had opportunities for occasional flights, something I had always wanted. The trip by boat from Kyle to the Isle of Lewis, past the Isle of Skye and across the Minch to Stornoway was really thrilling, I had travelled quite a bit in Europe but considered I had never seen anything to surpass this. Until this part of my journey I had travelled alone from London, but on the boat I met others of the men who had been posted with me and when we arrived at the camp just outside Stornoway we found the others. The sergeant responsible for receiving us showed us inside a Nissen hut and we each selected a bed and put our kit away. I noticed the Nissen huts were strapped to the ground with strong cables and remarked about it, to which the sergeant replied that we will find very strong winds suddenly blowing in off the Atlantic ocean and if the huts were not strapped down they would "take off." When the sergeant had finished giving us the 'gen', I took him aside and told him that while I had been posted with the works flight I was not really part of it, I had never worked with the chaps at Ruislip, that I had been a film projectionist, and explained what my other duties were and that I had been told to remuster to another trade as soon as I arrived at Stornoway. He suggested I should go at once and see the adjutant at headquarters. I went, saw the officer, told him I was not part of the works flight nor was I suitable for their kind of work. He got the form for me to fill in applying for remustering to the dental branch, said it might take many weeks before it came through, in the meantime they were short of clerks at headquarters, would I like to work there until I was sent on a D.C.O's course. Naturally I agreed, it was better than laying a tarmac road, and working as a clerk at headquarters meant I did not have to do occasions on guard or on fire picket.

We were told that personnel posted to the Hebrides had to be on the islands for three months before being given any leave or any chance to get back again on to the mainland. I had a calendar hanging up over my desk and like most of the other chaps I began marking off the days towards the completion of my three months, each morning I started my work by crossing out another day. I found it a bad system, it made the time drag and I kept hoping my remastering would come through before my three months were up, but it did not and I was therefor exactly three months from the end of March until the end of June 1943 before my turn came to get off the Isle of Lewis. There was not much work for me to do and what there was I found boring as it was repetitive. Occasionally I was sent out to deliver documents to other sections of the station and that relieved the boredom a bit when the weather was good. However, I found all my interest away from the camp. There was no main gate out of which any of the personnel booked, there were no fences or gates at all, the buildings and huts were just put down on a peninsula walking distance away from the town of Stornoway, with sheep roaming all over the camp, including the runways, proving a menace to the aircraft, as were the many varieties of sea-gulls. Occasionally when aircraft were preparing to take off, airmen had to go along the runway and chase off the sheep. Nobody could get off the island except by having an official warrant to travel on the ferry boat to the mainland, so there was no need to put any fence around the camp, our Nissen hut was by the side of a road which ran along the top of the beach on the south side of the peninsula, so as soon as we got some warm sunshine in May and June I used to go for a dip in the sea. The other chaps in my hut used to think I was mad, they all considered the sea as far north as the Hebrides far too cold in which to swim, so did I, but it did not stop me going for a quick dip, I have always been crazy on the sea and cannot resist going in when I am near it. However, being a slightly built chap I have always felt the cold and that always forces me out before I would, but I always feel exhilarated if I have a short swim around before I come out, even today in my old age. Another interest I found while stationed up there. I became friendly with



a civilian engineer from Edinburgh who was working on our camp, his wife had come with him to the island and they had taken a flat in Stornoway. He was a keen fisherman and introduced me to trout fishing in some of the many lochs near to Stornoway. He had two rods and let me have the use of one of them. His method was fly fishing and he showed me how to select a fly from his varied collection and how to cast one on the line over the surface of the water. My method was to go into the little back garden behind his flat before we started and dig up some ordinary earth worms which I broke into suitable lengths and fixed on a couple of hooks at the end of my line which I flung into the water. On more than one evening's fishing I caught more with my worms than he did with his skilful fly fishing. They were beautiful rainbow trout which we took back to his flat in Stornoway late at night, his wife cooked them and we had an enjoyable meal before I walked back to my Nissen hut after midnight, on one occasion in June it was 2.a.m., before I got back into my bed, but that was because at that time of the year it does not get dark at night. The sun sinks not completely behind the horizon then appears to stay, then slowly move along until it begins to rise again in the east. During that period it was perpetual daylight and not many of us went to bed until the early hours of the next morning. However, although I had these interests on an island which was very boring to most of the men in my hut, most of my time out of camp was spent giving assistance to friends at one of the main churches in Stornoway. When I arrived with the rest of my unit half way through March 1943, I immediately introduced myself to the Church of Scotland minister, the Reverend MacLeod. Nearly everybody on Lewis seemed to be called MacLeod, the rest were either MacIvers or MacDonalds. When the minister knew what my position was in civilian life and that I was taking some preparatory studies for the ministry after the war, he offered me facilities at his church. During the evenings of the week the Church Hall was used for certain activities, but the vestry of the Church was always vacant, except on Sundays. So he gave me a key of the vestry so that I could have a quiet place for study. He introduced me to the lady responsible for the young peoples activities, Miss MacIver, who was a school teacher during the day,

she asked me if I would give a talk to a group of her young people and after that first talk I was invited to address adult gatherings. I really found plenty to occupy me off camp during those three months of waiting for my remustering, it was the time in the camp which seemed to be a boring waste of time. However, at last the time came for my two week's leave home, and then I found what a great advantage I had working at headquarters. Normally the journey home was by ferry boat from Stornoway to Kyle, then by train either to Edinburgh or Glasgow, that journey taking the first day out of the leave. Then those of us going to London or the south of the country took the night train and by time we arrived home it was best part of another twenty-four hours. So for that reason all the chaps who had a long journey were allowed to add the usual day off we had each week, to our leave time. Those of us at headquarters had an additional advantage. The Americans made frequent journeys from the U.S.A., to Great Britain by an air route which required stops for refuelling in Canada, Greenland, Iceland, then to us at Stornoway, from us to the next stop was at Prestwick in Ayrshire, then wherever their destination was in Great Britain. The aircraft they used to bring over important personnel, light freight, their mail and official documents etc., were the old twin engine, propeller driven Douglas Dakotas. There was usually enough room in the rear steerage end of the plane for about half dozen of our chaps. I was told a plane was coming in the afternoon of the day before my leave started and that if I brought to the office with me what kit I would be taking home I would be allowed to finish duty a bit earlier to board the plane. All I had to get officially was a chit signed by the Adjutant saying that I had permission to fly, and as I was working at headquarters there was no difficulty about that. There were only four of us who waited by the plane after it came in and was refuelling. Even after the aircraft was ready we still had to wait a bit because the pilot had gone out by jeep to some remote part of the island to obtain some Lewis tweed. The islands of both Harris and Lewis were noted, and still are well known, for their excellent hand woven tweed. I saw more than one of our chaps with a roll of it they had purchased from a crofter who manufactured it, tucking it into a kit bag to take home when going on leave. It must be

remembered that we were rationed during the war, not only for food but for clothing, and a piece of Harris or Lewis tweed was an excellent gift to take home. But when the pilot returned with another American officer stationed at Stornoway who knew where the tweed could be obtained, he took from the jeep, not a roll of the material as I had seen our chaps pack in their kit bags, but a sizeable bale of it. There was no question of having to declare any goods to customs when going from one country to another by these air crew chaps, they flew from one air force station to another and found ways of wangling around the regulations. When we went aboard we were told to sit on one of the two long padded seats fixed both sides of the tail of the aircraft. It was my first flight ever and I wanted to see everything from the air so I sat by a small window and although our backs were against the sides of the plane I was able to turn around with my face against the window. That first flight was most exhilarating, those old propeller planes were vastly different from the 747 Jumbo Jets I have since twice flown <sup>in</sup> to Australia and back, as well as in smaller jet planes, in the old planes you could feel you were flying, with the pilot manually controlling the machine. The lift-off was like gently rising in a slow elevator and I saw the town of Stornoway gradually receding below. But what impressed me most was the sight of the whole island of Lewis laid out below and I knew then why our lads joked about the island when they said it was so full of water that if the Germans dropped a bomb on it, it would sink. I had walked across the moors with my civilian engineer friend to various lochs to fish for trout on a number of occasions and there seemed to be miles of moorland as well as rivers and lochs, but when I saw it from the air we had taken off over the centre of the island and that part certainly looked as though it had more water than land. Another sight that really thrilled me seeing it for the first time, was when we climbed up through broken clouds. I had been interested in skylscapes for many years, having painted them in my art work, representing their densities and formations in various tone colours, but seen from earth the clouds appear more like patches across the ceiling of the sky, but up there with them I saw some towering up to heights far greater than their widths

and when seen from below we do not really see their three dimensions. It was like sailing through a gigantic sea of icebergs, except that when we contacted one it dissolved into mist around us. I flew several times in the R.A.F., as a passenger after that but that first flight was the most memorable. Arriving at Prestwick it was only a short train ride to Glasgow where I got a bed for the night at a Y.M.C.A., hostel, then took train the next morning to Edinburgh as my engineer friend and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Pratt had gone home for a short break and wanted me to spend a day with them so that they could show me around Edinburgh. All that I was able to get in, even before my official leave time started, through being able to fly from Stornoway to the mainland. After I had arrived home with my family I had just five days out of my two weeks leave, when a telegram came from R.A.F., headquarters at Stornoway saying my re-mustering had come through would I return at once to Stornoway to pick up my kit so that I could proceed immediately to the dental training school in Sidmouth, Devonshire. I knew of course, that the leave days still due to me would be made up at some future time. So back I had to go to one of the furthest points north of the British Isles, in order to clear that camp and proceed to one of the most distant points in the south of England, and there was no flying this time, all trains and boats, but I enjoyed the travelling and saw parts of these islands I had never seen before, all at government expense. It was a shortened course they gave us at Sidmouth, we had to cram it all into six weeks as Air Ministry were in a hurry to form mobile surgeries to accompany mobile medical units that would follow the forces being prepared to invade Europe. Most of us in our group passed our tests and were accepted, we were given a few days leave then told to go to Bracknell in Berkshire where Second Tactical Air Force was being formed. The dental branch was as I had envisaged, units of just two people to a surgery, the dental officer and his D.C.O., (dental clerk orderly). My officer was Flight Lieutenant O'b. Daniels and we soon got to know each other and found we could work a routine that was convenient to both of us. At first all the surgeries were sent to attach themselves to squadrons being formed in various places in the south of England.

It was all very hush-hush, nobody seemed to know exactly what was going on, although we knew it was part of a preparation for an eventual invasion of Europe. We were not long with any unit to which we were attached and it was always the same routine. I had a pay book I carried always with me. As soon as we arrived at the camp my officer had on his instructions, the dental officer went to headquarters and booked in and I went to pay accounts section and produced my book and said we were attached for only a couple of weeks or so. I would then be told which day to attend the pay parade, which was once a fortnight for ranks in the R.A.F., or if we were leaving before a particular pay parade I would inform pay accounts and they would give me the amount of my entitlement before we left. The dental officer had a folding camp bed which he made up at night and, at first slept in the surgery, we carried a bell tent which, when we were travelling was packed on the surgery floor with all the boxes of dental stores. There was also a folding camp bed for me with a couple of blankets and when we arrived at a camp we fixed up the tent and put all the stores in it with my bed where I slept each night. The first time it rained I found the tent leaked in the middle and had to move the stores and my bed away from where I had been sleeping. When I told the dental officer this he said the medical officers on that particular station had told him there were some spare cubicles in the officers' quarters and he need not sleep in the surgery. So we took down the tent and used it as a cover for the stores which we put underneath the mobile six-wheeler surgery and I slept where the officer had previously been. When we eventually arrived at a permanent R.A.F., station in Norfolk, which had been built before the war, the dental officer joined the medical officers at the officers' mess for his meals and sleeping quarters and I ate with the medical orderlies and slept in the surgery in the medical building. We kept to those arrangements thereafter until I was taken off that mobile unit. We moved to Newmarket in Cambridgeshire, which was a temporary camp erected in the grounds of an estate owned by a notable person and was one of the places used for mobilizing units ready for the invasion of Europe. The large house was used as headquarters as well as for housing the officers, and in the grounds many huts had been

erected for the ranks, and also temporary workshops and office buildings. Again my officer was accommodated at the officers' mess and I was told to make my own arrangements about sleeping quarters. The camp was crowded and when I saw the adverse conditions in which the men were squeezed together, I decided to continue to sleep in the mobile surgery. We had been there only about a week when I caught influenza, at least that is what it felt like. It was at a weekend and we had nothing to do, my officer had gone off somewhere so I took things easy on the Saturday. By Sunday I felt worse so laid in for most of the day, but that night I knew I had a very high temperature. Monday morning I decided to report sick, left a note for my officer and went to the sick quarters. Outside were a few men waiting to go in when told to do so. There was nowhere to sit and my legs were very shaky, I had found it difficult to walk from the mobile surgery to the sick quarters. I leaned against a wooden fence and felt my legs going. The next I knew I had collapsed on the ground. One of the airmen went inside and told the medical orderlies, two of whom brought out a stretcher, laid me on it and carried me inside. They called a medical officer who took my temperature, asked me a few questions, then said to the orderlies "he will have to go to the ward." They laid me in a room nearby on an examination couch while those reporting on the sick parade were examined and eventually three of us were taken in the ambulance to a fairly large house outside the camp a little further into Newmarket, they carried me in the stretcher into the ambulance, the others were walking patients. The treatment was the usual tablets and sleep. All I have ever wanted when I have had 'flu, and I have had some very bad bouts, is to be left to sleep, and if I can sleep I can recover. However, in the armed services you are put to bed only if you have a temperature, if your temperature is not above normal, however ill you feel, it is just M and D, - medicine and duty. So by the fourth day in bed my temperature began to go down, on the fifth day I was told to get up and walk about a bit. Now whenever I have had 'flu it has always left me very weak, so too on this occasion when I put my feet out of bed I found my legs were like jelly. I sat

on a chair next to the bed, but it was about an hour before I managed to hobble along to the ablutions, because I very much wanted to shave. Yet the very next day, my sixth day, when the medical officer came to visit the ward just before midday, he told me as soon as I had my meal I could collect my kit and leave to rejoin my unit. Then he handed me a note from my dental officer. In the note he explained that he had moved on to the next post without me, that he had left my kit at the sick bay where I was, then there were directions as to where he would be and how I would get there by train, naming the village where the nearest railway station to the place was. He had also left my bicycle in the rack outside the sick bay, for after I had been posted to the mobile unit and we were attached here and there in remote places, I found the bicycle was very handy for reaching the nearest village and railway station when I wanted to visit my family at a weekend. That bicycle proved to be my only means of reaching my dental officer and the mobile surgery. The medical officer, nor anyone else at Newmarket seemed concerned that they were discharging a still sick and very weak patient with orders to reach his unit without bothering to find out how he was to reach it with a load of kit on a push bike and no railway warrant to cover the rail journey from Newmarket to the nearest station from which I could make the remainder of the journey by bike. The only authority I carried was my permanent pass which got me a service men's concession of about half fare, and a note from my dental officer with the name of the place where I would find him. Outside the sick bay I laid the heavy kit bag across the handle bars of the bike, fixed my full pack on my back and a full haversack over my shoulder. I already had my great coat on although it was quite a nice autumn day, but being a sick man only just out of bed I felt cold and decided it was the easiest way of carrying the great coat with my load of kit. The road from the sick bay to the camp was a gradual incline all the way up and I found I had not got the strength to pedal the bike, so I walked up slowly holding the handle bars on which the kit bag was heavy enough to settle itself between the curves of the bars. It was early afternoon but I knew it was not possible to make the journey that day for it was difficult place to reach in Norfolk from Cambridge and I might have to

change trains and eventually arrive there in the early hours of the morning and I felt too weak for that. I decided to report to headquarters and as I was officially in transit, ask for a pass so that I could put up at some bed and breakfast place in Newmarket for the night and proceed as early as possible in the morning. Most airmen would have reported to the guard room and would have been directed to the transit hut, which on that camp was overcrowded and I would have had difficulty in finding a bed. I had worked in headquarters on another camp and knew a better routine that by-passed the guard room. After I had entered the camp grounds I leaned my bike and kit against a tree and sat down on the grass for a while as I was exhausted. After ten minutes or so I left the things there and walked to the headquarters building with the intention of seeing the station Warrant Officer. However, I found the chap who was in charge was a Flight Sergeant, so I explained that I had just been discharged from the sick bay and had to join my unit in Norfolk, that it was too late to travel that day and I needed a bed for the night, then I added "I'm a sick man, Flight Sergeant." He looked at me and replied "I can see you are." I had seen my face in the mirror when I had shaved that morning, I looked like someone from Belsen or Buchenwald. I was encouraged for a moment when I discovered a man, among all those who held authority in the armed services, who was human, for I had come to believe during the years I had already spent in the R.A.F., that war degrades men, so many, under survival conditions, seemed to have discarded any feeling of human kindness and had become insensitive and callous. Those of today's generation who have never known life in the armed services in days gone by may not understand this, but to give the example of a man going sick, when an airman reported sick he was looked upon in the first place as a possible scrounger, and the job of some medical officers appeared to be, not so much to find out what was wrong with the man but how much was right with him. If he could walk and talk and his temperature was not above normal he was labelled M. and D, and sent back to carry out his duties and help fight the enemy. If he had a high temperature he was segregated from the other men in case he spread some infection and put to bed in a ward until his temperature went down. In my case, I not only had a very high temperature but was literally picked up off the ground, looking like death,



and carried into the sick quarters, but from the moment my temperature was down I was classed among the potential scroungers. As a matter of fact my temperature was shown to be below normal and that was no doubt why I felt so cold. However, as I have said, the Flight Sergeant proved to be human and when I told him if he gave me a pass permitting me to find my own bed and breakfast outside the camp, I was prepared to do so at my own expense, he immediately agreed to do so. He said if I saw the condition of the transit hut I would not want to sleep there and he did not think I should. When I walked out of the camp wheeling my load on my bicycle I felt a bit more encouraged and I knew what I was going to do. I made my way to the Methodist Church I had seen in the town. As I have already said when describing my time at Ruislip, through the influence of one of the best of the chaplains there, the Methodist padre, I had decided to quit the Church of England and took some preliminary studies in preparation for entry to the Methodist ministry when war ended. The R.A.F., still had me marked on official records as being C of E., but wherever I was stationed after leaving Ruislip I introduced myself to the local civilian Methodist minister, and on many of the Sundays when I was off duty and not able to get home, instead of conducting my own service at Putney, I took a service in one of the Methodist churches in the country. The Methodist denomination has always had more churches and chapels than ministers but has always maintained a system of local preachers, laymen who have taken a course of studies, passed the required standard and entered on an accredited list of local preachers. The minister might have a number of churches under his charge, all of which expect to see the minister at regular intervals, and on those Sundays when he is not conducting their services they know they will be getting local preachers. During the war many of those laymen were in war service and ministers had great difficulty in filling the appointments, so they were always happy to see me when I arrived at a new station and introduced myself. At Newmarket I knew we were there only for a short stay and had not had time to meet the minister when I was taken ill, but I had seen the church and knew I would find the name and address of the minister on the church board outside. It was the Rev. W.H.Evers, The Manse, 4, Exning Road, Newmarket. I was going there

for one purpose only, not this time to introduce myself as an accredited preacher, but to ask him if he would direct me to a suitable place where I could sleep for the night. Now, for any reader of this who may not know I would explain that Newmarket is a well known horse racing town, indeed one of the finest race courses in the world is there besides having the headquarters of the jockey club in the town. At certain times of the year many people visit the town and for that reason there were in those days, and I believe still today, a number of smaller boarding houses where people are accommodated for bed and breakfast, as well as some larger hotels. It was very likely that among the members of his church the minister would have one or two people who were proprietors of boarding houses and he would be able to recommend me to one of them. The minister's wife, Mrs. Evers, opened the door to me and looked almost shocked when she saw a ghost-like creature in R.A.F., uniform. Before I could utter a word she said "come in." I explained I just wanted to know if she knew of a place where I could get bed and breakfast for one night, she said, "yes, you are going to stay here." The minister had come into the hall, looked at me and said, "indeed, you need not go any further than this house." They said their son had just gone back to college, his room was vacant, I could sleep there. They nursed me up for the rest of that day and I retired early to bed. In the morning, after a good meal, I said I thought I could travel as I had been ordered to proceed as soon as I could get a train. I have been grateful to a number of kind people in my lifetime, but none more so than to the Reverend and Mrs Evers for their help when I needed it so much. It was some years later when I was a probationer minister in the Methodist Church at Brighton when I saw in a list of supernumeraries the name of the Rev. W.H.Evers, in his retirement he and Mrs. Evers had settled in Worthing, a neighbouring town of Brighton. I went to the address in the list and once more the door was opened to me by Mrs. Evers. This time I was not in uniform and as we were enjoying a lovely summer in that year of 1952 and I lived only a short walk from the sea and went for my dip almost every day, Mrs Evers looked at a much healthier chap

on her doorstep this time than she saw at Newmarket in 1943. However, when I introduced myself and reminded her of the last time she saw me as a very sick man, she remembered at once, and once more said, "come in." She said the Rev. Evers had gone to watch cricket but she knew he would be in soon, in the meantime she made some tea and by time it was ready he came in and joined us in a cup. They were glad to hear I was on the last weeks of my probationary period and soon to be ordained and we sat and talked for some time. Then just before I left they said, "now we will tell you something that we have often thought about since those war days at Newmarket." "During the years we occupied that Manse in 1942 to 1945, we had literally hundreds of airmen and Waafs go through our hands, often entertaining them at the Manse and organising functions for them at the church and giving personal help to some of them with their problems, and now you (indicating me) are the first and only one ever to come back, or contact us in some way, to show appreciation for what we were able to do during that difficult time." As I left their home I felt very glad I had been to visit them in their retirement, I had not forgotten, nor could I ever forget their kindness to me when I needed it so much, and I was glad I had gone back to let them know how grateful I would always be. On the autumn morning when I left them in 1943 I wheeled my bicycle load of kit to the railway station, not attempting to ride it just then. At the station I asked the chap in the booking office how I could get to a place called Weasenham Hall, which was where my unit had gone, all I knew was that it was somewhere in Norfolk. It took the booking office clerk some time to trace where he thought it might be. He found on the map two little villages near each other named Weasenham All Saints and Weasenham St. Peter, they are about ten miles north of Swaffham, he thought Weasenham Hall must be somewhere there. There was no railway near those villages but there was a line running through East Dereham and north of that town was a village where the train would stop and from that station I could cycle about seven to eight miles to the two Weasenhams. I have forgotten the name of the village now and as those railway lines no longer exist I cannot trace it, so many convenient railway lines were closed and dismantled about ten years after the war, for economic reasons we

were told. I do know those railways were a godsend to me during the war, I was stationed at a number of different R.A.F., stations around Norfolk and all of them were near enough to a rail line and most of those lines connected with a junction at Wymondham from where I could get to London when I wanted to get home for a few hours. It was to Wymondham where I had to go from Newmarket and I was told to change there for the village station from which I had to cycle the rest of the way. Although I had started fairly early from the Methodist Manse, I had to wait for the right train from Newmarket, then again, when I did eventually reach Wymondham I had another long wait, during which I found a buffet and had a snack and a drink, but by the time I reached the station to which I had been directed, being late autumn it was already dusk and I had pedalled my bicycle only a mile or two along country lanes when I had to stop to switch on my lamps. All vehicle lights were masked with just a narrow slit allowing a limited beam to shine through, this was because of the air raids blackout, but I could just pick out my way along the road. I had quite a load on the bike, but I had been used to cycling for some years and although I was very weak through my illness, I found once I got my rhythm going I could just ease the bike along. Fortunately, it was flat country there, it was a calm evening, there was no wind blowing. At last, after winding along lanes for some time without meeting a single vehicle or seeing a single person, I came to a wider part of the lane where new concrete had been laid. I could see at that point the old lane turned round to the right but the concrete continued straight in front through a wide gap where the hedgerow had been dug up to allow a concrete road to run through. As I came level with the hedge I stopped, then I saw by the restricted beam from my cycle lamp that as far as I could see it was all concrete and knew it was what the ticket collector at the station told me I would find, a long concrete runway which had been laid down but for some reason not finished. He had told me to continue straight across it slightly to the right and I would find another lane on the other side leading to a small village. I found it just as he had described and had gone only a few yards along the lane when I came to a couple of houses and saw a lady about to enter one of them, she was the first person I had

seen since leaving the railway station, and I must have been riding for over half an hour. I stopped and asked her if she could please direct me to Weasenham Hall. She gave me directions and said I would come to a high brick wall running alongside the road for some distance, which enclosed the grounds of the stately home which had been taken over by the R.A.F., for the war. She said I would probably find the large main gates locked but there was a door in the wall near the gates which the service personnel used. Another ten minutes ride and I found what the lady had described, there was just room to get my bike and kit through the side door and inside the grounds I could just make out in the darkness the dim outline of a large building which was Weasenham Hall. Then I saw for a moment a chink of light as a door opened and shut and I walked with my bike towards it. The chap who had come out came in my direction and I saw with the light of my bike lamp he was a medical orderly. I asked him if he knew where my dental officer was and when I said Flight-Lieutenant Daniels the orderly said, "yes, I've just left him, come with me." I leaned my bike against the wall of the house and followed the orderly through the front door of the house into a spacious hall which was well lighted and while all the woodwork looked like solid oak and well kept, the walls looked bare as though oil paintings and decorations which previously hung on them had been removed while the building was being used for war purposes. The orderly asked me to stay where I was and said the officers had just finished their evening meal but were still in the dining hall. He walked across the entrance hall to some double doors on the other side and when he opened one of them to enter I saw a beautiful lighted chandelier hanging from a high ceiling, he left the door ajar while he went for my officer and everything in there looked bright, warm and cosy, it occurred to me that after the camping conditions on our mobile units at least the officers were enjoying luxury. I was exhausted after my journey and very unwell, all I wanted was a bed somewhere so that I could sleep. My dental officer followed the orderly into the entrance hall where I was waiting, looked at me, screwed his face as though he had seen something horrific and said, "my God ! who sent you out looking

like this ?" I told him the medical officer at Newmarket considered I was fit enough to rejoin my unit. "Wait a moment," he said, and went back into the dining hall. A couple of moments later he came out again with a medical officer, who looked at me, then asked me the same question, "who sent you out like this ?" I told him the medical officer at Newmarket said I was fit enough to rejoin my unit. He turned to my dental officer and uttered something under his breath that I did not catch, then called the medical orderly over and said, "fix this man up with a bed, then get him a suitable hot meal." Then to me he said, "as soon as you have had a meal, go to bed and in the morning I will see you and if I think you are fit enough to travel I will send you home on a week's sick leave, get all the rest you can and by the time you return your medical report should be through to me." This humane treatment cheered me up a bit and although I did not feel like eating, I was grateful for the hot soup the orderly got me in the airmen's dining room. As soon as I got into bed I fell asleep. I awoke in the morning with the sound of the chaps moving about and a corporal came to me and said, "take your time chum, have a shave if you feel like it, and some breakfast, and I'll tell you when the medical officer will see you." After breakfast I was taken to the office of the medical officer who asked me how I felt and I told him I was sure I was alright to travel, so he made out my pass and travel warrant. As a matter of fact I was not looking forward to the cycle ride again back to the railway station from which I had cycled the day before, it being the nearest station to Weasenham Hall, but the medical officer had also thought of that. He said that they had one of their light vans going up to London for medical stores that morning and thought it best if I went up with the lads and they could put me off at a convenient London Underground station where I would not have far to travel to my home. They were going to south east London, I lived in the south west, but the Underground went right through to my district. This arrangement certainly saved me having to get to the out of the way station in Norfolk, then change at Wymondham for a London train. The medical officer said my dental officer wanted to see me to give me instructions before

I left. The dental officer told me he would be moving to a new station before I returned. It was at Fakenham in Norfolk and he gave me written instructions as to how I would get there. He told me to take home only what kit I would need, he would take the remainder with my bicycle in the mobile surgery to the next camp. The week's sick leave at home gave me a chance to rest and recover and when I rejoined my dental officer at Fakenham he said he thought we would be there for a few weeks, so I introduced myself to the Methodist minister in the village who put me on his preaching plan for the Sundays I would be available and also asked me to give a hand with the youth work on a couple of evenings during the week. We were at Fakenham only three weeks when we were ordered to move again to a permanent R.A.F., station at Swanton Morley near East Dereham. Fortunately it was only ten miles away from Fakenham and had a single track railway between the two villages, so I was able to keep contact with the church work I had undertaken. Swanton Morley being a permanent station my officer was accommodated at the officers' mess. We carried out our treatments no longer in the mobile surgery but in a well equipped, up to date surgery which was part of a modern medical complex that included not only a ward for bed patients but an operating theatre as well. This was because it was an air operational station, planes were going out on bombing missions both by day and night. While we were there they were engaged mostly in bombing the enemy's defences along the French coast, all part of the softening up in preparation for the invasion of Europe. We had a small room for stores additional to the dental surgery, so I put my camp bed in there while I was accommodated in the camp. But it was not for long, I never went back on that mobile surgery again and before long I was back on what they termed a static station, or we referred to as a permanent station, and no longer mobile. It was that dental officer and the medical officer with him who had seen how ill I was when sent out from Newmarket, that made moves on my behalf and they had begun while I was home on sick leave. As soon as he knew action was being taken higher up he had a talk with me. He said he thought I should never have been put on

a mobile unit. Most of the other D.C.O.s were in their twenties, one or two perhaps were about thirty years, I was forty-one at that time. When the medical officer at Weasenham Hall saw my condition when I arrived from Newmarket he thought there must be something seriously wrong with me. Up to that time he had not seen my medical record, neither had my dental officer, being mobile it was always chasing around after me, and we kept moving. Fortunately for me my officer did not see my medical record until after we had been together for many weeks, during which time we had got to know each other quite well. Not only did he find me in my service work reliable and capable but, in spite of the differences in our ranks, we had got to know each other as two human beings thrown together in war conditions, for most of our time we were just the two of us isolated from all other service personnel except those we treated, then we moved off to another camp and carried out treatments there. We were accountable only to dental headquarters at Reading and our contact with them was only by the records on our paper work, which was my job, the dental officer just signed them. Now that we were at Swanton Morley we were with medical personnel on a large station and at last my medical record had caught up and when my dental officer read what was on it he knew that some injustice had been done to me by someone. The medical record of an airman was known as Form 48. It was a stiff buff envelope inside which were thin sheets of paper known as flimsies on which were recorded the man's fitness and health when he came into the Airforce and any sickness and treatments he had received since. The flimsies were made out in triplicate, one went inside the Form 48, one to medical headquarters and one somewhere else. Inside the flap which folded over the top was a printed chart on which was recorded the airman's dental condition and his treatments. I had handled a number of other airmen's Forms 48 when I had marked up their treatments but I had never seen my own, indeed we were not allowed to see what was recorded on our flimsies in our own Form 48, that alone, I consider, was an injustice to an airman, anything could be written about him and he could never know what it was. Moreover, I had read when studying the Airforce Book,



that which we called the Airforce Bible, "King's Regulations and Air Ministry Instructions," known today as "Queen's Regulations," that no record of an airman was to follow him after three years, it was to be withdrawn and a new record started, and I feel sure that applied to his medical record as well as his conduct record. Yet my medical record followed me for the whole six years of the war. Fortunately, after I settled in at Ruislip it was tucked in among hundreds of other Forms 48 in the steel cabinet and because I never had an occasion to report sick during my three years there it stayed in the cabinet and never came out until I was posted to the Hebrides in the early spring of 1943. But my chaplain at Ruislip had seen it. He was Padre Dodson the first chaplain with whom I was placed as orderly, the one who, as I have already said, was having a conflict with Air Ministry over his accident while he was carrying out his duties. When, shortly before he was posted overseas, he was discussing the matter with me said, "you too, Gilly, if you knew what was written on your Form 48, might want to take legal action against Air Ministry." He went on to say he could not tell me what was on it, a chaplain was allowed to see a man's record but must not disclose it. It was more than his job was worth to tell me, but he suggested when the war was over I ought to go into the matter. That was at the beginning of the war and none of us knew it would last for six years. But he told the chaplain who followed him and I did not know that. He was straight from civilian life, his name was Padre Fletcher. But he was with us only one month when he was posted and I had a succession of chaplains straight from civilian life and I had to brief each of them on service routine. Then, as I have already recorded, after three years at Ruislip I was posted and within three and half months was in the Dental Branch. When our initial training at Sidmouth was finished we were sent to Uxbridge to the dental surgeries there to learn surgery routine. One day I was walking across the barrack square when coming in the opposite direction was Padre Fletcher. He was surprised to see me and said he had been increasingly concerned about me ever since he left Ruislip. Then he said, "well it is about what I saw on your Form 48,

I can't tell you what it is we are not allowed to disclose what is shown to us in confidence." Then he went on to say that if I knew what was written when I was at the R.A.F., hospital at Halton I would want someone to take up the matter with Air Ministry, he had sought the advice of other chaplains as to whether he could take the matter up through the chaplain's branch, but they were doubtful. As he went on he seemed to be very annoyed about something, quite incensed in fact. Then he said, "you see what was said about you applies to all us chaplains too, it reflects upon us, if what that doctor recommended should be applied to you, then we might as well close up the chaplains branch we are all useless." By the time we parted I began to understand what Padre Dodson had hinted to me and I wanted to know what was written on my Form 48, but it never came my way, not until the very end of the war, when by chance, quite legitimately in the course of my duties, it came into my hands. Then I knew why that medical officer at Newmarket had treated me so harshly, even cruelly by turning me out while a very sick man hardly able to stand, to make that long journey carrying a heavy load. He judged me, not on his assessment of my physical condition, but only on what he read on my Form 48. So once more I must jump ahead a bit to the end of the war in order to record what I read, but firstly it is necessary to tell the story from the beginning. A couple of years before the war I had some periods when I suffered from pain in my back. When it became severe and was keeping me awake at night I went to my doctor. He tried several sorts of treatments including sending me to the old Charing Cross Hospital, which was then in the Strand, for a course of heat treatment. I told my doctor that when it was most severe the pain always went through my inside to the front of my abdomen, and he said it could be my appendix. There were periods when it cleared and I was free from the pain, then suddenly it would come back again. At the time when I joined the R.A.F., Reserve and went for my medical examination I was in a healthy condition and without the pain. It did not return until after I had been at Ruislip for about three months. I had a weekend off from Friday to Monday morning and on that Friday night the pain came back and I was awake much of the night with it. On

Saturday morning I went to my civilian doctor who had my medical record about this and had been treating me. It so happened he had been an army medical officer in the first world war and was on the War Office list as M.O., to our local territorials. He said he had thought for some time it was my appendix. He said there was a ward set aside for armed services personnel, chiefly army units camping in the area, at Putney Hospital, which was near where I lived and he decided to send me there for examination. He wrote out for me, to send to my camp, a certificate with a covering letter saying he thought it was appendicitis and that he had sent me to hospital. The first few days at the hospital I went through various tests and X-rays examinations, in case it was kidney trouble. The X-ray for the appendix showed an area of inflammation so it was decided to operate. After the operation the sister told me they had some difficulty in finding my appendix and after some probing it was found long and very inflamed curled around behind the large intestine. She said it was a chronic appendix. When it came to the time for me to get out of bed and on my feet, I found I could not stand upright, something was pulling where they had opened my abdomen which gave a sharp pain if I tried to stretch up. The doctor said it must be a small adhesion and that probably when the internal stitches dissolved, with gentle exercise it would come right. It was obvious they were not sure. In the meantime the R.A.F., medical authorities had written to Putney Hospital saying they wanted to send their own ambulance to transfer me to their own hospital for examination. The surgeon at Putney would not agree, he said they had performed the operation and he could not discharge me from his hospital until he knew I was fit, and that I was in a ward for service personnel. The sister told me that subsequently they 'phoned from the medical quarters at Ruislip and there had been a heated argument between the doctors but the Putney surgeon was adamant that he could not let me go until he considered I was fit and then he would discharge me in the normal way and I would make my own way back to camp and report and the R.A.F., would examine me thereafter. So that is what happened and when I reported at Ruislip

they told me they were sending me to the R.A.F., hospital at Halton to be examined and my medical records to be brought up to date.

When I arrived at Halton I was examined by a doctor who looked at my operation scar and asked some questions. He just confirmed what had been told me at Putney, that when all the internal stitches had dissolved I would be able to stretch upright and that I should keep walking about to help it. Then he said, "tomorrow you will see the psychiatrist." When I went back into the ward I said to the other chaps in the beds near me, "what's the idea of having to see the psychiatrist?" They said, "oh, we all have to see him, whatever is wrong with anyone, we all see him." He was Flight Lieutenant Jones, and when I went into his consulting room the first thing that struck me was how young he looked. With all the books on psychology I had read as a student, beginning with the very early professors MacDougall and Stout and then on to Freud and Jung, I had seen photographs of those men and they all looked quite elderly, but this R.A.F., psychiatrist must have still been a little boy when I was reading psychology. However, the last thing I wanted to do was to let him think I knew anything about his profession, after all he was an officer and I was from the very lowest ranks in the Air Force, I would just listen to him and answer his questions. But his very first question opened up a conflict. He asked me what I was in civilian life and I said a London City Missionary. He asked me what the work included so I gave him a brief outline. Then quite sharply he said, "well that's not much use to the war effort, is it?" I asked him what he meant. He said, "we are at war against the Nazis and religion is not going to help win that war, is it?" Then he asked me what work I was doing in the R.A.F., and I said I had been placed with the chaplains branch, to which he replied that he advised that I got out of it and took up work more conducive to the war effort. I said that my religion had always been bound up with practical help and that when I joined the Air Force I did not leave my religion at home. Then I outlined to him some of my duties at Ruislip, that I was the film projectionist responsible not only for Air Ministry instructional films and Ministry of Information propaganda films but also for the entertainment of the men and that I

was also responsible for the distribution of the woollen goods sent from the U.S.A., among those airmen who were most in need, but he just scoffed at the fact that I was doing this within the Chaplains branch. Then he said "I've seen all I want to see of religion," and told me his father was a Pastor of a church in Wales and that as a boy he was brought up in a strict religious atmosphere. While I cannot now remember the exact phrases he used he had not a good word to say about his father and revealed a hatred for everything for which his father stood, several times he repeated "I've seen all I want to see about religion." He was an officer and the psychiatrist at this R.A.F. hospital, I was just an ordinary airman, but I began to wonder who was psycho-analysing who ? He had obviously carried with him from boyhood an intense aversion to everything for which his father stood and seemed prepared to release his pent up antipathy upon anyone who represented his father. I was inferior in rank to him so I was a prime target for his resentment, I could not answer back, although I did voice my point of view in that interview, but I did not reckon on something he had power to do which I could do nothing about. He made a damaging report on my Form 48 which followed me for the whole six years of my war service in the Royal Air Force. However, the two chaplains who saw that report knew it was wrong, and my dental officer, who had got to know me for some time before he saw that report, when he did see it knew it was unjust. It was during the week's sick leave, when they had sent me home from Weasenham Hall, that my Form 48 was sent from Newmarket to the medical officer with my dental officer and when they read the psychiatrist's report, while they could not challenge it nor do anything to take it from my Form 48, the medical officer knew there was something he could do and immediately made moves on my behalf. However, before the moves he had made could materialise another traumatic experience happened which complicated things. The medical officer had made formal application to have me examined by a Air Force specialist. He knew, of course, that it would take several weeks before I would be asked to appear. The dental officer notified Dental headquarters that this had been arranged and asked that I should be taken off the mobile unit. Again this would take

some weeks for arrangements to be made, so in the meantime I worked in the surgery at Swanton Morley and went to Fakenham some evenings of the week and at weekends to give a hand with the work of the Methodist Church there. It meant that I could not get home for a weekend as I had to be within call in case a signal came through that I had to proceed to some station for the specialist's examination. However, after a few weeks I thought it was about time I had a couple of days home with my family, the dental officer was having a weekend away, so I asked him if I might go home for a few hours, I said I would be back by the Sunday night, he thought it unlikely I would be wanted before the next week so signed a pass for me. We both left early on the Friday afternoon and it was just getting dark by time I arrived home where we then lived near Barnes Common. There was an air raid alert on, the raids had increased over the past two or three months but no bombs had been dropped around our district. However, as the raids on London had been heavier and wide-spread since the earlier lull we had during the summer of 1943, my wife and I had decided to sleep our three children downstairs, the two girls in a bed away from the window in our front sitting room, and our fifteen year old son in a camp bed in the living room. As the evening wore on no raid developed but the alert was still on when the children decided to get some sleep. They had not been in their beds long when we heard gun-fire in the distance which gradually got nearer. I had thought since the beginning of the war that our area held no targets worth while for the German airmen to drop any bombs where we were, but, of course, we did not know. However, German intelligence knew, and we were blissfully ignorant of the fact that the target was almost opposite our house. I knew the small buildings were there behind a brick wall and I had known before the war that they were the workshops and stores of Wisden's the people who make tennis rackets, I also knew they were no longer being made during the war, but I had never thought of asking what was being manufactured there then, and if I had asked I would not have been told. We had no shelter at this house in Barnes. When we lived in Roehampton we had an outdoor shelter, but at Barnes we had neither an indoor nor outdoor shelter. So when our gunfire became really fierce and showed

that there were enemy aircraft above us somewhere, I went into our sitting room and brought our two girls into the back room with us and put them and our boy under our solid wood dining table. My wife went out into the kitchen to get something and was coming back and about to re-enter the living room when there was an almighty explosion in front of the house that felt like a huge giant slamming against the house trying to push it over, at the same time the front door came like a shot from a cannon right down the hall and just missed my wife coming into the living room. She stood rooted to the spot between the parting wall between the front and back rooms, and the open door of the living room, hunched up as a violent tornado of hot, cordite smelling air rushed through the house carrying everything with it, pictures from the walls, ornaments and books from the shelves, cushions, covers, crockery and everything that was not protected. The blackout curtains in the living room disappeared through a huge gap where the windows and frames had been a second before, with a shattering of glass. All our lights had gone out yet the brilliance of the light outside the house shone in like the noonday sun, it reflected off the red brick wall at the end of our back garden and I knew a fire was raging outside. Things raced through my mind in a flash, the training I had in the R.A.F., what to expect when a bomb explodes, I knew after that first rush of pressure, the vacuum left would fill up again with another rush back. It came and I ducked behind an armchair because I knew that what glass had not gone out, would shatter back into the room. The open living room door shielded my wife from it. As soon as it stopped I looked under the table to see if the children were alright. The electric torch I had been holding had blown out of my hand, when I picked it up it would not light but there was enough light in the room from the fire outside. I could still hear gun fire outside and thought the raid was still on, but it sounded more like small arms than anti-aircraft guns. The children said they were alright so I told them to stay until I found out if it was safe for us to get out. I pulled the front door away from the living room and looked towards the gap where the front door had been. It was like a firework display outside and

I saw why it sounded like small arms fire outside, the raid was over but explosions were going up from Wisden's factory. I remembered a whisper I had heard about incendiary bombs being made in Barnes and I could see they were being made almost opposite our house. I went back into the living room which fortunately was the one room that had withstood the blast, told the three children they could come out from under the table. Christine, our youngest said she could not find her slippers, they had blown off her feet and we never knew where they went, yet we were, all of us, without a scratch. I did not want Christine to walk on the broken glass everywhere, so had to carry her out of the wrecked house. As we were climbing over heaps of plaster and broken wood I heard a crackling sound coming from upstairs and said it must be an incendiary bomb that had come through the roof. The German airmen usually dropped a shower of incendiaries with their high explosives to set light to everything around the area of the explosion, our airmen did the same when they raided the German cities. It was the small explosions from each of those charges that were going up in the firework display across the road where they had been making these small fire-raising bombs. We had been taught in the R.A.F., how to deal with these bombs if they dropped on our installations. I wanted to salvage as much of our furniture as I could, I did not want it all to go up in flames, so I said to my wife I would have to deal with it before we left the house, handed Christine to her and told her to stay with the children near the opening where the door had been, then I climbed up over the debris on the stairs on my way up. I got only as far as the bathroom when I saw what the crackling sound was. It was not an incendiary bomb, but water pipes which had always been concealed behind the plaster of the walls had been forced out by the suction of the blast, twisted into fantastic shapes with splits in them out of which were spraying jets of water everywhere. Quickly I went back down over the debris on the stairs to a recess underneath, to the water mains tap and turned it off, and then turned off also the electricity and gas mains, which, in my concern to get us all out of the unsafe house, I had overlooked. Just as I joined my family an air raid warden came



to the front of the house, could see us just inside reflected in the brilliant glare of the fire outside, and called out "anyone need help?" I replied, "no, we are all alright." He came just inside and looked at the mess and said, "you sure?" I said, "yes, look we are all alright," then showing Christine to him said, "I'm carrying this one because we have lost her slippers." He said, "well you are all very lucky." He thought that anyone in that wrecked house must be injured. Later we found we had one or two minor things, our eldest daughter Margaret had small blisters around her ankles and the doctor said they were minute pieces of powered glass which had blown through her skin without showing any signs and were later coming out in the fluid of the blisters. I also, within a couple of weeks discovered I had lost the high tones in my hearing. When my children remarked on the chirping of the crickets near the house where we went to live, I could not hear them, although I had always heard them clearly at our home at Roehampton, and I have never heard a cricket since. The warden wanted to get us to temporary shelter, but I told him I had a friend the other side of Barnes Common who had enough room for us and we were going to him and his family. We arrived at John Hedges' lodge, attached to the depository where I had so often repaired pianos and other musical instruments before the war, just as we <sup>WERE COVERED IN DUST AND SMELLING OF CORDITE.</sup> for we had not been able to salvage anything from the house. John Hedges, being the manager of the depository and removals department, said that as soon as his removal men came in early the next morning, which was a Saturday, he would send them with a van to our bombed house and I could go with them to search and save all I could. When we arrived soon after daylight the men hesitated to go in until I assured them that what was still standing was quite firm, none of it would come down. Inside they remarked on the fact that we all came out the night before without a scratch on any of us, it did not seem possible that anyone in that house could not have been injured. Some of the furniture was badly damaged, some only scratched, but we got all of it out and in the removal van and down to the depository where my wife and I sorted out what she and the children would need to take into the country where we decided they should evacuate. We packed into two suit-cases their best things

and made up bundles in old sheets of other things, tied at the top with string, as we had seen other evacuees and refugees carrying when leaving London after bad air raids. As soon as the post office opened I sent off two telegrams, one to my R.A.F. station at Swanton Morley saying I had been 'bombed out' which was the familiar term in those war days, and saying I must stay to clear up and go through all the official routine, which meant attending the Town Hall to register my wife and children as a 'bombed out' family and to sign forms making claims for grants of compensation for the losses we had suffered, and the other telegram to the Methodist Minister at Fakenham to say I was sending my family to him, would he please arrange for their accommodation. I knew, of course, that both he and some members of his church were on the committee for the care of evacuees coming to their area. John Hedges provided transport for us to Putney Bridge station and from there we went by Underground train to Liverpool Street Station. Arriving at the station we found crowds of other evacuees with bundles like those my family were carrying, all seeking trains to leave London. It had been a very heavy air raid the night before and people were wanting to get away. I would have liked to have gone but I could not as it was not possible to attend the Town Hall until Monday morning, that is why I had to telegraph to my camp. This put my dental officer and the medical officer, both in an awkward situation, for I should not have been away from the camp while I was waiting for orders regarding my examination by the specialist. However, I found out on Sunday morning that they had found a way out of it. My family were met at Fakenham by the Minister and ladies from the church, who told me later when I arrived that when my wife and children got off the train they smelled strongly of cordite and acrid smoke and one young lady who was a hair dresser had to start by washing out of their hair soot and plaster dust. After I returned from Liverpool Street to Putney I spent part of the afternoon with John Hedges stacking our things in an allotted space in the depository so that we could be entered on the register of clients with things in store. Saturday night there was no air raid, so I got some sleep to make up for what I had lost the night before. On Sunday morning a police sergeant came from the Putney Police Station to say he

had received a telephone call from my R.A.F. station asking him to check up on me at the address I had given on my telegram, and to tell me the M.O., had given me a week's sick leave and was sending by post my pass and subsistence allowance. So that was how they got out of the awkward situation. The police sergeant knew John Hedges, in fact most people in Putney then knew John Hedges of the well known department store of Mathias & Company, so when he saw me in my uniform with him, there was no need for any questions, the sergeant just told me I was alright, I was covered, so I could relax for a few days.

Part of Sunday afternoon I spent going through our chest of drawers in store, sorting out small things I thought my wife might need, which I packed in a small hand case I carried when going on a weekend with the rest of my kit in a haversack. I had intended staying in Putney for a few days then joining my family half way through the week. But that Sunday night the German bombers came back and we were right beside the railway that ran from Clapham Junction to Richmond and other parts of Middlesex. Railways were always targets for German bombers, that is how Mathias's department stores were totally destroyed early in the war, they were right beside the railway. The depository was further along nearer to Barnes but also right beside the railway. As the raid developed John Hedges went to check up with Roy, the young chap who was fire watching in the depository. We heard bombs drop some short distance away and I and Mrs Hedges decided to shelter under a large solid dining table for there was no other shelter in that lodge. Just as we got underneath the Germans dropped a stick of three or four bombs right near somewhere along the railway, our floor rocked and the solid brick walls of the house shuddered. It shook again as others dropped further along, I had only just gone through our own lot and was hoping I was not going to have a second packet. In my mind I told myself "if I get out of this lot I'm not staying here after I've been to the Town Hall tomorrow, I shall clear out and join my family in a quieter place." When the raid ended I was grateful that nothing had hit us and we got a few hours sleep before the morning. After I had been to the Town Hall on Monday morning and signed the necessary forms including a claim for our damaged and

destroyed things, I went back to the depository to collect my kit and the packages of necessary things for my family, said farewell to Mr and Mrs Hedges and made my way to Liverpool Street station to spend the remainder of my week's sick leave with a quiet rest.


At Fakenham I found the Methodist Minister and his helpers had accommodated my wife and two daughters at one house and my son and myself at another. We were grateful to be with helpful friends, but it was not for long. I had been back in camp at Swanton Morley only a couple of days after my sick leave when my dental officer told me he had received orders that I was being posted to a static station, which meant I would no longer be mobile. I was to proceed to Wrexham in North Wales. Fortunately I had left my bicycle at Swanton Morley so I had that to help convey all my kit, and once more I was cycling to railway stations with my kit bag across the handle bars and heavy packs on my back, except that this time the distances to the stations were shorter and I felt much fitter than when they turned me out of the sick quarters at Newmarket. Those at Headquarters responsible for the movements of personnel always routed us to wherever we were posted, stating which stations and where to change and gave us a travel warrant to cover that route. I had to go first to London and there I had only a fairly short cycle ride between stations, and once I was in the train to Wrexham I had no more cycling except from Wrexham station to the R.A.F., camp just outside the town, which was not far. When I booked in at the guard room, the sergeant told me they were expecting me and that some dental stores had been delivered which had been taken in for the time being by the medical people at sick quarters, which, from the guard room door he pointed out to me a short walk away in a secluded part of the camp near a farm. He pointed to a smaller wooden building next to the sick quarters and told me it had been built only a couple of months or so but had never been used, I would be the first person to occupy it, but I would have to go to the medical people for instructions. He then handed me the keys of the dental surgery, two pairs, one pair for me and the other for the dental officer when he arrived, one key for the outer door and

one for the surgery. I went to the sick quarters and introduced myself, the sergeant in charge showed me some boxes and packages of dental stores they had taken in and said he would get a medical orderly to help me take them into the dental centre when I was ready. Then he told me they had been informed that a dental officer would not be arriving until in three weeks' time, but in the meantime I had to get the centre ready, check all the stores with the lists, sterilise the instruments, clean and polish everything and generally prepare for the dental officer. It was a Saturday when I arrived and booked in at Wrexham and one of the first things I discovered was that most of the personnel on the permanent staff had the weekends off, except for an occasional duty on either the Saturday or Sunday. It was a Flying Training Command station where most of the pupils were being trained for Bomber Command. I had just left a tour of busy active operational stations where bombing missions went out both day and night and where we also were subject to German air raids. At Wrexham we hardly knew there was a war on. Only once, earlier in the war, when the Germans raided Liverpool, did their bombers pass over Wrexham and drop a few bombs on targets in the mountains near Wrexham. The people I got to know there used to refer to the time when the enemy bombers "set light to the mountains." Later, when I used to organise rambles at weekends, for young people at the local Methodist church, I thought I discovered in those mountains, what the Germans were after. This was certainly my best posting in the R.A.F., from the point of view that it gave me a regular settled job with plenty of time off for my own private preparation for the work I intended to pursue when the war was over. Within a week I had my family in Wrexham with me and was given a living out pass and subsistence allowance to be with them. This was another of the stations where there was limited accommodation and the authorities were quite willing to give married men with families in the area, living out permission and subsistence allowance. At first we were in two separate homes on a housing estate, my wife and two daughters in one and my son and myself at another. However, I had introduced myself to the Superintendent Minister of the Methodist circuit on my first Sunday in Wrexham and he was so glad to have help from a qualified leader and preacher that he put me at once on his preaching plan and also

asked me if I would take charge of the youth work one evening per week and organise young people's activities on Saturday afternoons.

The minister was the Rev. Frederick Speight, who was due to retire but who, along with other elderly ministers, was asked by the Methodist Conference to continue to take charge during the war years, as so many younger ministers were Padres in the armed services. The manse in which he and Mrs. Speight lived was quite a large house, detached and surrounded by a fairly large garden. There were a number of rooms in the house which were unoccupied. We had been in our rooms on the estate only a couple of weeks, when the Rev. Speight came to see me to say that members of the town committee responsible for accommodating evacuees from places under enemy attack had asked him if he would take a family into the Methodist Manse. He had just met me and knew I had brought with me to Wrexham a wife and three children, so he asked us if we would be the family to move into the Manse. We were delighted, and although the house was large enough for our part to be quite shut off from theirs, they said we were to use their sitting room whenever we wanted and the Rev. Speight, knowing I was studying for the ministry after the war, said I was to have full use of his study and books. He had a small room separate from the library which he used as a study and the library was to be mine. There were stacks of books in the shelves and book cases around the walls, and many of them on the subjects I needed. I felt that I was very fortunate indeed to have a posting like this, it proved to be the very best, and when at the end of the war I discovered what had followed me on my Form 48 through the six years of my service, I felt this, my last year in the R.A.F., must have been some sort of compensation for the injustice which had <sup>been</sup> done to me at the beginning. I considered I had been lucky as almost a free lance airman at Ruislip, especially on those days when I was strutting around the Foreign Office knowing that nobody on my camp, not even the chaplain then, knew that the chaplain's orderly was moving in such exalted circles. But now at Wrexham I was almost back in civilian life again. When the dental officer arrived and found he too was on a quiet training station after previously having been operational, decided we would do a five day week, work steadily at our treatments, then close down every weekend. It took

me just fifteen minutes to cycle from the Manse to our surgery each morning. There was no booking into camp, we were a unit on our own not directly accountable to anyone else on our station, not even the medicals, although, being next door to us I knew the orderlies quite well and my dental officer met with the medical officers at the officers mess. So I arrived each morning at 8.a.m., opened up and prepared the surgery for my officer when he arrived at 8.45.a.m., our first appointment was at 9.a.m., and we worked until 12.30.p.m. We then closed the surgery until 1.45.p.m., I cycled to the Manse for my midday meal and got back in time to prepare for the first afternoon patient. I made all the appointments and did all the paper work, my officer just signed everything. We fixed our last appointment each day by 4.p.m., after which I cleared up any denture work, for it was also my job to do the first stages of the dentures after the impressions had been made, I did the plaster casts and wax bites etc., then when the officer was satisfied after making any adjustments, I sent them away to our dental laboratory for completion. Besides this, I worked by the chair with him, mixing fillings, sterilising instruments etc., so there was always plenty to do and the days went quickly, but we were always glad to lock up at 4.30p.m., each Friday afternoon until the Monday morning. Most week days I got away from the surgery by between 4.30. to 4.45.p.m., and was home with my family by 5.p.m. Once off the camp I was back again as a civilian and apart from my share in the chores of the home and shopping, many of my hours were spent in the work of the Methodist church and study. There were signs that this second World War might soon be all over. While we were at our first lodgings on the housing estate on the edge of Wrexham, on the 6th June, 1944, the news had come over the radio of the D-Day landing and invasion of Europe by the combined forces of Great Britain and her allies and by the time we had settled into the Manse, and I in my routine work of the R.A.F., our troops had pushed well towards Germany. In London R.C.Thomson had already told me that the Foreign Office had given him the task, as soon as hostilities ceased, to go to Germany under army authority, to search and collect information relating to war crimes and on two occasions had said he would like me to go with him. When I

had contacted him in London to say I had been posted to Wrexham, he said if I had at any time to go up to London on any business would I stay with him at Pinner and I promised I would, although I had a nagging doubt at the back of my mind about it. I always had a place in London where I could stay, it was with the caretaker of my Chapel in Putney, Mrs. Tucker, who lived in a house opposite the Chapel gates. When we gave up our house at Roehampton at the beginning of the war and before we took the house at Barnes from which we were bombed, I had on occasions stayed overnight at Mrs. Tucker's house. She was a homely woman in a humble home but I felt more relaxed there than at R.C.Thomson's house at Pinner. Mrs. Tucker always felt she could not do enough for me, it was her gratitude for the years I had helped her sub-normal son Jimmy. He was listed by the medical departments as M.D., which in those days of hard, insensitive terms and attitudes, meant mentally deficient. The authorities had him, for a period, collected with other sub-normal children in a school 'bus and taken to a special day school, then brought back home in the afternoon. But Jimmy could not concentrate on anything for many seconds and as he got bigger was very hard to manage. His mother could manage him but she had other members of the family to care for and could not give all her time to Jimmy. I was the only other person who could manage him and when the special school folk said they could not take him any longer, in order to give his mother a break, when I was in the Chapel several afternnoons each week, either preparing for an evening activity or painting scenery for a play by our children, I would let Jimmy have the run of the Chapel, both downstairs and in the balcony upstairs. I used to tell him stories of the pirates who, in the old days,  came up the river Thames to Putney, and as ours was a very old chapel, used to tell Jimmy that perhaps they hid some of their treasure there. He would go along the wooden panels on our walls trying to discover a secret hiding place. The old chapel was only yards away from the river side and it was easy to imagine a pirate situation. But poor Jimmy was not able to concentrate for long even although his imagination had been excited, he would be off on something else and fortunately for him and for me, I found he was very musical and I had two pianos and an organ in the chapel. If the medical experts said he was mentally deficient



what was that deficiency? He seemed to me to be intelligent in some ways. He had a record player and his mother would put on records he asked for. His choice was for operas. He also had radio, or what we called in those days wireless, and often when I have been in his home and a solo from one of the operas has come over the air, Jimmy would call out at once which opera it was from. So when he was with me in the chapel I showed him first simple melodies he could play on the piano with a couple of fingers, then a little later simple chord harmonies and in a very short time he would sit on the piano stool and bang away in great delight at the chords making up his own music, then he would suddenly jump up and go off on something else, he was unable to concentrate on anything for long. However, when he came to adolescence he grew quite big and powerful, his mother felt she could not manage him any longer. She had from time to time taken him to specialists and psychiatrists, but she found it difficult to explain things to them or to understand what they were explaining to her, she was an intelligent enough woman but with very basic education. So when the London County Council authorities made an appointment for Jimmy to see one of the top psychiatrists in this country at the Maudsley Hospital at Denmark Hill in London, she asked me if I would take Jimmy and explain what his and her problems were. She filled in the official forms to say that the Pastor of her chapel would be taking him. From the time I had my interview on Jimmy's behalf with that psychiatrist, through many years that followed, I saw a number of others with Jimmy. That is why, when I was at the R.A.F. hospital at Halton and went before the officer they told me was the psychiatrist, I could not help but notice such a difference between him and those I had consulted on behalf of Jimmy. The one at Halton did not seem like a psychiatrist, he did not speak like one nor act like one, neither did he look like one. He spent most of the time I was with him, scorning his boyhood and disdaining and condemning his religious upbringing under his father whom he appeared to hate. It could be his father was too severe and extreme, but it was not his job to work it off on me, his job, as with any other medical officer at that hospital was to return to duty an airman who was fit, healthy and happy and ready to do his bit for the war effort. Instead of which he sent me back to duty with a tag attached to me which was most derogatory and which

followed me for the remaining six years of my war service. Fortunately that tag was not seen by many people. It was on my Form 48 which for most of its existence was shut away in a filing cabinet with hundreds of others, but every now and again it came out and it was brought out on an important occasion, and the tag most unjustly used to my detriment. It was while I was in the Hebrides waiting for my re-mustering to the dental branch. An order was posted up at Stornoway stating that there was a shortage of officers and that Air Ministry considered there were men in the ranks whose civilian qualifications could be suitable for some airmen to be commissioned. They invited applications. I knew my re-mustering might be some time before it came through, so decided I would apply for consideration as an officer. When I went before the selection officer, he questioned me about my education and experience and at the end of the interview considered I was suitable to go forward. Of course, he had never seen my Form 48 and judged me on his own assessment of my suitability. The next stage was a medical examination. When I entered the medical officer's consulting room I noticed he had my Form 48 on his table. I remembered what two irate chaplains had told me and my heart sank, doubts came into my mind. I had come for a medical examination. The M.O., never touched me nor put a stethoscope near me. He sat one side of a table and I sat the other. He asked me some questions and glanced now and again at my Form 48. The whole interview took only five to six minutes, then he said "that is all, you can go." A few days later a sergeant handed me a buff envelope and said, "the result of your application is in that." When I opened it and read the form inside it stated the medical officer had said "I was not officer material." He was supposed to give me a medical examination, he did not, he judged me not on his own assessment of me but only on what he read on my Form 48. <sup>But</sup> the selection officer <sup>had</sup> said I was officer material, because he had never seen that tag put on me at Halton. All this happened some time before I picked up the virus at Newmarket and when my medical condition stated on my Form 48 was that I was A.I. Fit. At the time when I had my interview with the psychiatrist at Halton, I had no idea of the power a tin god in the armed services can have,

I had met them previously in the Civil Service and I had had my conflicts with some in the Church, but, at least in civilian life we can challenge them if we consider they are unjust whatever power their positions give them, but in the armed services for many years now, there is no hope of even answering back by a man in the lower ranks to one in a superior position. I could only stand to attention and say "yes, sir." Of course, in my boyhood, we still had relics of the past, bad old days, when tin gods were often vicious, particularly among the Poor Law officers when dealing with the lowest classes. Today, even after two World Wars when social conditions have improved, we still have those who can use the power of their positions to make things unpleasant for those beneath them, and from time to time some of us find ourselves being harassed by officials in government departments making mistakes or coming to wrong decisions, and even when the mistake has been shown, still obdurately maintain their positions lest they should humble themselves before their inferiors. But, I come now to one, who in my own personal experience, stands out from all the other tin gods I have known in my many years among them, indeed, I am not sure that I can include him as one of them. It was R.C.Thomson, whom I have already introduced when recording my earlier experiences in the R.A.F., at Ruislip. When I first sat with him in his office in the Foreign Office or walked about the corridors there with him, I felt privileged that he should have chosen me as one of his assistants, indeed, I never met any others from outside that government establishment, as I was, there may not have been any others, yet I felt there must have been some who were better qualified than me for the translation work he was giving me. Then bit by bit as I had more contact with him, and particularly after the first occasion when I stayed overnight at his home in Pinner, I began to wonder if the help he maintained I could be to him, might be of a much more personal nature. My doubts reached their peak with the experience I am now to relate. We had been in Wrexham a little over three months and had settled into a regular way of life at the Manse. My wife, who had been very much subdued after our bombing experience and loss of our home, was now enjoying

conditions better than we had in London, apart from the fact that we had the peace and quiet of no direct enemy activity, we were able to get some additional food stuffs occasionally to supplement our rations. The minister had the oversight of several churches in the country outside the town of Wrexham and among the officers of those churches were farmers, some of whom gave the minister, when he visited them, things we could not get with our ration books, such as fresh eggs, their own butter, cows' milk, vegetables etc., which he and his wife shared with us. On our ration books we could get only dried egg powder and tins of milk powder to which we added water. We were glad enough to come out of the bombing alive and undamaged and in the more restful environment of Wrexham my wife, for a time, was more easy to live with. She did not enter into the activities of the church but just attended the Sunday morning service at our main church in Wrexham. I had the oversight of the young people's activities there but she never entered into that any more than she had back home at the Platt Chapel. I had a preaching engagement at least once every Sunday, either morning or evening, at one of the country churches and on a few occasions at the main church in Wrexham. So we were really back in our peace time routine in Putney, where I had my official duties and my wife had her interests, chiefly with the Choral society to which she belonged. But here in Wrexham she did not join up with any Choral society and bit by bit got bored and drifted back into her old ways and I was back in acting the old pretence that heaven existed in the holy precincts of the Methodist Manse between the Pastor and his wife. However, because the superintendent Minister and his wife also lived in that Manse, I had to bear with some things which I do not think I would have borne with back in our own home in London. After we had been in Wrexham a little more than three months, my wife kept repeating that there were things in store in Putney among our salvaged furniture and chattels and could I go up on my weekend off duty with the R.A.F., and get those she wanted. This was a bit inconvenient for me as the rota of preachers was printed three months in advance and circulated among the churches. However, I asked the superintendent Minister if he could arrange a substitute

for me on one Sunday so that I could go to London for the weekend to attend to other business at my Putney Chapel as well. As I had promised R.C.Thomson I would stay with him if I had at any time to go to London, I wrote to him to say I would be arriving at his home in Pinner on Friday evening 8th September, 1944, a date I will always remember, not only as being outstanding in my own life but one of the important dates in the history of the second World War. I arranged with my dental officer that we would close the surgery early that day so that I could get the afternoon train up to London. I wrote to John Hedges to say I would be at the depository on the Saturday and I intended to stay overnight in Putney and return to Wrexham on the Sunday morning. I arrived at R.C.Thomson's house about 6.p.m., he opened the door to me. I did not see any signs of the inscrutable lady who looked at me reprovingly last time I stayed there. Then Thomson began preparing a meal which his housekeeper had got ready before she left. He said she had to go early for some reason. During the meal he told me that now our troops and the Americans were pushing on towards Germany, all the details of what he would do when he followed the actual occupation of Germany had been finalised. So that he could work closely with the military authorities the Foreign Office had arranged with the War Office that he be given the army rank of lieutenant-colonel. He had already been fitted with his uniform. Then he outlined to me what duties I would have if I went with him. I would have to forgo being demobilised when it was my group's turn, and the groups had already been published, on account of my age and length of service I was among the early groups to be released - No. 9. The first ten groups would be out within a few weeks of the cessation of hostilities. I would have to remain in the R.A.F., but would be seconded to the Foreign Office. My rank would immediately be put up, probably to flight sergeant and I would receive the appropriate rate of pay. R.C. Thomson told me my job would be to process German documents on to micro-films. He said that as I had been the film projectionist at Ruislip, it would require only a short course to instruct me in the new process. It all sounded

very interesting and was an attractive proposition, yet apart from the nagging doubt as to Thomson's real motive and intention in choosing me, when he had the choice of many equally qualified men younger than me and who were not in an early 'demob' group, I shared the overwhelming desire with so many men in the R.A.F., with whom I served, to get the war over and get back to civilian life. In my case I wanted to go forward in my preparation for ordination in the Methodist ministry. I said all this to R.C.Thomson, but he continued to persuade me that I would be losing a great opportunity if I turned down his offer. Then he said, "I'll give you a little while to think about it, but I must know soon as all preparations are being finalised and I will have to contact Air Ministry authorities for you." We talked for some time after our meal, I cannot remember now what matters we discussed but I do remember he repeated what he had said to me on a previous occasion that he hoped to find his friends in Germany and he would take me to meet them. When it was time to go to bed the jolt came, I was quite unprepared for it, for I had expected I would be sleeping in the single bed in the little room I had used on my previous visit. Thomson said his housekeeper had been making changes and alterations in the rooms, the little room was unprepared and the single bed not made up, the lady had to go early so could not do anything about it, "but, never mind," he continued, "I have a large double bed, there's plenty of room for you to share it with me, I'm sure you will not mind, you'll be quite comfortable." I was embarrassed, there was nothing I could do, he said there was no other bed that I could use. I had worked all that morning, travelled all the afternoon, I was tired and wanted a night's sleep, but I had never slept with another male in my life, from my early youth I had always had a bed of my own until I married and shared a bed with my wife. In the R.A.F., of course, every man had his own bed. Thomson gave me no choice this time, he had trapped me and I felt annoyed. He asked me if I would like something to drink before we retired, I cannot remember whether I had a hot chocolate or cup of tea, I know I had something and after the experience I had that night I wondered if there was

anything else added to it. Now, I want to make it quite clear before I recount the following that I am making no judgement of Thomson, I am not accusing him of anything, I am describing truthfully and in accurate detail all that happened to me. I am not describing so much what R.C.Thomson may or may not have done, but I am recounting my own very unpleasant experience on that night of Friday 8th September, 1944. I undressed and put on my pyjamas, then got into the side of the bed Thomson had indicated to me. I turned on my side with my back to where Thomson was getting in his side of the bed. Immediately he snuggled into me putting his knees under my bottom. Then in a soft voice whispered close to my ear, "I wonder if you might have any sexual problems you might like to discuss with me." So many things rushed through my mind in an instant, it is impossible to put that instant down on paper. He knew I was a married man with three children, why should he think I might have sexual problems? He had never met my wife and children but he knew I went home to them when in London, and down to join them at weekends when they were evacuated, and at that very time they were living in the Manse with me at Wrexham, he knew nothing whatever of the strained relationship between my wife and myself for my peace-time profession made us skilled at keeping up appearances, and in any case there were no sexual problems with her. I thought of the years in my church work when young men about to marry came to me for advice about the sexual side of their married lives, and of the newly married couple at my Putney chapel where the young wife came to me to ask if I would have a talk with her young husband who seemed incapable of carrying out towards her that function of their newly married lives which she knew he should. I thought of all the sex talk among the men in the R.A.F., separated from their women folk and who had only the pin-ups over their beds to look at, how, knowing I was the assistant of the "Sky pilot" as they called the chaplain, often sought to bring me into the discussion, and when on one occasion I said to one young chap, "you know, sex is a very powerful and important part of human life, but it is not the be-all and end-all of life, there are other important things in life as well." To which he replied, "well if God has anything nicer than sex, He's been keeping it from me." Now, here is R.C.Thomson, asking me if I have any sexual problems. I said

"no, I have no sexual problems." He said, "well, I have been able to help other young chaps who have discussed their sex problems with me." I thought, does he mean like this in this bed with his knees under their bottoms ? My mind also went back to Speke Hall when that man came to talk to a group of us boys on the evils of sex and masturbation, I was convinced then that the man got an erotic pleasure from describing all the details to us. Now here is R.C.Thomson doing the same thing or at least wanting to do the same with me. I just said, "I've no problems I just want to get some sleep." Just then there was an explosion somewhere outside, it was quite powerful and I judged it must be about four or five miles further into London. The last time I was in London we had our own home bombed, I was not looking forward to an air raid on my first visit since then. The raids by German aircraft had ceased since the D Day invasion of Europe but London and the south of England had been getting the V.l.s. nicknamed by the people the "doodlebugs". I said to Thomson "what do you do if a raid develops ?" He said, "nothing, I have not got a shelter." From that moment I remember nothing more, I must have gone into a deep sleep. It must have been a couple of hours later, perhaps in the early hours of the morning, certainly it seemed after midnight, when I awoke in a hazy stupor, I had a pain in my bladder, I wanted to pass water. Now that was very unusual for me. Always before going to bed I emptied my bladder and never, for the whole of my life, have I had a broken night having to get up for the toilet. I sat up in bed. I heard Thomson say "what's the matter?" I looked in his direction and saw he was out of bed doing something. I said, "I want to go to the toilet." He said, "there's a chamber pot on your side, use that." I got out of bed but found my legs were weak I could hardly stand. I knelt down on the floor to get the pot and in so doing turned a bit in Thomson's direction. He was taking something out of the open bedroom door. I found I could not stand to use the pot, so I knelt by the side of it, but although I was in pain and wanted to pass water, I could not go. Thomson came back into the bedroom, heard me puffing and blowing, and said, "what's the matter ?" I said, "I can't go." He said, "you'll be alright in a moment, stay there and relax." I turned my head towards him, he had a short pyjama jacket on, shrunken above his waist, and the rest was bare, his genitals were exposed.



When we first went to bed he had on his pyjama trousers as well as the jacket, why had he now taken off the trousers as was walking about half naked and exposed. What was it that he put outside the door ? These questions flashed through my mind. Eventually I managed to relieve my bladder a bit and after a struggle it became more normal. That was forty-one years ago, at the time of writing this, and I have never experienced anything like that since, and I am an old man now of eighty-three years. When I got back into bed I was still hazy and weak, but also annoyed that I had undergone such a humiliating experience. In the morning all I wanted after breakfast was to get away to Putney as soon as possible and I had already decided that I would never come and stay with R.C.Thomson again. During our breakfast he again raised the question of my going with him to Germany as an airman seconded to the Foreign Office. He outlined to me more of the details of what we would be doing under the British army protection. Then he got to the point of saying that of course, many of the German hotels had been destroyed by our bombers and the shelling of the cities by our troops, but he knew the army authorities would get us accommodated somewhere, then added that we would have to share a room together, but, of course, he knew I would not mind that. He was wrong, I did mind it, and it was that piece of his information that sealed my refusal of his offer. I told him that on account of my age I could not afford to lose more time if I was to enter for one of the schemes being prepared for ex-service after the war. I knew some men who chose school teaching, including my eldest brother, after he came home from a Japanese prison camp. They went to college on a government grant, which I thought was not really sufficient to keep a family for two or three years until the candidate was qualified. Consideration was given to the fact that many of us had lost the six years of the war in the pursuit of our civilian professions, so we were accepted at a later age than previously had been usual. I was forty-two at the time of discussing this with Thomson and wanted to make my application as soon as possible. It so happened that I was able to enter a scheme within the Methodist Church. They took qualified men as approved lay pastors as the first stage in preparation for ordination. While working as a Pastor on a just adequate

stipend, each candidate had to take external courses of study under the Methodist education department, our mornings given to study and afternoons and evenings to our pastoral work. Altogether our studies took five years, the first three assessing whether, as fully approved lay pastors we should go forward for ordination. I was one of those accepted so had to pursue another two years study. So it was quite true when I told Thomson that at forty-two years of age I did not want to lose any more time, but, of course, I knew in my own mind the real reason why I did not want to accompany him to Germany. However, before I left him that morning he got a promise from me that I would keep in touch with him. I departed from Pinner at 9. a.m., as I wanted to complete my business at the depository before having a midday meal with Mrs. Tucker, the caretaker of my chapel. I took the Underground train to Putney Bridge station and walked over Putney Bridge. Approaching me from the other side was a member of my congregation, we stopped to talk and I asked her if she knew what the explosion was that we had heard in the night. She said there were rumours being spread that it was a rocket and it had dropped on Chiswick, which was on the other side of the river from Putney just a little way further westward. She said it was not a "doodlebug" because they could be heard coming like the sound of a motorbike engine in the sky, then when the engine suddenly stopped you would know it was going to drop to earth. But the missile which exploded in Chiswick travelled faster than the speed of sound, there was the sudden explosion then the swishing sound of it travelling through the air came a second or so afterwards. By midday it was announced over the radio that the Germans had launched the first of a new type of missile, a rocket, which was called the V.2., and that it had fallen on Chiswick. From that time there were a number of others that fell on London and other places in the South of England, one or two on crowded shopping areas, causing many casualties and extensive damage. I had told John Hedges when I wrote to him, that I would stay over to Sunday morning before returning to Wrexham, but once I was back in the district from which we had been bombed and lost our home, and now here was a new missile dropped only a short distance across the river from the depository,

I decided there was no reason why I should stay longer than I needed, so collected the things my wife had asked for from the depository, went to Mrs. Tucker and had a meal with her, then made my way back to Wrexham by train on that Saturday afternoon. It was nice being back in the peace and quiet of North Wales, as I have said, we spent the last year of the six years of the war there, the other five years we had spent in the precarious, hazardous, and often nerve-racking conditions of enemy action. Also, that Christmas of 1944 spent at the Manse, was the most pleasant of all our war Christmases, with the exception of the first in 1939, when we still had fairly ample food stuffs, the others were much leaner, yet we managed to scheme by saving the stamps on our ration books to get a little extra meat for Christmas dinner, because a chicken or turkey was out of the question for ordinary folk. But with the aid of pamphlets issued by the Food Ministry, we were able to make a Christmas pudding and cake by using ingredients such as grated carrots and other ingenious ideas that house-wives would discover and tell each other about. The pity is, it takes a terrible war such as the two World Wars, to create friendliness and helpfulness among people. Our Christmas at the Manse in 1944, seemed like a normal peace time occasion to us. The minister and his wife told us that a farmer friend of theirs was giving them a goose for Christmas dinner, and they would like us to join them in their dining room for that occasion. This meant we could use our rations for the following days of the holiday. I had never eaten goose before, in peace time we usually had a chicken for Christmas dinner and on one occasion we were able to get a turkey, a goose sounded seasonable and exiting to my family. When we shared that Christmas dinner with them we found they also had all the usual trimmings and a real Christmas pudding with fruit like in peace time. People everywhere were much more cheerful, the war news was good and our troops and those of the Americans, had pushed the German army back to their own borders and the Russian armies were doing the same on the eastern front, there was every sign that the war would soon be over. Our children were more settled in Wrexham. Their education had been very much disrupted by being evacuated to various places, then returning to London, and again

being evacuated to Wrexham after we were bombed. Margaret, our eldest had already left school during the early part of the war and got part time jobs wherever the family were living. Just before her eighteenth birthday while at the Manse, she decided to take up nursing. She was a small, slightly built girl and I thought she might not be tough enough to cope with the very strenuous duties and long hours that nurses had to endure during the war, so, at first I tried to persuade her not to make a hurried decision. However, she was sure it was what she had to do and as there was a nurses training school at the main hospital in Wrexham a short distance from the Manse, she applied and was accepted. In that aspect she followed in my footsteps, for if it had not been war time with the difficulties of recruitment, she might not have been considered as having the required qualifications, not having the old eleven-plus examination nor any equivalent. Yet, from those early days at Wrexham she has never looked back, and, with the exception of brief breaks after her marriage when her own children arrived, has gone up from stage to stage, and after settling in Australia with her family, took further courses at Adelaide University and obtained more advanced qualifications, again following me in obtaining most of my education after I had left school, and now today, forty-one years later, at the time of writing this, holds an important post in South Australia, being responsible for organising and co-ordinating the work among families of sub-normal children in the large area north of Adelaide, and she is still studying for further diplomas. There is no doubt that many of us can look back on the war as setting the course we took in life thereafter. The Manse at Wrexham was where I made my resolve and preparation to go forward for ordination in the Methodist ministry, and it was where my daughter Margaret, the first of all my children, born in Riga at the beginning of my career abroad, made her decision that nursing was to be her life's work, leading up to psychiatry and psychotherapy today. Our son Peter, at the time in London when we were bombed was a messenger boy with the Post Office intending to train as a telephone engineer, but in Wrexham he decided to take up work with the railway, doing clerical work at the goods depot. Later in life he proved himself to be a very efficient businessman

having built up a printing industry from very small beginnings to what today is a successful business with the latest electronic machinery. So the fact that their education was interrupted during war did not hold them back, they both made up for it with hard work and continued studies into adult life. But the youngest of our three children, our lovely daughter Christine, was the one who benefited educationally by our move to Wrexham for the last year of the war, and I will always be grateful to the headmaster of a little village school just outside Wrexham, who, when he realised she had been moved around from pillar to post with other evacuees for five years of the war and that she was ten years old when we arrived in Wrexham, an important year in her life, for it was when she had to prepare to take the old "eleven plus" examination, he made sure she had every opportunity to catch up on those subjects she had missed. He arranged for her to have personal coaching after school for one hour on each of three afternoons per week. The result was that Christine passed the examination with good grades which qualified her for entry to Grove Park School, which was then the girls County School, which girls from Junior and Secondary schools in the county aspired to enter. However, the war ended at the time she took her exams in June 1945, and before the new school year began in the autumn we had moved back to London. So Christine never went to Grove Park School but to a girls school which I had always hoped my daughters would enter when we had lived in the Putney and Roehampton areas. It was the old Mayfield School, where, before the war most of the pupils came from families where the parents were financially able to pay for their daughters to be educated there. However, under the government education Acts of those days, a limited number of places were open to brighter girls from elementary schools passing the required grades of the 'eleven plus' exams and who were considered suitable for one of those places. When I made some enquiries in the early days before the war, with Margaret in mind, I found there was no likelihood of a cash grant with such a place and working class parents who were fortunate enough to get a daughter there, would still have to pay quite a lot for uniforms, books, sports equipment and occasional projects, and on my small salary we just

could not maintain that expenditure, so I had to resign myself to the fact that I would not get Margaret there, but still hoped that by the time it got to Christine things might have changed. They did, not so much my financial position, but by the time Christine qualified the war had changed many things. There was only one other important thing that happened while I was stationed at Wrexham, which was that at last the overstretched medical services of the R.A.F., got around to sending me for examination by one of their specialists. I was sent to a medical centre at Bridgnorth, which was a convenient train ride from Wrexham so that I could get there and back in one day. The result of the examination was that the specialist reported that there was nothing to indicate what virus I had picked up at Newmarket, that he could find nothing wrong with me and for my age he considered the work I was doing in the R.A.F., was quite suitable. I did notice when he was questioning me that he occasionally glanced at my Form 48, but while I still had not seen what was written in that Form, I must have given him all the right answers to his questions. Soon I was to read for myself what the psychiatrist at Halton had written in that damnable document. For the first stage in my demobilisation procedure I was sent to Boreham in Essex. It was only a short cycle ride away from where wife's parents had retired to a cottage just before the war, so I and my family moved together from Wrexham, except our daughter Margaret who remained at the nurses training school to complete the first stage of her training. My wife took Christine with her to her parents, and as Peter transferred on the railway from Wrexham to London, I arranged with Mrs. Tucker to have him at her home until my demob was complete and I returned to Putney to find a new home near where we had previously lived. As soon as I arrived at R.A.F., Boreham I applied for a living out pass, was giving one immediately and cycled between the camp and the cottage for the three to four weeks I was there. The dental officer with whom I had to work at Boreham was also expecting his demob soon. Our work there was chiefly to complete any treatments still to be done before personnel were demobbed. This was one of the instructions laid down in King's Regulations, that airmen had to be as fit as was possible before being sent out of the service and any

outstanding treatments must be completed before allowing patients to leave. On this camp at Boreham our dental surgery was part of the medical complex. All the Forms 48 for airmen about to be demobbed were sent to this medical centre, they were examined by medical officers before the airmen came before a medical officer for final check before being certified fit to be discharged. Inside the flap of each thick square envelope containing the flimsies on which the airman's health record and treatments were written, was a printed chart of dentures, upper and lower sets, and these were marked up showing the condition of the airman's teeth when he entered the service and underneath this chart were lines and columns in which were entered any extractions or fillings he had received under service treatments. It was the dental officer's job to examine these records and to sign against any entry that they were correct. But at each surgery where I had worked and also on the mobile unit, the officer often gave to me the job of entering the records and he just signed them. So in my years in the dental branch I had seen the inside of scores of Forms 48, but I had never seen my own. For one reason I never had any dental treatments while in the R.A.F., so my record would never have come into our dental surgery. But at this demob disposal centre, along with hundreds of others, mine too had to be examined. It never occurred to me at first, for the officer only was dealing with the Forms 48, while I was assisting with treatments and dealing with the stores and clerical side of the administrative aspect of the work, so I never suspected anything at the time and it was only after I was out of the R.A.F., that it dawned upon me. As I look back now, many years later, it is obvious. The dental officer was friendly with the medical officers, they had their meals together in the Officers' Mess. One of those officers would have gone through my Form 48, in confidence he would allow my dental officer to see it, quite legitimately he could read my documents in the same way as two of my former chaplains were allowed to see it. I am convinced now that my dental officer considered I ought to know what had followed me around for the six years of the war. One afternoon just before we closed the surgery, he told me he would not be in the next day as he had to go to London. He said I would no doubt find enough to do, and if anything came in

would I deal with anything I was able. It is obvious now that he must have known what would be coming in. The next morning I was sitting at my desk going through some stores documents, when the door opened and a medical corporal came in carrying a pile of Forms 48, put them on my desk and said, "will you check the dental sections of these?" then grinned and said, "that 'll keep you busy." I began to go through them in the order they were given to me in the pile, there did not appear to be any treatments outstanding or to complete, it was just a question of getting the dental officer's signature. I had gone through only about half a dozen when I came to one with my name and number on the outer cover. I was not expecting it and for a moment wondered if I dare open it to see what had been written about me by that psychiatrist nearly six years before. Then it occurred to me that, of course, I could now quite legitimately, in the course of my duties, open it to check the dental record. This did not include pulling out the flimsies to read an airman's medical record, but I was all alone in the surgery, we had no patients booked for that day, nobody would be likely to come in. So I pulled out a small pack of about six or seven thin pages. The first one was my initial medical examination when joining the R.A.F., Volunteer Reserve, plus my inoculations at Brize Norton, the last two pages contained my last examination by the specialist at Bridgnorth, three or four pages in the middle were the psychiatrist's report at Halton. As I read that report I realised that psychiatrist was revealing his own psychological make-up. I knew from his argument with me at Halton that he had an intense antipathy for anything religious, he had revealed his boyhood to me in his consulting room, and got more of it out of his system by writing up such a derogatory description of me. I could also see why both of those chaplains who had read the report in the early days of the war were so incensed about it and wanted the chaplains' branch at headquarters to take the matter up with Air Ministry. My only regret now is that in the intervening years from the time I read that report, to now that I am recording it, the copy I wrote of what the psychiatrist said has been lost along with other important papers of mine,



so that, while I would have preferred to quote from what he actually wrote, I have now to rely on my memory of what he said. However, one phrase has rooted itself in my mind, and one word in particular, so when I get to that point in narrating what he said, I will show it as a quotation. But before I do so I would ask the reader of this to have in mind the reason why I had been sent to the R.A.F., hospital at Halton in the first place. I had been sent to a civilian hospital at Putney by my civilian doctor, who had been treating me for backache for some time before the war and when it recurred while I was home on a long weekend, decided it was my appendix and sent me to Putney hospital. It was necessary for my service records that the R.A.F., should examine me through their own service medical officers and make up their own minds what was wrong with me. By the time they decided they wanted me in the service hospital and not the civilian hospital it was too late, my appendix had been taken out. There was nothing I could do about it, I could not ask the Putney surgeon to put it back again. There was some heated disputation between the R.A.F., authorities and the Putney surgeon both in writing and over the 'phone. When the Putney hospital discharged me and I was sent to R.A.F., Halton, they sent me to their psychiatrist, why ? Because it was the usual routine in all three of the armed services, Navy, Army and Airforce. All service men in the ranks were suspected if they went sick - I am describing more particularly the attitude in the old days before the second World War conditions brought about many changes - every service man was a potential malingerer, any chance he might get to avoid duty he would take, he might even "work his ticket" to get out of the service if he could. Of course, there was always the odd one here and there who tried it, so every man who reported sick was a potential malingerer until he was proved otherwise. But the Halton psychiatrist did not, in his report, suggest that I was one of those, for everything he wrote pointed to one thing and one thing only, that I had volunteered for service in the R.A.F., so that I might bring religion into it and find for myself a cosy niche where I might continue my civilian work among the airmen. Remember, at this point of time I had only just been placed with the chaplain, my first few months of service had been at Brize Norton and St. Athan, doing road sweeping,

coal carrying, floor polishing, etc, and it was the selection board at St. Athan that decided I would be of more use in the Chaplains' Branch. The psychiatrist did not appear to know anything about that and he also knew nothing about my writing to Sir Andrew Duncan, in his consultation with me he revealed one thing only to me, his own intense hatred of anything to do with religion. Let me say at this point, looking back in my old age, that I have long since learned to discern the enormous damage, suffering, misery and bloodshed that religions in general have brought into this world, any student of history knows this, and at this very time wars are raging in some parts of the Middle East as well as other parts of the world, where various rival factions term their conflict a "Jehad" or Holy War for God. Religions have always been divisive and have never made for peace in this world. But my work up to the time of seeing that psychiatrist had never been just religious, much of my work had been of a social welfare nature, and, indeed, at that very time my work just begun in the Chaplains' Branch was entirely of that nature. Now, while the psychiatrist very forcefully argued with me about the uselessness of all religion and revealed to me the intense resentment he had built up in his mind against his Chapel Pastor father and all he stood for, he did not put any of that in writing in his report about me in my Form 48. However, I could see it was there in the professional terms in which he framed his report, because I had been in the altercation with him in his consulting room and knew what he had said. Anyone reading the report who had not heard the conversation between us, would without doubt get a very poor view of me and a good impression of the clever psychiatrist who had diagnosed in me what he was reporting. As I have said already I cannot now quote the actual words, except the one phrase with the one damning word which I have memorised. After writing at some length of the uselessness to the war effort of the religion I was seeking to bring into the Royal Air Force, he turned on me personally by saying that I was (quote) "seeking the soporific of his peacetime work" within the R.A.F.. As soon as I saw that word "soporific" as I read the report in my Form 48, I said to myself "good God ! what kind of church was his father running in Wales if he thought my work had ever been a "soporific." I would like to take him to the East-end of London to the

kind of folk I had visited in hovels where, in those days, no ordinary vicar or minister dared to enter. That is why the City Missionary was sent. We had contacts with those in utter poverty, with men and women just out of prison with no means of livelihood, for in those days prisoners' aid societies were hardly organised and much was left to the Salvation Army and the City Missions. Even when I was appointed to the poorer area of Putney, there I had the same kind of folk besides the artisan class and one middle class area. To give just one example out of many during my time there. I used to visit an elderly woman who lived on the small widows' pension of ten shillings per week but who supplemented that with a few hours cleaning work for a lady in the better class area. The elderly widow had a son in his early twenties who was a wastrel. He would be away for weeks at a time, then come back to his mother and scrounge on her. She would give him money out of her pittance just to keep him out of trouble. One day the widow was arrested and charged with breaking in her employer's house and stealing jewelry. The lady said the widow knew the time the lady would be out on a Sunday and knew how to get into the house. The widow, however, used me and my Sunday service as her alibi, she said she could not have been in the lady's house at the time stated because she was in my Chapel service. I had a good memory when I was young, it is still quite good in my old age, and although the Chapel was usually filled on Sunday evenings I remembered her being there, but, I also <sup>remembered</sup> seeing her come in just after we had started, in fact while we were singing the opening hymn. She asked me to go to Court as a witness. I knew I would have to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but I asked if I could also speak on her behalf in mitigation because of her circumstances and I was given permission by the Court. I also promised to keep in touch with the widow and keep an eye on her. I was thanked by the Court and told what I had said would be taken into consideration. She was given two months in prison and I went to visit her in Holloway Womens Prison. When she came out I got a small cash grant for her. I mention this one case because it was the kind of human situation in which I was often involved, it was time-consuming, there was a lot of running about to be done, and yet my regular routine work still had to be done, and besides

all this I had to fit in time for occasional side-line jobs for John Hedges in the depository because my salary with the London City Mission was too low to meet all the needs of my family. In no way could my work ever be described as a soporific. What sort of a church the psychiatrist's father had in Wales I would not know, but even when, a few years after the war, I was an ordained Methodist minister in Wales, I never found a cosy little church where I could lie back and relax. I had seven churches in the Rhondda Valley under my care and was expected to appear at four of them at least once each week and the others fortnightly and for those Sunday services where I could not be present I had to arrange a rota of local preachers - accredited laymen from the congregations, mostly coal miners, with whom I had to keep in touch. Looking back today on the many years of my life spent in full time work within the Christian Church establishment, from the time I began in the Baltic States with the British American Mission in 1925 until the time in 1955 when I resigned from it all to make a new start in life, I can say quite honestly that I never at any time found anything in my work that could be described as a soporific. I knew as I sat and read that psychiatrist's report in that dental surgery at Boreham, why those two Chaplains who had previously seen it were so incensed about it and wanted to take up the matter with Air Ministry, for what he had written about me also applied to every Chaplain in the Royal Air Force. Had I known what he was going to write in the that record that followed me for the six years of the war, I might have told him the real reason why I had joined the Royal Air Force, certainly not to take religion into it. I was exempted from war service because of my profession and I need not have joined. I did not tell him and I have never told anyone, but I have no hesitation in telling it now. I knew it then and I certainly know today, as I look back on my life in my old age, I wanted some means of escape. I had come to a turning point in my life, I had become disillusioned with the kind of propaganda that I was required by the Church and the London City Mission under whose auspices I was working, to spread among the people. I had begun to read the works of modern theologians and scholars. Some of those writers were still influenced by the old traditions and dogmas of the Church, but when I found that some of the things they said were confirmed in history

I felt I ought to go more fully into my studies on these subjects. Of course, I knew the books I was reading would be frowned upon by my superiors at headquarters. I had already been reprimanded as being a modernist when I had made a statement in my exam papers, which today would be accepted by extreme fundamentalists. However, once I had settled in the work at my chapel in Putney, nobody seemed to bother me at headquarters, and as I had always had the strong conviction that whatever I discovered, which I was convinced was true, I had a responsibility to make that known to my people, so I began to include little bits of information in my sermons. Somehow, in some way, some information must have reached headquarters because, as I have said earlier in this book, the Reverend Bourne asked a typist to attend one of my services and take down shorthand notes of what I was preaching, but she refused to do so. What I was saying then was mild in comparison with what is being openly preached from many pulpits today, I was only at the beginning of my discoveries, indeed, the most important results of advanced scholarship have only been published in the years between the late fifties and the eighties, which show what went wrong in the early years of the Christian era. But I had discovered enough just before the second World War to make me want to continue further studies. How could I do so if I was limited and gagged by being forbidden to make known what I discovered. I could have opted for a quiet cosy life by continuing to propagate the old mythological legends, but I knew that once I had seen what was obviously true, I would not be honest to pretend I had not seen it. I wanted to be free. Then additional to my doubts about the religion I was supposed to propagate was my hopeless first marriage. My first wife and I had our own separate interests, she in her Choral Society and I had moved even my hobbies to the Chapel where I used them in the children's work there, my art I used in painting scenery and back drops for the children's plays and demonstrations which we often held, my music in not only arranging their songs and choruses but also writing my own pieces, we were growing further apart. Divorce was out of the question then for anyone working within the Church, besides which I would not think of it while our children were young, they were often with me in the children's work at the Chapel,

for their sakes I preferred to continue to keep up appearances. My marriage itself I knew had only been a religious transaction, there was no love or romance in it, something instilled in us by the extreme fundamentalists at Speke Hall. Then it was arranged in a hurry because a married couple were required at the Mission headquarters in Riga and my brother and his wife wanted us to go, so I got tied up with a woman much older than myself who was one of the sad multitude of young women who were left without husbands because of the terrible massacre in the first World War of young men of their age group. The frustrated young women, therefore, grabbed at any younger men they might win. It might have been successful if she had made up for it by attempting to live a shared life, allowed me to have my own personality and choices, but I was compelled to fight for that, she was so self-willed, so dictatorial, so intransigent, she just had to be the centre and everything had to revolve around her. It was impossible to make a go of it, I knew the day must come when we would separate, but I could not do that while our children were young. Then the second World War came, and even as the first World War had given me my chance to escape from the dreary life of my boyhood in the depressing environment of East London of those days, so the dreadful holocaust of the Second World War gave me my chance to escape from the restricting, constricting and mentally limiting prison enclosed about me by the legendary and mythological religion spread around the world by the Christian Church establishment. I did not know when I made my escape what I know today, I just knew I wanted to get away from it all into a freer atmosphere. It was the beginning and I can see now that I just had to go into the Royal Air Force, it led on stage by stage to the path that was mapped out for me. I can write with confidence today for I have learned enough to convince me that Jesus of Nazareth had nothing whatever to do with the great Christian Church establishment which down through hundreds of years has claimed to be founded upon Him. But I will come to this later. I am at the point of my discharge from the R.A.F., and I am showing how wrong was that young inexperienced psychiatrist, who had a grudge against religion and his Pastor father, in supposing I joined the R.A.F., to bring religion into it, how very wrong he was, for I volunteered in order to make my escape from it.

My demobilisation date was 3rd August 1945. I was issued with a card instructing me to proceed to Uxbridge and telling me what to take with me. At Uxbridge I joined a group of other airmen, all of us very pleased that we were on the way out. We turned in all our kit but were told to keep our best uniform as we would be on class Z reserve in case there should be any emergency that would require us being called up again. I have never been notified officially that I am no longer on the Z reserve, so for all I know, at 83 years of age, I may be still eligible for call up? However, the uniform has been worn out long ago doing odd jobs in the garden in it. When we were cleared at Uxbridge we were taken by coach to a large stores at Wembley where we each chose our own style of civilian suit, pullover and pair of shoes. On leaving Wembley I went straight to Putney to the caretaker of my Chapel, Mrs. Tucker, who was looking after my son Peter until I could join him. The arrangement was that I should also stay there until I found a new home for my family, then go back to my wife's parents to bring back my wife and our youngest child, Christine, who was with her. Our eldest, Margaret, was a student nurse at Wrexham and decided to stay there to complete her course, then transfer to London. I lost no time in making moves to get us all re-housed. When the war broke out we were on a London County Council estate at Roehampton, but I was told that as we were in the Wandsworth Borough, the Wandsworth Borough Council was responsible to re-house bombed out people in that area. As a bombed out family we had certain priority points over more fortunate people, and as I had just been released from the armed services I had more points in my favour. The Council was requisitioning all vacant properties in the district, but they were not all immediately ready and needed repairs, re-decorating and installations. They had not yet recovered from the man-power shortage of the war but what workmen they had were doing overtime, however it meant some delay before they could put all applicants into new homes. In taking my particulars they asked me if I had a job and I told them I could start when I liked back with the London City Mission, but that I wanted to get a home for my family again before I started. They said they could not get me a house immediately but they would put me on the priority list. I said I was

prepared to take temporary accommodation so that I could get my family together again. The lady taking my application said she would let me know as soon as there was a vacancy, it might be a couple of weeks. But I had what I can only describe as one of my hunches, I have had them occasionally throughout my life and it is not easy to explain what I experience. The hunch is not exactly an intuition or presentiment, for I went into that housing office believing I would come out with a house key in my hand and that might be termed faith. But faith has a religious concept and my hunch has nothing to do with religion. It is more an awareness of reality, something exists and I know it is there, there was a house, and there was a key to that house, and that key would be put in my hand and I would walk out of that office with it. So when the lady got up from her chair as though the interview was over, I hesitated, got up slowly, looked at the lady quietly for a while, I was in no hurry to go. Then I read in her eyes that something had occurred to her. She asked me, "what did you say your work is ?" I said "I am the London City Missionary appointed to Putney." I knew of course, that I was still officially appointed by headquarters to that position because, in keeping with many firms and industries, the City Mission too had kept open the jobs of men who volunteered for war service, promising they would come back to them when the war was over. For that reason I felt I was under an obligation to return to the Mission particularly as they, in line with the firms, had also paid to our wives a weekly amount which made up our lower service pay to the amount of our peace time salaries. However, although I was going to continue as a City Missionary for a while, I was not going back to the Platt Chapel in Putney, I had been there long enough, I had made my escape with the coming of the war, I was now going to ask for an appointment where I was not tied to a chapel or mission centre, but where I knew that I could virtually work as a free lance as I had most of my time in the R.A.F. So I told the lady I was a London City Missionary because I still was. She said to me, "will you wait a moment," and went to the back of the office to a separate division of the room and spoke to a gentleman. After a while he came around the division and looked at me, then said to the lady, "well, yes, he may be suitable." She went to a cupboard



and took from it a card which apparently had been separated from the other house allocation cards in the filing cabinet near where I was standing. She said they had a house in a good area which because of its size they were letting as two flats, one upstairs and one down. There was a gentleman who was a watchmaker and jeweller, with his wife and daughter, who had lost their home in an air raid. Until their home was rebuilt the Council had housed them in the lower flat and as, for the present, they have to keep some of their more expensive jewelry in the flat with them, the housing authorities want to make sure they put the right people in the flat above them, for there was only the large front door for both flats and nothing separated the two flats except a wide oak stairway leading upstairs. Apparently they had kept the upstairs flat vacant for some weeks until they got what they felt were suitable people to go in. "We think you are suitable," she said, "if you would like to look at it to see if you like it, I will give you the key."

She went on to explain that it would be best to ring their bell first on this occasion and say I had been sent by the Housing department, but if they are out use the key. The flat was quite ready we could move in immediately. She wrote out the address and as soon as I saw it was 57, Augustus Road, Wimbledon Park, I knew the area and was thrilled, I walked out with the key in my hand absolutely elated and uttered "thank God!"

My conception of God was still in the primary stage then, in spite of what I had been discovering. Obviously my thinking was still influenced by all that had been programmed into my mind from childhood onwards when God had been presented to us as a Super Person in the realm beyond this, up there or out there somewhere, and although I had got beyond the stage where I believed He had to be placated or feared, there still lurked in my mind the feeling that I had to keep on the right side of Him, keep His rules and regulations if I wanted Him to do anything for me. It was the old Hebrew conception of a bargaining God, keep your side of the bargain if you want Him to keep His. Yet I had often read to other folk on their deathbeds the story told by Jesus of Nazareth of the loving father who wanted nothing from his absent son except for him to return so that the father could shower his love upon him, and I had got beyond the stage formed in my mind as a child of the Big Bogeyman in the sky. Nevertheless

as I had been working so long within the established Church system, it was inevitable that I should still be thinking in their thought forms. This does not mean that God, however we conceive Him, cannot respond to us according to the stage of our mental and spiritual development. Even as we communicate with our children, at first with baby language, then with child talk according to each stage in their development until we reach the time when we converse as adults. We do not expect our children, however, to remain immature, we encourage them to become more enlightened and intelligent. In my psychological and spiritual development I would say I had reached the stage of adolescence when I walked out of that housing department with the key of a lovely house in my hand, felt so elated and made my exclamation. Looking back in my old age I would still say today, thank God ! However, I still cannot explain my hunch, it was more than an act of faith. I went into that housing office knowing our great need. Throughout the whole six years of the war I and my family had gone from pillar to post without a real home of our own. The war had now been at an end for nearly four months, the government and local authorities had made moves to get things back to normality, bombed out civilians were already being re-housed. We had a number of points in our favour which gave us an amount of priority. But I also knew how government and local government departments worked, I had worked in the civil service, and with the civil service, and had seen the mistakes that often happened, sometimes inefficiency and sometimes stupid cock-ups which should never have happened, I approached all local government officials with a lack of confidence. Additional to this I had gone into that office believing there was a house for us and I would get it, that is why, when the lady showed the interview was at an end, I did not move but remained quietly looking at her, until in her mind came the memory of the shelved accommodation. Looking back today in my much more mature years, I am convinced, indeed I know for certainty, the house was being kept for us. I say the "house" because although we were given the upper flat, it was not long before the jeweller's own house was completed and he with his family moved into it, I was given permission to move downstairs, and I think the house papers must still have been separated at the office, no one was put in upstairs, we had the house to ourselves.

It was a beautiful house in a beautiful setting, Tudor style design, modern in those days, built only a few years before the war. It had belonged to Harry Roy the well-known dance orchestra conductor who had left to marry the Princess of Sarawak. The house was still empty when war started, the Ministry of Defence requisitioned vacant properties all over the country to accommodate units of the armed services and this house in Augustus Road, Wimbledon Park, with one or two others nearby, was used by the army as a headquarters section. The Wandsworth Borough Council, after the war, re-requisitioned it with the other properties to house people who had lost their homes in the war. The housing department had repaired and re-decorated the house but had left the very large garden just as the army had left it after carting away anything that was dumped there. I met the jeweller and his wife when I rang the bell and at once we knew we liked each other. They had not met my family but they accepted that if I was alright then so too must my family be. Upstairs I gazed out of a back room window at extensive grounds behind our garden belonging to a large property known as North Lodge, a stately house with laid out gardens, woods and a lake. Our garden was also very large and I could see where it had once been laid out by a landscape gardener. There were overgrown terraces down one side and in another part the remains of rustic arches where there had been rose walks. Nature had taken over during the war and it looked more like the wild countryside than a cultivated garden. Through the overgrowth at the bottom of the garden I could just discern a wooden fence that divided us from the large estate beyond. Masses of large blackberries were growing along the fence with the brambles having crept into much of the garden during the years of neglect. At some time they must have been cultivated blackberries and the fruit on the bushes was very large. There were far too many for us and even after we had cut them back, during the summers we lived there, we gave lots of them away to friends. The jeweller said that as they were not expecting to be there very long they had no interest in doing anything in the garden we could have all of it. The house with its surroundings thrilled me, you could not imagine that you were anywhere near the London area, and as I gazed, I remembered.

I thought of the days when as a youth I delivered packages, accounts and estimates to these same houses in this lovely area, and how time and time again I felt so incensed at the injustice of the unequal sharing of the good things of this life, that some should enjoy so much while others of us exist with so little. Now, here was I on such a glorious summer's day, about to make this lovely place my home with my family. Within a few days we were all in residence, except my daughter Margaret who was continuing her student nurses training at Wrexham until the end of the term when she would transfer to London. I was keen to start my first moves on my way to seek ordination into the Methodist ministry and knew there was a procedure to be followed which would take a period of time, stage by stage. The first move had to come from the circuit where an applicant had to be in church membership. Then usually he began as a local preacher, which was a voluntary work while he was still earning his living at his trade or profession. I could not transfer my membership from Wrexham until I knew in which area I was going to live. Now that I had a home in Wimbledon Park I knew to which Methodist Church I was going to transfer my membership. It was a requirement of a London City Missionary that even if he had the care of a mission centre, he had to be in church membership somewhere himself. At the Platt Chapel I was so tied up with the work that I rarely had time to attend any other church so I never applied for membership. It was during my time in war service in the R.A.F., when I gave up being Church of England <sup>and</sup> became a Methodist that I was received into membership and also became a local preacher. Now I could transfer to a church of my choice in London. However, in order to be able to go through the usual procedure I needed to be free of the ties of a Mission centre, and in any case, after my escape from what I had felt was a hindrance to my further spiritual and educational progress, I wanted to go forward not backward. So I went to the London City Mission headquarters to see the General Secretary, the Rev. W.P.Cartwright, not only to tell him I was demobbed from the R.A.F., but to ask him if I could recommence in an entirely different sphere of work after being so many years at Putney. He was very helpful and said he had just the very job for me. They were planning the re-opening of areas

they were not able to operate during the war. They had a City Missionary who for some years was the visitor to the staffs of exclusive West End clubs and hotels. He carried on after retirement age but in the early years of the war was taken ill and died, they had not been able to replace him. The Rev. Cartwright explained to me that as staff changes had been made during the war, new people would be running the establishments who would not know of the City Missionary who had regularly visited for so long, I would have to make my own way into those places, but I could organise things as I felt fit. This pleased me very much, it was right up my street, once more I would virtually be a freelance even more than I had been at the Platt Chapel, and certainly with more freedom and less oversight than I had in the R.A.F., although I had organised things there very much to my own way. But I had learned a lot during the war and my way of thinking about religion had changed radically. I certainly was not going to carry with me into those clubs and hotels fundamentalist gospel tracts to distribute in the staff rooms or among the workers in the kitchens. I knew a source of literature where I could get magazines and pamphlets which I considered more interesting and helpful, free of any cost to myself. I decided I would not introduce myself as a City Missionary but, having in mind the old Chinaman in the story at the beginning of this book, give myself some better qualification for what I was about to assume. There was a student I had known very well in my days as a youth at Speke Hall who, like me, after his training, went overseas with a missionary society. His name was Jack Chadwick. After a year or so in India he became disillusioned with his work out there, resigned from the society and returned home. About that time, between the two world wars, industries and large businesses were introducing the scheme of having a welfare department with a welfare officer to look after the interests of the workers. The need for the right kind of men for those positions - for in those days women were not required - gave Jack Chadwick his chance. He applied to the firm of Walls Limited, at their new ice cream and frozen foods production plant in West London, and was accepted as their first Welfare Officer. After a year or two my sister married his brother so we had a family link as well as our friendship when we were youths.

As more firms set up welfare departments, the early welfare officers got together and decided they would form an Institute of Welfare, which they did and duly had it registered. So I decided that instead of announcing myself as the new City Missionary appointed to staffs of clubs and hotels, I would call myself the Welfare Visitor. I had my own visiting card printed, on the top in small print was the name of the London City Mission, but beneath in large letters was the title WELFARE VISITOR to staff members and workers of London clubs and hotels. Then my name and private address, it was a good address now, a posh house in a very select area of Wimbledon Park. But before taking my sample visiting card to the printers I wrote to Jack Chadwick and told him of my new appointment and asked his advice. He replied at once and advised me to make application immediately to the Institute of Welfare for associate membership, enclosed an application form, stated what the yearly subscription would be, which I thought was very reasonable, and said he was on the committee and felt sure he could get my application accepted. In a short while I received a certificate signed by the Chairman and other signatories stating that I had been given associate membership and giving me authority to use the letters after my name A. M. I. W., which I immediately added to my draft visiting card and took it to the printers. I do not know what course of training a Welfare Visitor would have to take today, but I was convinced that my years of working experience in the Eastend of London and other areas, plus my three years in the Chaplains Branch of the R.A.F., which was entirely concerned with the welfare of the airmen, gave me enough qualification. I did not tell anyone at the City Mission headquarters of the methods I was using, they had given me permission to organise things myself and all they were concerned about was that a Missionary had been appointed to the work. The reason for that was that work like mine which was listed as Special Appointments, was supported usually by a legacy left by a rich philanthropist back in the old days when the underprivileged workers were neglected and the rich man, seeing the conditions under which the poor worked, in my case probably the workers at the select club of which he was a member, found a salve for his conscience by leaving enough cash to ensure that someone could go

among them and look after their spiritual needs, or to use the popular phrase then, "win them for Christ." By the time I was appointed to that work I had received, during the war years, my first inkling that the dogma of the "Christ" was not something that Jesus of Nazareth left to the world, but a new religion created after His death by a group of Jews who belonged to a secret, mystic sect or fraternity, which existed in Palestine long before Jesus was born, but was very influential and active during His days and still so for about two hundred years after His death, during which time the Christian Church was being built and its doctrines formulated. The most notable Jew who put the new dogmas into writing and propagated them throughout many cities in the Middle East outside Palestine, was, of course, the one we know as St. Paul.

By the time I was appointed to the clubs and hotels in the West End of London, I was no longer interested in propagating those dogmas, but very keen to make known the "Way of Life" Jesus the Jewish rabbi had said was within reach of mankind on this earth, rather than in some heaven somewhere beyond this world. Having been brought up the hard way myself I knew the urge and hope for any member of the underprivileged whose days are consumed in the struggle to survive, is for equality, sufficiency, and enough dignity to give some meaning and purpose to this life. All I was promised by the Church when I was a child was heaven beyond, after all this is over. When we sort out what Jesus taught, after eliminating those things others, in the first and second centuries A.D., said He taught, we find He made it quite clear that we are and will be through our span of life, very much part of this world, this planet which brought us into being, we cannot escape it while we are human. Our physical bodies are indeed composed of the very chemicals and gasses of this earth. The mind or spiritual part which makes each of us unique is derived from the Life Force of the universe. Jesus taught that the only way to the fulfilled life here is to relate ourselves rightly to that Life Force and to every offshoot of that Life, our fellow humans. That, He said, is accomplished by that quality within each of us we call Love. We can know and love God only by loving our fellow humans, and that, said Jesus, is the only way to fulfill the high moral code which keeps a balance in life and which was summed up for the Jews in the Decalogue of Moses and

the spiritual exhortations of the Prophets. There was no religion in this and Jesus told the religious leaders of His day that they could discard all the paraphernalia of the Temple and all their religious rites and ceremonies and just live the rightly related life, to their fellows and also to God. Almost all the religions of the world which have caused so many divisions and conflicts among men all down the ages right to the wars which are going on in the Middle East today, have come into being through some unusual man who conceived the idea of escaping from this mortal life and being transformed into something other than we are. It is what Aldous Huxley in the Appendix to his book "The Devils of Loudun," explains as being "man's deep-seated urge to self-transcendence." Of course, there are other means than through religion by which men seek to satisfy that urge and as far back as history takes us we find that the taking of alcohol in excess has been an easy means. In this very advanced scientific age today things seem to have raced on beyond man's ability to cope and many feel lost and confused, and with this feeling of inadequacy has come a very great increase in alcoholism in many civilised countries of the world. Unfortunately, side by side with alcohol, among young people have developed new forms of drug taking, which the medical authorities tell us is reaching epidemic proportions. Another extraordinary phenomenon is the numbers of young people who are being attracted to the old religions which in past years have been losing their following, including fundamental Christianity. However, the gathering of worshipers I have witnessed are not the sober, more controlled Bible devourers we were, although we sometimes became highly emotionally worked up in the singing of our Gospel hymns and chor. But most of us have seen live on television services where today they have "Rock Gospel" music with highly emotional singing with that age old primitive way of inducing transcendence, constant repetition, with arms raised to the heavens and eyes closed and faces beaming with heavenly radiance, in some cases reaching a trance-like state and falling to the floor, and I, in my old age, looking back on my youth and feeling sorry that young folk today should be continuing this psychologically dangerous cult, have exclaimed as I viewed, "I've seen it all before, and one day they are all in for disillusionment and disappointment." Of course, they have St. Paul's authority for this in the New Testament,



which can be seen clearly enough by just reading through his epistles. I had begun to realise these things during the war in the studies I was pursuing in preparation for the course I intended to take in peace time. So when I was appointed to the staffs of West End clubs and hotels, I decided I would lose no time by continuing the old methods and jargon of my pre-war profession, but begin at once to meet the challenge of a more enlightened age. Now came the chance once more to follow in the footsteps of the old chinaman in the story at the beginning of this book. I now had a title that sounded authentic, for I was now an Associate Member of the Institute of Welfare, I would also dress to look the part. Business men in London still wore, at least in the nineteen forties, the dark grey jacket with white collar and tie, and pin-striped trousers to match. I had preserved in good condition such a suit from the days when I had worked in Westminster as an assistant to Sir Andrew Duncan, fortunately undamaged even when we were bombed. I had sometimes worn it when taking a special preaching appointment for some occasion such as a church anniversary, and I certainly wore it each time I was invited by my friend Harry X to lunch with him in the Civil Service restaurant in Whitehall, when on those occasions I also carried a brief case and a rolled umbrella. These same things now made up my uniform for my new appointment. I realise that today, in a vastly different age, any welfare worker who dressed like this would look ridiculous, but it was still the done thing in the forties. So, looking the part and sounding the part - for I had long since learned to talk my way into places - I made my way in through the front doors of all the exclusive clubs in St. James's Street and Pall Mall, beginning with White's and Boodles, the Travellers, Army and Navy, the Royal Automobile and all the others, and asked if I might see the Secretary and in some cases the Chief Steward. I was well received in all those establishments and a number of the officials I interviewed appeared to be new to their jobs themselves, for many changes had been made during the war when most of the men of military age went away for war service. Some of the older members of staff remained at the clubs and hotels through the war but did not seem to know the old London City Missionary who used to visit. He had died during the early part of the war and nobody had been appointed since, and it could have been that when the old chap had made his visits he

went into the buildings through the staff entrances down in the basements and the officials upstairs would have been unaware of his presence among the staff members downstairs. I made my approach in the first instance through the front doors upstairs as I wanted official recognition. Naturally, they were quite ready to accept a Welfare Officer sorting out private problems of some members of their staffs and visiting any of them in their homes if they were sick. On the few occasions when I had to travel out to the suburbs to the homes of men who were ill, my travelling expenses were paid at the end of each month by the London City Mission, none of the clubs and hotels had a penny to contribute towards this service, I did not even suggest a yearly donation to the City Mission because I knew there was a dowry that had been left to maintain a man as a visitor to those staffs. He, of course, was expected to preach the Gospel to them, which meant putting a Bible or New Testament in their hands and getting them to accept certain dogmas which would make them followers of the Christ. I preferred to preach my Gospel in the way Jesus of Nazareth worked when He healed the sick and sorted out the mental problems of sufferers and helped those in need. He was very scathing when chiding the religious leaders of His days. He told them they should scrap all the rites and ceremonies of their religious practices, discard all the very involved dogmas contained in their cumbersome theocratic law, and get down instead to relieving the needs of the widows and orphans, who, because they were left largely to the goodwill of other relatives of their families, who themselves were too poor to give much help, were left to beg in the streets in order to survive. So, in my work too, I saw the futility of going among the people with Gospel texts in my hands and pumping man made dogmas into them, I felt I could be of much more help to them in more practical ways. The first of the large hotels which accepted me was the Dorchester and there were others to follow. However, I was on this work only one year when I left for something for which I had been preparing through all the war years in the R.A.F. Being appointed by the City Mission to the clubs and hotels meant that I was no longer tied up at any Mission centre or church at weekends, so was free to

attend any church which I chose, in fact it was a rule of the London City Mission that all its missionaries not having charge of a Mission Centre must be a member of a local church. Now that I was living at Wimbledon Park, the nearest Methodist Church to our house was at one of the Central Halls which Methodism has for many years established in all the large cities in Great Britain. In London there are many Central Halls, including the headquarters of the Methodist Church at Westminster. The one near Wimbledon Park is Southfields Central Hall, so I went to see the the Minister of that Methodist Centre, who was the Rev. Samuel Jones Jackson, one of the finest ministers Methodism has ever had, one of the old school of evangelists who had begun as a local preacher when not much more than sixteen years of age, then entered Cliff College and on completion of his studies was appointed as a lay pastor and went on to become an ordained minister of the church. He was delighted to receive my transfer of membership from the church in Wrexham where I had been, not only a member but an accredited local preacher during the time I was stationed there in the R.A.F. He at once put me on his list of local preachers, for he had five or six other churches under his charge on that circuit including another Central Hall at Tooting, and had to appoint preachers to them on Sundays. He also asked me to take charge of some of the work among teenagers, for like everywhere else, after the difficulties of the war years, activities were beginning to start up again. My age group of youngsters were between thirteen and seventeen years. When the Minister knew I was keen to go on to become an ordained minister, he did everything possible to help me. In the first place I should apply for acceptance as a lay pastor, for at that time they were still taking men on to the approved list of lay pastors, but the system was being phased out and in future young men would be accepted only as candidates for the ordained ministry. However, just at that time, older men, if suitable, were being taken on the understanding that they undertook to pursue a five years course of studies for ordination while working as lay pastors, mornings being given to studies and afternoons and evenings to church and circuit work. I was quite ready for that and once more in my life, the timing was just right for me, for I was one of the very last candidates to be accepted under that scheme and I was forty-five years of age. Of course, all my previous studies

helped me considerably in coping with my heavy work load, because I became very much involved in organising new activities among young people and at one period, when I was under the auspices of the Methodist Youth Department, spent much of my time opening up new centres where work among young people could be developed. But I enjoyed every moment of it and even after all these years since, I still have contacts with some of those young people, although like me, they are grandparents today. When it came to the time of giving notice of my resignation from the London City Mission I decided to go personally to the general secretary, the Rev. W.P. Cartwright, because when I saw him on my return from war service, I got the impression that he already understood that after those six turbulent years, men were coming back with new experiences and new ways of looking at life in general, some of us found it difficult to settle down in the old narrow routine, propagating the very limiting, outworn dogmas of a former era. When he knew I was offering for ordination he said he quite understood that I would want to reach for something higher than just remaining as a London City Missionary, although I will always look upon my twenty years in that service as being the most valuable from the point of view in my understanding of the needs of my own people, looked upon in those days as being on the very lowest stratum of society. So my month's notice was accepted and I said farewell at the end of September 1947, and immediately began as a lay pastor in the Methodist Church. However, my very first full time appointment in Methodism did not promise me an easy and happy future. As it turned out it was my worst appointment, no others like it ever followed. When I reached this point in recording my pilgrimage through life, I hesitated for some time, trying to decide whether or not I should include this short interlude, for it was only the first six months of my service as a lay pastor and later as an ordained minister. Then I remembered that at the beginning of this book I promised that everything I would recount would be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So how could this be a true account if I left out of it something, while unhappy and unpleasant to tell, was so vital for my future, especially when it came to my going forward

for ordination, the backlash from that unhappy first appointment held up my actual ordination ceremony until the following year after I should have been ordained. As far as I know there has never been another minister in the whole of the Methodist Connexion who has had an entry in the ministry like mine, where I was finally given full authority as a minister in a certain connexional year but could not go through the ordination ceremony until the following year, and it was all because of what had happened during the six months of my first appointment in Methodism, although absolutely no blame whatever was attached to me. So, having said this much, the reader is now expecting me to give the details, and while for many years now I have sought to live by the Way of Jesus of Nazareth, the way of tolerance and magnanimity, the way of forgiving and forgetting, yet in the interests of Truth, I must recount everything that has happened, particularly when it is concerned with what we unhappily call religion, a term which I seek to avoid, for today I call myself non-religious, I seek only to follow the Way of Jesus the Jewish Rabbi, and from my many years of study I am quite convinced He never intended that what He taught should ever become another world religion, indeed it is quite evident He was anti religion. At the time of writing this the United States of America has just attacked some specially chosen targets in Libya as a form of punishment for acts of terrorism which have taken the lives of American citizens and which terrorist acts were supported by the Libyans. Well, from my childhood I was always taught that two wrongs did not make a right. However, it is very disturbing to see the great increase in terrorism and wars and conflicts all over the world, all of which are tied up either directly with religion or with some politico-religious movement. Particularly in the Middle East where opposing Arab nations are fighting each other, both claiming to be engaged in a Jihad, or holy war for God. It is so easy to believe that God is on our side and against the other side, and it is because I recognise this that I was reluctant to include the details of my first unfortunate appointment in Methodism. However, as all the truth must be told

I will endeavour to be factual yet write with forbearance and without any resentment as I look back on those days. So I will begin with one thing in favour of the minister around whom these things took place, for it was not the work to which I was sent, about which I have any complaint, that was great, and I was keenly interested in it, but it was the minister under whom I was sent to work who was the problem. He was a sick man and that was obvious to me the first time I met him. His name was the Reverend John A. Thompson and he was the minister in charge of the Battersea Central Mission. Now, when they briefed me at headquarters about the work they said nothing about him being a sick man, but said he was not the kind of minister who fitted into any particular niche, was something of a law unto himself, and some years before had been released by Conference to work in Battersea more or less as a free lance missionary. That was alright by me, I had worked as a free lance myself, I saw no difficulty about that. They told me they were sending me to organise the young peoples' work, for they had received an excellent reference from the Superintendent minister of the Southfields Central Hall under whom I had been doing my voluntary youth work, they thought I was the right man for the job. They also told me that the Rev. Thompson had also built up the work from an old Cinema Milk Bar to the present Central Mission by his ability to influence notable people to raise the money to build a modern mission and clinic. Once a year the late Sir Malcolm Sargeant put on a symphony concert in the old Queen's Hall, London, the proceeds given to the Battersea Central Mission. The Rev. Thompson also got the former Queen Mother to officially open the place when it was completed. They prepared me by telling me he was of a somewhat rugged character, but the day I met him at the Central Hall, I told myself he was more than rugged, he was a sick man. I met a large bulky man with large bulging eyes and a swollen thyroid gland in his neck. He spoke gruffly and roughly and when he raised his voice it almost bullied you into listening. He had an Irish accent, but I had not learned then to differentiate between the southern Irish and the Ulster men. He was an Ulsterman, and when in these modern days, on T.V., I hear the Northern Ireland M.P., Ian Paisley speak, I hear the voice of Rev. Thompson.

In my first interview with him, it appeared that I was going to be able to run my part of the work of the mission as I thought fit, for I was to build up the young peoples' activities. Up to the time of my being appointed there not very much had been organised for young people. The Rev. Thompson told me they had a large women's meeting which had begun in another hall nearby which had been rented while the Battersea Central Mission was being built and which was still being held there, but soon it was to be moved into the new mission building. They had a Sunday school for children being run by the Rev. Thompson's wife, but they were mostly girls and Mrs. Thompson was also training a girls' choir. My routine was to spend my mornings at home on my studies - that rule was laid down by headquarters - then report to the minister's office each afternoon about 2. p.m., to see if he had any particular instructions, then to go around the district on house to house visitation, getting to know the parents of any children I could enlist for my youth club. After the children came home from school I got to know some of them, but as Mrs Thompson already had a number of girls, I concentrated on boys, although my youth club was mixed. One evening each week I had to give a film show in the main hall of the mission. When I was shown the projector I was pleased to discover it was the same type as I had operated in the R.A.F., a British Thompson Houston, referred to as a B.T.H. I advertised those shows personally as I visited around the district and I always had the hall packed out with children. As I lived at Wimbledon Park, which was some distance from the Battersea Central Mission, I had my main meal at home midday after my studies, then took a packed tea with me to the mission and stayed on for my evening activities. There was a staff room which had cooking facilities and I had my own small cupboard where I kept my tea and sugar and foodstuffs. Usually I was the only one using that room and it gave me a quiet break between my afternoon work and the evening activities which always kept me on my toes. There was another member of the staff - the only other member - who occasionally used the room, she was an elderly deaconess. Her disadvantage was that she was a free lance who had been engaged privately by the Rev. Thompson, and therefore had no official ~~back~~ backing from headquarters. I had been

officially appointed by the Home Missions Department at the headquarters of the Methodist Church at Westminster. My first indication that everything was not well at the Battersea Central Mission, came after I had been there for three weeks. I went into the staff room for my tea one afternoon and found the deaconess there in tears. I asked her what was wrong and between her sobs she told me her story. In the beginning she was given a free hand to build up her women's work as she felt fit. From a handful of women from the poor streets of Battersea, after visiting house to house as I was doing, she gradually built up the meeting to over three hundred members. Then when things were going really well, the Rev. Thompson began to take over. At first he used to go into the meeting and have a few words with the women. That, of course, was alright and what most ministers do, but bit by bit he began to change things, brought in new speakers on subjects that did not really interest the women, and little by little the membership began to drop. Then one day the minister told the deaconess he would be discontinuing renting the hall and would be moving the women's meeting into the new Central Mission. At first they were given the use of the main hall, and although some women did not like the change, they did still have about two hundred members. But little by little the women were losing interest in the kind of speakers the Rev. Thompson was getting, instead of the happy, cheerful meetings they used to have in the old hall when they first started, the women were getting bored. Then one day the Rev. Thompson told the deaconess she would not be able to use the main hall any longer she would have to use a large room at the back of the Central Mission. The deaconess said she could not possibly get two hundred women into the room, but he insisted she would have to manage. The result was that within a couple of weeks the membership had dropped from the original three hundred to about thirty members, and now, said the deaconess "he's been telling me off because the numbers are so small, and says I must do more visiting and get the women in." She told me she did not know what to do, there was nobody to whom she could appeal. I felt sorry for her but could not give her any practical help then, because she had no official headquarters backing. Up to that



time I had been left to build up my own work in my own way, although I had already felt the atmosphere in the place was not too healthy. It came to Christmas time and with the Christmas spirit abroad, things seemed a little easier. But it was not long after Christmas when I went into the staffroom again for my tea and found the deaconess crying. She had struggled to keep together the handful of women who felt the need of meeting each other once a week, but now the Rev. Thompson wanted more changes. "He has killed my work," she said, "and now he is blaming me." All I could do was to commiserate with her and tell her if I could possibly put in a word for her with someone in authority I would. As far as my work was concerned I was still being left to run things my way and I had all the youngsters I could accommodate, my weekly film show was always packed out, and I was allowed to go on like this until early in March, 1948, after I had been there for about six months. Then I went in to the minister's office one afternoon to be told by the Rev. Thompson that I could no longer use the smaller of the two halls ~~for~~ for my youth club, I would have to use the room where he had placed the women on Wednesday afternoons. I told him I could not possibly accommodate all my youngsters, along with three table tennis tables and other equipment in a room as small as that. He just granted that I would have to do my best and was insistent. Apparently the smaller hall I had been using was not going to be used for any other purpose, Thompson just wanted to change things around. Up until then I had been conducting myself as circumspectly as possible, in spite of the fact that he was always complaining about the noise the children made, he said they congregated outside some time before it was time to open and were damaging the property and making a din. After the children I had managed in the Eastend of London, these Battersea children seemed easy in comparison. Of course, they were noisy, kids always are, until I settled them down on some game or activity. The man who came in to do odd repair jobs in the mission told me the police on Lavendar Hill were fed up to the teeth with the Rev. Thompson, he frequently 'phoned them to say some children were vandalising his property and asked them to send a police car down.

My job was to recruit as many youngsters as possible and involve them in useful activities, but the Rev. Thompson seemed frequently to be having conflicts with them. I came back from visiting some families on one occasion to get my tea in the staff room, it was winter and was already dark. As I approached the Mission, by the light of a street lamp I saw the Rev. Thompson stalking around the side of the building like a hunter after his prey, with a pair of braces in one hand.

I said to him "anything wrong?" He replied, "I'll get the little rascals," and disappeared in the darkness to the back of the building.

I do not think there were any children there or that he caught anyone.


But I did not like the atmosphere, it was not conducive to my winning young people to any activity in the Battersea Central Mission. I was worried when I saw that I was not going to be able to continue with the youth club if I was not to use the small hall. I was left to the one evening per week when I had a film show in the main hall. I wondered what I could do, short of reporting the matter to headquarters which I was loathe to do. However, within a few days the matter was solved for me. There arrived by post at my home some forms sent by headquarters to all lay pastors upon which we had to write out a report on our past years work, and although I had been only six months on my job since being appointed, I had to make a report on that six months. I began by outlining all that I had built up during the early months of my appointment, including my contacts with families through my visitation as well as my youth activities, then was compelled to explain that as far as the youth activities were concerned, most of that had now come to an end, and gave the reasons why. This gave me the opportunity

I had wanted to put in a word for the elderly deaconess, who otherwise had nobody to whom she could appeal with her problem. I just reported word for word everything that I have outlined here in this book.

I had absolutely no idea as to what measures headquarters would take and I must admit I was very surprised at what transpired. They did not tell me, they did not even acknowledge the receipt of my report, but they immediately convened a small committee from among the important gentlemen at Westminster and asked the Rev. Thompson to appear before it. Had I known about this I would have expected some bad reaction at the Battersea Central Hall but not what, in the event, I got. When I arrived the next afternoon, I went to the minister's office as usual but as soon as I appeared in the door he shouted loudly and angrily, "get out, get out, I don't want you here any more," I replied "why not?" "I don't want you near the place," he shouted, "get off the premises, and don't come here any more." Now, of course, I knew nothing whatever of the fact that he had been called to headquarters the previous day, I had not seen him the evening before, I had given a film show to the children, then packed up all the equipment and went home, and although he and Mrs. Thompson lived in a flat which was part of the mission premises, I had not seen either of them. So I said to Thompson, "there must be some reason why you don't want me and I must know the reason. But he kept shouting, "get out of this office, I don't want you." I said, "now look here, this is Methodist Trust property and I have been sent by headquarters to work here, if you don't want me you must ask headquarters to take me away, you can't just order me out, I have a right to be on this property.

Then, as though he realised he would have to find a good reason for ordering me out, he shouted, "you have ruined the projector, you left it plugged in all night and it has burnt out, it is a wonder you did not set fire to the place - it's all ruined." I said, "what are you talking about, I packed up all the equipment as I usually do and put it in the cupboard at the back of the gallery." "You, did not," he shouted, "you left it plugged in on the gallery and it is all ruined." I said, "show it to me." He replied, "no, you can't see it, just get out of this office." "Right, I said, "if you will not 'phone headquarters, then I will," and I turned and walked out as though I was going to the public 'phone just outside the mission. But instead of going out immediately I went first upstairs to the gallery wondering what I was going to see. Now, as I said earlier that projector was a B.T.H., the same as I had operated in the R.A.F. Anyone who has been in any of the armed services will know that everything is done to a strict routine. The old war time type of projector had a separate transformer and both the projector and the transformer were packed in their own boxes, the cables and connectors were neatly rolled up and everything was convenient for transportation. With this civilian equipment at the mission, I carried out the same routine as in the R.A.F., and I knew I had packed away everything neatly in the cupboard before going home the previous night. I wondered if Thompson had dragged it all out of the cupboard again, but when I reached the gallery there was no projector on it. So I went to the cupboard and there was the equipment just as I had left it all neatly packed the night before. I examined it and there was not a mark on it.

For a few moments I was dumbfounded, not knowing what I should do. I was dealing with a sick man, but was he also mentally sick? If not, then could a minister of religion deliberately lie and concoct such a story about me? Did he not think I would come and check the apparatus? I decided I would 'phone headquarters and as I went I thought of the last time I had had to do this, when with the London City Mission, when the high Church of England rector Galpin had almost literally kicked me out of the Rectory and I had to go to a 'phone box and 'phone that headquarters. On that occasion it was because I could not accept the mystic rites and paraphernalia of the high church, but now this was my first appointment in the Methodist church and the reason I had gone over to Methodism was because among Methodist ministers there was a much broader platform, some that I knew were liberal modernists, which I had become. It was just unfortunate that I had been placed with the wrong one in the beginning. I 'phoned the secretary of the Home Missions department who was the minister to whom I was immediately responsible. He did not seem surprised and told me they had called Mr. Thompson before the committee the day before. Then he told me almost exactly what the Secretary of the City Mission had said when Rector Galpin had kicked me out, he said I had my studies to do so I was to go home and get down to them and they would send for me when they knew where they were going to appoint me. Within a couple of days I was called to headquarters and told they had just the job for me where I would have the chance to build up a new work from the very beginning. It was in a new suburban area at North Chessington where new estates had been built just before the war but because

the war had delayed any further development, there were no amenities particularly for young people. The Methodist Church had already purchased a plot of land upon which it was the intention ultimately to build a church and community centre. There was only rubble on that plot, but if I could get a young people's work going in the area they would erect for me a large Nissoon hut with a brick facade which would form the first part of larger buildings that would be added as the work developed. They had a list of a few names and addresses of Methodist members living in the district who were going by transport on Sundays to the main Methodist Church in Surbiton. They were willing to form a nucleus of an adult church in Chessington which I was also expected to build up. In the meantime they were willing to open up their homes so that all interested people would have somewhere to meet. But the great need was for something for young people and as I had specialised in building up youth clubs in the past, they asked me to make that my first priority. I was thrilled at such an opportunity and was glad that Thompson had kicked me out. I would work under the superintendent minister at Surbiton but would be given a free hand to run the work in my own way. I would also have the care of a small Methodist church at Esher where I would take a morning service on alternate Sundays and begin with evening services when I got an adult church going at Chessington. The first thing I saw when I arrived at the Chessington plot,  across the road almost opposite was a Secondary school with a large playing field. It was not possible to use the plot while rubble covered it, so I went to

introduce myself to the headmaster of the school, explained what I would be doing for the young folk, most of whom would be pupils of his school, and asked for permission to use his playing field during evenings when it was not in use, and on Saturday mornings. He quite readily gave me permission. It was the beginning of springtime in the year 1948 and the weather was beautiful that year, everything was in my favour. I began by visiting around the new estates, door to door, which was not a new experience for me after twenty years with the London City Mission, and both parents and children were glad that someone at last was doing something for the young people of the district. Some of the parents said, if I started an adult church service they would like to attend. So I went again to the headmaster and this time I had to fill up an official form which went to the Education authorities to ask permission to use the school assembly hall on Sunday evenings and within a few days we were using that hall. I feel however, that I ought to acknowledge the kindness of a young couple with two young daughters, who before I got permission to use the school, had already opened their home to me for meetings and their large garden for gatherings. They were a Mr. and Mrs. F. Carter and their home was at 500 Chessington Road, W. Ewell, a short walk away from the plot where my work was to be built. As I lived at Wimbledon Park, it was too far for me to go home for an evening meal, so, even as I had done when at the Battersea Central Mission, I took a packed tea with me and had it in a builder's hut already put up on the plot. When the Carters knew this, they insisted I had an evening meal with them, and this they did until the Nissen hut was

erected. There were funds already available at headquarters for the building of a new church at Chessington, and when my superintendent minister and the circuit stewards saw how quickly I was able, with the help of the Carters and a few other friends, to build up the work, they worried the gentlemen at Westminster to make some of those funds available, at least for the first stage of the buildings, and within a short time a large Nissen hut was built which was an all purpose hall which could be used as a church on Sundays and a youth club and other activities, such as Guides and Brownies, during the week. They allowed me to have some say in the design of the place, so I drew a plan along the lines of the utility churches we had at a number of our R.A.F., churches during the war, which were used as a gymnasium on weekdays, with curtains drawn over a chancel at one end, and on Sundays the physical training equipment was stacked away and the curtains opened up to reveal the chancel complete with altar. I not only designed the chancel for Chessington but made the wooden cross which was the centre piece. I had two sections to the youth club, the juniors and the seniors, the juniors met at an early time in the evening followed by the seniors at a later time which gave them time to get their school homework done before they came. That was on two evenings each week, there were other activities on the other evenings. On Saturdays I met some of the youth club members for games in the morning and we occasionally had rambling or hiking parties in the afternoons. There were so many youngsters wanting to join the clubs that I had to keep a waiting list. But members rarely left, only if a family moved to another district, or when young chaps at eighteen years



were called up for their two years national service, which still obtained during those years after the second World War. I was three years at Chessington and they were three very happy and useful years which unfortunately ended in a tragedy which changed the whole of my life. Chronologically, when I view this pilgrimage of mine through this remarkable twentieth century, this most traumatic experience of my whole life happened exactly half way through, in June 1950. However, before I get down to the very difficult task of writing about this tragic happening, I want, first of all, to put on record that at the time of my being sent to Chessington, I had a final contact with the other Thomson in my life, the one who was the Foreign Office senior civil servant - his name is spelt with one letter less than that of the Thompson of the Battersea Central Mission - who I had last seen just before he went off to Germany to search through Nazi records and who wanted me to go with him as his assistant. He wrote to me to say he was home on a short leave leave from Germany and would very much like to visit me in my new home at Wimbledon Park. As Pinner, where he lived, was some distance from Wimbledon, he might have to make it a brief visit because of getting back. He gave me a 'phone number to ring him. Over the 'phone I suggested that it need not be a brief visit if he stayed with us overnight, we had enough accommodation as our eldest daughter Margaret was nursing at Putney Hospital and came home only on her days off, our son Peter was away in the Army Accounts Corps, doing his national service and my wife and I had only our youngest daughter Christine with us who was a pupil

at Mayfield School for girls at Putney, a few years before it was made one of the first comprehensive schools in England and Dame Margaret Hill appointed as head mistress. R.C. Thomson accepted my invitation to stay the night. I met him at Southfields station and he looked just as imposing in his uniform and gold braid, and as we walked up Augustus Road to my home, people we passed turned to look at him, it was unusual to see any "top brass" walking about like this, they usually were seen only in staff cars. As we talked I thought he seemed more subdued than I had known him previously and when I asked him how he was getting on with the work the Foreign Office had sent him to carry out he spoke like a man who was very disappointed. He said the Americans had taken most of what he was doing out of his hands, he would be going back but was not sure what he would be doing. At that time I had no idea what he was trying to convey to me and it is only after many years, in fact within these recent times through the persistence of the Israelis in hunting down previous Nazi officers responsible for terrible atrocities among the Jews during the war, that public statements have been made and documents published showing how members of the American C.I.A., bartered with top Nazis, getting information from them in exchange for helping them to get refuge, either in America or in one of the South American countries. With regard to two of the latest Nazis who were finally caught and both of whom are being held in Europe awaiting trial - Dr. Joseph Mengele and Klaus Barbie - some very forthright statements have been made over our televisions as to the very doubtful transactions made between C.I.A., agents and these and other Nazis. Of course, R.C. Thomson played some part in obtaining

documents for the Nuremberg trials and our own Foreign Office, government and legal officers, took part in the trials of former Nazis, but it has become quite clear in these recent years that a number of Nazi officials responsible for atrocities did avoid being brought to trial by being helped to find refuge abroad. Whether R.C.Thomson ever found the German friends to whom he said he would introduce me, had I gone with him as his assistant, I will never know, they may have been quite innocent Christian folk like the Niendorfs I had known in Berlin. After Thomson stayed with us for that one night I never saw him again, neither did I ever hear from him, what information about him I have gained since, I got from the Foreign Office information department when making up my notes for this book. I was informed that he was awarded the MBE., for his services, retired on 27 February, 1949, and died in 1967. He will always remain an enigma to me. He was a man I could never fathom. During my three years at Chessington I got through the bulk of my studies for ordination. The fact that I was able to get through so much much during those busy years was only because I ensured that I gave every morning entirely to study and undertook my pastoral work on afternoons and evenings. I travelled by train between my home and my work, changing at Wimbledon station. It took quite a bit of my time. As my travelling expenses were paid by the Methodist circuit on a quarterly basis, I asked my superintendent minister if I could have an advance of my coming year's expenses so that I could pay it as a deposit on a two-stroke motor cycle upon which I could cut down my travelling time considerably. The remainder of the cost I was

prepared to pay in monthly instalments. However, although it was agreed and I was given the advance, when a business gentleman on the circuit finance committee, heard about it, he thought their lay pastor should not have a financial burden over his head, so he bought the motor-cycle completely for me. That machine proved to be a great boon to me for as long as sixteen years. I could never, on my salary, have afforded to put a car on the road and some sort of vehicle was a great convenience in getting around our rather widespread circuit, and other circuits subsequently.

About this time, in my studies, I began to acquire bits of information that showed that much of what I had been taught in Christian dogma did not accord with historical facts. Soon after my demob from the R.A.F., I picked up a book from a second hand bookshop which had been published as recently then as 1938, written by Professor Cecil John Cadoux, Professor of Church History, and Vice-principal at Mansfield College, Oxford. The title of the book, which is a series of four theological lectures he had given, is, "The Case for Evangelical Modernism," and it is a study of the relation between Christian faith and traditional theology. In this book he makes several references to Professor Adolf von Harnack, a German scholar who after many years of study published a seven-volume masterwork entitled "History of Dogma." It is a formidable work, very heavy going and full of technical terms and it was published as far back as 1893. But, Professor Harnack was not only a scholar he was a practical man of religious affairs and was interested in reaching the more educated laity. So he condensed the cream of those seven

volumes, summarizing the labour of his life into one volume which he entitled "Outlines of the History of Dogma." I was interested in the references Professor Cadoux makes in his book but because of the books I had to study for the Methodist ministry I did not pursue the matter. Then the Methodist Study Centre sent me a text book for one term of my work, and in a foot-note at the bottom of one page which was on the question of Gnosticism that was widespread among the early Christians, the foot-note states, "It was part of the movement which Harnack described as the 'acute Hellenization of Christianity.'" As soon as I read that I wanted to know more, but I still waited until I had got some of the more difficult of my studies completed, then through the library services I obtained a copy of the "Outlines of the History of Dogma," it was a revelation to me and was the beginning of my going more deeply into the subject. As I look back today I am amazed that I was able to get through so much work, especially among the young people, besides giving every morning to my studies. The year 1950 was the outstanding year of my life. My daughter Christine, the younger of my two daughters by my first marriage, was due to sit for the last of the old matriculation examinations in June of that year. After that we have had 'O' levels and 'A' levels, although today moves are being made for a new system in the future. I was giving Christine what help I could in some of her subjects but she was at a very good school - Mayfield - and I was hopeful that she would pass at reasonable grades in her subjects, but - it was not to be.

It was a beautiful sunny day on the 17th June, 1950. I was particularly pleased because I had arranged for a garden party in our large garden for the teenage members of my Chessington Methodist youth club. About midday I was in my bedroom preparing some games for the afternoon, when Christine came in with a book in her hand. She said that although my birthday was not until the 28th June, she felt she would like to give me my present from her on that Saturday morning. Christine knew that I had already been told by my chief at headquarters that as my three years at Chessington finished in September of that year, for the term of office of ministers and lay pastors in Methodism is for three years and the moves are made in September, and that I was going to be sent to Derbyshire, to the village of Wirksworth. So Christine had bought for my present a guide book on Derbyshire. There was one thing in the book which seemed to claim her interest and she opened the book at the place and read the explanatory notes and showed me a picture in the book. It was of an ancient sepulchral stone in the old church at Wirksworth, the stone dating back to about A.D.690. The carving on the stone is of seven scenes from the Gospel story. Why should Christine be so interested in this sepulchral stone, and why should she bring to me my present eleven days before my birthday, she had never done anything like that before, always on the morning of my birthday she brought her present to me. I was to have this question puzzling me for a long time after that sunny June morning, indeed it still exercises my mind nearly forty years after, as also what took place a couple of hours later when she decided to spend the time while

I went to meet the young folk at Wimbledon station, by cycling around Richmond Park. She was a member of the Society for the Protection of Birds and I sometimes went with her bird spotting either on Wimbledon Common or in Richmond Park. The common was within walking distance from our home but the park meant using our cycles. This time she was going alone for about an hour, took her cycle out of the garage and came down to one side of the house where I was preparing a programme for the afternoon, to say she was going. She seemed hesitant. I asked her did she need any cash, perhaps for an ice-cream. No, she did not need any she had some pocket money in her purse. She still hesitated and looked at me as though she was going away for a long time. I can still see the look in her lovely eyes, she was such a sweet girl, so gentle, so open, frank and loving. How could she have known she was going away from me for the rest of this mortal life and it was going to hurt me so much, but that is how she looked at me, then turned and walked slowly away wheeling her cycle, out of the side gate of the garden, never to come back as the Christine I loved. Of course, I loved all my three children, but my daughter Margaret was away nursing in hospital and came home only on her days off. My son Peter was away doing his national service in the army, I concentrated all all my attention on Christine. I was thrilled when she qualified for "Mayfield" school, I was helping her in what subjects I could. In my work with the youth she came with me and after I was given the motor-cycle I fixed a pillion seat on it for Christine so that she could attend anything for young people. It had been her intention

to join the young folk in our garden party. She was constantly with me, it was my children who had kept my marriage together in spite of the fact that it <sup>was</sup> really hopeless, in my position as a minister of religion in those days, there was nothing I could do about it, but my compensation was in my children and particularly Christine. I met my youth club youngsters and took them to our home and started them on games in the garden. During the morning my wife and Christine had prepared the food for a buffet tea in the garden, but we had got well into the afternoon and still Christine had not returned and we were wondering why the delay. There came a ring at our front door bell. I went to answer the call, my wife came at the same time. There was a police sergeant, who asked if we were Mr. and Mrs. Gilbrook, when we said we were, he told us there had been an accident and a girl named Christine Gilbrook had been involved, was she our daughter? When we said she was, he asked if we could accompany him to Putney Hospital where she had been taken. There was a police car waiting at our front gate. The driver and the sergeant sat in front and my wife and I at the back. As we were going along the sergeant turned and said to me, "it has been a serious accident sir, but they will tell you at the hospital." At the hospital we were put in the waiting room while the sergeant went down the corridor to see the doctor. When he came back he said the doctor was just coming, then paused, then continued, "I think you should prepare yourself for the worst, sir." It was the doctor who told us our daughter was dead, she was in the mortuary. I asked if



I could see her. The doctor said, "I think it better if you do not, she has been very badly damaged." Then he said I could come to the hospital the next day and they would hand to me Christine's personal things. They had her diary, from which they had found her name and address, which was also written inside her purse. When the police took us back home in the car, the sergeant said he was not sure what had happened but that it was an army gun carrier that had got out of control, veered across the road as it was going down hill, struck a car coming up the hill, then mounted the footpath up which Christine was walking pushing her bicycle up hill in the gutter. The cycle had been mangled beyond repair. The hill comes up from Putney Vale, across Wimbledon Common towards Putney Hill. It is over half a mile long and Christine was the only person walking on the footpath and the armoured vehicle mounted it right where she was. The sergeant said the Coroners officer would be coming to me to tell me about the inquest and get some information from me, he was not sure if he would come tomorrow (Sunday) or on the Monday, but he would 'phone me to let me know. I 'phoned my superintendent minister to say I would not be able to take my Sunday services, the morning one at another church in the Circuit and the evening at Chessington. The 'Super' made other arrangements for me and told me to take time off from my work until after the inquest and burial. The shock stunned me at the beginning, I could not believe what was happening. We gave the young people their tea and I told them what had happened and said I would have to ask them to go, they had already had a couple of hours in our garden. After they had gone my wife and I were alone.

Margaret, our eldest was nursing at hospital, and Peter, our son was away in the army. I kept walking about the house and around the garden, I was bewildered, and kept thinking there would be a 'phone call any moment to say it was all a mistake, it was somebody else. After all I had not seen Christine for myself, they may have had a couple of accidents at the hospital and got mixed up. The 'phone rang, I hurried to answer it, but it was the police sergeant to say the Coroner's officer would not be coming until Monday morning, if I would hold myself available. I walked about the house again, and as I passed our bedroom door I saw my wife inside standing before a mirror, dressing herself in her special evening gown she wore only for outstanding occasions. I knew, of course, that the Choral Society to which she belonged had reached the final in an important competition and they were singing that evening hoping they would win the cup. I could not believe my eyes, "you are not going?" I said to her. "Of course," she said, "I can't let the choir down, we are hoping to win." I walked away, I had never understood the way she thought in all the years I was with her, but I was shocked, our Christine, our lovely Christine was dead, does she not understand? I could not address my congregations, I was too shocked, my 'Super' understood that, he had arranged for someone to take my place. Within another hour my wife had gone and I was alone in the house, to continue walking about and around the garden, telling myself it was not real, it was some horrible nightmare. Finally I could not stand it any longer, I 'phoned Putney Hospital and asked them, were they sure it was my daughter Christine, did they have

other accidents during that day ? , Yes, they had another accident but it was an adult. "You come tomorrow, Mr, Gilbrook, and we will give you Christine's things to take home." I put the 'phone down and went back to my walking. It had been a beautiful summer's day that Saturday June 17th 1950, and now the warm June sun was slow to set that evening and I walked around and around the garden until quite late, talking all the while to Christine. I looked at the things we has started in the garden, among the fruit trees, and with the new arrangement for our chickens, and said, "look my love, I cannot finish them without your help, my darling." "Why have you been taken without me ?" I thought I was having a horrible nightmare. My wife returned at 11. p.m, and we went to bed. I awoke in the morning with the sun's rays pouring through our eastern windows, another glorious day, but not for me. I could not hear Christine singing in her bedroom. No words can ever describe what I felt that morning, it was a depth of grief to which I had never <sup>descended</sup> before in my life. Only those who have gone through such an experience can understand the despair one feels. You find an unbridgeable gulf between yourself and the loved one who has gone, the absolute finality of it. Never again could I talk with my Christine, never again look into her lovely eyes and see her smile. I felt then that death is for ever. A dark depression came over me and seemed to crush my mind. I broke down and cried, more bitterly than I have ever cried in my life before. Overwhelmed, I sobbed and sobbed and could not stop. I buried my face in my pillow which was wet with my tears, then I heard my wife's voice from her side of the bed, sneering or scorning me as she said, "you can cry !" I knew this would lead to the break-up of our marriage, there were no children now to hold me, and no love.

Now sadly, the one who meant most to me in this life had been taken so cruelly from me and I could not reach her, she needed me and I wanted to go too. I can understand what is meant by the description the heart being broken, that is what it feels like. When I left my bedroom, it being Sunday and the Coroner's officer was not coming until Monday, all I wanted to do was to walk across Wimbledon Common and down into the woods, tracing in the June sunshine the walks I had so often had with Christine, for although she was now in the unseen realm, I felt she was somewhere near and I found myself talking quietly to her as I went. Many of my days throughout that lovely summer were spent making those same walks. I will spare the readers of this account all the details of the inquest, and the legal procedure of the claim made against the War Office. Methodist headquarters gave me the services of their solicitor, but the amount settled was not very much. I was not interested in getting any money out of the tragedy, so long as the funeral expenses were covered and the cost of a grave stone, nothing could compensate for the loss of Christine. What hurt me very much was having to write to the holiday centre in Norfolk, where I took a large party of my young people each year, I had to ask them to take Christine's name off the list and explain the reason why. My brother, who by then had finished his training under the scheme for settling ex-prisoners of war and was a school teacher, came with me each year to help me out. Knowing I was to be appointed to Wirksworth in Derbyshire, that September, I wanted to go up for a weekend to see the Manse where we would be

living, I also wanted to see that sepulchral stone in the old church at Wirksworth. Why did Christine mention that in particular only about three hours before she was killed ? I could not get it out of my mind, I wanted to see it. So I asked my brother if he would mind my leaving him with the young people on our first weekend at Mundesley and my going up to Derbyshire on my motor-cycle. I would stay only one night at a bed and breakfast guest house and return the next day. It would give me enough time to see both the manse and the church. My brother agreed and I went. After booking my bed at a place in Matlock, I immediately went the few miles into Wirksworth and went to the church first. There was nobody about, it was a quiet warm sunny afternoon, I went into the empty church and made my way to the wall that was pictured in the illustration shown in the guide book Christine had given me. There it was, I stood still before it and found myself saying quietly "I'm here Christine," believing that in the unseen she was conscious of me. I stayed there in prayer for a while, and when I left that church I felt I had accomplished my mission. I went to the Methodist manse and met the lay-pastor and his wife, who would be moving to a new circuit in September, leaving the manse vacant for me and my wife. But it was not to be. I returned to Mundesley and finished the two weeks holidays with the young folk, then returned home to Wimbledon Park to find a letter waiting for me from Methodist headquarters. In it they said they had decided not to send me to Wirksworth but to a new work beginning in the Brighton and Hove circuit, and giving me the name and address of the Superintendent Minister with whom

I had to arrange an interview. He was the late Reverend W. Davis Evans one of those fine men within the Methodist Church to whom I will always be grateful. He was of the same quality as those other good ministers who helped me during the war Years in the R.A.F., and also later in the early days of my ministry. Padre Kenneth MacKenzie, the Rev. Frederick Speight at Wrexham, the Rev. Samuel Jones Jackson who was responsible for my entry into the ministry, firstly as a lay-pastor, the Rev. J. Rees Davis, my 'Super' when I was appointed to the Rhondda Valley, and my colleague in that same circuit, who then was just the Rev. Kenneth G. Greet, but who ultimately attained to the exalted office as Secretary of the Methodist Conference as the Rev. Doctor Kenneth Greet, and whose word on my behalf, some years later, after I had resigned from the ministry, for reasons I shall shortly explain, greatly helped in my reinstatement into full membership of the Methodist Church, which I still enjoy today in my old age. As I was saying the Rev. Davis Evans was of such sterling quality and help when I was sent to serve under his supervision so soon after losing Christine so tragically. Those gentlemen in high office at Methodist headquarters could never have foreseen that in sending me to the Brighton Circuit instead of to Derbyshire they made possible a complete change in my life, in fact a complete end to the old life and the beginning of a new. At my interview with my new 'Super' he told me that the manse we would eventually be occupying would not be available until the following June, but that arrangements had been made with headquarters for me to be in lodgings from each Sunday to Friday morning with a member of one of the

churches, return home on Friday afternoon, take Saturday as a day off and return to Brighton on Sunday morning in time to take a service at one of the churches. I had to give each morning to my studies and carry out my pastoral work during afternoons with evening activities among young people. The arrangement of my lodgings was not satisfactory, I had a very small room which looked out on the rear part of a large laundry, with machines running all day and the voices of the workers occasionally shouting above the noise. So I went to the Hove library to do my studies, where upstairs in the reference department it was quiet. However, after a few weeks like that I asked my 'Super' if instead of paying for my unsatisfactory digs they bought me a weekly season ticket from Brighton to London, I could then study at home, have my midday meal there, arrive at Brighton in the afternoon to put the same amount of time to my pastoral work, stay on to the young people's activities and return to London on the 10.p.m. train. He agreed, 'phoned headquarters and the arrangement was made, so for about six months of the nine months I was waiting for the manse to be ready, I commuted between my home and my work, a much more humane arrangement than splitting up my home so soon after our tragedy by taking me away for five days and nights and being home for just two nights per week. The work that I had to build up was at Portslade west of Brighton, where they intended eventually to erect a new church. A nucleus of folk who were to start that church were already gathering on Sundays and on one week evening at the Portslade Community Centre, where a large room was hired on a weekly basis. When I had my introduction to those folk, they had gathered both adults and

teenages. I could not take my eyes off a young lady at the back of the room. I thought I had seen her before. Something about her difficult to describe - demure - serious - yet when introduced her conversation helpful and she had a lovely smile. I knew she was going to be a great help to me. I found I had an interest in life again, I wanted to get on with the work.

It is difficult in beginning a new work, and not having had time to get to know one's new people, in knowing which ones to ask to take office, such as society stewards and secretaries of various committees and groups. My priority with the young folk was to begin a youth club, there were already a group of them who met at the Community Centre to play table tennis one or two evenings per week. My job was to form a Methodist Church youth club like I had at Chessington. Also I needed the right adults to act as stewards of the church. The difficulty was the church met in a room at the Community Centre and the first Sunday service I took, other people could be heard going up and down the corridors and using the other rooms. It was a most unsatisfactory arrangement and I made up my mind I was going to find another temporary building that would be exclusively ours. I knew no permanent church would be built until there was a sufficient number of people forming a strong church membership, but I could not see things getting to that point unless we had a place of our own, even if it was a Nissen hut like I had at Chessington. I spent the first few days of my new appointment searching around Portslade as far into the Downs as the newly built estate of Mile Oak, indeed, it was the building of that estate that had led to the Brighton Methodist people deciding there should be a new Methodist Church on that estate,



and a plot of land had already been purchased by the Brighton and Hove Methodist Circuit, but there was nothing on it, just grass. In the old village of Portslade I saw a small barn-like building next to the village pub. There was an open space of ground between the pub and the barn which was used as a car park. I enquired from some local people near by, to whom the barn belonged, and was told the landlord of the pub was the owner. I went to see him. He told me that until a few months previously a club had rented it but had obtained larger premises into which they had moved. When he knew I wanted it for a temporary church and youth club he was prepared to rent it to us until we obtained permanent premises. I forget how much the rent was but for those days I know it was very reasonable. I 'phoned my 'Super' to ask if I could take it and he agreed I should make the arrangement. Before long I had a board up showing it was a Methodist church and another board listing the services and weekday activities. I had a friend who was a professional sign writer who did those boards for me to help launch the new church in Portslade. There was a room at one end of the barn with facilities as a kitchen so that we could always make tea and refreshments and just outside at the back was our own toilet. The place was ideal as a beginning and I spent most of my three years on that circuit concentrating on building up that church, even after my ordination when I was given the charge of two other churches in Brighton I still had to continue to take charge of the new church in Portslade village. The folk who formed the first Methodist Society there gave their time and materials to repaint and decorate the interior and the ladies made curtains for

the windows which ran the whole length of the front of the building. I had enjoyed much satisfaction from seeing my work in Chessington grow from very small beginnings to a flourishing church with various very good youth activities. But this work at Portslade was different. It was the beginning of a new phase in my own personal life, indeed it could be described as my second innings, the second half of my life which proved far happier than the first, although initially it was thwart with many difficulties and as I outline in the following pages - for it can only be shown in outline in this book - I think it will also reveal the great differences in Methodism between those who have clung to the old primitive dogmas and the rigid interpretation of them in human life, and those who with new knowledge and understanding of the past history of the Christian church, have moved on to a more humane and benevolent interpretation in the lives of ordinary humans, of what Jesus of Nazareth really taught, not what some Church Fathers in ages past said He taught, but what He really taught, not what they said He did, but what He really did. Much excellent scholarship had been recorded by the time I was taking my studies for ordination and I got hold of anything I could lay my hands on. But in the years since my resignation from the ministry a vast amount of new information has been published and these things are known to those whose job it is to teach younger people for the ministry today. If they had been accepted by the Church generally in my day, it might have made my resignation unnecessary. But there were some in my day who understood, and they were those, thank God, who, when they knew the real reason for my resignation, pressed for my reinstatement into the Methodist Church.

It is my view that nothing happens by chance in this life, there is a reason in every circumstance, if only to make us fight to escape from what is bad even as I made up my mind as a child that I would escape from the dreary environment of my boyhood shown at the beginning of this book. Shakespeare says in Hamlet, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." St. Paul says in his epistle to the Romans, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." But we do not all love God to begin with, because we do not understand Him. Jesus on the other hand, in that wonderful parable to which I have referred earlier in this book, shows the loving Father so concerned about His erring son when he is right away in the far country, and longs to improve his quality of life and bring him home. We can be sure of the parables of Jesus, there is a hall-mark about them, whatever may have been added elsewhere in the scriptures down through the centuries. On this reasoning I would have to say that even the tragic death of my Christine was not without some purpose. Neither was my change of stationing from Derbyshire to the Brighton Circuit where almost the first person I met was that young lady who I felt instinctively could be a great help to me. She was introduced to me as Joan Willmer. Within a couple of weeks of meeting her we were in our new church in the old barn, we began a youth club of as many young people as we could get into the place and Joan was my secretary. The work developed rapidly, society stewards were appointed, a women's meeting started and a Sunday school which filled the building with children each Sunday. But while the work was going very well, the circumstances of my lodgings

as I have already said, were not, and it was after we had progressed in the work for about three months that the change was made when I had to commute between my home and work each day except Saturday, having mornings at home for my studies. As I was no longer in digs arrangements had to be made for my meals while at Portslade. Five days of the week I had my main midday meal at home before leaving but the evening meal for each of those days was arranged between some of the leaders of the church. They had a rota for me which was mainly between three members, but on the evening of the youth club I began by going to Joan's house for my meal. I will always remember that first evening as I sat at their table. Joan served me with my food. As she put a plate down beside me I noticed she had on a white blouse with long sleeves with lace cuffs. Instantly I saw and felt my mother, who always wore similar blouses and to whom I was very close, being the frail one of her children she gave me much attention. There was a warmth and feeling of comfort in Joan's nearness, such as I had never felt for many years, the atmosphere of my home since my marriage was cold and rigid. In the few months while I had been in lodgings I had known Joan as the one who was helping me with the youth club and who was reliable and intelligent but nothing more. That evening in her home with her and her parents I felt she was someone special, someone who was going to be a great help to me personally. Now I have thought about that occasion many times in the years since and looking back I know that really she was beginning to take the place of my Christine who had been taken from me recently at the time of meeting Joan. Of course, Joan was older

than Christine by a few years, she was twenty-one at the time of that first visit to her home and I was in my forties, but I felt I needed her in my work. She helped me in the Sunday school work as well as the youth club, but being an adult she was on full membership of the church and on one or two committees. However, being the minister of the church I had to be circumspect, never to show any favouritism nor more attention to her than any of the other members. By the summer of that year, 1951, the South Bank Festival was on in London, being the centenary of the Exhibition of 1851, held then in Hyde Park and from which event came the story of the Chinaman with which I began this book. I asked Joan if she would like to go to the show, told her she could stay overnight at our home at Wimbledon Park and return with me when I went to Brighton on Sunday morning to take a service - I was at that time usually planned at one of our Brighton churches in the morning as we had only an evening service at Portslade besides the afternoon Sunday school. Of course, I had my wife's approval of this visit of Joan to the Festival and our home, but my wife said Joan would have to use Christine's room and sleep in her bed and I felt quite pleased that they were to be used again as, by then, it was nearly a year since Christine had gone. It is obvious as I look back in my old age that more and more Joan was taking Christine's place in my life. Within a few weeks after that visit to the Festival the manse in Brighton was ready for us and we moved to the Kemp Town end of Brighton and all the very intimate associations with Christine were left behind in Wimbledon Park. Joan had met my wife at our London home, now she was to see more of her at the manse. My wife's father who was old and

suffering from a bad heart, had to come with us to Brighton so that my wife could look after him. There were occasions when my wife had to accompany me to Circuit functions and it was necessary to have someone in the manse in case my father-in-law should need attention. On one occasion we had to go to London to Christine's school - Mayfield - to be present at the presentation by us of a lectern in memory of our daughter - this we got made and inscribed out of the balance of the compensation amount paid to us, after paying for the burial and grave. On occasions such as these it was always Joan, being the eldest and most reliable of the young people at the church, who was asked to be at the manse in our absence, and little by little she sensed that there was not much warmth or depth of feeling between my wife and myself, although as leaders of a Christian church we always conducted ourselves most correctly in everything we said and did. But little by little I too sensed that Joan was showing more sympathy and attention to me, she seemed to be trying to compensate for what she felt I was not getting in my home. The autumn of that year was the time of my exams for ordination and from the results I would know if I was to be sent forward. When those results came I had passed in good grades, but there was still the formality of the Circuit vote, for in those days, it was the people of the Circuit where the candidate had been working as probationer, who decided whether or not to send the candidate forward. I was thrilled when I was told that mine was a unanimous vote. In course of time I heard from headquarters that I was to attend at the following Conference - 1952 - with other candidates for ordination by the President of Conference for that year. By that time Joan and I

had become very close and we began to wonder what was going to happen after I was ordained. Newly ordained ministers were usually stationed to a new circuit, it was fairly certain I would be leaving Brighton. We discussed the possibility that with a forced separation we might gradually lose the close feeling we had for each other. I was much older than Joan, although it so happened that in those days I did not look anywhere near my age and even as in the R.A.F., they used to think I was younger, so our acquaintances in Brighton thought I was in my thirties, whereas at the time I first met Joan I was forty-eight years old. There were still some months before Conference and during that time we were together as much as ever, the thought of the coming separation drew us closer. It got almost to the time of Conference in 1952, when I received a letter from the Secretary of Conference to say he was sorry I would have to be held back from going for ordination that year as a complaint had been sent by someone who said I was not a suitable candidate to go forward. Dr. Eric Baker, the former Secretary of Conference, who wrote the letter, said that he personally did not think <sup>there</sup> ~~think~~ <sup>^</sup> was any substance in the complaint but that he was bound by the rules to call a committee to examine the matter. I wondered who on earth could have written, there had been a unanimous vote in my favour in the Brighton circuit. My 'Super' said that if Dr. Baker had said he did not think there was any substance in the complaint, he must know who wrote it. Conference came and was concluded with the ordination of all the other candidates for that year except me. Subsequently the complainant was called up to headquarters and the complaint examined. A letter was sent to me

to tell me there was absolutely no substance in the complaint and the name of the complainant given as the Rev Thompson, the minister who so vociferously dismissed me from the Battersea Central Mission as I have recorded earlier in this book. Looking back on that incident today, quite sincerely I believe that he only acted in that way because he was a very sick man. The letter from Dr. Baker went on to say that I was immediately given full status as a minister, could wear the clerical collar and carry out all the offices of a fully ordained man, but that, unfortunately, I could not go through the ceremony of ordination until the following Conference in 1953. The letter continued to instruct me that I would stay for a further year where I was in the Brighton and Hove Circuit. I confess that as soon as I read that I was very delighted, it gave me another year to be with Joan, which I had not expected. But as things turned out it was to be a year of great conflict in my mind. Only those who have been through situations like mine can know the strain one is under. Important decisions that have got to be made, courses of action from which one cannot escape. Things became much more involved between Joan and myself during that year, in fact they started just before the new Connexional year commenced. As I had taken the youth club members at Chessington each August to the Methodist holiday centre in Norfolk, so now I was taking the young folk from Portslade. This particular year we could go for only one week. But Joan had two weeks holidays from her work and so had I. For some years my wife had a separate holiday arrangement from mine. She never entered into any of the activities among the young people so went away to a relative of hers



on one or two occasions or with friends on others. I had three weeks holidays so sometimes went with my wife for one week. This August of 1953 she expected me to be away with the young folk for two weeks, so I booked two weeks for myself and two weeks for Joan. My brother who was then a school teacher always came with my young people to give me a hand, he agreed to take the youngsters back to Portslade while I stayed on with Joan. I had taken my motor-cycle on the train so that we could tour for that second week, but, of course, it was fatal, by the end of that week we both knew we were very much in love with each other and how to disguise this fact was the problem we both had during the next Connexional year. By Conference in 1953 I knew that my next Circuit to which I was stationed was in the Rhondda Valley in South Wales. Joan and I discussed the matter endlessly. For years while my children were young I had dismissed any idea of divorce, for anyone who was a professed Christian, let alone a professional worker in the church, this was looked upon by many Christians as an unpardonable sin. Up to the time of my being given full status as an ordained minister I had never read the Standing Orders of the Methodist Church to see the official ruling on divorce, I was prepared for it myself now that I no longer had the responsibility of young children. Our son Peter was married and Margaret was engaged to be married. I went up to Conference in Birmingham that year of 1953, was duly ordained by the Rev. Donald Soper, who was President that year - today he is Lord Soper, - and when I returned to Brighton I decided I had at last reached that for which I had worked so hard, I would now give it all up.

I felt I could not go on any longer as things were. I was keeping up appearances as a good minister, I meant everything I preached and taught, but was having clandestine meetings with Joan. My wife knew I was seeing Joan a lot and made cross remarks to me about it. I denied everything, and I hated doing that, for I believed and taught that to make things look other than they really are was the same as telling a lie. I began reading law books in the library to see which was the easiest, quickest and cheapest way of getting a divorce. I had for years believed that not all marriages made on earth are necessarily made in heaven. I was one of the first ministers in Methodism to marry divorced people in church. Being a Junior minister I had to get my 'Super's' permission first, but I was sure that the couple who came to me ~~who~~ had both been divorced from their previous marriages, should be given the chance of a new beginning. I discussed with Joan that we should do the honest thing and come out into the open with everything. Finally we decided that as the August holidays of 1953 were soon due and that year we had not booked any of the young people for a club holiday, we would go away to Cornwall together and that later I would tell my wife I had been unfaithful to her and ask her to take a divorce against me, but that in deference and respect to the Methodist Church I would not do so as a minister, I would resign from the ministry first. During that holiday we saw the difficulty of my being already appointed to the Rhondda and that arrangements had been made, I had better work for the first year of my three years before telling my wife. Neither of us liked the thought of our being separated and so far apart,


but I said I would see what time I could get off from my duties and every so often would make the journey on my motor-bike from Wales to Portslade, but when I arrived in the Rhondda I found I had the top end of the valley with seven churches under my charge. The central church of the circuit was Tonypandy Central Hall, but there were only three of us altogether on the ministerial staff, the superintendent minister the Rev. J. Rees Davies, the Rev. Kenneth G. Greet, who was the minister at Tonypandy Central Hall and a couple of other churches, and myself in the manse at Treherbert but in charge of seven churches between Pentre and Blaenrhondda right at the top end of the valley. We met at a staff meeting once a month, but apart from that we saw very little of each other. Kenneth Greet and I met <sup>at</sup> his manse occasionally but we were colleagues for only one year when he was called to take the office as ~~secretary~~ of the department of Christian Citizenship, and, of course, from that he rose to become Dr. Kenneth Greet, Secretary of the Methodist Conference. But apart from our occasional meetings I found I was left to myself with my seven churches most of the time. So I arranged my own time off. Instead of taking my day off each week, I left my time off until the end of each month and took from early Friday morning to late Saturday night, so once each month I went on my motor-bike to see Joan. To cut the journey down a bit I rode to Cardiff, then put my bike on the train to Bristol and did the journey from there by road. I always carried camping gear including a small tent which we used on the Saturday, but for Friday nights I had my regular bed and breakfast places either in Worthing or Shoreham. I was always very late back at Treherbert on Saturday

nights and in the winter months very cold. My wife did not like being shut in the Rhondda Valley so always went off to London, either with our son and his wife or sometimes with a relative. She knew I was going to Brighton and guessed who I was going to see. I always denied that there was any love affair going on and hated having to be deceptive, I would have preferred to be frank and open but knew I would have to wait until I could confess everything to her because of the Church work I became very involved with. I had a rota of local preachers who were at the churches I could not cover on Sundays. They were mostly coal miners, very good intelligent chaps. At two of my churches I had a pit managers and they both took me down their pits right up to the coal face, crawling on our hands and knees. At one pit they had just introduced modern cutting machinery with sprays of water keeping the dust down. This was something that was done only after many thousands of miners all down the years had developed silicosis. I used to watch the poor old chaps who gathered to meet each other at the bottom of my street, some of them with their shoulders heaving as they struggled to breathe. I had to visit one who was a member of my Treherbert church who was bedridden and dying. When I entered the home the wife said that one thing her husband would like which would freshen him up, was if I would shave him. Of course, I was only too glad to do so. But I thought of the terrible injustice done to that man and thousands like him. As a boy he started working in the mines, in the winter months going down while it was still dark and coming up again in the dark, Mondays to Fridays, and only seeing the daylight on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Now, after all those years of hard work under terrible conditions, he was unable to enjoy

even a few years of retirement at the end, but was bedridden and dying. I became involved with the people and the work they were doing and felt I would like to stay the three years of my appointment, but at the same time knew I could not go on with my private and personal life as it was. I talked the matter over with Joan and we both agreed that I could not resign after only one year there, so instead of resigning at Conference 1954, I would do so in 1955. I suppose it was only prologing the agony really, and it meant a further year of monthly journeys to Joan, with clandestine meetings and a further holiday together in the summer of 1954. My wife guessed what was going on but she was no doubt waiting for positive evidence. She knew when letters arrived from Joan and I began to fear she would begin opening them, so I arranged for Joan to write on certain days and send them as letters to be called for at Pontypridd post office. This is how I carried on during the two years I was in the Rhondda Valley. As far as the legal side of divorce was concerned I had studied the law books on the subject in the public library and knew that the quickest and cheapest way through the divorce court was to be the guilty partner, admit adultery and if the case is not challenged it would go straight through. What worried me was the ruling of the established Church on the matter. I had always known that according to Christian teaching, for a man to abandon his wife in order to take another one was sinful. However, in my studies I had discovered that so many things written in the scriptures were not in the original writings but were progressively added by the church Fathers down through the centuries. How can we know for instance

what Jesus really said about divorce and what has been added to what he said. In all my pilgrimage through this life in my quest to know where life on this earth is leading, my problem has been to know which signposts are leading in the right direction and which in the wrong, so many signs and instructions are contradictory. In the Methodist Church, that branch of the universal Christian Church of which I was part, I had a great respect for the gentlemen of the hierarchy who were leading and guiding us, I wanted to know what was their ruling. So I borrowed from my superintendent minister his copy of "standing <sup>orders</sup> and read through the "Statement of the Methodist Conference concerning the Law of Marriage and Divorce (Adopted Conference 1946)."

After quoting what Jesus said in the three Gospels, Mark, Luke and Matthew, the statement goes on to say, "We do not know whether He actually made any exception to this prohibition of divorce; and we do not know, if He did, what was its exact character; nor do we know whether, in what He then said, He was laying down a rule for all subsequent civil law on this matter." With regard to the phrase Jesus used "whom God hath joined together," They say, "It is surely impossible to apply these words to what are called 'forced marriages,' or to unions based on cupidity or mere physical desire." Then on the question of "Broken marriages and Reconciliation" they say, among other things, "The intolerable marital unhappiness of some unions, the wrong they do to innocent partners and children ..... make it imperative to seek the right way of remedying the evil." Then later in the same clause, "Divorce, where there are children of the union, should be granted only after the gravest consideration of their

interests, and, whether the marriage is childless or not, should be possible only when the marriage has broken down beyond the power of restoration." My marriage had long ago been hopelessly unsuitable and I no longer had any young children under my care. My only problem now was that I could not abandon my wife unless I knew she had some means of supporting herself. I also knew I could not start divorce proceedings while I was still an ordained minister in the Methodist Church. As far as my wife's maintenance was concerned, I knew I would have to give her an amount each week  and I determined I would resign at the next Conference in 1955. Shortly before Conference was due I told my wife of my intention to resign, said I could not go on in my secret love affair, I wanted to come out into the open with everything, admit my guilt and, by the Grace of God, make a fresh start in life. I told her I had been unfaithful to her, to which she said she had guessed for some time. I asked her if she would divorce me on the admission of my guilt, told her I would pay her some maintenance. As I have said earlier, she was older than me and would be sixty years old in the autumn of that year so would qualify for the women's state retirement pension on the strength of my payments into the state scheme. After the divorce she would no longer be my legal wife but would qualify for a different payment under the state scheme. To show this in figures would not mean much to anyone reading this today, for inflation has increased so much since those days that my payment would look an absurdly small amount, but when it is understood that the average working man's weekly pay was about ten pounds per week the amount of two pounds per week I promised to pay would be a fifth

of a week's pay I might earn while waiting to get into a position in the welfare section of some industry, which was the reason I gave to Conference when I wrote my letter of resignation. I intended, of course, to tell the Secretary of Conference after I was divorced as an ordinary citizen, and not as a minister of religion, the true reason for my resignation. I wanted to avoid any newspaper scandal about a parson going off the rails with a member of his flock. As things turned out the outside world knew absolutely nothing about the affair, it was known only among my own circle of friends and members of my family. My wife agreed about the financial arrangement, she intended to go back also to the part time job she had in Wimbledon before we moved to Brighton. There were blocks of flats on Wimbledon Common where better off people resided and there was always a need for women who would go in to do the house work. My wife used to go in to an elderly lady to do her cleaning and polishing. The flats were so modern and labour saving, that the work was quite easy and it meant my wife was able to supplement what amounts I gave to her. In fact as time went on she was financially better off than me, with my paying her a voluntary maintenance I found the first couple of years something of a struggle to make ends meet. When I told my wife of my intention to resign she said that now she knew the truth she would no longer stay with me, she would pack up what things she needed and leave me at once. I knew, of course, she did not like living in the Rhondda Valley any more than I did, being shut in the valley was depressing to us who were used to more open surroundings. When I made my monthly escapes to Brighton, she also went to family or friends



in London. During Conference that year I had a reply from the Secretary of Conference saying Conference had accepted my resignation and hoped I would do well in my new venture. I had to stay in the appointment until the end of the Connexional year when my holidays would be due in August, so I told only my superintendent minister that I would be going, I delayed as long as possible before telling the stewards and members of my churches that another minister in my place would be appointed for the following year. In June, during the Whitsun holidays Joan came to me at the manse, to help decide what things I should keep and take with me to Brighton, my wife had already left a list of what she wanted. The only thing that I regretted about that visit of Joan's to the Rhondda was my having to give the impression to my neighbour next door, a very nice lady, that Joan was a relative. She had seen my brother when he came to visit us and I gave the impression that Joan was his daughter. As soon as I said it I regretted it and have done all these years since, it would have been better to have given no excuse. As I now look back in my old age I know I was in a trap and struggling to get out of it. My involvement with Joan had grown stage by stage without my realising what was happenening. To begin with she took the place of my Christine upon whom all my affection was given, but as Joan was not my daughter inevitably the relationship grew until I was inextricably involved and desperately in love, something I had never been in my first marriage, which was nothing more than a religious transaction. Nevertheless I had entered into a solemn contract and was responsible, I argued in my mind

that I had always done my duty by my wife but had never really loved her as between husband and wife and I had, up to that point, given her thirty years of my life. From what I had learned from the teaching of Jesus, I believed that no man should have to live in bondage, but what ruling Jesus would have given in a case like mine, it is very difficult, after nearly two thousand years, to know. One thing only I did know, I could not remain as a minister of the gospel while I was living in the situation such as I was. When August 1955 came all our own bits and pieces from the manse were packed into the removal van and I rode with the men, first to London, to put my wife's things in store at Southfields, then on to Brighton where mine were stored in a depository at Hove. But within a short time I got a one room flat in Hove and set up a temporary home with my bits and pieces from the store which included, most importantly, my books. For I had made up my mind that while I had resigned from the ministry, I was not going to give up my quest to know what this life is all about, and in things spiritual and religious, who is right and who is wrong. I decided I would immediately have to start earning some cash and that it would be good to get experience in industry on the assembly line. I went to Underwood's typewriter factory on an industrial estate just outside Brighton. The personnel officer told me they were setting up a new line for repairs and overhauls of their adding machines which, up to that time had been repaired in America. He did not seem to bother about the job I had previously held, being a minister of religion did not seem to concern him, he wanted to know could I handle tools. I told him I could as I had been in the musical instrument trade.

I explained to him some of the intricate work I had done and he was satisfied. I was one of six men chosen for six swivels on the new assembly line. There was a bit more variety and interest on our jobs than those of people on the typewriter lines, as we found out when, on one occasion, we were held up while waiting for spare parts to come from America. We were sent over to help out on typewriter parts and the day I spent there was terribly boring, just forming one part over and over again all the working day, I realised that if I had to do that every day of my life I would go crazy.

While I was at Underwoods I had a letter from the solicitor acting for my wife, asking if Joan and I would go up to his office in London to sign a sworn statement. We both got a day off from our respective firms. At the solicitors office we were both surprised to find how formal and casual everything was. By that time divorces were becoming much easier to obtain. The solicitor chatted to us like an old friend, said my former wife was bringing a case for divorce against me on the grounds of adultery, he would read a statement to us in which we admitted adultery and we would both sign it. After we had signed he said to me, "I think you have been very wise doing it this way, you will not have to appear, the case is not being contested."

He discussed with me the amount of maintenance I had agreed with my wife to pay her and explained that while it was a personal agreement between us it would be made the subject of a Court Order, but that the Court usually kept to the amount agreed between the two parties. We were soon out of that office, it was all so easy. But what surprised me subsequently was the speed with which the case went through and

was all over. It was about the beginning of October, 1955, when we signed that statement and by the following Spring I received a letter from the solicitor to say the case had been heard and that a Decree nisi had been granted and within another six weeks, in May, I heard that the Decree had been made Absolute. On the statement we had signed I was described as a mechanic and in the Court the case was brought against a mechanic, no mention whatever was made that I had ever been a minister of religion. So it was not a newsworthy case and nothing more was heard about it. Joan and I immediately began to make plans for our marriage in the following August when our holidays from our firms were due. We also agreed that I should, before trying to get into welfare work in industry, see if I could get back into some kind of work in Methodism. In the advertisements in the "Methodist Recorder" we saw that there were a number of vacancies as caretakers in Methodist Churches. I applied for one in Huddersfield and we were accepted. We were married in the United Reformed Church in Hove, where we had both been attending on Sundays in the meantime. The reason for that was that I had previously been a minister in the Brighton and Hove Circuit and the ministers there who knew me, which included my former Superintendent minister, considered that while there was nothing that could prevent my attending a service at any Methodist Church in the circuit, there would without doubt be some members who would be embarrassed, if not offended, to see a former minister, now divorced and with a new wife, sitting among them. But my former 'Super', God bless him, was most helpful and ready to give us both a new start, he contacted the minister who was to marry us

in the United Reform Church, and told him he gave his whole-hearted backing to our being given a new start in life by having the solemn recognition and blessing of the Church. Relatives and friends came to support us in the service and at the reception at Joan's home afterwards. Later we flew from Shoreham Airport to the Isle of Wight for our honeymoon. That was the beginning to what has since proved to be a long and happy marriage. We have had our hard times struggling to bring up four children from babyhood to adulthood, but we have had the easier times in between. At the time of writing this Joan, my second wife, and I, have been together for thirty-five years and we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of our marriage this year. Looking back in my old age I realise how shocked were those in the Church then who knew what I had done. For centuries the Church had rigid rules about marriage and divorce and to break those rules meant you could no longer be a member of the Christian community, least of all a minister whose job it was to see those rules were kept. I had been studying writings that gave me to understand that many of the rules and laws laid down by the Church Fathers during the checkered centuries, were man-made and not necessarily God-made. I held to the view laid down in the Methodist Conference Standing Orders in the statement concerning the Law of Marriage and Divorce, that we do not know, from what Jesus said about divorce, <sup>whether</sup> He was laying down a rule for all subsequent civil law on the matter in every age and condition. Of course, then I was going through a very traumatic emotional experience and I clutched at anything that might give me the support of the Church. From the time I lost Christine my thinking about these

matters was bewildering and behind my distress were nearly thirty years of an unhappy and unstable first marriage. Of course, the world has changed since then, divorce is commonplace and young people are not so inclined to want to marry, they prefer to live with each other. To us older ones it does not seem a stable way of life, but then I am going by my second marriage, my first was surely not stable. The important part of what Jesus said about marriage is in the phrase "what God has joined together." How can we know what God has joined ? Well, there was one ancient Apostle who understood what Jesus meant in His teaching about God, it was the Apostle John who in his first epistle said, "God is Love." In the whole of creation as we observe it, Love is the creating force and it is the compelling power behind every true union between the sexes. If young folk came to me to ask my advice as to whether they should marry, I would not quote any creeds or dogmas to them, I would not in the first instance ask them if they had prayed about it, I would ask, "are you really in Love ?" After Joan and I had become settled in our new married life, I wrote to the Secretary of Conference and gave a full account of what I had done and the real reason why I had resigned from the ministry. I said I would like to know what my standing was now in the Methodist Church. A special committee was called together to go fully into my case and on a certain day I had to go before that committee to be questioned by them. After my interview I had to go off while they discussed the matter and I had to return in the afternoon to know the decision they had arrived at. On my return I found the committee had dispersed and there was just the Secretary, Dr. Baker,

and one other minister who had been a member of the committee.

They told me the committee's decision was, that while they did not like the way I had made my divorce possible, they considered there were extenuating circumstances in my case and for that reason they gave me reinstatement as a full member of the Methodist Church.

Dr. Baker then explained to me that being a recognised member again meant that in course of time I could again come up through the normal process of the Methodist Church, from the Society and through the Circuit, and apply to be reinstated as a local preacher. Beyond that he could not go, but he did go on to tell me of a minister who had been dismissed for embezzling money, who, after being restored to membership went up stage by stage and was finally reinstated as a minister. I came away from that visit to headquarters feeling very pleased that I had official sanction to worship at any Methodist Church. However, within a year of appearing before that committee Joan and I returned to her home at Portslade, which, of course, was on my old Brighton and Hove Circuit, only to find the Methodist folk there were not so ready to have us among them. I wrote to Dr. Baker about the matter and he immediately sent me a written statement he said I could show to anyone, which declared that there was no question about my being given a warm and friendly welcome at any Methodist Church where I wished to take up membership. But at a little later date, when he found that there were folk on our home circuit who were embarrassed by our presence, he advised me that it might be better if we joined up with a church on a neighbouring circuit within reach, which we did. However, I want

to make a confession here, that when I came away from that committee feeling so elated, I also had a lurking feeling of guilt, for while I had given all the facts relating to my previous unhappy marriage, and admitted I had made myself the guilty party to be sure of obtaining a quick and not expensive divorce, I did not say that I had carried on for over two years as a minister with a secret love affair going on between Joan and myself, because I did not want to let down the good folk in my churches who were supporting me. I carried this feeling of guilt for some years, until I decided to write to a former colleague of mine who had risen to the high office of Secretary of the Methodist Conference, in succession to Dr Baker who conducted my case before the committee. My former colleague was the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Greet, who backed me in my application because he had known and worked with me. He replied with a kindly and helpful letter assuring me that he felt sure they would have made the same decision to restore me to full membership, although he understood how I felt about wanting to put everything right. Although this assurance given that I could rise up again to become a Local Preacher, and probably to an ordained minister again, was encouraging, I was not sure that I wanted to be a minister again. I had the feeling that it would be better if I were a freelance, earning my own living and preaching to the people on Sundays as a local preacher, and not being bound as I was, as a minister, warned by my superiors that I must be careful what I preached, being bound to propagate something that was not true, lest members withdrew their support of the church, which included the minister's salary. I knew that so many of our members did not want their beliefs disturbed because by their dogmas they had already got a place in heaven reserved for them. They could not see that what I was seeking to give them was far better than anything their doctrines and rites can offer. I also knew that what I was preaching was taught by the historical Jesus before the mythical Jesus was created by those seeking power over the minds of illiterate people. I still had a long way to go before I discovered that I could never advance while I remained within a religious establishment, for all religions are a hindrance to knowing the Deity within us. But this comes later in this book. Joan and I began our married life as caretakers of a church. and from this within a short time, took a position managing the property at a large Methodist Central Hall at Southall, Middlesex, where we received enough salary to enable us to employ a cleaner to lighten our work load. This



suited us as it improved our financial position. Methodist Central Halls all over Great Britain had long since outlived the purpose for which they had been built in an age when they were very much needed. At the time when we applied for the job, King's Hall was typical of many of them. The congregation worshipping on a Sunday little more than half filled the large auditorium. There was a smaller hall used for children and a womens meeting, but at the rear of the King's Hall complex were a number of large rooms, some of which were let out to a boys' Grammar School near by, as class rooms, and others were occupied as offices by two or three manufacturing firms in Southall. The revenue derived from the rentals was the only means enabling King's Hall to survive. The firms provided their own cleaners, but I and my wife were responsible for those parts of the buildings used by the Methodist Church. There was a lot to do and we always had to be on the premises except on our day off when an arrangement had already been made with a young married man who lived nearby who stood in on our day off and on other occasions when required. He was a very helpful and friendly chap and when, after we had been there a little over a month, Joan found she was expecting our first baby, I was able to make an arrangement with him whereby when Joan felt she could no longer continue with her cleaning work, George, for that was his name, would share it with me, so that we would not have to lose all Joan's wages. It was our intention to have the baby born in our flat at the top of King's Hall, but when in June 1957, the baby started to arrive during a heat wave, and there was difficulty because it was a big baby, the midwife decided to call an ambulance and transfer Joan

to Hillingdon Hospital. In those days some hospitals did not permit fathers to be present at the birth of their babies and Hillingdon was one of them, so although I went in the ambulance with Joan and the midwife, I was told in a very brusque manner by a sister, "you need not wait," and I went away disappointed that I could not see our first baby arrive in this world. Later in the day when I 'phoned and was told the baby was born, I went along at visiting hours to see Joan with our first little son David, a healthy looking nine pounder. When they came back to King's Hall a couple of days later, we found we had our first problem. Our bedroom was at the top of the building facing the main road, it was a very busy road with heavy traffic, belching up exhaust fumes, which, when our windows were open, trapped much of the fumes in our bedroom. So, although we were going through a heat wave, I had to close all the windows, keep our bedroom door open and other doors open in our living quarters which led into passages that opened into the space between the roof and the dome of the auditorium, where the air was not so polluted. During the day time, it being good weather, we put our baby son in a pram downstairs outside in a space by the side of the hall where we could see him from our living room window upstairs. But we both decided we were not going to bring up a child in an unhealthy atmosphere like that, neither did we want to live in it, so we began to make arrangements to return to the Brighton area. Also by that time I could see that being a caretaker at any Methodist Church, or even managing the property at King's Hall could not lead to my getting back into the kind of work I had always done, my contacts at King's Hall were mostly with the business people or the Grammar School,

and apart from attending the Sunday morning service, there was very little chance of entering into the activities of the Church, we were far too busy for that. We gave the usual notice to leave and by the end of August 1957 we were back in Portslade, living temporarily with Joan's parents. I was still hoping to be able to get a position in welfare work in industry as I had intended when I resigned from the ministry. In the meantime I had to earn some money to keep my family and also continue to pay my former wife an agreed amount of £2 per week maintenance. That may not sound very much today, but it was about a quarter of the average working man's wages in those days. If the amount had been ordered by a Court it would no doubt then have been the third of my income, but my amount had been agreed privately between my former wife and myself, she was earning a weekly amount then and I knew she was financially better off than me. However, I had to keep my payments going and I did not mind what work I did so long as I was earning something in the meantime. I went to the Brighton Co-operative Society depot in Hove where their bakery vans and milk floats loaded up each morning for their rounds, saw the foreman and asked if he had any vacancies. I told him I had a driving licence. He said there was one round without a salesman, but it was not paying for itself. In those days a round had to reach one hundred pounds per week before there was any commission paid to the salesman, this was a bread and grocery round which only reached about eighty pounds, so I would be paid only the basic wage which was a little above nine pounds, not really enough to live on unless I could increase the sales. I had an interview with the manager and he agreed to let me take the round.

It proved to be the hardest work I have done in my life. I tried hard to bring that round up to, at least, a hundred pounds weekly, and where customers on my book had regular orders for only one or two loaves of bread, I always carried to the doors in my basket a variety of groceries, so that for several hours each day I carried a rather heavy load. At the end of each day I was very tired but still had to take home my books to reckon up. My wages came to only a little more than nine pounds per week, and after sending to my former wife two pounds from it there was not really enough for us to live on. Fortunately when it came to Christmas time most of the customers gave me a Christmas-box which altogether came to more than a week's wages, so that gave us enough to cover our extra Christmas spending. But we certainly had a struggle to live during that period. I held the job for one year and four months. Shortly after I started the work we were able to rent part of a house in Southwick. The landlady had moved to London and left an elderly aunt in two rooms upstairs and wanted somebody who would be prepared to keep an eye on her. She was quite capable and in fact went out every day to somewhere where she got her midday meal, and returned in the early evening. She was no bother to us, we got on very well with her. The rent was reasonable and from our very limited income we just managed to pay it. Then came, what I can only describe as God's Providence. I saw in our local newspaper an advertisement. The Central Electricity Generating Board had recently opened a residential training school in Shoreham for apprentices, lads between the ages of sixteen to twenty years of age. They needed an assistant Warden. Someone who had experience of working among young people and who also had

knowledge of office routine and administrative work. It was just what I had in mind when I resigned from the ministry to take up welfare work in industry. The post advertised was the only secular job in my life for which I could apply knowing that I was fully qualified for the position. Of course, in my ecclesiastical work I had qualified, both as a Pastor and a Minister, through my training and by passing examinations. With my application I sent three references from people who held senior positions in the Methodist Church, who recommended me on what they knew of my work within the Church, and also listed the office positions I had held at Westminster and other places from which I still had references. I knew I was applying to a newly Nationalised industry and I wanted them to know I had done work for the Civil Service. After a couple of weeks I received a letter from the C.E.G.B., in London, to say they had received seventy-two applications and had made a short list of ten, and that I was among those chosen to be interviewed at the Training School in Shoreham. Ashcroft, which was the name of the school, was a large house in very pleasant surroundings, which had been extended by the C.E.G.B., to accommodate fifty students, and as soon as I entered the place I knew it was where I wanted to be. I was one of the last candidates to be interviewed. There were six men forming the interviewing committee. The chairman, who was Personnel Officer, asked most of the questions. The others were, Education Officer, Welfare Officer, two gentlemen from administrative departments and the Warden of the school, whose assistant I hoped to be. He had been a well-known Lancashire cricketer who became sports master at some notable public schools after the war, including Rugby.

His name was Frank Booth, and as I was to discover in course of time, he had the final say as to who he wanted out of the ten candidates to be his assistant. He was a powerfully built man and had been a very skillful sportsman, not only in cricket but in other sports too. However, as I was also to discover, his physical ability and prowess did not appear to have qualified him as the best type of administrator for the school and, I was soon to find out, that it was one of the reasons why the chiefs at headquarters of this newly Nationalised industry decided to appoint an assistant to the warden. I seemed to satisfy the gentlemen of the interviewing committee with the answers I gave to their questions, and when it came to my knowledge of office routine and clerical work in general, I said I had received all my initial training from youth to young manhood under Sir Andrew Duncan, then added, "who as you gentlemen will know, was the first Chairman appointed by the government when they formed the Central Electricity Authority." The members of the interviewing panel looked at each other, then one asked the others, "did you know Sir Andrew Duncan?" and only the Personnel Officer could answer and say "O yes I knew Sir Andrew," he was the only one of them who had been in the industry ~~as~~ as a young man, the others had all come into the industry since the days of Sir Andrew. After my interview I was asked to wait in the warden's office. None of the other candidates had stayed and I heard the last one go in after me and eventually when he came out he also left the building. Then the Education Officer came into the office with the warden and told me they had decided to offer me the position, I would receive their decision in writing and I would also have to be medically examined. We discussed the date I would commence. It was nearly Christmas time when the students

would be going home. It suited me to start in the New Year when the students returned, for the very good reason that I had already held my bakery salesman job over a previous Christmas when I found that almost all my customers gave me a Christmas box, which amount in one week came to more than my week's wages and enabled us to buy all our extras for the Christmas holiday, which otherwise we could not have afforded as my wife was not earning at that time on account of having our young son, she was also expecting our second baby. So things worked out very nicely with having the extra cash to finish the bakery job and with a much more adequate salary as well as more suitable work to begin in the New Year. The Education Officer told me they would require me to have two week's training at their Divisional Headquarters at Kingston upon Thames before actually starting at Ashcroft. They would send me a railway season ticket for the two weeks journeys between Brighton and Kingston and I could arrive at the headquarters at 10. o.c., each morning. This was to brief me on the administrative procedure of this Nationalised industry, and I knew, of course, that it meant I would be back in the Civil Service where I had begun my working life as a small boy on leaving school. A few days before I commenced this two weeks briefing, I went to Ashcroft to have a talk with the Warden whose assistant I was to be. In our conversation I gathered he was not pleased about my having to be at headquarters for two weeks, he thought he could show me all there was to know about the administration at Ashcroft, but I was soon to learn that there was much more involved in his attitude towards headquarters. Each morning when I arrived at Kingston I went to the Education Officer's office. On the first day

he took me around to various departments and introduced me to those in charge. I was surprised at the number of people there were who seemed to have some interest in the training of apprentices and students at Ashcroft in this large industry producing electricity for the nation. There seemed to be many departments with a number of people in each, not appearing to be very busy. I had, of course, begun my working life in the Civil Service during the first World War, and being war time everybody was busy, then when I became a member of Sir Andrew Duncan's staff, each of us always had something to do from the time we entered the office in the morning until we left in the evening. It was not clear to me what some of those folk there were supposed to be doing and by the time my two weeks' briefing was finished, I wondered if this Nationalised industry was a bit top heavy. Towards the end of the two weeks I was told that other people had also been engaged at this beginning of the New Year as I had been, and that the Divisional Controller was to meet us all and address us on Friday afternoon. On that day we assembled in the boardroom and were entertained with tea and cakes, the Controller welcomed us and talked about the industry's past and their hopes for the future. When it was over we lined up in single file so that as we went out the Controller could shake hands with each of us. There must have been nearly twenty of us and I was about two thirds down on the queue. When I came up to the Controller, instead of shaking hands with me, he tapped me on my shoulder and said, "I want to have a talk with you, will you wait over there," and pointed to the boardroom table. So I left the queue and waited. When everybody had gone, including the Education Officer



443

443.

( FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE )

who had assembled us all in the boardroom and stayed for the tea and talk, and I was left alone with the Controller. He came straight to the point, all was not well at Ashcroft, they had been having difficulties with the Warden, he would not work within the system and give them what they wanted. He explained that they were a government controlled industry and lines of procedure were laid down by the powers that be. They were expected to work within the system and they hoped now that I had been appointed as assistant to the Warden I would co-operate more fully with headquarters and keep to their requirements. He said it was one of the reasons why my post had been created. The residential school had been enlarged, so they could take an additional person on the establishment, but they wanted someone they hoped could take much of the administrative routine out of the Warden's hands and keep things in order. After the Controller had finished his talk with me and I was on my way home, it occurred to me that if the Warden was a paid servant in this Nationalised industry like every other official I had met, why could he not be compelled to obey instructions or risk losing his job if he did not. It was only after I had got to know the Warden personally that I discovered he had signed a ten years' contract with the authorities, and while there were certain things in that contract he regretted, it did secure his position and there was not much the authorities could do about it. However, on my first day at work at Ashcroft I sensed that the Warden knew that headquarters had briefed me to take over some of the administrative work, he gave me nothing to do, absolutely nothing. He had fixed my times on that first day to be in the office all the morning, then go home to my midday meal, have

most of the afternoon off, then return at 5.p.m., when the lads came back from the technical workshops attached to the new Brighton 'B' Power Station. I had then to supervise the kitchen staff giving them their evening dinner, then see that they got at least an hour on their revision of their lessons during the day, after which I had to organise a certain number of the students in the hobbies room on a project of their own choice. I knew once I was with the lads my work would be interesting, for I had many years of youth club work behind me, but to sit in that office in the morning with nothing to do on my first day was boring. Frank Booth, the Warden, sat at his desk reading through some papers. After some time of silence I said to him, "is there something I can do?" He replied, "can't you find something to do?" I said, "but I do not know yet what office work I am supposed to be doing, when the lads return this evening I shall know what to do with them," then, pointing to my empty desk, continued, "but at present I can't see any office work to do." He then pointed to a glass doored cabinet on the wall beside my desk with rows of keys hanging on hooks. They were the keys of every dormitory and room door in the school. He said, "those keys want labels, you can put a label on each of them." I asked him where he kept the labels and he pointed to a cupboard on the other side of the office. There were numbers above each hook, so I just copied that number on a label for each, then walked around the school building to discover which number was a dormitory or study or lounge etc., and wrote the names on the labels. However, that kind of attitude on the part of the Warden did not last long, he was soon obliged to give me work to do. It was not directly concerned with the industry but was

an extra-curricular activity. Frank Booth, having been well known in the cricketing world, had played for the late Duke of Norfolk's eleven at Arundel. The Duke, knowing that Frank was Warden of our school invited him to bring a team of our lads to play against other teams in which the Duke was interested. Through these contacts Frank Booth met people interested in youth work who were supporting what was then the new Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. He introduced the scheme to our Ashcroft lads just at the time when I was engaged as his assistant. Now while Frank was a very good sportsman, not only in cricket but other sports too, when it came to the other activities which candidates for the award scheme had to take, activities which we, at Ashcroft, used to group under the heading "cultural" as distinct from "sport", Frank knew nothing much about these subjects. I had taught subjects in which most of our Ashcroft candidates were interested, such as music, woodwork and art. So Frank had to ask me to be responsible for those parts of the scheme. He wanted a large chart to be put up on our office wall showing the names of candidates, the various activities being taken and plotting progress made. Frank had seen these charts up in the public schools where he had been sports master, but he could not type nor make up such a chart. He asked me could I type and when I said I could, he asked me if I would make the chart. We had two typewriters in our office and I used the larger one to make up sections, then pasted them together. This was right up my street, the making up of charts etc., I had learned when with Sir Andrew in Westminster in my youth, the teaching of the subjects I had done during the many years since. This was the beginning of Frank and I becoming pally and made the atmosphere of our

office more pleasant. But this did not happen immediately upon my beginning my work at Ashcroft. An arrangement made with the Warden by the Personnel Officer, was that my times on and off duty were to be put up over my desk for each month, so that I could make my own personal arrangements accordingly. They were written up for my first week only. I was to have one and a half days off each week. That first week I was given a day off in the middle of the week and my half day was on Saturday afternoon. That Saturday was like my early days on duty when I arrived at Ashcroft at 7.a.m., rang a ship's bell hanging in the entrance hall to call the students up, then supervise the kitchen staff with giving the lads their breakfasts, after which I had to see they were off in time to go to the technical workshops near the Power Station for their training. Now when I had that duty on certain days of the week, I usually worked in the office up until 11. a.m., then went home and returned at 5.p.m., to see the lads back from the workshops, then supervise their evening meal, then settle them down for a period of revision with the notes they had brought back from their technical lectures, after which I supervised those who had hobbies and gave instruction where needed. Some of the lads would go into the Common room to play billiards or snooker or some other game. The popular group I conducted on some evenings of the week was the music group. Those were the days of the well known Beatles group, so lots of lads wanted to learn to play the guitar. At odd hours during the week I gave individual lessons to some of them and when they could play chord accompaniment reasonably well I let them play with my group of lads who could play quite well. Every year, with every new intake of students, I always had

some lads who could play musical instruments quite well, so during my years at Ashcroft there was always a good musical group. However, that first Saturday at Ashcroft was the only time during my seven years there, when I can remember having a proper half day off. It was an early time on duty, but instead of breaking at 11.a.m., I worked through until 1. p.m., then went home. The next day, Sunday, was my full day off, so I had one and a half days consecutively away from the work, but that was the only time it happened during a normal week. All future weekends I was on duty part of both Saturday and Sunday and my day off was a weekday either Wednesday or Thursday. The half day the Warden made always a morning. I protested about that, it was no different from the days when I had to be on duty from 1. 30.p.m., to 10. 30. p.m., that was a stretch of nine hours continuous, so for that reason I did not go on duty until 1. 30.p.m, but that morning could not be called a half day off, I still had nine hours work to do. When I protested Frank Booth changed my early duty to 7. a.m., to 11. a.m., then go off and come on again from 5. p.m., another nine and half hours duty but split up in two halves, but he still kept my half day in the morning with my coming on duty at 2. p.m., to 10. 30.p.m., eight and half hours stretch, and he called the morning my half day off. I could not make him see that the average working person has more than that number of hours at home with their families after they have finished work in the day and gone home in the evening. My morning hours were only equivalent to that, but were certainly not a half day off. He would not give way and I did not want to bring headquarters into the matter at that early stage of my engagement, so I put up with it for some time. But as the better weather

came in the Spring, the position regarding my times on and off duty became even worse. No times at all were put up on the wall, Frank left it until the end of a week before he told me what my times would be for the following week. I soon realised why he was doing this. Now I can quite understand that both he and Mrs. Booth, living in a flat on the premises, wanted to get away from the place whenever they could, but it was obvious they wanted to know what sort of weather we were going to get before they decided where they would go in their car. So I just had to wait until they had made their plans before I could know what times I would have with my family. My wife and I could not plan anything in advance, if relatives wanted to visit us we could not be sure that I would be off duty to see them, or as the summer days came and we wanted to have our young boys on the beach, which was only walking distance from our home, we would have to make last minute decisions, we could never plan. By the time of my first summer at Ashcroft our first son was a toddler and enjoyed himself with a spade and bucket by the sea, and our second son had arrived just before the spring-time, which always meant a lot of preparation when going to the beach, packing baby foods and changes of garments in our pram, we were not in a position at that time where we could make a sudden decision to go out, yet there were times when I did not know what my times on and off duty were for a particular week, until I arrived at the office on the Monday morning, only to be told that my day off was on the following day, and by time I arrived home again to tell my wife, it was a bit late to do anything about it. In the end I got to a point where I could not tolerate being messed about any longer,

I knew the Personnel Officer had said I was to have my times displayed for four weeks ahead, so I wrote to him at headquarters and told him what was happening. He came down to Shoreham and had a talk, first with Frank Booth, then with me and the result of that visit was that my times were put up for a week in advance for a few weeks. But before long we were back to the uncertainty of the past months. However, by then things had improved as far as my working conditions were concerned and also with regard to the relationship between Frank and myself. He was becoming more and more dependent upon me for things that were not in his line, particularly in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. This was an activity which was nothing to do with the C.E.G.B., but, of course, they were willing enough for our students to be involved in it. Then a further development came when Frank did something which proved to be of great value to me for some years. He was on friendly terms with the headmaster of what was known in those days as an "Approved School" in Portslade, a short distance from Shoreham. This particular school was then under the London County Council, a couple of years before it was dissolved and the Greater London Council created, after which the school, for difficult lads who had been through the Juvenile Courts, was taken over by the East Sussex County Council. I had been taking my Ashcroft music groups to play occasionally at concerts in aid of various charities. The headmaster of Mile Oak Approved School, as it was known, asked Frank if my group would play at the school's open day in the summer. We played and apparently made quite an impression. After the event was over, the headmaster said to Frank, "I wish your assistant would come and teach my boys to

play music like he teaches your Ashcroft boys." Frank said that I probably would, he told the headmaster that I had split duties and that he could arrange my times so that I could attend the Mile Oak School a couple of times each week. I gladly accepted the opportunity, went to see the Headmaster, who told me the lads were very difficult and would not learn music from the regular teachers in their classes, that he had tried a couple of teachers coming in from outside the school, but with no better results. He said he understood I had my own system of teaching music, I said yes, I believe music is something that is a vital part of most human beings make-up, a means by which we can express ourselves and should never be imposed upon children as an irksome lesson to be learned, but should be a pleasure from the very beginning. I elaborated and explained this bare outline, of course. He told me they had a number of paino-accordions and a couple of guitars, which the boys had damaged. I examined them, picked out four accordions which I said I could repair, and he said he would send them down to my house by the school 'bus. Within a couple of weeks I went to the school to give my first lesson. I took my own accordion with me, those I had repaired had been collected by school transport. My first pupils were brought into the room by a teacher and left with me. The lads all looked at me suspiciously and as I strapped my instrument over my shoulders, I just said, "hello lads !" Then I said, "have you heard this latest Beatles number ?" and began to play. The expressions on their faces changed and they all came nearer to me. One lad asked me if I knew another popular Beatles number and I began to play it. Immediately they all joined in singing and I knew I had



got them all with me. One lad said, "cor, sir, I wish I could play like that." I said, "well perhaps you will soon, I'll show you how." Of course, these were all lads from the London area, mostly cockney boys as I had been when born and brought up in the East of London, I understood them, and they instinctively took to me. I wrote out simple melodies in the letters A to G, put stickers on the notes of the accordions, showing which notes were of those letters, and on the first afternoon I was with them we were able to play together some well known tunes. I played all the chord accompaniments with them and the lads were thrilled when they heard how good it sounded, and they were helping to produce that sound. The headmaster heard us when he entered the building, and came down the corridor to our room and stood looking and listening. When we finished our piece he said, "well that sounds good lads, you have soon learned to play." I said, "yes, we play first and learn music as we go along. That is how I learned to speak the English language, I listened to my mother and copied her, and she has told me that before I was one year old I could speak quite well. I did not learn the grammar first. Some of that I learned stage by stage during my years at school. I also learned music the same way from my father, I played first and only as I needed to know the theory did he tell me." The headmaster seemed impressed. He looked at my instrument, which was a modern one. He asked me about those the boys were playing, which I had repaired, and I told him they were the older models which were not very good and more difficult for the lads to play. He said he would see if he could get new instruments from the County authorities and asked me to go into his office when

I had finished with the boys and write out a list of what we needed. Within a few weeks there arrived at the school a number of new student model instruments, just the right size for these lads who were learning. From that time onwards, during the years I was at that Approved school, I always had a group of lads who played for the festivities each Christmas as well as at the school open day each summer, just as my students did at Ashcroft. Not only was this very interesting work in which I felt I was doing socially helpful work, but it helped my wife and myself financially. At Ashcroft I was already receiving the best salary I had ever been paid in my life, but I was now also on the London County Council list of Extraneous Teachers, as it was termed in those days, and received a monthly cheque from the Education Department. For the first time in my life I was able to buy our own house. An elderly lady living alone, wanted to go into smaller accommodation, she considered her house was better suited for someone with a young family. By that time, not only was our second son, Timothy, born soon after I started at Ashcroft, but two years later our third son, Nicholas, arrived. The house was on the Old Shoreham Road only a few minutes walking distance from Ashcroft. I went to see the lady, who considered my family was just what she had hoped for, and offered me the house for under two thousand pounds, which was a bit below the market price in that year of 1962. The Southwick District Council was giving generous mortgage loans in those days and my bank manager gave me a loan for the deposit, which was only a small amount by today's standard, and in June 1962, we moved into our new home. Just to think that the same house, twenty years later, in 1982, was

put up for sale by the new owners for around forty thousand pounds, that is twenty times the market value when I bought it. Some of us want to know why property prices have gone up double the inflation rate on all other commodities. Now, I do not want to go into this matter here in this book, I am not an expert on economics, but one does not need to be an expert to work out simple arithmetic on our own incomes compared with twenty years ago. My salary at Ashcroft was twenty pounds per week, more than twice what I had earned as a Co-operative bakery salesman. The equivalent salary today for the same Civil Service grade I held then, is around two hundred pounds per week. So that salary has gone up ten times in twenty years. Some foodstuffs we can work out at a bit below that increase. But when it comes to properties, they have increased twenty times, why? I can remember the years when it began, people I knew personally who saw the chance to get rich on the needs of others who were greatly in need of a home. One chap who lived next door to us, would buy a house in our area, ostensibly for himself, it would be in need of some repair so he paid a reasonable price for it. Then he would pay a couple of men to paint and repair it, then sell it for several hundred pounds more than he paid for it, making a good profit. He never needed to go to work himself. While one house was being prepared he would buy another on a bank loan, at the time when he told me what he was doing he had three houses like that being prepared for sale. There were scores of other people like him cashing in on the needs of folk on low incomes. When I see the exorbitant prices being charged for properties today, I know it all began with greed.

From the time when I began going in to the Approved School to teach, things became easier between Frank Booth and myself. He still occasionally did not give me my duty times in advance, but I put up with that because I had learned to work out a convenient routine for myself. My financial position was the best I have ever had it in my life, we had our own house, when the Booths went off for the day and I was left in charge of Ashcroft, I would clear my office work by the afternoon, my wife would put our youngest son in his pram, meet our other two little boys at primary school, which was not far from Ashcroft, bring them to Ashcroft and if the weather was dull our sons played in the common room where there were plenty of games to keep them amused, or in the summer when the weather was good I put a couple of deck chairs outside my office window which looked out on a large lawn surrounded by flower gardens and trees, a safe place for our children to play, I could reach the telephone from the window if it rang, and my wife and I sun-bathed until the apprentices arrived back at 5.p.m. So I ceased bothering about my duty times. Although I was on duty part of each weekend, every fifth weekend the students went home and it was a free weekend for the Warden and his assistant also. The apprentices left the place at 4.p.m., on the Friday and by 4.30 p.m., I locked up and went home until the following Monday morning. That certainly made up for the other weekends when I had split duties. Frank Booth left more and more of the running of the place to me and it suited me if he was happy. But I used to feel when I took my groups of lads to play at concerts, that he was a bit jealous of me.

He could not do anything like that. He took some lads to the swimming baths one evening per week to teach swimming, and he took a team on Saturdays to play against other schools, football in the winter and cricket in the summer, but that was all. My groups were very popular with the lads, we played music frequently, and my woodwork groups produced some good models which were on display on our open day each year when some of the headquarters people came to visit us, as well as the parents of the lads. Then one day I had a big surprise. I walked into our office one morning and saw on Frank Booth's desk a clarinet. I asked him, "whose is that instrument Frank?" He said, "mine." Then he told me he had been having lessons from a lady clarinet teacher in Brighton, he had not told me before in case he was not able to make much of it, but he could now play a few simple pieces. I saw my chance of a more peaceful life, I said, "Frank we can play together, it will help, for the more you play, the better you will become." He was quite in favour of that, and I knew he really wanted to play with the lads' group. Once a year when I have taken a band on a decorated float around the streets of Shoreham to collect for the Shoreham Life Boat, the only part Frank could take was to take pictures of us on his film camera. From that time onwards I often spent an hour or so with him while the students were away on their technical studies, I usually played my piano-accordion so that I could cover any mistakes he might make. By the time of the next Life Boat day, he could play a number of popular numbers reasonably well and he was on that decorated float with us. There was quite a long period of peace between Frank and myself. But, unfortunately, the time came when that peace was to be

shattered, we had the biggest quarrel of all. It was because he was accusing a lad of something which I was convinced that lad had not done. We had a public telephone box in our entrance hall and on most evenings there would be a few students who would call their parents, and if any of those were long distance, say to London, or somewhere else in our South Eastern Division, they would ask their parents to reverse the charges so that they did not have too many coins to put in for the call. Now, when the account came in each quarter, it was always handed to me to check the figures, either by Frank or Mrs. Booth, but I never saw the cash that was taken out of the 'phone box, only Frank had the key to that, and I knew he could make mistakes I had enough evidence of that. One morning he came into the office in a sour mood, "I'll get some of the cheating little devils, I will," he said. I asked him what he meant. He said the account had come and when he counted the cash there was not as much as the figure showing the private calls the boys had made. "I know the devils who are fiddling," he said. I asked him if I could see the account. "You don't need to do that, we have checked it," meaning Mrs Booth and himself. I reminded him that they usually gave me the account to check. He got into a temper, "I don't want you bloody well taking the boys' part," he shouted. So I said no more at that point. But during that evening when I was on duty with the lads and Frank and Mrs. Booth were out, a student came to me looking very worried, and said, "sir, Mr. Booth is accusing me of something I have not done." I asked him what he meant and he told me he was being accused of fiddling 'phone calls so that he did not pay for those he had made.

Now for anyone to understand today how this could be possible, I must explain that in those days the telephone system in Great Britain was run by the General Post Office, not under British Telecom as today. Also that the quarterly accounts were made out differently back in the nineteen-sixties, every single call was listed when it was out of the subscribers local area, and longer distance calls still were listed as trunk calls. The calls made on our public box in our hall were listed together with the business calls of the Training School, but it was possible to calculate the amount of those in the coin box to see if it agreed with what was on the account. Now, as I have said, I never handled nor saw the cash when taken out of the box, I always took Frank's word that the amount he took out agreed. Now, it so happened that I did know that it was possible to fiddle a public call 'phone in those days, but very few people knew how it could be done. My son, Peter, who as a teenager, was with the G.P.O., during the second World War, demonstrated to me how it could be done, but one would need to know something of the technical side of the telephone system. So I had this at the back of my mind at the time of this incident at Ashcroft. It occurred to me that one of our apprentices or students could know the fiddle, but I was also convinced that it was not this lad who was being accused. He was a very reliable lad and one I knew I could trust. After thirty years of full time work among youth, organising youth clubs, as well as teaching in schools, I had learned to recognise the various types of young people, and I knew this lad was innocent. He told me that whenever he 'phoned his parents, he always asked the operator for reversed charges and his parents always took the reversed charge call.

Other lads also at Ashcroft did this when 'phoning to their homes and, of course, none of those calls were charged to our account. What this particular lad was worrying about was that we were just coming to the end of the course when the results of the tests and exams for each student would be shown on a certificate and a report made by the Warden of the school. This lad had got through his past year's work quite well and did not want this to be spoilt by a bad report from Frank Booth. I asked him if he could get a letter from his parents saying that they had always taken reverse charges on their son's calls. He replied that he had said he could do this, but Mr. Booth would not listen to him. I told him I would see what I could do.

The next morning when Frank came into the office, I told him this lad had come to me the evening before, but before I could say another word he began shouting and swearing, saying I had no right to discuss the matter with the lads. I insisted that if any of the lads came to me when I was on duty, I was bound to listen to ~~them~~ and report what ~~they~~ had said. Frank continued to shout and swear that I always took the part of the lads as against him, that I was no bloody good to him and I could get out of the office, "go on," he shouted, "get out of this office." I said, "now look here, I've been appointed by Divisional Headquarters to this job and if you don't want me then you must get in touch with Headquarters and tell them." He flared up even worse, shouting if I would not go out he would throw me out. I said, "well I'll 'phone Mr. Gregg about this — ~~he~~ being the Personnel Officer who had to come down on a previous occasion from headquarters to settle the question of my times on and off duty. Quickly I moved around his



desk to the telephone on the window-sill and picked it up. With his eyes glaring like a madman he came rushing around the other side and with a hefty swipe knocked the 'phone out of my hand and on to the floor. Then he came for me with both hands out, as though to grab me and throw me out of the office. Now, he was a big muscular sportsman and I was a slightly built chap but wiry and I have always had the advantage of very quick reactions. In a flash I grabbed off his desk, a heavy marble paper weight, held it in a defensive position and said, "if you lay a hand on me, you'll get this." I crouched, looking straight into his eyes like a young tiger about to spring. He stopped short, he was taken aback, he did not expect an ex-parson to do this. But, of course, he was not seeing the ex-parson, he saw the little cockney boy from the Eastend of London, who in the meantime had spent six years of war in the R.A.F., where I had been taught a little unarmed combat. He turned his back on me, shouting as he went out of the office, "I don't want to see you anymore, don't come in, I don't want to see you again." I picked up the telephone apparatus from the floor and examined it. As it went down down it hit the desk but dropped on the carpet, so only had a slight chip. Then I walked down to the kitchen to get myself a cup of tea. The kitchen staff all looked a bit shocked, they knew what Frank Booth could be like and I had always been on friendly terms with them, they had heard the noise of shouting and swearing and wondered what was happening to me. I assured them I was alright and told them what it was all about. When I went back to my office desk I sat thinking. This was the third time <sup>in my life</sup> this had happened to me, and in each case it was a big heavily built man like Goliath against little David. "Why,

in heaven's name," I asked myself, "does this keep happening to me ? The first was the Rev. Galpin, who stormed at me to go out of his rectory, he did not want to see me again. The second was the Rev. Thompson, who in a terrible rage, screamed at me to clear out of his office at the Battersea Central Mission, accusing me of things which had not even taken place. These first two were parsons and did not swear, nor threaten actual physical force. But now this third one, who gave full rein to his language and would have used physical force had I not threatened to defend myself. In each of these cases the powers that be, must have known to whom they were sending me. The London City Mission knew the Rev. Galpin's peculiar religious views were not those we were trained to propagate, the Methodist Headquarters had known about the Rev. Thompson for years, that is why they allowed him to work as a free lance in London, <sup>but</sup> of course, he was a sick man. But certainly the chiefs of the South Eastern Division of this Nationalised Industry knew about Frank Booth, for the Divisional Controller, at my induction, had held me back in the boardroom to tell me of the difficulties they had had with this Warden. But after nearly seven years now at Ashcroft I knew there was nothing I could do about it, I had really tried to get on with Frank and had put up with a lot. But I could not tolerate any more, this must be the end. If I wrote to the Divisional Controller himself he probably would not be able to do anything, a contract had been signed, and we were left isolated on the South Coast miles from headquarters, to run things more or less our own way, except for the official paper work, and Frank Booth certainly ran things his way, there was only one thing

I could do, it was a very big step to take with a family of three young boys, but I just could not go on any longer with Frank as he was. Ashcroft was the best paid job I had ever held, and I was also on the pay roll of the Approved School for part time work, I would have to give up that job as well if I took this step.

My daughter Margaret, with her husband and their three children, had migrated to Australia eighteen months before this incident at Ashcroft. She went 'down under' as a qualified staff nurse and her husband was an accountant, so they soon settled in good jobs, transferred their money from the sale of their house in England and purchased a new house in a new area twelve <sup>miles</sup> north of Adelaide in South Australia. It was at a time when everything was going well in Australia, there was plenty of work, everybody seemed to be making money, there was plenty of sunshine, and when you were not at work life was a constant holiday. Margaret wrote to us several times, advising us, almost imploring us, to bring our boys to Australia, the land of promise, it was the future for them. Before this unfortunate row with Frank Booth I had already written to Australia House in London, obtained their literature and had signed application forms. Then a couple of months after this, Joan, my wife, had a miscarriage and was taken into Southlands Hospital at Shoreham. When she came back home we did not pursue further steps in our application to migrate to Australia. But on this day when things got to being almost a punch-up between Frank and myself, I decided I would have to continue with my application to Australia House. When I got home that night I told Joan what had happened. She was only too ready to go ahead with our application, she had seen me on

several occasions come home from Ashcroft tense and worried because of an unpleasant outburst by Frank. Indeed, the very latest of those unreasonable and unjustifiable outbursts had occurred in the spring of that same year, when for the first and only time in my seven years at Ashcroft I had to go on the sick list and be away from Ashcroft for a couple of weeks. It happened because there had been a minor epidemic among the students. One <sup>lad</sup> <sub>A</sub> after the other went sick with mumps. I had to attend the sick lads. Our rule about ~~their~~ reporting sick was the same as that in the armed services during the war. When I was on early duty and saw that the lads were all up and then supervised the staff who fed them, if a lad said he was not well I took his temperature. If it was not above normal he was what the services call M.D., - medicine and duty, - but if it was above normal he had to go to bed and the regular doctor we called into Ashcroft, would attend him. When several lads were down with what the doctor had diagnosed as mumps, we would not allow any members of the staff to go near them, I took their meals and medicine to them and attended to their wants, then when I went off duty Frank Booth took over. After about three weeks of this and the epidemic seemed to be abating, I went to bed one night feeling very unwell and had pains in my neck. By the next morning the glands in my neck were swollen and I felt sick. I had not to be on duty until midday, it was one of my late turns. My family and I were on the medical list of a team of three lady doctors in Hove. My wife went to a 'phone box and telephoned the surgery and during the morning one of the doctors came to see me. She said I had not got mumps but glandular fever and that I was to stay in bed.

Accordingly, when my wife went to a chemists near by with a prescription given by the doctor, she went into the 'phone box again and called Ashcroft and told Frank Booth she would bring round to him during the day a certificate the doctor had also given her, signing me off work. Most of the first week sick I was kept in bed. During the second week I got up but took things easy and avoided getting too near our three young sons. My wife carried out her usual routine when she took the two boys to school, by putting the youngest in his push chair and wheeling him there to see them go, she also met them in the same way. But, one afternoon when they arrived home, about half way through my second week sick, she remembered she had to get some things from the shops across the road from us and for that brief while left the boys in the house with me, and, of course, during that brief period our front door bell rang. I had my dressing gown on so went to open the door. The boys, being inquisitive, came trotting after me to see who was at the front door. It was Frank Booth. He wanted to know when I was coming back to Ashcroft, he said he could not manage everything by himself he wanted me there. I said I could not return until the doctor signed me off the sick list. I told him she would be coming to me at the end of the week and I would ask her to give me a final certificate to return the following Monday. I knew, of course, that with glandular fever, two weeks was a short time to be off work, but Frank was insistent, he was quite unpleasant about it. However, when the doctor came on Friday she thought it was a bit soon for me to return to work, but I told her I would only have to sit in the office and keep my eye on things so she wrote out a certificate to return

the following Monday. But knowing that the weekends were our most busy times with the students, <sup>that</sup> and on Saturdays Frank and I were usually both on duty, he with the sports teams and I, apart from the office work, had charge of other activities in the hobby rooms. So I turned up at Ashcroft during Saturday morning with my doctor's certificate. I went up to the Warden's flat on the first floor and when Frank came to the door I told him I had returned for duty. "About time too," he shouted. I said I had to persuade the doctor to let me return, she wanted to keep me home longer. "Don't give me that," he bawled, "you weren't bloody sick, you stayed home to look after your kids while your wife went out." I told him my wife had brought him a doctor's certificate showing what was wrong with me. "Anybody can write anything on a certificate," he shouted, "it doesn't mean a bloody thing." His voice sounded along the corridors, there were dormitories both sides and, being Saturday, there were lads in those dormitories who could hear him shouting and swearing at me, it was most humiliating. I walked downstairs to the office, I was not feeling very strong and I wished I had not come in until the Monday. If he had looked at me he must have seen that my neck was still swollen, I should not really have come to work, but I had come in because it was Saturday and I knew he would need some help, only to be so unjustly humiliated like this. All these things were in Joan's mind too as we discussed whether I should resign from Ashcroft and take our boys to Australia. Fortunately our holidays were due in a couple of weeks and Ashcroft would be closed for six weeks. For the first two of those weeks, I with my family had to move into

Ashcroft to be about the place while the cleaners and decorators cleaned and redecorated. Then I had three weeks annual leave when for a couple of weeks we usually took our boys for a caravan holiday. After our holidays I was back at Ashcroft for a week preparing for the new intake of students, who started at the beginning of September. But those holiday weeks in the year 1965 gave us the chance of going ahead with our moves to go to Australia. All the formalities were arranged at Australia House, we were all given our medical examinations and had our interview with the Australian official at an office in the Department of Health and Social Security building in Brighton. When he saw our three boys he was ready to accept us, they wanted young life in Australia. I looked much younger than my years and my wife was much younger than me. We had been sponsored by my daughter and her husband in Australia and we had their home to go to until we got our own house. We could sell our own house in England and transfer our money to Australia, everything was in our favour and we were the kind of family they wanted 'down under'. By the time our new year started at Ashcroft we had been told from Australia House that we would be on a flight out by the end of November or early in December, they promised us we would be there well before Christmas. I said nothing to Frank until we were almost through the month of September, then I told him I would be giving a month's notice to headquarters to leave Ashcroft at the end of October. We put our house up for sale and had no trouble in getting a buyer. After the three years we had lived there house prices had gone up, so after paying back to the

Southwick Council the balance of my mortgage from them, and settling legal dues and solicitor's fees, we had a clear profit of well over a thousand pounds, which was quite a bit in those days. As soon as we were told we would be flying out on the 6th December, 1965, we arranged to vacate our house ten days before, went into a Guest House in Hove for bed and breakfast and had our other meals with Joan's parents in Portslade. All the things we were taking to Australia had been crated up and taken by the shipping agents and furniture we could not take we sold, our home in England was gone, it was a great responsibility with a family of young children, I was longing to get to Australia and start again. This was another of the many traumatic times I have been through in my long life, I was then sixty-three years of age, only two years away from the usual retirement age in England. Had I stayed at Ashcroft I had been told on my engagement that I would be allowed to continue beyond the retirement age so long as I was still fit, the Approved School also would have kept me for as long as I cared to go in to teach. I did not know it would not be like this in Australia, I was taking my family to a land of sunshine and plenty, but I was off to a very hard life ahead. We flew out early in December, 1965, landed on the way at Kuwait, Colombo, in what was known then as Ceylon but today is Sri Lanka, Singapore, Darwin in Australia, then across to Melbourne where we changed planes for Adelaide. It was summer time there but not yet as hot as it can be, it was mostly in the eighties and lower nineties Fahrenheit, but we had left England in an early winter with snow and ice, and with a flight



of less than forty-eight hours it was a bit sudden for us. However, I preferred it to the winters of England, and as it was holiday time over the Christmas weeks and up to the first week in the New Year, Margaret my daughter, and her husband Robert, took us around in their car to see both the city of Adelaide and the beaches along that part of the coast. It was lovely swimming in December in warm sea water. But after we had done our Christmas shopping and spent quite a bit on frequent cool drinks and ice creams, I realised we were spending money from what had been transferred to a South Australian bank from our account in England, and I was not earning anything to replace what we were drawing out. Margaret said firms were not taking on people until the New Year, but I wanted, if possible, to get into school work. Schools were just breaking up for the holidays, but we found the Education Department staff were still working on arrangements for the new term in the New Year. So I got an interview with the chief officer responsible for recruiting members of the teaching staff. I had taken with me from England two excellent references, one from the Central Electricity Generating Board on my work with the students at Ashcroft and one from the headmaster of the Approved School. When the education officer saw that I had worked at an Approved School, he said they had recently opened a new school in a suburb of Adelaide where they had introduced the new methods we had in England, he thought ~~the~~ headmaster there might be able to use me. That school did not close for Christmas as the ordinary schools, the lads there were under constant care. An interview with the headmaster was arranged

and I went the next day with my wife to see him. When he read through my reference from the Approved School in England and saw it was signed by Leo Kane the headmaster, he was delighted. He told me he had come out from England himself a few years ago that he had worked with Leo Kane and knew him very well. The reference told him of the methods I had used in teaching the boys music and my personal influence with some of the most difficult lads. He said I was just the kind of chap he needed at this new school in Adelaide. The following day was an open day when parents of the boys, as well as school managers and officials from the Education Department would be attending. The rooms and halls had already been laid out with examples of the work the boys had done during the past term and the headmaster conducted us around the place and introduced me to some of the teachers and house masters and mistresses as being, he hoped, one of his new members of the staff for the coming year. Everything looked hopeful. Then my papers had to go before a committee at the offices of the Education Department for consideration. A letter came from them just before Christmas, they could not offer me the post. From what I could make of the way the letter was worded, it was only on account of my age that I had been turned down. This was to be the same in every application I made for a job, and I realised Australia was not a land of opportunity for me. When I interviewed people everything seemed favourable, because I looked so much younger than my age, I had become accustomed to this for many years, even in the R.A.F., they would not believe I was as old as the date of birth shown on my documents. But Australia is a young peoples'

country and I was yet to learn that even a dinkum Australian, born and bred there, if he left his job at about forty years of age, found it very difficult to get another. I was sixty-three years of age, and nobody in England had bothered about that, I had always been chosen on my looks and my ability. In Australia, when they examined my official documents and saw my age I was finished. I interviewed for two other positions after that school and in both cases I had the impression that I was just the man they needed, until they saw my age. One of those positions was as assistant warden at a Senior Citizens home. When they saw from my references that I had been an assistant warden in a Nationalised Industry in England, and that I had also been for some years a minister of religion, the officers in charge of the home considered there was nobody more suitable than me and they were prepared to ignore my age. But my papers had to go before the City Councillors and they turned me down. While I was seeking a position and was living on the money we had brought from England, with no income to replace it, my daughter advised me to go to the Government Employment Department in Adelaide. There they registered me as unemployed and paid me an amount of £9 : 10 shillings per week for a family of five people. This was a few months before decimalisation was introduced. It was a very humiliating experience for me, to come out to this so called land of opportunity and begin, for the very first time in my life, on unemployment pay, which was nowhere near enough to keep a family like ours even on basic needs. As soon as Christmas was over we rented a house near my daughter, the rent of which was £10 per week, more than the unemployment pay for the whole family.

470  
470  
( FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE )

By then my wife was receiving the government child allowance for our three boys which was a little bit more than families were paid in England. So after taking ten shillings out of it to make up my unemployment pay to the amount for the rent of our house, the remainder of the child allowance money was for the basic foods we needed, with a little more drawn from our money transferred from England, but which was really intended to buy a new home in this new land. My outlook for the future seemed hopeless. I felt quite depressed at being out of work for the first time in my life, having left the best paid job I have ever had in England. After the New Year holiday in early January, I was told that a government department in Salisbury, a few miles from where we were living at Para Hills, would be giving interviews for new men they would be engaging in their vast stores, they gave preference to ex-service men. So on the first Monday after the holidays I presented myself with a number of other men at the Personnel Officer's department. The very large establishment was known throughout South Australia as W.R.E., which stood for Weapons Research Establishment and was where all preparation went on originally for the atomic tests at the Woomera range in the outback many miles further north. Since the atomic tests, the range was still used for the testing of other conventional weapons, but all the research work by scientists was, and I believe still is, done at W.R.E., at Salisbury. The men they engaged occasionally were as workers in the large stores sections and were in the grade known as temporary civil servants, the lowest paid grade in the service.

I took my R.A.F., discharge book with me and waited with other men in the waiting room until it was my turn to go in to the Personnel Officer. He looked through my service record documents, which, fortunately did not include my medical record on that damnable Form 48, all that was in my discharge book was good and in my favour. He also saw the references I had taken from the C.E.G.B., and the Approved School in England. He seemed quite satisfied with everything, until he saw my age on the R.A.F., book. He said, "I see you can only give us a bit under two years." He then explained that the government rule was that when a man reached sixty-five years he must go. I said, "now look sir, the Australian government welcomes my young boys out here, they want young life, but I am the bread winner of the family, I've got to keep those boys until they can earn their own living, I cannot do that on unemployment pay. At least I can give you a couple of years work, and if I am no good you can easily sack me. I am asking you to try me, give me a chance to show if I am any good." He looked at me for a bit, then said, "Okay, start on Monday next." I went into the next office where a lady clerk gave me instructions. I was told we all started in the salvage section just outside the restricted area, until we were cleared. That took six weeks after lots of information was taken from us, which included which countries we had visited, where our parents were born and our children etc. I wondered if there would be any difficulty when I stated that my eldest daughter Margaret was born in Riga, Latvia, as that is now included in the Soviet Union, but I did not hear any more about it. After six weeks in the salvage

section I was given a cellophane covered card with a photo of myself, my name and official number etc., which I had to wear always on my lapel, and which identified me and gave me authority to walk in and out of any of the guarded gates of the classified areas of the establishment. I was sent to work in the main stores. After being temporarily in various sections of the stores, including the electronics section where my desk was near one of the many rows of metal cabinets and shelves containing hundreds of various parts of electronic equipment, with a warning notice at my end of that particular corridor between the compartments, that it contained some radio-active parts and materials. I was glad when they took me from that section and placed me with a section that issued almost anything in bolts and nuts and screws and metal gadgets, coils of wire and even dustbins. I was in this section for the remainder of my service in the Department of Supply, which was the government department under which W.R.E., operated. My work was easy but not interesting, I was the only one in the section who sat at a desk all day, entering on cards what items were requisitioned by various people from all departments of the establishment, as well as all goods brought into the stores as replacements and put on our charge. All the other chaps moved about all day, serving those who came to our counter with a requisition demand, and walked up and down corridors of shelves selecting the items according to their code numbers. I was glad always to be busy, the days went quicker. We made the most of our break times, ten minutes in both the morning and afternoon for a drink of something and an hour for midday lunch. It was dreary in the very large, mostly corrugated sheet iron, building.

The roof was high above us on iron girders, but being sheet iron the heat from the sun beat down upon us in the hot weather. We had no air conditioning in this building which had been put up for war purposes during the second world war. In the Australian winter, which mostly is like an English summer, the winds blew up from the south for nearly three thousand miles from the Antarctic, across the Southern Ocean, and although by the time they reached Australia they had become temperate, yet because my blood had become so thin during the hot weather, as the winds came in through two large open main doors, swept along the lanes between crates in our bulk stores, then in to our section and on my back sitting at my desk, and within an hour of my first experience of this my teeth were chattering with my being so cold. So I immediately took measures against this. Under my overall provided by the Department of Supply, I wore two woollen pullovers, and over my overall a thick duffle coat, and over that I tied some sheets of strong brown paper across my back, and all that just about kept the winds from making me shiver. I never though I could feel cold like that in Australia. I discovered how thin my blood had become in that first summer there - for we went out at the beginning of a summer - when I lightly scratched my hand with a pin, it poured with blood as though I had cut down into a vein. However, when we went out for our lunch hour I ate my packed lunch in the sunshine and it felt like an English summer. I used to think of the interesting job I had left in England, and wished Frank Booth had not made things so unpleasant for me, I would never have left the position. Then I would walk down to the end of our area and

look away into the distance, across adjoining paddocks and open countryside to where, in the far distance, I could just see the tops of the mountains of the Flinders Ranges and knew that beyond those the land continued for over another two thousand miles across scrub-land and desert of the Northern Territory to Darwin, and the vastness of the space fascinated me, there was a feeling of freedom out there. Then when our lunch hour ended I would join the other men leaving the sunshine to go back into our dim corrugated prison as it felt to me. As I have said fortunately I was always busy so the time went quicker to 4.30.p.m., when we clocked out to go home. Although the job was not interesting and only brought me enough cash for the basic needs of my family, there was one great advantage in being employed there. This establishment was just a short distance away from the new town of Elizabeth which had been opened by the Queen a few years before we arrived. The housing authorities were still adding to it. As we were working for a government department we had priority for a rented house there. I got a certificate from our Personnel Officer and applied and within a short time we were allocated a house with three bedrooms for four pounds per week, which was much less than half the rent we were paying for a private house at Para Hills. I also had the added advantage of having less to travel on my motor-cycle each day to work. Shortly before we moved Joan, my wife, found she was expecting another baby. This was something we had thought was not going to be possible. Back home in England Joan had two miscarriages. We had three young boys but had always wanted a little girl, but after things had gone wrong



we decided there would never be a little daughter and gave up trying. So we were both greatly surprised when Joan discovered this. She went to a doctor who examined her and confirmed that she was pregnant. In Australia then, they were very keen that young life should be born in the country, they avoided any risks, discouraged women having their babies born at home but had them in hospital under careful medical attention. To ensure that Joan did not have another miscarriage he put her on their latest medication and had her checked regularly. When we moved to Elizabeth he transferred her to another doctor there ~~who~~ he knew personally. Joan told the first doctor that she could not understand how she had become pregnant as we calculated our times carefully on her regular rhythm she had always had. The doctor said that was where so many migrants to Australia <sup>who were</sup> caught, they did not understand that when moving from the northern hemisphere away down under to the southern hemisphere, the whole rhythm of our lives changes and it takes us some time to adjust to it. Many migrant women, he said, after they had been in Australia a couple of months found they were pregnant. However, Joan and I were pleased about it and hoped and prayed that this time it would be a daughter. When the time came I accompanied Joan to our new hospital in Elizabeth, gave the sister in charge the telephone number of our stores at work and she promised to get someone to 'phone me when the baby was born. Our three boys went to stay with my daughter Margaret at Para Hills and her children. Imagine how thrilled I was when on 13th October, 1966, one of the nurses rang to tell me I had a baby daughter.

We named her Sallyanne and after registering her with the Registrar of births in Adelaide as an Australian citizen, I also wrote to the British High Commission in Canberra as I wanted my new daughter to be included on my passport as a British citizen, although she was registered in Australia as an Australian citizen. I was assured by the passport officer at Canberra that Sallyanne had dual citizenship, she was a British citizen as her parents were British. I made sure of this because we had decided that we could not go on using up our money in the bank from the sale of our house in England, so we paid into the travel firm of Thomas Cook almost all the savings we had to ensure that we could return to England by ship when the two years expired which was the agreement all migrants sign when going out on an assisted passage. I had seen that I could never hope to get the kind of work I had in England, so I wrote to the headmaster of the Approved school at Portslade telling him that when I was made to retire at sixty-five years of age, we were intending to return to England where I could get a part time teaching job to supplement my pension. He replied that if we returned, there was a job waiting for me, as he had not been able to find anyone in my place who could teach music to his lads as I had done. So at least while I had to stick to the dreary job at W.R.E., and keep to the basic things of life on a small income, we had got a passage home assured. We frequently met migrants who longed to go home but could not raise the cash for the journey. There was one thing about my work of which I was very pleased, it was only a five days per week job,

we had two full days clear every weekend. Back home at Ashcroft I had always been on duty part of every weekend except once in each five week period, when we had a long weekend off. Now in Australia I could escape from my dreary work for two days each week. Almost everybody in Australia appears to own a car, the distances are so great, and while it is possible to travel to any civilised part by train at a reasonable cost, or fly if you can afford it, nevertheless, if you want to take your children to the nearest beach, or for a barbecue in the country, you must have your own transport. We could not afford to buy a car from the small amount of wages I was earning, so it really was a godsend when the chance came to get a second hand car very cheap. I took with me to Australia a full driving licence from England, although I only had a motor-cycle in England and began by using a motor-cycle in Australia. We were members of the Methodist Church in Elizabeth, and one Saturday they held a jumble sale out in the open in the square adjoining the church. When we arrived we saw a car standing near the stalls with a notice on it announcing it was to be auctioned at a certain time. We stayed, and one other man besides myself decided to bid for it. He started at ten pounds, so I bid eleven, and so it went up one pound a time, first him then me, until he could see I was determined to get it and he knew I had a young family, so when I reached twenty pounds, which was forty Australian dollars as decimalisation had just been introduced, he dropped out and I got the car, we could just squeeze the cash from what we had got left in the bank after transferring most of it to the shipping

agents, but that was not until another one and half years from the time I bought that car, and that time in Australia was made much more interesting for me and my family after we acquired that old "banger." Petrol was cheap in Australia then and every weekend we went out somewhere, most of the year to the various beaches and when it was not beach weather to places in the country, and occasionally we went up to Adelaide for shopping. Our old car was also very useful for our usual weekly shopping at the large super markets in the centre of our town of Elizabeth, I got back the twenty pounds I paid for it over and over again in not having 'bus and train fares to pay for the whole family. But what brought interest into my own life and made me feel my two years in Australia were worth while, in spite of my struggle to support a family on a low income, was the fact that I was able to get back into the work of the Methodist Church as a local preacher. This was voluntary work, there was no pay for the job, but it gave me status in the church again. It made my dreary and uninteresting work at W.R.E., tolerable, for whenever I had a pause in my work, waiting for requisitions or other records to be passed on to me, I would work out in my mind notes for my Sunday sermons. I was also involved in weekly evening activities at the church, mostly in the musical side of things, and most of my programmes were formulated during my hours in that lowest grade of the civil service. When I found that the education authorities, to whom I first applied on arriving in Australia, could not use me in teaching because of my age, I decided to use another good reference I had been given by the

highest authorities of the Methodist Church at Westminster in England, so I obtained an interview at the headquarters of the Methodist Church in Adelaide. I presented my papers to them and when it was seen that subsequent to my resignation as an ordained minister and my divorce, I was granted by Conference authorities at Westminster, full membership of the church with the right to share in all Circuit activities, working up through the accepted stages to become again a local preacher, at once they said they could certainly use me in South Australia. The town of Elizabeth where I was living was teeming with migrants as well as indigenous Australians, and they had not enough qualified men to cope with the work among these people. My interview was just at the time when we had moved to Elizabeth from Para Hills, but we were still going over to the church where we had been attending with my daughter and her family. When I told the ministerial secretary at Adelaide we were living in Elizabeth West he said they had a thriving church there and advised me to see the minister, he said he would 'phone him and have a talk with him about me. The minister at that time was the Rev. Ralph Hood who with his wife Margaret and their three young boys, a little younger than our three, lived in the manse adjoining the Methodist church. They proved to be among the very best friends we made in Australia and we have been in touch with them during all the years since then, although Ralph later became Doctor Ralph Hood with degrees in philosophy, psychology and social sciences, and had a long period after we had left Australia, lecturing in Adelaide University. When I went to see him he welcomed me with open arms, he told me

that when the senior minister at headquarters spoke to him about me he said, "we would like you to use this man," and Ralph said he was only too pleased to do so as he very much needed help and had only one other qualified man to give him a hand, and he was the headmaster of a High school in the district who was involved in other activities for the education authorities. Ralph immediately put me on the list of approved local preachers, who were men with sufficient qualification in the Methodist Church to conduct church services and preach but who gave their services voluntarily. I was delighted to be back in the work for which I had been trained and as I could just about support my family on my wages from W.R.E., I was quite willing to give my services to the Church. We had three Methodist churches in the extensive, sprawling modern town of Elizabeth, one at Elizabeth North, another at Elizabeth Vale and in our area at Elizabeth West was Ralph's church known as "All Saints." The other two churches had a minister each, but the circuit for which these three ministers were responsible stretched for miles out into the surrounding countryside where in scattered settlements and townships were a few old churches built many years back by old settlers in Australia. They were solid stone built churches but with the usual corrugated iron roofs used extensively back in the early days in Australia. Everything in Elizabeth was modern and of the latest design and the churches and houses were brick built with tiled roofs. Besides our own churches in Elizabeth we also supplied preachers to two Presbyterian <sup>churches</sup> at each end of the town where they had no minister of their own but were managed by their

deacons appointed from among their church members. Occasionally I took the services at those churches. So for almost every Sunday during our two years in Australia I took services and preached in one of those churches. Before I acquired the car I travelled to those at a distance on a motor-cycle, but with the car I was able to take our three boys with me, they always insisted on coming although I used sometimes to try to discourage them by saying, "you will only hear the same stories I told at the other churches last week and the same sermon to the grown ups," to which they always replied that they did not mind, they liked hearing them again. When the journeys were away out in the country, especially to one little place called One Tree Hill, their delight was to kneel in the back seat to look out of the window, for we travelled for some miles on a dirt track road and it was always so dry in South Australia that clouds of dust rose up behind the car which they thought was fun. Joan, when she was expecting the baby and for a while after our little daughter arrived could not accompany us but usually attended those that were near. Ralph arranged that once now and again I was not planned at any church, but that was usually on special occasions, such as at Easter when our own church at Elizabeth West was packed to the doors with people who had come for the Easter Communion and Ralph needed me to give him a hand serving the elements, I shared the service with him on those occasions. So with all the difficulties we had trying to get a living in Australia, the one thing that made everything seem worth while was my being back in the work of the Methodist Church.

Then came the time when I had to retire from my work under the Department of Supply at W.R.E., in Salisbury. There would no longer be a weekly wage packet, how were we to live? I knew, of course, that I had paid up all my National Insurance stamps in England to ensure that I would qualify for a retirement pension. Before we left home for Australia I went to see my bank manager, and when arranging with him to transfer all our cash from the sale of our house to an Australian bank, knowing it would be about two years before I became retirement age, I also left in my account enough to be able to pay up all my weekly contributions to the National Insurance for those two years. I had joined the insurance scheme as a lad of fourteen years only a few years after Lloyd George had introduced it, and I had kept my payments going for the whole of my working life. When I was appointed to my position at Ashcroft I found I was just one year too late to join the superannuation scheme of the C.E.G.B., so it was agreed that I should continue to pay the contributions to the National Insurance, deducted in the usual way from my salary. So knowing that I qualified in England, I sent in my claim to the Insurance headquarters at Newcastle, at the same time making a claim for additional dependents' payments, for my wife and four children. When, after a while, I received a reply from Newcastle, they said they would pay me my pension plus an allowance for my wife, but as we had been in Australia for more than six months they could not pay my children's allowances, as the ordinary child benefits were being paid by the Australian government, so too would the dependents allowances for them on my pension be paid in Australia.



The amount the U.K. National Insurance office paid me for my pension with allowance for my wife was thirteen pounds per week, which was not much more than half of my weekly wage at W.R.E., and that was the lowest rate paid in the Australian civil service and was not really enough to keep a family like mine, how could I possibly support my family on only thirteen pounds per week. I was told I could get a part time job to supplement my pension, so at once I began to look for one. I went up to Adelaide each day and went to firm after firm, wasting hours of my time in waiting rooms with other applicants waiting to interview personnel officers. I quite literally walked my feet sore for several days around the streets of Adelaide going from firm to firm. I went to music shops to try to get musical instrument repair work, I had already done one or two jobs occasionally in my own district as a side line, but there was not enough of the work to earn enough to make the effort worth while. The music firms in Adelaide all told me they had their own men and there were no vacancies. So after a couple of weeks of this I decided I would have to apply to the Department of Health and Social Security in Adelaide for some assistance. At that time Australia was a little behind Great Britain in these matters and the chap I had to see was more like the old time Relieving officer we had when I worked among the poor in the Eastend of London and the first 'tin god' my own mother had conflicts with when I was a little boy. I too, as an adult, had occasional contests with the 'tin gods' of officialdom in England, I was now to be up against a more intransigent type of 'tin god' in Australia. I had begun

my time in Australia with the humiliating experience of being on unemployment pay for the first time in my life, I now had a far worse experience, probably the most humiliating in the whole of my life. I was directed to the office of the man to whom I had to apply - I have forgotten his title, it was perhaps the Social Security Officer. When I entered the waiting room there was no other person in it and I was really staggered at what I saw. The room was filthy and smelt horrible as though all the 'down-and-outs' in the city had dossed there overnight, the floor was all stained, some of it looked like black ink from the ink wells on the table which had been deliberately poured on the floor, there was graffiti scribbled all over the walls in black ink, with greasy smudges and other stains and the only piece of furniture in an otherwise empty room was a wooden table upon which applicants had to fill up forms when making application for help. It looked as though a cleaner had been in that morning and made an attempt to sweep up all the rubbish but had left quite a bit of it behind in the corners and under the table. Another door in the room opened and a man came out of an office and asked me what I wanted, when I told him I was seeking some financial help for my family he went back into the office and brought out some forms for me to fill in, three or four long pages with what seemed like dozens of questions to be answered, and the first thing that flashed through my mind was that if they gave any help here they made you work for it, as it obviously was going to take a long time to fill up these forms. The man said when I had finished I had to press a push button on the wall to

which he pointed. I had to lay the forms on the dirty stained and greasy table, I would not touch the corroded pens with bent nibs I had my own pen in my pocket. When I had completed the forms and pressed the bell push the door opened and I was asked to go in. There was only this one man there who seemed to have all authority on whether I was or was not going to get any help. The first thing he did was to hand me a Bible which he said I was to hold in my right hand and swear an oath after him as he read it out to me. I had to "swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God." I felt like a prisoner in the dock, for I had witnessed such scenes when, as a London City Missionsry, I had gone to Court to speak on behalf of some unfortunatue person who had fallen foul of the law. Then he read through the forms I had filled in and asked me if I had any savings in the bank. I told him we had drawn out all our cash to pay to the shipping agents for our journey home to England, but that my wife, who had her monthly child benefit amounts paid by the government department into her own savings bank, had left in just fourty pounds to pay for the shipment of our crated baggage to the docks, and when we arrived in England for the shipping agents there to get it through customs and convey it to where we would be living. He said that so long as we had that fourty pounds in the bank he could not give me a penny. I said we dare not touch that money or we would never get our luggage home to England and that there were six of us concerned in this. He said he could not help that, even if I had got more than one penny in my pocket when I came to him he could not

give me anything, but if I had one penny and only one penny, then he could help me. I thought of that first 'tin-god' brought to my knowledge as a little boy, when my mother came home so exasperated because he was so intent on keeping to the letter of the book that he was incapable of interpreting its spirit, so he sent her away in her great need with nothing. I also thought of Jesus of Nazareth who rebuked the 'tin gods' of His days because they were so rigid in keeping to the letter of their law that they were incapable of interpreting its spirit. This official in Adelaide was so concerned to know how many pennies I had in my pocket, whereas I was appealing for help for six people, four of them children who had to be fed, and the only income for the six of us was thirteen pounds per week at a time when the lowest paid worker who could just keep his family with the very basic things, was getting paid about twenty pounds per week and the average working man about thirty pounds. But I was yet to experience much more of this treatment by 'tin god' officials, not only in Australia but home again in England, from time to time through all the years right up to the time of writing this book. The problem was at that time in Australia, that no government department would give us any state payments that were normally paid to retired people, on the excuse that we were intending to return home to England, therefore they were not responsible but that the U.K., should pay us. But back home in England they had also got a book and its title was "The Insurance Act", and you know "it's all in the book," which says that if you are out of the U.K., for more than six months you cannot be paid by the U.K., authorities.

This also applied to the dependants allowances added to a retirement pension where a pensioner has dependants to keep. The National Insurance office in the U.K., said they were giving me a wife's dependency allowance on my pension, but they could not give me children's dependency allowances because they were receiving the usual weekly child benefit payments made to every family both in Australia and Great Britain, and as Australia were paying our child benefits they should also pay the child dependency allowances on my pension. When I showed this to the Australian government departments they disagreed with what the British authorities said. They argued that as we were going to return to England, they in Australia were not liable to pay, ignoring the fact that we had already been living in Australia for over a year and half and had still another seven months before we would be departing. Now what puzzled me then and still puzzles me as I write this, is that the authorities in England could say from their Newcastle office, "you have five dependants, we will pay you dependency allowance for one of them, your wife, but not for the other four, your children, as they are being paid child benefit allowance in Australia." Child benefit allowance is nothing whatever to do with a pensioner's old age pension, it is a payment to every family in both England and Australia, with parents as young as twenty years of age upwards and irrespective of what that family earns, every child gets it. The Australian officials said "yes, your children are living in Australia so we pay child benefit to them, but we cannot give you child dependency on your pension for

the reason that you are going home to England. Now one thing I must explain to the readers of this. There was a reciprocal agreement between Australia and Great Britain, and I believe still is in operation, on payments of retirement pensions. Pensioners whose subscriptions are paid up in Great Britain can have their pensions transferred to Australia, and in our time there the Australian government made up the British amount to the amount of the Australian pension which was a bit more than was paid in Great Britain. But they did not make up mine to the amount of the Australian rate. My pension with the dependency allowance for my wife was transferred to Australia and was paid to me monthly through the Adelaide department of Health and Social Security, but only the exact amount of thirteen pounds per week set by the British National Insurance office. Seeing that I had worked in Australia for one and half years and still had seven more months to live there before returning home, that pension should have been made up to the Australian rate. On the other hand if the Pensions office in England sent to the Australian authorities my pension plus one dependency allowance for my wife, why could they not have sent the other dependency allowances for my children to which I was legally entitled, and which then would have made my complete entitlement to the figure from which the Australians would have assessed the amount to the Australian entitlement. If the British authorities can include one member of my family, why not all of them, they are all British subjects, after all they had to pay them from the moment we all set foot in England again ? Of one thing

I feel quite sure, that someone in a government department somewhere still owes me seven months of dependency allowances to which I was entitled. It seems quite stupid to me to say that the British Insurance authorities could not pay them for the children because they were receiving child benefit payments in Australia. Those child benefits are absolutely nothing to do with the old age pension, families whose income is several hundred pounds per week receive these child benefits. We know people in our district the members of whose families are each earning well over a hundred pounds each per week and we know they are also receiving government child benefit payments, changes by the present government are going to be made in this respect, but I am writing of a time when every family received those payments and they were nothing to do with old age pension entitlements. The subscriptions for my pension entitlements were entirely made up in England, and my complete entitlement should have been sent from England to Australia even if the Australians did not make it up to their amounts. How could we live on thirteen pounds per week for six of us. Of course, we had to keep the forty pounds for our freight charges home in Joan's savings bank, but the current child benefit payments being sent we had to draw, in order to make up enough cash for food and basic requirements. However, as I could not get a part time job anywhere on account of my age in Australia, Joan and I agreed that she should get work and I would stay home to look after our baby. Joan was a skilled machinist on the latest types of machines making ladies garments. She went up to a well known department store in Adelaide and straight away was given a job in

290

their factory at Gawler, a small town about five miles north of where we were living and easy to reach by train, for the station of 'Broad Meadows' was a couple of minutes walk across a paddock at the back of our house. I kept as much going in our home as I could so that Joan would not have a lot to do when she came home tired in the evening, I always cooked and had the evening meal ready for the whole family to coincide with the time when Joan arrived home. But I was kept on the move with a young baby, in the hot weather we had to be sure the children did not dehydrate, and Sallyanne, our baby, had to have frequent drinks apart from her baby foods, which were usually rose-hip syrup diluted with water previously boiled then kept in the fridge to make sure it was always cold. It would have warmed up considerably in a few minutes if it was placed anywhere else in the room, we had no air-conditioning in that Housing Trust house. But that which required the most care with a baby was to ensure that all the feeding bottles and food utensils were sterilised before and after they were used. There are viruses in Australia we do not have in Great Britain and there were occasions when I picked up one of them, but where I worked I drank my water straight from the mains which passed through a portable cooling system something like a fridge, I had to drink in the hot weather or I would have dehydrated. Joan began that job in July 1967, after we had found we were not going to get any financial help from the government insurance departments, either in Australia or in England. But, fortunately it did not last very long, for the Methodist Church came to our aid



in a way that was a godsend to us. One evening in September that year our minister, the Rev. Ralph Hood, along with Brian Hannaford, the headmaster of Elizabeth High School, <sup>WHO</sup> I mentioned earlier as being another local preacher on plan with me, came to put a proposition to Joan and me. Ralph was going to the United States of America to take a two to three years' course at a university. He would be going at the beginning of October and the new minister appointed to take his place could not start until after the Christmas and New Year's holidays. They suggested that as our passage home on the P. and O. ship Himalaya was not until the 6th January of the following year, we could just cover the time when there would be no minister at All Saints Church and could keep things going in the meantime. It was essential that some responsible person should be there, for apart from the fact that the office was often busy with 'phone calls and people calling, there were builders also building a new church hall. The church stood on one side of the grounds and the manse on the other with the office attached, and the new hall was being built alongside the church. The contractors were frequently having to use the office 'phone, besides the minister, and I would have to take over the work and attend to any mail that came in. If there was anything I could not attend to I would refer that to the Superintendent minister whose church was on the other side of Elizabeth. They said there would not be a lot to do but it was necessary that I should be about the place. There was no pay for the job but we could live there rent free and we would have the advantage of air conditioning and free gas and electricity and one

or two other perks from the job. I could see at once that if we had not to pay our four pounds per week rent any longer, nor any payments for fuel, Joan would not need to go to her hard and tiring work each day for little money. Another great advantage this gave was, that whereas, when migrants returned home, they could only sell up their furniture and goods and chattels from their homes at the last minute before they departed and take what prices were offered, we had three months to sell ours and could ask our own prices. We had only set up home in the beginning with the essentials from the cash we transferred from England, but, at least they were fairly good quality. One important thing everybody must have in Australia is a good fridge and for a family the size of ours we had quite a large one. We already had a young lady asking to purchase that as soon as she knew we were going home. There was plenty of storage room in a large garage and shed at the manse, and as the weather was always sunny in the summer, I could park our old car in the garden. However, we never needed to do that, as we were able bit by bit to let things go, and on the last day we were in that house our fridge and beds were sold, we took with us only our kitchen utensils and crockery. What a difference living in that manse made. It was nicely furnished with several advantages, but best of all, during that very hot summer, was the air-conditioning. Joan was able to do <sup>2</sup>everything for our baby again while I attended to church matters, but I found I had plenty of time to make crates for those things we wanted to take back home to England. I saved a lot of cash doing things myself.

Ten days before we were due to sail Brian Hannaford conveyed the crates on a trailer he towed behind his car to the docks at Port Adelaide. Being a large car he said he would take all of my family on the day we had to board ship, and the baggage we would need for the cabin would go on the trailer. The crates were for the hold of the ship and would not be opened until they were delivered by the shipping company at our new address in England. There were hundreds of people along the quay side to see our ship the S.S. Himalaya, sail. Not only were friends and relatives of migrants returning home there to see them off, but on such occasions when a British ship was in port, migrants would go to renew their contact with the homeland and during the time when visitors were allowed on board they would go for the thrill of once more standing on British territory. Looking at that ship even before we boarded it we knew we were looking at a bit of England. I will not weary the reader with the details of our month's cruise home, many people today have been on sea cruises and the routine is similar. However, one of our stops made a lasting impression on me. When we first booked the passage, some months before, we were told our route would be via India and the Suez Canal where we would be able to join a trip to Israel. I had always wanted to see what we had always referred to as the Holy land and we all looked forward to this. But this was not to be. A short while before we were due to sail a conflict broke out between Israel and Egypt and the Suez Canal was closed.

The P. & O. shipping company contacted all passengers to say the ship had been given another route, we were to go, after leaving

494

494 (FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE)

Western Australia, where we would call at Freemantle, do a nine days sail across the Indian Ocean to South Africa, calling for two days at Durban and another two days at Cape Town. From time to time the Indian Ocean can be very rough, but we were very fortunate, for all the way across the sea was as calm as a mill pond. As soon as we arrived at Durban we loved South Africa but not the atmosphere. After leaving the dry state of South Australia we were surprised to see how green and fresh the countryside looked in South Africa, there was obviously more rain fall there than in Australia. Also we noticed the absence of flies which pestered us in Australia. I mentioned this to the coach driver who took us from the ship to a Japanese garden outside Durban. He pointed to the flower beds of the garden and told us that when Durban was first settled, this was nothing but a swamp swarming with flies and mosquitos, the authorities dried it up and planted the gardens we could see, and all the flies and mosquitos disappeared. But what made us feel embarrassed in those gardens was when we all sat down on a seat it had a sign over it which said it was for "Whites Only". It was our first contact with apartheid in South Africa. We had many more signs of this in our trips around Durban and a couple of days later, when we arrived at Cape Town, in our travels around the coasts and countryside in that lovely country. We liked the country, better than Australia where we had lived for over two years, but the one thing that gave us a sense of uneasiness and spoiled our few days there was the unpleasant atmosphere that apartheid brought. After leaving South Africa we sailed along the west coast of Africa with its oppressive heat and humididty. Of course, our ship was air conditioned, but

when we came up on deck we felt the changes in temperature.

Our next call was at Las Palmas in the Canary Islands, then from there to Lisbon in Portugal, which was our last stop before arriving at Tilbury in England. As we went from the South Atlantic into the North Atlantic, things became greyer and colder. We had left the southern hemisphere in its summer-time and had entered the northern hemisphere in winter, gone were the calm blue seas around us, we were now <sup>ploughing</sup> ~~^~~ our way through dark grey angry waters, while the blue sky above had changed to an almost colourless light grey. It felt depressing on deck, we had been away from England for three winters, I did not like what we were coming back to.

We went down below to the hold of the ship to get our winter clothes and overcoats from our trunks. Along the south coast of England we could just see the snow on the tops of the downs. However,

when we awoke the next morning we were already tied up at Tilbury docks, and when we went up on deck the sun was shining, and although we could still see signs of the snow here and there, things felt more cheerful.

My brothers were there with their cars as well as my son by my first marriage - Peter. So we had plenty of conveyance for our luggage as well as ourselves, but our larger crates had to be left in the customs shed for our freight agents to pick up later. My brother Alec, the one with whom I had spent my early years abroad, with his wife, had arranged that we could use their flat in Hove until we could find a home of our own. My brother then was a headmaster of a school in London and his wife was head mistress of another school. Our sister-in-law owned a house at Hove on the south coast of Sussex.

We had left that area when we had sold our house to go to Australia, so anywhere in the Brighton and Hove district was home to us. My brother and his wife had both arranged to retire from their school work when the schools broke for their summer holidays that year. In preparation for their retirement our sister-in-law had purchased a house in Hove, let out the upper two storeys to other retired people and retained the ground floor flat for themselves. There was not really enough room for a family of six of us, but our children were still quite young then and the house being of the older Victorian style, the rooms were quite large, we knew we could manage until we found a new house to suit us. However, after using up all the cash we had in coming home from Australia, there was no question of us buying a house, I was now retired and living on a state pension and what I could earn part time, no one would give me a mortgage on that income. It meant we would have to rent a house again as we had in Australia. But, on the south coast at that particular time it was almost impossible to find a rented house at a reasonable rent. We entered our temporary home on 4th February, 1968, with the promise that we would move out of the flat from the 1st July of that year, giving my brother and sister-in-law time to get the flat ready for their retirement. It was a furnished flat, but we had brought with us sufficient of our own sheets and blankets etc. One of the first things I did was to go to the Hove Borough Council housing people to register my family for a council house, but I was told that because we had been out of the borough for more than two years we would have to

be resident in the borough again for another three years before we could qualify for a council house. Portslade, where the Approved School was, where the head had promised me some part time teaching, was only a short distance from Hove, so within a couple of days of arriving back home I went to see him and he started me at once for two afternoons per week. It was a help in supplementing my pension but nowhere enough to support a family. When I last was on the extraneous teaching staff of the school I was also getting a full-time salary with the C.E.G.B., but now I had only a very inadequate pension, I could see I would have to get a part time job in the mornings as well as <sup>the</sup> a couple of afternoons at the school. From the time we set foot in England the Department of Health and Social Security began paying the child dependency allowances on my pension, which they would not pay while I was in Australia, and which the Australian government department also would not pay. With regard to the seven months when the allowances were not paid to me, the Hove, D.H.S.S., arranged for me to appeal to a tribunal, which subsequently was held at Hove. The outcome of that was, in the words of the chairman, that I was "between two stools." He said the Insurance Act showed that the British D.H.S.S., were not liable to pay me because I had been out of the country for more than six months, but he felt that the Australian authorities should have paid me, because I had gone there in the first place to reside permanently. However, it never solved anything and I have never been paid those amounts for my children which I feel sure legally they were entitled to. My wife and I now had one major concern, our children's education. Two of our three

boys began their junior school education in England before going to Australia, so therefore had to adjust to the Australian system. Australia was about level with England then on some subjects, but in one very important subject, the new mathematics, they were behind us. Nicholas, our youngest son, began his education in Australia, so after we came home he had to adjust to the British system. David, our eldest son was coming up to his eleventh birthday in June of that year and he had started back at school in England in February of that year, so we knew he would have to work hard to get a place in either a County School or Secondary School, in the coming school year after the summer break. A further complication was in the fact that during our two years absence in Australia the British education authorities had introduced the new system of "Comprehensive" education. This levelling up throughout the whole country was to give opportunities of more advanced education to pupils who were capable of reaching the standard whatever their social background or whether their parents were financially able to pay for their education or not. Now we knew before we left for Australia that this was coming, moves towards this had been made for some years, right back indeed to the time of Sir Frank Fletcher, the headmaster of Charterhouse School I met when I was a little underprivileged cockney boy. I used to hope when I was assistant warden at Ashcroft that my boys might get the chance to be educated at one school in particular. It was only six miles inland from where we were living on the south coast, we used to send teams of our Ashcroft boys to play against the pupils of this well-known



Grammar School, cricket in the summer and football in the winter. Frank Booth always took our teams himself, he had been sports master at Rugby and other famous public schools and he liked the old world atmosphere at Steyning Grammar School, for, during my time at Ashcroft it was only the old school built in the year A.D., 1614, that still existed, with the additions of a few more modern buildings annexed. Originally the school took only boarders, then as the years went by they took day boys and at the time when our Ashcroft teams went there it was about half boarders and half day boys, but it was still a school for boys only. At the time when I was at Ashcroft I knew of only two boys in the Southwick and Shoreham area who had obtained places at Steyning Grammar School by a scholarship from Secondary schools. But grants were not so easy to get then and no doubt the parents of those boys had quite a lot of financial outlay on their uniforms and equipment etc. Then one day we heard that building works were being started on the northerly edge of Steyning village, a complex of buildings was being constructed to be part of the new comprehensive school, Steyning Grammar School was to go comprehensive, but would retain its old title. Now I had already been through a phase like this with my first family. I had always longed that one of my daughters would be able to go to the well known Mayfield School for girls in Putney, and I was thrilled when Christine was given a place there after the war. But, alas it was only to be for a few years up to the time of her tragic death. Then, while we were in Australia, Mayfield was chosen as one of the first schools in the London area to go comprehensive. At first it was to be still a school for girls only, whereas we were told that Steyning Grammar

School was to be mixed, for both boys and girls. However, when we came home from Australia we had temporarily to live in Hove, which was in East Sussex, while Steyning is in west Sussex, the boundaries of which county reached out only as far as Southwick where we had previously lived before going to Australia, and the new comprehensive school could take day pupils only from within the borough.

My wife and I went to interview a headmaster of a County Secondary School in Hove. We explained how that our eldest son David was working hard at a Hove Junior School to catch up with the system in England, being given extra work to do at home so that he could get a place in a Secondary School after the summer break. But the head could not promise anything, everything seemed chaotic, the change over seemed to be affecting all schools, the headmaster did not even know how many places he would have to offer. The best he could do for us was to put David's name on his list and if he found he could take him he would let us know. But we did not even know if we would be living in Hove after the summer. We had promised to be out of my brother and sister-in-law's flat by the first week in July. Where could we go, we had chased about everywhere looking for a new home, it seemed impossible to rent a house at the price we could afford. One of my wife's sisters and her husband lived in Portslade nearby, and after we had been back from Australia for a few days my brother-in-law told me he was buying a new car and that he would let me have his old car for only thirty pounds. It was licenced through all the summer months and the M.O.T., was not due until the autumn. I agreed at once although I had not much cash. I had sold my car in Australia before we left for twenty pounds,

( FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE )

and had put that money by in case I had a chance to get a second-hand car in England. That old banger from my brother-in-law proved to be very useful for the couple of years we had it. I got a part time job in the mornings at the other end of Hove from where we were staying and I used the car to go to work and also to the Approved school on the two afternoons and evenings I was there. At weekends we usually put our children in the car with their bathers and beach wear and went off to some quieter place than the crowded beaches of Brighton and Hove. It was a wonderful summer that year we were frequently out somewhere. But when it got to the last weekend in June we decided to get away from the crowds and the traffic and go for a quiet picnic a few miles inland in the country. Before we went to Australia my wife and I used sometimes to go up on the downs to a lovely view behind Steyning. We had not seen it since returning to England, we decided to go there. It was Sunday afternoon the 30th June, 1968, the very last day of June, the next day was the first day of the week when we had to move out of my sister-in-law's flat, we still had nowhere to go. I drove the car up the Bostel Road to a high point on the Downs where Joan and I knew of a flat grass patch on which we had picnicked a few years past. It was still there and it gave an unrestricted view of the whole of Steyning below, and beyond, and for many miles into the distance across The Weald, a clear, artist's picture, of beautiful countryside. There was <sup>a</sup> perfectly blue sky overhead, it was a gorgeous sunny day, and to us who had so recently returned from the hot, parched scrub-lands of Australia, it was breath-taking.

We looked down on Steyning laid out so clearly, we knew the village fairly well, Joan and I had, on a number of occasions, stopped there when touring around on our motor-cycle before we were married and had our family, we sometimes went into a tea rooms near the Clock Tower for some refreshment. From the top of the Downs we could see the buildings we knew, the old Parish Church of St. Andrews, we had attended a Christmas service there on one occasion, there were pretty old world cottages with thatched roofs nearby and opposite them the tops of the old buildings of the Grammar School. The new buildings recently built on to the former Secondary school on the north-western edge of the village, which were to be the larger accommodation for the pupils of the new comprehensive Grammar School, were obscured from where we sat by clusters of trees and shrubs. I said to Joan as we sat taking it all in, "do you remember the last time we were in Steyning, we said, that when I retire we would like to live in Steyning ?" Of course, it was just wishful thinking, there was no hope of our being able to live in Steyning. People did indeed come in from outside the county to retire in Steyning but they were all those who had enough money to purchase their own properties, there were then, and still are today, lots of retired folk in Steyning. There is also a Council estate with houses for working class folk, that is in the area where the new comprehensive school has been built, but the people who live there have probably lived in Steyning or in the neighbouring country areas all their lives, for to qualify for a Council house one must have resided in this part of West Sussex for a certain number of years. There

seemed no chance of ever being able to rent a private house in Steyning at a rent we could afford from our very limited income. Even as Joan and I discussed this very pleasant flight of fancy up on the Downs that Sunday afternoon, we did not imagine it could ever materialise, and we were so desperate for a home for our young family that we would gladly take a house anywhere, if only for a time until we could qualify for a Council house. That there could be some Providential intervention in this vital matter I did not doubt. I had not lost my faith since resigning from the ministry, indeed my two years in Australia during which I was regularly back in the work of a local preacher brought me to a new way of understanding things spiritual. But from the time of my studies for the ordained ministry I had accepted liberal-modernist views and it was difficult to think as I had as a young fundamentalist. I had got to a point when I believed that God did not do for man those things which He had already put within the power of man to do for himself. Yet when I found myself in desperate need I found myself praying for God's help. We all at some time come to the end of our tether when we discover there are some things we just cannot do for ourselves, and it was when I reached that point that I discovered that God is so unlike humans, He does not give up on us as easily as we give up on each other. But I carried constantly a lurking sense of guilt, I had taken things into my own hands when I ended my first unhappy marriage, and resigned from the ministry to be divorced. The thought kept nagging me that I would have to do everything my way now. Then I would console myself with the story I had so often read to other folk in need, that which Jesus told of the loving Father in the story

of the Prodigal son, the lad who went away to run his life his own way, only to discover in the end that there was nowhere anywhere where he could run away from his Father's love. All these thoughts were going over in my mind as we left our picnic above Steyning to return to our temporary flat in Hove. They were still bothering me the next morning when I was getting ready to go to my part-time job. This was the day when I had promised to begin to move out of the flat into a home of our own. My job was to assist a man who had his own one-man business in a garage at the back of the shops in Boundary Road, Hove. Although he was retired himself he continued his work in a limited way with the help of an old age pensioner, he needed another part time helper and I got the job. I parked my car in a side street nearby and, having a few minutes to spare, walked a little way along Boundary Road looking in the shop windows. I came to a stationers and newspapers shop and in the window saw a board on which were displayed advertisements written on post cards and slips of paper. One card caught my eye, it said, "House to Let in Steyning." It went on to say that the rent was three pounds per week plus rates and that one had to apply at the cycle shop in Boundary Road. Rates were much lower in those days and I knew that for a working class house in the country they would be about one pound per week. At first I was interested, but as soon as I saw the rent with rates my heart sank, "where, in Heaven's name," I thought, "could one get a house in lovely Steyning for as little rent as that?" We were there only yesterday, we did not see any houses as cheap as that. I thought there must be something wrong with it, perhaps it was

old and very damp. At that time the average rent for a Council House in Brighton and Hove was nine to ten pounds per week, which included the rates, I could not believe there could be a habitable house in the select area of Steyning as cheap as £3 per week. I went to work and I told my boss what I had just seen. He asked me if I had been to enquire about it and I said there was no time before coming to work. "You go at once," he said. I said, "it can't be much of a house for that amount of rent." "How do you know, you go now and find out, it might be just what you are looking for," he said. I went. As I entered the cycle shop a man came out of a small office, he told me his name was Mr. Willmont. Inside the workshop at the end of the showroom I saw another man working on a moped, I discovered later that he was the manager and Mr. Willmont was the owner of the business. It was fortunate that my boss had advised me to go at that particular time as Mr. Willmont was there only at certain times. I asked him about the house to let in Steyning and told him I had a young family, that we had returned from Australia and that we had to move out of my sister-in-law's flat this very week. He asked me some questions and kept looking at me as though he was summing up what kind of a fellow I was. Something inside me said, "this man is a Christian." Now, before I go any further, I would like to remind the reader what I said at the beginning of this book, that everything recorded in it factual, every happening is true and recorded without any exaggeration or embellishment, and every person mentioned is a real person. This which I am now relating is one of several things that have happened along my journey through life which has made me decide never to deny the possibility of the miraculous, and my quotation in support

of this is not taken from the Bible, for the Bible is full of the miraculous, but I am using Shakespeare's words where he makes Hamlet say to Horatio, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." I would remind the reader that some of our most advanced scientists have admitted to us, when they have been demonstrating on our television screens, that whatever they have discovered, and some of their discoveries are in themselves bordering on the miraculous, particularly now that they have got to the point of examining the unseen stuff of which the whole universe itself is created, that there is still the unknown quantity, always the something beyond. So reader, please believe me that these things which I am recounting, really have happened in my life.

After Mr. Willmont had asked me some questions, he told me that the house in Steyning was one of several such houses that a Mrs. Slater owned. She was a lady who lived in Worthing. Her late husband had bought the houses for one purpose only, to enable families he considered genuine, who could never afford to buy their own homes, to be able to rent a respectable house at a rent they could afford. For this reason the rents were kept at a little below the market value of similar properties. Mr. Willmont went on to explain that as a lad he had been adopted into the late Mr. Slater's family and that when Mr. Slater died, Mr. Willmont took on his duties in helping Mrs. Slater with the properties she had inherited. They bought a new house in the Broadwater area of Worthing, where Mr. Willmont shared part as his flat. Then he said, "when I left Mrs Slater this morning she was quite troubled in her mind about this house in Steyning.



She had half promised it to a lady with one daughter whose husband had left her. Mrs. Slater felt sorry for her and wanted to let her have the house, but something kept telling Mrs. Slater that she was wrong, that they were not the people intended for the house."

Mr. Willmont after saying a bit more about how disquieted Mrs. Slater was about it, said, "I would go and have a talk with her if I were you."

I told him I had a morning job but that I could go as soon as I

left work. "That's alright, you go this afternoon," he said, and

wrote down on a piece of paper the name and address of Mrs. Slater.

He said he would 'phone and tell her I would be coming. I told my

boss all this and I completed my mornings work with him, then I went

to our temporary flat first to get Joan and our little daughter,

said I would not stay for a meal as we were going to Steyning to see

a house. In surprise Joan said, "Steyning?" I said, "yes, of all

places, we were there yesterday saying how we would like to live there."

I went to my brief case and took the only reference that I had at

hand, for most of my papers were still in a box unpacked after they

had been brought by the shipping agents. It was certainly Providential

that the one reference happened to be the one from the headmaster

of Mile Oak school, given when we went to Australia. I was back there

again teaching, so it was right up to date. I followed the directions

given by Mr. Willmont and parked our car in a side street next to

Mrs. Slater's house. As we got out of the car we saw a lady in her

early sixties in the front garden, asked her if she was Mrs. Slater

and said Mr. Willmont had suggested we saw her about the house.

She asked us into her house and I told her all that I had told

Mr. Willmont. I said "I have one reference here, but I can get others

if you require them. She unfolded the paper and as her eyes caught the badge and title printed across the top, we saw her face light up. "Mile Oak School !" she said in surprise, then she read what the headmaster had written, it was one of the best references I have ever had in my life. When she finished she looked at us and said again, "Mile Oak School - well - well - well !" Then she told us that she and her late husband had lived near the school and for some years Mr. Slater used to go in regularly to visit the boys. He had known the headmaster very well. Then she said, "now I am going to tell you something." She told us more or less what Mr. Willmont had told me in the morning that she had half promised a lady with one daughter, then said something kept telling her it was wrong, they were not the people God wanted for the house. When she said that I knew she was a lady of some Christian persuasion. Then she said, "I was so troubled in my mind about the matter, that when I said my prayers this morning I prayed that God would send to me today the people who He quite definitely wanted to take the house and that I would have no doubt about. You have come, you have the right reference, it is a family house and you have a family, I feel quite sure now in my heart and mind that you are the right people for the house. Would you like me to take you over to see it ?" She suggested that we left our car parked there and she would take us in hers. When we reached Steyning she took us through turnings we did not know, through to the very last road on the east side of the village.

Imagine my surprise, when we arrived outside, to find a house identical with the one we had sold in Southwick when we went to Australia.

It was slightly smaller but it was the same type of house built in the nineteen-thirties, built of better materials than some types which have been built since then. It was the end one of four with a side way on the left facing the house with enough room for the chap who previously lived in it to take his car down to an iron-framed garage he had left at the back of the house. Inside there were three bedrooms all in the same positions as those in our former house. But one thing it had which the former had not and that was a lovely view from the living room window at the back, and from the upstairs back bedroom that view was even more extensive. There was quite a lengthy garden from the house to the fence of the meadow of the farm lands through which the river flows. Mrs. Slater could see that we were delighted, so was she to know she had got the right family for it. It felt like home the moment we entered it. All this for three pounds per week. We arranged to pay each calendar month and, to allow for the thirteenth week in each quarter, the rent was set at thirteen pounds per calendar month. I had taken my cheque book with me, I had not much left in the account after coming from Australia, but there was enough for that first month's rent, so

570  
( FROM HERE TO SOMEWHERE )

on the first day of July 1968, the very day on which we knew we must begin to move out from my brother's and sister-in-law's flat, and the day after we had looked down from the top of the Downs and wished we could live in Steyning below, we stood in our new home while I wrote out a cheque and handed it to Mrs. Slater for our first month's rent. I knew without any doubt it was the Providence of God.

It was a further step in my having a new concept and understanding of God. It has taken me a life-time to change the old childhood conception of God as a grey-haired old gentleman in the sky. I have tried to understand the modern theologians when they describe God as the "ground of our being," it always seems to be nearer to what Jesus of Nazareth taught nearly two thousand years ago when He said the Kingdom of God is within you. It is futile when in great need, throwing up prayers to the sky or out there somewhere, hoping that God will hear them, there are billions of us on earth all down the centuries who have been doing that, a God out there could not cope with it all. But when I realised that in spite of all my mistakes all my waywardness and sins, right down in the very deepest depths of me is God, knowing my every need, feeling my every pain, conscious of my deepest sigh, and all that I had to do was to reach down by faith alone, deep enough to contact Him who has never left us.

The next day, after my morning job, I dropped a letter in the post to my brother and sister-in-law to say we had got a house and were moving in immediately, then Joan and I packed one or two items of furniture, <sup>in our car</sup> such as a couple of chairs and a small table and also some cleaning materials to scrub out the new home. We fixed with a removal firm to move the bulk of our things on the Thursday, for

our sister-in-law had already told us that they were going to replace some of the furniture when they move in and had shown us what pieces we were to keep when we obtained our own house. We went to the schools where our boys were in Hove to say we were moving to Steyning, then when our furniture was delivered and we were officially in residence, we went to see the headmaster of the new Comprehensive school in Steyning. The Grammar School was divided into two separate parts, the upper school, which was the old original school in Church Street, which was for fourth, fifth and sixth form students, and the lower school, on the lower ground of Steyning, where the former Secondary school had been, for the first, second and third forms. The headmaster of that Secondary school had been appointed as head of the lower school, and it was he who we had to interview about our son David. There was no difficulty in getting David accepted, as the headmaster told us they would be starting the first year of the comprehensive school without the full complement for which the County Educational authorities had planned, he said it would take some time before they got the new scheme settled. They would start with nearly a thousand pupils brought in by a fleet of buses each morning from all parts of West Sussex, but eventually that number would be nearer two thousand. I had no idea when I was talking with that headmaster, that before long I was to be very much involved in the work of that school myself. However, before I can relate how I became drawn into the comprehensive school work I must say something of the Methodist Church in Steyning, for it was indirectly through this church that I had my first working contacts with the school. As soon as we settled in Steyning I went to see the local

Methodist minister. When I told him we had recently returned from Australia, I was surprised to learn that he was an Australian. His father had brought him to England when he was a lad of ten years and that he had received most of his education here. His father had been in the hotels and catering business and this minister, who was the Rev. Frank Brown, had inherited his father's business concerns after his father's death. He had decided quite late in life that he would like to be a minister, had paid for training at Cliff College in Derbyshire and eventually became an ordained minister. He had worked as a minister for comparatively few years when his own health began to break up. He asked Methodist Conference if he might have a quiet country church where he would work without a salary. He was an unusual Methodist Minister who had private means. He was appointed to Steyning a couple of years before we arrived and had bought his own house not far from the church. He was a heavy smoker which was considered to be a cause of his having hardening of the arteries among other things. He asked me where we had lived in Australia, and after talking for a while on life down under I told him I had been at one time a Methodist Minister and told him why I had resigned. Then I handed to him the official paper I had been given by Methodist headquarters at Westminster which gave me full membership of the Methodist Church with the opportunity of once more becoming a local preacher, and told him that when I had presented that paper to the church authorities in Australia, they immediately put me on plan as an accredited local preacher. He hesitated for a moment, looked briefly through the paper, and said he would have to take up a matter like that with the Superintendent

minister of the Circuit. I was soon to discover that he did not hurry to do that. Indeed I also discovered after about six months that he had not even officially transferred our membership to his church roll. In the meantime I had got to know the lady who was at that time the church Steward, a Mrs. Kathy Holt, who when she knew that I had worked among young people for many years, asked me if I would help with the Junior church. In the old days it was called the Sunday School and was held separately from the adult worship. The children met in the front pews of the church for the beginning of the service, then after their hymn and a talk given by the minister especially for them, they filed out through a door leading into a hall at the back. Besides this work with the children on Sundays I also started a weeknight guitar class for those children who wanted to learn classical guitar. I was already back at Mile Oak school two afternoons per week teaching music, but I found there were a number of children in Steyning who wanted to learn guitar, and while at day school they could be taught a number of instruments under their music department teachers, there was nobody who was qualified to teach classical guitar, which was a very popular instrument then. I asked the Chapel Steward, who was a Mr. Ted Kelly, if I could be given permission to use the hall one evening per week when no other activities were on, under the arrangement that I would take a small subscription from each pupil which would pay for the lighting and heating we used. Ted Kelly took the matter to the trustees of the church who gave their permission. However, I had a feeling that the minister was not too pleased about it, but,

according to Methodist Standing Orders, those who held office in any Methodist Church, had a right to make these decisions. However, it soon got around the neighbourhood that I held this guitar class and parents were coming to me to ask if their children could join, so that before long I had quite a large class which I had to divide into two sessions, the first for beginners and the second for those more advanced, three quarters of an hour for each, so that I had the hall for one and half hours each Tuesday. The parents brought their children, some by car, then collected them at the end. Then one day the minister came in during a lesson and told me I would have to make other arrangements for the next Tuesday. I said that the reason we were given Tuesdays was because no meetings or activities were held on that evening. He said they had to make changes as it suited people best to come on a Tuesday. I asked him what time was their meeting and he said seven o'clock, but that the place had to be prepared so I would have to be out by six - forty five. This meant my having to ask my senior <sup>Pupils</sup> to attend with the beginners, and I had to divide my attention between the two groups. I thought for one occasion I would have to put up with the inconvenience, but, before long he came in and told me they wanted the hall again. Now, it so happened that when my guitar group had grown so large, I decided to write to West Sussex County Hall at Chichester and ask if my group could be registered as a County Youth Activity. The lady Youth Officer came to see me and my children in the group. She was pleased with what she saw and agreed to register us at once. Then I told her of the difficulty that had developed in having the use of the hall, to which she replied, "well, why not let me get you into the Grammar School ?"



She told me they were encouraging young people's activities to be held in the new school buildings after the day school hours, they had a youth club on a Wednesday evening so far but nothing else, I could have Tuesday evenings in the music room there. I was delighted and agreed, so she said she would see the headmaster, and within a very short time we were in the school. That was the beginning of a close association I was to have with the Grammar School, which grew over a period of twelve years. But I still continued to attend the services at the Methodist Church and helped in the Junior Church for about three years, in spite of the fact that the membership of myself and my family had not been officially recognised, although I had handed to the minister an official document from the highest authority at Westminster giving us full membership of any church where we were living. I became very friendly with Ted Kelly, the Chapel Steward, we were good pals over the years. Ted was a bit older than me and had been through the first World War on the battle field in Flanders, whereas I was a teenager and just missed being called up, but instead was working as one of Sir Andrew Duncan's assistants at Westminster. Ted was in his late seventies when I used to assist him and he died a couple of years ago, at the time of writing this, at the age of ninety. Among other things at the church he was responsible for the setting of the time switch for the heating of the building. There were times when he went away to his daughter for the weekend, and on those occasions I did his job for him. For that reason Ted had my name added on the official Circuit Plan circulated through all the churches on the circuit, and I was listed as Assistant Chapel Steward, and yet at that time I had not even been officially given

Church membership. The church leaders meeting where matters of membership are dealt with, met once a quarter, and on each occasion when either Ted Kelly or Kathy Holt brought up the matter of the transfer of the membership of myself and my family from Australia, the minister said he was dealing with the matter and that they were to leave it to him. However, things came to a head in an extraordinary way. Each winter, the minister, on account of his health, used to escape from the cold of England, by spending two months back in Australia with his relatives. The preaching plan was arranged accordingly and at Steyning we had a different preacher each Sunday, sometimes a retired minister from among a number of them who had retired in Worthing, or else a local preacher from among the qualified lay men. On one of those Sundays when our own minister was away, I got ready to attend morning service with the junior church, my sons had gone ahead of me and our daughter was too young at that time to attend and my wife, Joan, had to stay home with her. I was just going out towards the front door when something said to me, "the preacher cannot come, take a sermon with you." Now let me make it quite clear, I had certainly never, in the whole of my life been given to hearing voices, indeed, having taken a course in psychology I had long ago believed that there was an explainable reason when people claimed to have heard voices, as I have said earlier in this book, Joan of Arc's voices can be seen as the product of her own mind. I cannot say I heard a voice on this occasion, it was something inside my brain that said it, and I had not had any reason whatever to make me think it up.


Of course, I knew that there were things that happened occasionally for which we had no explanation at present, and I had long believed that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in any philosophy - as I quoted from Shakespeare earlier. So this experience did not startle me, I believed it was some means of communicating something to my mind, some people might explain it as a form of telepathy from one human mind to another by way of the Super Mind to which we are all linked, the reader may think this when I relate the rest of the happening. I went at once upstairs to a drawer where I knew I had left the notes of a sermon I had preached in Australia shortly before returning to England. I never at any time read my sermons from a fully written out paper. Often I have attended services and lectures when the preacher or speaker has read from a paper and it always seemed to lack spontaneity. I prefer to be free and not tied to a paper, so usually I made my first notes on the Monday before the following Sunday, then each day through the week I rehearsed in my mind from those notes until I had memorised the sermon from beginning to end. Then when I preached it I used only the notes of the headings and salient points. The notes I got from upstairs on that Sunday when I received that mental message, were enough to bring back to me the whole of that sermon, for I had preached it in several churches in Australia just before we returned home. When I arrived at the church doors of our Methodist church in Steyning, there was the church steward, Kathy Holt, looking very worried. "Oh, Mr. Gilbrook I'm glad you've come," she said, "the preacher cannot come, could you take the service?" I replied,

"Yes, I know, and I've come prepared." "Did the preacher 'phone you?" she asked. "No, I haven't got a phone," I replied. Also I did not know who the preacher was supposed to be. "I will tell you all about it after the service," I said, as we walked down the church. Up to that time I could not afford to have a 'phone installed, there was no way in which Kathy Holt's concern and need could have been communicated to me other than in the extraordinary way it was. I have no firm theories about it, I cannot explain it, but I have learned through the experiences of my long life that these things do happen sometimes. I think, however, that it is not wise to over emphasise these happenings, it is so easy to build up into the miraculous, things which can have a normal or natural explanation. If something appears to be outside of that which we accept as being natural, we consider it to be Supernatural and therefore miraculous, but today our scientists are constantly surprising us with discoveries which explain things which we once thought of as being miracles. It is only in recent years that man has been able to split the atom, thereby releasing such an enormous amount of energy that he could soon blow the world to bits. But it is not a miracle, men have found a way of manipulating the laws of the universe to their own ends. Primitive man used to think the thunder and lightning were God performing miracles because He was displeased with what men were doing. So today, things which we accept as being within the natural laws were miracles in bygone years. However, that was the first and only time I conducted a service and preached the sermon in Steyning Methodist Church. When the minister returned from his holidays in Australia, he was told that I was asked to take the service on that Sunday, and he told the stewards that

they must never ask me again, I was not an accredited preacher and had no authority. He said that, in spite of the fact that I had handed him an official paper from Methodist headquarters at Westminster giving me the right to work up through the accepted Circuit process as a layman and as such to hold any office to which the Circuit appointed me, including being a local preacher. Also I had recently returned from Australia where, through presenting that same document to Methodist headquarters in South Australia, I had just completed two years work for the church, conducting services every Sunday and occasionally lecturing on weekday evenings as well. So, I decided to have a talk with the minister. I told him I wanted to apply officially to the Circuit to become an accredited local preacher. He said he would have to put the matter to the Superintendent minister, but he did not think it would be possible. I asked him why not, and he said because my former wife was living on the Circuit and was a member of the Lancing church. I replied that she was living there before I went to Australia and yet I held office on the Circuit, when I and my family were members of the Shoreham Church, where I took a regular Sunday class in the Junior church and was also appointed as Home Missions Secretary and occasionally addressed weekday meetings as well. He said he would make enquiries. Later he told me he had seen my former wife and she said it would embarrass her if my name appeared on the official plan of the Circuit. So, I went to see her for myself. I had not seen her since she left me in the Rhondda Valley when I told her I was going to resign from the Ministry and gave her the reason why. I had occasionally corresponded

with her about the matter of a small amount of maintenance I paid her, which amount had twice been reduced by the Registrar at Somerset House in London, when on those two occasions after my new family had increased, I applied for an appearance before the Registrar. My ex-wife was represented by a solicitor because she opposed my application both times. I represented myself, after making enquiries and finding it was possible to do so. I could not afford a solicitor, especially the first time when I was working as the bakery roundsman and was not earning enough to keep us in basic needs. When I went around the various departments at Somerset House, with my brief case under my arm, presenting forms and having legal stamps affixed to them, the officials behind the counters thought I was just another of the solicitors clerks doing the same thing, only the Notary, before whom I had to swear an oath, knew I was representing myself. I thought of the times when I had talked my way into the exclusive clubs in the West End. I should think by now the reader of this will have seen it has been the pattern for my whole life. However, on both those occasions the Registrar reduced the amount I was paying when he went into the reason for the divorce also and found my ex-wife was financially better off than me. Now I went to see her personally after seventeen years. During all those years I had been used to a young wife and a young family and had worked mostly among young people. When she opened the door of her flat to me she looked a very elderly lady. I spoke very politely to her and she was polite but as ice cold as ever. She asked me in and we discussed the reason for my call. She said she had no objection to my being a local preacher so long as I was never planned to her church.

I understood that could be an embarrassment to her, but I told her it was not my intention to be planned around the circuit, I only wanted to be officially accredited so that I could occasionally take a service at my own church in Steyning. She agreed to this. The remainder of our conversation was about our daughter in Australia and her family. I had only recently returned from having two years down under with them. Since I had returned home my daughter had written to my former wife offering to pay her fare if she went for a holiday to Australia to visit them, but she would not go. I tried to persuade her that at the right time of the year it could be a lovely holiday, but I think she was afraid of flying. I gave the minister plenty of time to go into the matter but when he never mentioned it I asked him how far forward my application had gone and reminded him that I had seen my ex-wife and that she had agreed so long as I did not go to Lancing. He said, "Oh, she changed her mind and does not want you to go on plan." In great surprise I said "changed her mind?" He said yes and said there was nothing more he could do about it. Now I had lived with my former wife for thirty years, and although I never really got to know what was in her mind, at least I knew enough about her to know that if she had changed her mind on a question concerning a church matter, she would have written me a note to say so. However, I decided not to pursue the matter any further, for this reason, that I had become much more involved in work at the Grammar School and could see that it had opened to me an avenue of very useful work, equal to any that had occupied me in all my

years in the Church. It began with the mothers and fathers who brought their children to my guitar class at the Grammar School. They were the years when the classical guitar was becoming a popular instrument. Andres Segovia, the Spanish genius, had been seen and heard on our television screens on a number of occasions, as well as our own classical players, John Williams and Julian Bream, and people had become aware of the difference between the music those great players produced and the chord strumming of the 'pop' players in the groups that were attracting hordes of young people, such as our own Beatles group, as well as the American 'pop' stars. The children I taught I encouraged to pick their strings separately and would not let them begin by strumming across the strings. The parents liked what their children played and some asked if I could hold a class for adults so that they could learn. By that time I had got to know the principal of the Adult Education Centre, held in the evenings at the Grammar School. His office was a little way down the corridor from the music room. He was a  school teacher at the Grammar School by day, but also principal of the Adult education Centre, under the County Education Department in the evenings. Two of my own sons had been in his day classes and he also knew some of the children in my guitar class and used to come in occasionally to hear them. I asked him if it would be possible for me to continue to use the music room after the children had finished so that I could start an adult class. He asked me, why not make it part of the Adult Education Centre, he could then put me on his list of tutors and I would be on the pay roll at County Hall.



Up until then my work with the children was voluntary, I had started it that way at the Methodist Church, although I had to work very hard in other ways to supplement my old age pension in order to get my children through their education. There were no grants, and I found I had to buy school uniforms and equipment for all my <sup>own</sup> children from a small pension with shockingly inadequate allowances for wife and children, supplemented by the small amount I was earning at Mile Oak school two afternoons per week. I had to give up the one man job in Hove when my car packed up and I could not afford to put it back on the road. I acquired an old motor-bike from a neighbour so that I could still make the journeys to Mile Oak School, but coming back to Steyning on wild winter evenings was too much for me at nearly seventy years of age and I had to give that up at last. Instead I got musical instrument repairs for a music shop in Brighton. I went by 'bus to pick them up and bring them home to carry out the work. They found I was very useful, and at Christmas time they asked me to help in the shop for three weeks before Christmas, which helped us greatly in the extra cash we needed. They sold instruments but could not play them, whereas I could demonstrate instruments to the customers and advise them on choice when buying for their children. But I also did repairs up in our loft at home after tiring days at the shop, sometimes until after ten o'clock at night. I remember a number of Christmases when we came to the holidays I was so tired I got down on a settee and slept most of Christmas day. But I was happy because my family had all the usual things for Christmas. However, I would like to put on record here that I should never have been compelled

to work like that up to nearly eighty years of age. Provision could have been made for old age pensioners in my class. We were a minority class who had been overlooked and while from time to time I wrote to members of parliament and Secretaries of State for Social Security, pointing out to them that there were a few of us in the country in quite a different group from ordinary old age pensioners for whom no adequate provision had been made. We were those pensioners who still had young children at school, and where those children had the ability and desire to go on to higher standards of further education, no grants nor financial help of any kind were paid to enable the parents to pay for their equipment and books. Indeed, the additional payments for our dependants normally paid on our weekly pensions were so low that they only just paid for their food, <sup>but</sup> the purchase of their clothes and school uniforms was out of the question. The reply to almost all my letters to members of parliament and Secretaries of State was the same, namely, that the Commission was going into the matter. That did not help me with my struggle to provide for my children, and and as far as I know, now that my children are all grown up and supporting themselves, the Commission is still going into the matter. Only one minister, Mrs. Barbara Castle, when she held office for Social Security, got us some temporary help, but even that was left to local officials in the Department of Health and Social Security to decide how much we should get, which was a ridiculous amount and quite inadequate for the things they said it would purchase. That was one small gift in a period of twelve years of struggling. So I thanked God for my health and strength and went on

working, both at the Grammar School and also at a local Convent school where some of the Sisters had seen me with my classes at the Grammar school and got their Mother Superior to ask me if I would teach classical guitar at their girls school, which was a school for both boarders and day girls. Before long I was teaching some of the sisters there too. I enjoyed the work but found it tough in the winter months when I had to journey to those schools on a push bike with a guitar strapped across my back, pushing in pouring rain and a biting wind and returning home in the evening in the dark with passing cars splashing up showers of muddy water over me. It was only those conditions which made me, in the end, give up the work. But as I look back today I realise that no man at my age should have been compelled to go on working as I did during those years. However, I must say that I was helped through those years by the most wonderful wife that any man could have, and we have both been compensated by seeing our children each in turn, reach that goal upon which they had set their minds, and acquire that for which they had worked so hard. One of the greatest joys in my life, and I know also my wife's, was when we attended our eldest son's - David's - graduation day at Southampton University. It was a beautiful sunny day on the sixth of July 1979 when we attended as part of a large congregation to witness the Conferment of Degrees. It was a thrill to us to see our son in procession with all the other Graduands, he wearing the gown for which he was now qualified, going up before the Chancellor and Dean to receive his B.A., degree in French Literature. We felt all our hard work during those earlier days of his education, when there was not a single penny in grants until he had acquired a certain number of 'A' levels, was worth while.

At least for four years before he qualified for a County grant, we had to scrape up every penny to keep him going. Then, of course, this continued for each of our four children, so it can be seen how many years I had to continue to work in part time jobs to supplement the insufficient amount I received from the State as an old age pensioner. However, all our children now are adults and supporting themselves. They have also all done well for themselves, so we thank God for this. I am very grateful for the fact that I was able to continue to do part time work up until my eightieth year because my health was good and also that I had one other qualification besides being an ordained minister of the Church, I was able to teach music in local schools. It was a sad day for me when, after our children were on their own feet and supporting themselves, I had, at last, to give up the schools work. At first I relinquished the Grammar School, giving up teaching classical guitar to first and third form pupils, then also the Adult Education Centre, which was held in the Grammar School in evenings. but I was reluctant to give up teaching in the Catholic Convent Girls School, and this was an extraordinary experience for me and can be seen as an important turning point in my life-long pursuit after the understanding and meaning of things spiritual. When it is borne in mind that from my early youth I was brain washed by protestant fundamentalists into viewing the Roman Catholic Church as a very evil establishment, indeed, they said, it was she who is represented in the seventeenth chapter of the book of The Revelation in the New Testament, as being the evil scarlet woman, who is doomed to destruction. The language and style of this book is apocalyptic, that is a revealing of

hidden things, a revelation, a making known to the initiated things which the uninitiated could never know. It is written somewhat in the style of Greek mythology, in fact the original book was written in the Greek language. But the fundamentalist Christians who taught me how to interpret the Bible in my youth, gave me the impression that all the books in the Bible were written in this secret mystery language and they mixed up the Jewish historical books with the apocalyptic books, and we were told we could get messages from God from any part of the Bible. I have given an example of this in the early part of this book, as well as relating the joke we used to tell as students about the old lady who used the Bible as a book of divination or magic. Those early teachers of mine certainly interpreted some extraordinary things to me from this book of the Revelation. For instance, this story of the scarlet woman in the seventeenth chapter, in the third and fourth verses she is described as sitting "upon a scarlet coloured beast," which had "seven heads and ten horns." Then it goes on to describe the woman as being "arrayed in purple and scarlet colour," and after a bit more description of her it continues that upon her forehead was a name written, then in bold capital letters in my Bible and everybody else's Bible, it states her name as, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." The story then goes on to give some hint of the interpretation to this and in the ninth verse says to the "mind which hath wisdom," that means to the initiated to whom the mystery is being revealed, that "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." As soon as we got to this point in our reading of it as young people, our teacher would say, "that means Rome and the abomination is the

Roman Catholic Church, and they painted such a lurid picture to us of all the terrible evils of the Popes down through the ages up to the present day Pope, and of the abominations of the Catholic establishment and its priestcraft, that it created in me a fear of anything to do with the Roman Catholic Church. This fear was not entirely the result of what I had been taught about Catholicism but also something I believe I have inherited from my forebears, and is why I said at the beginning of this book, when dealing with the outline history of my roots, that I believe in the possibility of inherited memory, but while I have very good reasons for believing this, I do not feel it is a subject I want to pursue in this book. I have carried this fear of Roman Catholic church buildings through most of my long life. When I have visited Catholic cathedrals in various parts of Europe, or the Catholic cathedral at Westminster in London as well as some churches in England, I have always had the same uncomfortable, eerie, horrible feeling, which I can only describe as a fear. It has taken right until my old age before I discovered I could overcome this fear. This has all come about through my going to the Towers Convent to teach classical guitar, not only to the girls there, but to a number of the Sisters as well. The Convent is mainly one large, grey, sombre looking building with round towers on each corner, made of solid grey stones and reaching up to above the roof of the building and each being topped with an inverted cone, which, when I first saw them, reminded me of witches hats. At the rear, and to one side of this hundred year old building, some more modern buildings have been added, and there are some outbuildings. Surrounding this complex of buildings, recreation grounds, lawns, trees and shrubs, is a high wall built of

grey flint stones, in keeping with all the very old walls, barns and farm buildings in Sussex. Very large stones are still churned up in vast numbers by ploughs on parts of the downs and in the fields down in the valleys. When my wife and I first saw the Towers Convent many years ago, when we used to ramble around these parts, we walked down the lane at the back of the Convent and looked up at the rows of windows where the girls' dormitories are, we thought it looked just like a prison, particularly with the high stone wall surrounding the place. To me it was quite depressing just looking at it. Then came the time when I was asked if I would go into the Towers twice a week to teach classical guitar to some of the pupils and a few of the sisters. This came about because among my classes at the Grammar School, I had one for teaching an instrument which years ago was very popular, then in the nineteen-fifties, when electronic instruments came in, it lost its appeal, then suddenly in the nineteen-seventies it came back into popularity again. It is the piano-accordion and its popularity was enhanced when our television screens frequently showed a couple of young chaps, students from Cambridge University, who like most students, including my own sons during those years, were always quite broke in vacation periods, and while some managed to get part time jobs, these two went busking, sometimes in France and other parts of Europe, as well as places in Great Britain where they would be permitted to go. People were fascinated <sup>who</sup> saw and heard them, one on a smaller type accordion, the other on a recorder, play classical music. The accordion was usually associated with folk music, popular pieces or Scottish dances, but these two played brilliant stuff and some amusing pieces as well. They became very popular on T.V.,

but the student with the accordion made his instrument popular also.

It was a modern make with plenty of sound although it was a small model. People saw how portable it was and quite light to carry.

Strapped over the shoulders it was not a heavy weight like the old models and it had all the range of keys that one would need and lots of people wanted to buy one. Before long the music shop in Brighton for whom I still did some repair work occasionally, found a demand for the instrument. As well as purchasing new ones they also bought up some second hand accordions that were in reasonable condition which they asked me to overhaul and make any repairs necessary. A few of those instruments I recommended to some of my adult pupils. Then enquiries came in to the office of the Adult Education Centre at the Grammar School, people wanted to know if they could learn the accordion at my music classes. The principal talked the matter over with me and we decided that I should begin a new class for piano--accordions.

That young Cambridge busker who played his accordion so skilfully was doing me a good turn, but not only financially, for remarkably enough it led me into one of the final stages of my spiritual pilgrimage on this earth. It took me into work within a teaching order of the Roman Catholic Church, where at last, ~~my~~ my life-long prejudice, intense dislike, and even fear of the Catholic Church, was, stage by stage,

dispelled for ever. So often in this story I have seen a pattern where, what appeared to be ordinary mundane things, have led to some new spiritual enlightenment, and it has encouraged me to believe that if we are really sincere, dedicated and wholehearted in our search for the truth, if we go on seeking, we shall go on finding. This stage in my pilgrimage came about in this manner. The accordion class was



advertised throughout the district, in a short time enough pupils had enrolled to commence a class. When I arrived at the school for the first of the accordion classes and was making my way in with lots of people going from the car parks to the entrances of the building, I saw a nun get out of a car with two ~~ladies~~ ladies and saw that the <sup>one lady</sup> habit ~~she~~ was wearing, was like that of the Sisters at the Towers Convent. She looked older than those we saw in our neighbourhood from time to time. It never for a moment occurred to me that she might be coming to my accordion class, I thought perhaps she was taking up dress making or embroidery or flower arrangement. So it was a great surprise to me while I was arranging music stands in the music room with some of the first new pupils who had arrived, to see her come in with one of the ladies she had been with outside, both of them carrying accordion cases. She told me her name was Sister Georgina. I asked her if she knew anything about music and she told me she played the organ in the Chapel at the Convent as well as piano for assembly, but that she needed a portable instrument she could take outside when they had functions on the lawns in the summer, and for festivals when they had processions around the village. As she could already read music it was only a matter of teaching her the instrument itself and in a short time she played the instrument quite well. We began in the late autumn and by Christmas time I was able to include a group from the accordion class in the concert I arranged each Christmas with members from all my music classes, both children and adults. Sister Georgina invited other Sisters from the Convent to attend the concert, and they included the Reverend Mother and the Sister who was the head mistress of the Convent school. They were impressed when they saw and heard the pupils

in my children's groups play, particularly the guitar pupils, not only the whole group that played several pieces, but a couple of young soloists, both girls. Shortly after the schools re-opened in January of the New Year, a message came to me asking if I would go to the Convent to see the Reverend Mother and the Sister who was head mistress, with a view to giving guitar lessons in the Convent school, not only to pupils but to some of the Sisters also. I went at the time arranged and that was the first time I had entered the building I had often passed and which I thought looked sombre and depressing. I was surprised to find the interior looked much more cheerful than the exterior. Also by the time of my first visit I had already got to know Sister Georgina. From our first meeting I liked her, she was so cheerful and pleasant. Of course, these nuns belong to a teaching order, they are not a closed order, and Sister Georgina not only taught in the school but was engaged in parish work as well, having contacts with families in the village. So when the head mistress asked me if I would teach guitar I agreed at once, at first going in on one day per week for two classes, one for beginners the other for more advanced pupils. Before long I was in and out of that Convent frequently and became involved in many of the activities there.

Like most accordion pupils Sister Georgina found some difficulty in making the right and left hands both do something different simultaneously. She had been used to the pianoforte where both hands play the same keyboard, so she was alright with the right hand on the piano side of the accordion, but the left hand on rows of buttons was more difficult. So once I started going into the Convent and found that the day I went in was when she was off duty for a period in the afternoon, I told her I would quite willingly get there in the afternoon half an hour or so before my guitar classes and help her with the button

side of her instrument. She was pleased about this and her part of the arrangement was to make me a pot of tea when I arrived, for I have retained a life long habit of having a cup or two of tea every afternoon if it is possible. We became very good friends and I was in and out of the Towers for functions other than my classes. I was accepted by all the other Sisters, who knew me by my nickname of "Gilly" a name first given to me in the R.A.F., in the second world war, and has stuck with me ever since, even my wife, who first knew me by this name, has never called me anything else, only the members of our Methodist Church call me John. Nevertheless, while I was accepted so readily among the Sisters at this, the first Roman Catholic establishment in whose work I had become involved, there lurked still a feeling of uneasiness at the back of my mind. I liked these people, they really believed in their religion, they were dedicated to their calling, I was impressed with their sincerity but I knew I could never accept their dogmas or their myths and legends, I had spent too many years studying the history of the Christian Church and how its doctrines were formulated down through the ages. These nuns, I knew, believed that the Catholic Church was the only authority between this world and God, they had only to accept every word of what the Church told them and they were saved. They had no means of reaching God in any other way, they always have to depend upon a mediator between themselves and God, they cannot go to Him direct. But the Church does allow them a choice of saints, one of whom they could chose as a sponsor, one who would mediate for them, and of course the favourite saint among all Catholics is the Virgin Mary, whom they call the Mother of God, a doctrine that her own son, Jesus of Nazareth, knew nothing about, and this is evident in the oldest

of the Gospels as well as in St. Paul's epistles, he too never said a single word about this doctrine, and, after all, he did found the Christian Church on his interpretation of who and what Jesus was claimed to be, and his letters are the earliest written documents of the Church, written some years before the Gospels which came after the Church had formulated its dogmas and were included to support them. I was impressed with the sincerity of the Sisters, they believed every word the Church taught them. I wondered if their training included the reading of Church history, if not, then they may not know that the doctrine of Mary being the Mother of God (Theotokos) was not sanctioned by the Roman Church until the fifth century, after what is known as the Nestorian heresy. That was a long time after both Jesus and St. Paul, and it was after another very important man had come into the Church's history. He was St. Augustine who, during the fourth century when there were many opposing divisions within the early Church, and by means of his prolific writings, built up the first consistent Christian theology which reconciled many of the warring parties within the Church. To quote from Charles F. Potter's 'The Story of Religion,' "Augustine's statement of Christian doctrine was rapidly and widely accepted, and soon became what it still is, the official orthodoxy of Christendom. It is an astounding fact that the Christianity of the last fifteen hundred years has been largely shaped by this one man." When I first read that during the second World War, already preparing myself for the ministry, when the war would be over, and I was still in the R.A.F., I asked myself the question, is St. Augustine then the one who is responsible for the fears, superstitions and anxieties from which many millions of men and women have suffered for over one thousand and five hundred years? Soon afterwards I read the life story of Augustine, went through the period when at about seventeen years of age he took to himself a mistress, a girl living in the same area where he was born in Roman North Africa, took her with him when he was sent to university at Carthage at eighteen years of age, where, before his nineteenth birthday, while they were living together, she gave birth to their son, of whom, Augustine tells us, he became very fond; then on through his turbulent youth, two years in Carthage studying, carousing, attending religious pageants and dramas in honour of the fertility goddess Cybele, his following of Manichaeism, through the influence of which he

obtained his first good position as a municipal rhetor at the city of Milan - all very interesting until I came to the part where, after living with his mistress and son for nearly fifteen years, through his mother's influence and constant pressure he decided to become a Christian. His mother had been a Christian from his babyhood and had no doubt programmed much into his mind without his realising what the human brain can do in adult life. Her husband, Augustine's father, was a pagan, but while he would have nothing to do with his wife's religion he did not prevent her, and in the end, just before his death, he too became a Christian. Most Church scholars agree that it was Monica the mother of Augustine<sup>who</sup> was largely responsible for his becoming a Christian. However, in my first reading of the life of Augustine, when it came to Monica I formed a very unfavourable picture of her. She opposed his taking of a mistress, but could not do much about it as it was a common thing for young men to do in that age, in the part of the Middle East where they lived. But Monica was a snob, she wanted her son to marry someone from his own upper middle class position in life, and not live with a girl of humble birth. Augustine, after he had studied most of the philosophies of his day, then became a Manichaeon, then later came under the influence of Neoplatonism, finally, in his early thirties, surrendered to his mother's brainwashing from his birth onwards and became a Christian. This, Monica impressed upon him, meant giving up his mistress. She promptly arranged for him to be married to a young lady further up the social scale. Augustine agreed, and in his own words says, "I wooed, I was promised, chiefly through my mother's pains, that so once married, the health-giving baptism might cleanse me." His concubine was torn from his side and after being compelled to leave their son with Augustine, so that she would never see him again, was packed off back again to North Africa from where Augustine had taken her and had since lived with her for fifteen years. He says his "heart which clave unto her was torn and wounded and bleeding," and the poor nameless girl herself vowed "never to know any other man." By the time I had read this much from that book of Charles F. Potter's, in the R.A.F., station church at Ruislip in the year 1941, I felt a strong upwell of emotion rise within me and tears

came to my eyes. It was almost overwhelming, and I wondered why it affected me so much then. But all down the years since, whenever I have been reading in my studies - which I am still pursuing at 86 years of age - things which include anything to do with St. Augustine, I still get that upsurge of emotion, but now, in my old age I know why, for I have learned something which I will explain shortly. But to get back to my first reading of the historical record of St. Augustine at that R.A.F. station during the second World War, as I read on a bit further my deep emotion turned to anger, "the swine !" I said aloud, "good God !, did they make this man a saint ?" For the marriage to this upper class young lady, had to be postponed for a couple of years, so, believe it or not, the book goes on to say "Augustine promptly procured another mistress." Surely, I thought, if his heart "which clave unto" his mistress of fifteen years intimate union and on parting with her "was torn and wounded and bleeding," if he was so much in love with the mother of his son, why could he not marry her if he wanted to put things right to become a Christian. What sort of a character was he giving God if he believed that God did not want him to marry anyone he loved but someone who fitted in more with his religious beliefs. I knew only too well how my own first marriage was so hopelessly unsatisfactory because it was only a religious transaction and in which, falling in love, was not important. Additional to this was the fact that I was in the armed services surrounded by hundreds of men who were separated for weeks at a time from their own women folk, both single and married, and I very much deplored their attitude to women in general; because they were deprived of sex, they formed attachments to girls who hung around our camp gates, or who they met in the tea houses or public houses in the nearby town. How they thought it fun to bandy about their slogan among each other, "love 'em and leave 'em," except that they used another degrading four letter word in place of love. I thought this Augustine chap was no better than my 'oppos' in the R.A.F., whose moral standards had lowered under war conditions. Augustine, after satiating himself with sex, from his university days in Carthage onwards, decides he will give it all up and become a Christian, with no real understanding of the depth of a woman's love, and because of this, did not fathom the Love of God. It is now in my old age when

reading the latest findings by scientists on the makeup and workings of the human brain, from the time when we are in the womb to our old age, and tying up what I read with information I had gathered, from books by up-to-date psychologists and psychiatrists, the truth came to me, that the reason I feel so intensely emotional on behalf of that poor nameless woman rejected by Augustine, after she had been so loyal to him for nearly fifteen years, is because of what I have inherited. In this more enlightened world today our children learn in their biology lessons of the genes we inherit from our parents, and the chromosomes which carry the genetic information, all of which having been transmitted from parent to offspring determines our hereditary characteristics, our parents having inherited theirs from their parents, and so forth further and further back until we are thousands of different combinations of numerous forebears. It is common knowledge that in families there are one or two children who are throw-backs to one or other ancestors, and inherit not only their likenesses and characteristics but even their abilities and skills in certain things, as well as sometimes their fears. It would appear, therefore, very likely, we have inherited a rub-off of their memories. A traumatic experience could so deeply affect a forebear that being passed on to offspring, when similar circumstances arise, the very feeling experienced by the forebear can also be experienced by the offspring. I am sure that although I am a male, I am nevertheless a throw-back to that other nameless woman my great-great grandma, who, after that Spanish marquis had used her for his pleasure, found she was expecting his child, gave her some money and sent her off back to her home in Antwerp. My mother used to tell me I was the odd one of the family. I was the only one of five children who looked like my father's Flemish-Spanish side of the family. my brothers and sister were all like my mother's English Johnsons and grew up inclined to be plump, whereas I was a thin wiry little boy and now am a thin wiry old man. I was the only one who kept in touch with my relatives in Antwerp, occasionally spending my holidays with them. I am also the only one who has traced back as far as I can go in searching this history of the family, having obtained copies of birth

certificates from the Registry in Antwerp, but never being able to discover the identity of that poor young rejected woman, my great-great-grandmother. Her name really should be our family name, and not the funny-peculiar name in Flemish which the supervisors of the hospice decided upon, when they saw what the eighteen months old baby was wearing at the time he was being registered. The English nearest equivalent of how the name sounded, looks better and does not sound funny. But nothing was funny for my great-great-grandmother when she found that the money the Spanish marquis had given her, to get rid of her, had all been used up by the time the baby was one year old. She would have to get work, but she could not take the baby to work with her. There was no government Social Security department then, but there was a fund allocated by the City of Antwerp authorities to support the hospice under the Catholic church, where abandoned babies were left when young mothers could not support them. My great-great-grandma knew the baby would be cared for there. It was not until she was getting on in age that she <sup>felt she</sup> must see her boy now that he was a man, traced his whereabouts through the hospice, and saw him with his own two sons, one of them my grandfather who told us about her. However, my great-grandfather, the foundling, did not want to know the lady who said she was his mother, nor did he want to know who his father was, as shown on the document the lady left with him. That must have been the final cruel blow to that nameless woman. To be seduced, then rejected by the father of the baby, deprived of the boy for all her life because she could not bring him up without the support of a father, then finally be rejected by her son himself. History is full of many, many thousands of such cruelties meted out upon women by men insensitive to what a woman can feel or experience. I know what my great-great grandma felt, and I could feel also what the nameless woman rejected by St. Augustine went through when losing, not only the man she loved, but the son they had brought into the world as well. It is something I have inherited. All this came clearly to me when I ended my active working life by five years of teaching music in a Catholic Convent school. After going through all the important denominations of the Christian Church, beginning in the Church of England, then, as a student working with the Society of Friends (Quakers), a period of breaking bread with an open sect of the



"Open Brethren," then joining the Baptists to go out with their relief mission to work among Russian refugees in the Baltic States, all the while being a member of the extreme Fundamentalist Methodist mission in London, and after twelve years with the London City Mission, becoming an ordained Methodist Minister. Now, finally in my old age, working within a Roman Catholic Convent school with a teaching order of nuns. The more I got to know these sisters, the more I respected them for their sincerity, but also the more I saw, as the months and years went by, how mentally imprisoned they all were, limited and bound by their ancient, restricting, fear motivated creeds and dogmas. In seeking to grow in things of the spirit, they renounce the normal life of all men and women and in so doing become other than human, whereas I had discovered that Jesus of Galilee had taught that "we become Godlike, not in spite of our humanity, but in and through our humanity." However, the atmosphere of the place and what they were teaching to younger minds, sent me back to the study of the writings of St. Augustine. This time, with my increased understanding and experience, in this final stage of my own pilgrimage through this twentieth century, I found myself becoming more sympathetic towards Monica, Augustine's mother. She had been brought up in the strict tenets of the Roman Christian Church, and when she was carrying her son in her womb, because her husband was then still a pagan, yearned that when the baby was born, whether boy or girl, it should become a Christian, <sup>otherwise</sup> she saw no hope for it either in this life or the next. So all her prayers and longings were to that end, Augustine tells us this in his "Confessions." Modern science has revealed to us today, and millions of us have seen it demonstrated on our television screens, that what emotions a pregnant mother has, will affect the baby she is carrying in her womb, particularly her traumas and fears. What Augustine finally became, began in his mind in the womb, and he repeatedly shows this all through his book, as well as his many references to his mother's prayers and many tears shed about his waywardness in his youth when he would not become a Christian. Monica sincerely believed she was doing the right thing for her son's salvation, not knowing she was going to change the course of world history through her son for over onethousand-five hundred years. But what damage and suffering did she do in the mind of

that other poor rejected, nameless woman she compelled her son to discard, so that he might become a Christian, and the millions more of such suffering young women down through the many hundreds of years of the domination of the Christian Church. Imagine my surprise, in fact astonishment, when I got to this point in recording what I had learned through my working within a teaching order of the Catholic Church, and my returning to the reading of St. Augustine, when through another of the many coincidences of timing that have happened to me in my life, I switched on my radio one morning to listen to the "Thought for the Day" on Radio 4, when I broke into the talk just begun by a Catholic priest, who was quoting from a story by the writer John Updike, about this nameless woman of St. Augustine's. Now, I know there are some liberal Catholic priests today, although not as liberal as some within the Methodist church when I was a minister, but knowing that Catholic priests take the vow of celibacy, what this one was saying just staggered me, I immediately began to record it so that I could repeat it many times to make sure I had understood him correctly. He was Father John McDade and was quoting from Augustine's "Confessions" when I started recording. He spoke about the "nine" years Augustine was with his concubine. If John Updike only wrote about the nine years it is because some historians refer to the nine years when Augustine was a Manichaean and belonged only to the lower order and not the "elect." The lower order members were allowed to marry or have a concubine. But history tells us that Augustine first took his mistress when he was in his seventeenth year before he went to Carthage to university, when he took her with him, and was not converted to Christianity until in his thirty-second year, so it was almost fifteen years that he was with her, and this is what I learned in the first history of Augustine I read. However, Father John McDade quoted the 'nine years' from John Updike's story, who also quotes Augustine's own account of his nine years as a Manichaean. I will now quote what I recorded of Father McDade's talk, after missing the opening where he gave the title of John Updike's book, speaking of Augustine's nine years with his concubine he says that

Augustine tells us (quote)...that those nine years with her were years not of love, but of lust. He says "we lived seduced and seducing in divers lusts," and he speaks of "a wayward passion void of understanding." But surely a relationship which lasts nine years cannot be simply lustful. I suspect that the reason Augustine does'nt name her is because she meant so much to him and her anonymity preserves a dangerous and difficult memory, and he indicates as much. Under pressure from his mother to settle down in marriage with someone else, he says that his heart which clung to her "was torn and wounded and bleeding," and she returned to Africa vowing to God "never to know any other man, leaving with me my son by her." Now that's love on both sides not lust, and you get the feeling that Augustine is afraid to look positively at those nine years and that he is really not able to give much space to her account of the love which culminated in such a painful separation both from him and from their son. Coins are two sided, and one partner's view of a relationship can be partial and and incomplete. Updike's story tries to see the relationship from the concubine's point of view, and he suggests that what Augustine could'nt cope with was the directness and naturalness of her love; it could'nt be that simple, something was wrong here. Now why think about these people? Because Augustine is the Church Father whose writings shape the way in which Western Christianity thought about sexuality and relationships, and those nine years with his concubine is his main personal experience of sustained love, and how he interpreted that love led the Christian tradition to treat sexual relations with suspicion. As Updike says in his story, "for a thousand years men would endeavour to hate the flesh because of her." He also suggests that the concubine was left with the sense that although Augustine's writings swept through the world, in his rejection of her he had himself failed. Not for the first time, one might add, or the last, did a man find a woman's experience difficult to fathom, nor is it the first or last time that a man found his own experience of love difficult to fathom.(end of quote). This was the first time in my life that I had heard a Catholic priest, or anyone else in the traditional Christian Church speak like this of St. Augustine. It took my mind back to the early pages of this book where I have shown the psychological damage done

to youths passing through puberty to young manhood through the severe, forbidding, inhibiting attitude of the Christian Church on the subject of sex, and I have recorded two tragedies to young men I knew personally. It was St. Augustine who impressed that attitude to sex upon the minds of Christians in his days, chiefly through this book of his entitled "Confessions," and which has continued to be propagated by the Church down to this present generation in the twentieth century. Thank God there are signs of a changing attitude among the more enlightened members of the Church hierarchy through new scientific and psychological knowledge. But with regard to my own personal progress through all the fears and prohibitions, programmed into my mind by the Christian Church, the gradual, stage by stage enlightenment that has come as I pursued my pilgrimage and quest to find the TRUTH about this puzzle of human life, and the Source of Life and our relationship to it, or Him, everything seems to have come to a climax in this final stage of my journey when through ending my active life within an order of the Roman Catholic Church, and being transported in my mind back to the origins of the Christian Church, I saw how things went tragically astray, when the real human Jesus was turned into a legend, and the Way of Life taught by Jesus was altered and created into an involved, fear inspiring, guilt inhibiting religion. It blocked the advance of the enlightenment which had begun in the Eastern and Mediterranean parts of the world, from spreading into Europe and other parts, propagating instead only superstition, fear of God, and ignorance which culminated in those Dark Ages in Europe that our children today learn about in their history books at school. I saw too, in this my final stage upon this earth, why my own life had taken the course it had. There is an old saying I used to hear as a boy - "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world," it is not quite as the poet William R. Wallace wrote it, but it says what he meant and, of course, it is quite true. Young mothers today do not have rocking cradles, but quite a large number still rock their babies in their arms and perhaps sing them to sleep. However, nearly every pregnant mother rocks her baby in her womb and if that mother sings, the baby hears it in her womb. These are facts which every young mother is taught today if she attends a good clinic or

reads up to date pre-natal literature. Moreover, it is common knowledge today that everything that affects the mother affects the baby. If the mother goes through a traumatic experience, the baby feels there is something wrong. Millions of us have seen demonstrated on our T.V., screens recently, at the time of writing this in 1988, by scientists probing the mother's brain and recording what happens by means of the scanning electron micrographs, and also recording what the baby's reactions are and what takes place in its brain. There is no excuse for any of us ordinary folk from among the masses, in not having this knowledge today, it is available to us, both on radio and television, if we select the right programmes. We know now that the mother programmes much into her baby's mind before it is born, then continues after its birth to form in its mind that which will influence its thinking and how it will act in its later life. When Monica, Augustine's mother, was carrying him in the womb, she was almost fanatically obsessed with the desire and determination that her offspring would be a Christian - that is a Roman Catholic Christian. Throughout the whole of Augustine's book "Confessions," we read his constant references to his mother's prayers for him, and importunate pleadings with him, to become a Christian. He writes of her frequent shedding of tears on his behalf in prayer, in one place saying that when she arose from bowing her head to the ground, as they did in the Middle East then, when in prayer, and still do today, the ground beneath her face was wet with her tears. There is no doubt that when Augustine finally became a Roman Catholic Christian it was the result mainly of his mother's brain washing. There were two women in Augustine's life, the one, his mother, who inspired him to fear, abase and humble himself before a God who had very rigid demands that he should despise and deny the flesh in order that he should become other than human (not before he had satiated himself with sex, I would add), and the other woman who taught him how to love, and who presented him with their son, the result of their love, but who was banished by a religion, to years of heartache and loneliness, in the name of a God so different from the God Jesus proclaimed.

Monica, whose hand rocked the cradle of Aurelius Augustinus, ruled the minds and life style of many millions in the Western world for over one-and-half-thousand years through her son. Still today some are being influenced. There were three women in my life who have made me what I have been for so many years. My mother, like Monica, was determined that her children would be Christians of the Augustinian pattern, she had an abhorrence of sex and would have liked, at least, my elder brother and myself, to have become celibates in the Church, but neither of us had any such inclination. Whatever mistakes my mother made in programming the religious myths and fears into the minds of her children, she had one superb quality, she loved her children dearly. This made her absolutely reliable and I felt the security that came from this, she never had changing moods, she was always the same to each of us and I felt safe in the constancy of her love. It was from my father that I inherited a genetic memory from the second woman in my life, my great-great grandmother, the nameless woman who founded our family. This has made me a life-long feminist, in spite of my unfortunate first marriage. One thing is certain, that when my great-great-grandmother suffered her trauma of rejection and abandonment, after believing the Marquis was in love with her, and she with him, she was already carrying their son, my great-grandfather, in her womb, and the baby suffered with her, and inherited from her, that distress. Then he in turn, passed on to his descendants, through his genetic make-up, something of his mother's heartache. I wonder, through how many generations this must go, before it fades out in the countless number of inherited genetic permutations from scores of forebears down the ages, with many thousands of offshoots from many families? Thousands of years ago there was a wise man who knew something about this. His name was Moses and he was probably the greatest law giver of all time. His moral code is still the guide by which most countries of the world today, base the laws by which their peoples live. In writing of this subject of genetic inheritance, although he may not have known what progress in science has revealed to us today, but perhaps observed how a man's wrong lifestyle affects his offspring,

he says, that the iniquity of the fathers will be passed on to the children "unto the third and fourth generation." This is recorded in the Bible - Exodus, chapter 20. Well, I am of the ~~fourth~~ generation from my great-grandfather, the son of the Marquis and the unnamed woman, so perhaps my inheritance will fade out in my sons and daughters. My problem now is how can I find words adequate or descriptive enough to reveal a portrait of the third and most supreme woman in my life who has had the greatest influence in my discovery of the meaning and purpose of life for myself, and I believe for every other human being who finds it. She, of course, is my lovely wife Joan, with whom my life has now been so closely bound for nearly forty years. I turned to the poets to see if they could lend me words to help me say what is so difficult to convey to readers of this. The poets themselves found words inadequate, but they managed better than me. Robert Burns says in his poem 'Ae Fond Kiss,' "But to see her was to love her, Love but her, and love for ever." William Shakespeare, nearly two hundred years before Burns, says in his 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' "Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;" and he is nearer to that unseen 'something' that no words can describe. But when Edgar Allan Poe, in his sad but beautiful poem "Annabel Lee", says of Annabel "...we loved with a love that was more than love -" he takes me right into the unseen, into the Presence of the Source of Life and Love, the One Who can be known by humans, not through any religious transaction, but only by a relationship of Love. This, of course, was what Jesus of Galilee taught before His early followers distorted his message and turned Him into a legend. I have learned this truth during the many years of very happy, deep, loving relationship with Joan, who has been a wonderfully understanding wife to me and a very loving mother to our children. I would not want to spoil this with words, for the modest, unassuming, sincere young lady I first met many years ago, is still as demure as she approaches her sixtieth year, and would be embarrassed by any eulogy. So I have dedicated this book to her.

From what I have revealed in the foregoing pages of this book, it is quite clear to me that my life upon this planet has been lived in two separate phases, both of them taking a separate half of this century.

It is almost as though I have lived two separate lives in this world. Of course, I have no guarantee that I will see this remarkable century to its very end, but the first half was very clear cut. Being carried in my mother's womb during the first year of the century, in which early stage of development, my brain and thinking were influenced by my mother's intense religious emotions. Then after my birth all the impressions she made upon me, as well as upon my brothers and sister, that were all based upon a fear of a God up above who knew everything I did or even thought, and was keeping an account of it up there. Of course, our mother was a kind and loving mother and like many other mothers, was only concerned that we should go to heaven at the end of this struggling and often turbulent existence. She knew nothing then of the Immanent One Who is personally approachable by any creature without any religion, or Church, or creed, or mediator, and Who makes no demands other than we seek him just as we are, with all our faults and failings, fears, anxieties and tensions, and Who reveals to us nothing but Love. I had the impression when I visited my mother on her death-bed, that she had understood this at the end. But writing of my own personal experience, I can only say that the Church built upon those impressions my mother had programmed into my mind, confirming them and making them even more demanding and fearful. Then came the time when, after the fears and traumas of the first World War, I thought God wanted me to devote my life to the Church, left the service of that excellent gentleman, Sir Andrew Duncan, who had begun to programme more enlightened thoughts into my mind, which really began the conflict in my mind between what the Church was telling me, and what reason was revealing. Then my hurried and disastrous marriage of religious convenience, which brought thirty years of further conflict. But, all the while the truth was slowly dawning, until during the second World War I determined I would devote the rest of my life in trying to discover what really is the Truth about all this God and religion business. This first life of mine, spanning half of this century, ended with the tragic death of my lovely daughter Christine in June 1950, when a couple of months later, all my circumstances changed and I was sent to the Brighton circuit for pastoral work and studies, but where I met my lovely wife Joan.



As my mind goes back now to that beginning of my second half century, it seems that those first few years were a sort of no-man's-land, an intermediacy, a form of purgatory through which I had to pass before emerging into a more enlightened, liberated state. I had discovered through my studies for ordination, that the theologians and leading ministers of our Churches knew the truth about the origins of Christianity, knew, when they held the Bible in hand and called it the Word of God, that it was the words of several gods. Certainly, when Constantine the Great ordered the bishops, under the bishop of Rome, to burn all the original writings of the early Christians, and re-write a new form of Bible, he had incorporated within it some of the religion of his own god, Sol Invictus, the sun god, the rites of which the Roman Christian Church adopted, such as the altars, candles, votive offerings, the shaven priests, and the day of worship, the day following the Sabbath of the followers of the historical Jesus, which Christians still call Sun-day. These are facts of history, they are indisputable and can all be verified and indeed are confirmed by theologians and historical scholars today. Quite recently, at the time of writing this, I heard another speaker on the Radio 4., "Thought for the Day" programme - just a few days before the talk by Father McDade which I have recounted. This other speaker said in effect, that the ministers and leaders of the Churches today have benefitted from the knowledge of brilliant scholars for the past one hundred and fifty years, but have not passed on that knowledge to the people in their congregations. I know how true that is.

Now, in this year of 1988, when I am writing this, when I have tried for so many years since resigning from the ministry, to get the people in the Methodist Church to which I have still clung, in honour of those ministers of the past who have helped me, to leave the past in the ages for which it was intended, and to move on with the new knowledge we have, to a more enlightened understanding of God and His relationship to mankind. At least one of the leading ministers of the Methodists who is responsible for the education of the youth of Methodism, has agreed with me that the new knowledge which has come to us is true and should be taught in our churches, but our only hope is among the

younger generation, he thought. No doubt he has discovered, even as I have found, the great difficulty in penetrating the firmly established minds of many of the older generation who do not want their dear hopes taken from them and will not see that in place of those things which have no true foundation, they can be given something far more valuable that can lead them into a much more intimate relationship to God. From the time when I decided to resign from the ministry and begin a new life in which my chief quest would be to discover for myself the Truth, unto this present day, when at last I can say with authority that I do know now, in my own daily experience, that which I believe is the nearest any human being can know in this life, of an intimate relationship with God, without worrying about what is to come in the future beyond this life. I have gone through many years of bewilderment theologically, but, at last, in this year of 1988, in my eighty-sixth year, everything has come to a head, and to me the whole pattern of my life is clear. It took an illness in the winter of 1985 - 86 before I fully understood what I know today. Let me make it quite clear, that until this time I was a very fit man for my age, and rarely had occasion to visit a doctor. This also I would make clear, that our own family doctor is a good chap who has always treated the members of our family with care and professional skill and also did his very best to discover what was wrong with me before finally sending me to hospital. I am convinced today that it all began one and half years before my first attack. All medical men, physicians and surgeons are bound to a system. All diseases, illnesses or disabilities, with their cures, are put into certain categories and all patients suffering from the same complaint are treated with the same medicine or drug considered at the time to be the most effective. The diseases or illnesses are diagnosed from symptoms recognised for each complaint, and it is the symptoms which are treated. Since the two World Wars of this century, there have been a constant succession of treatments, medicines and drugs discovered and manufactured by chemists, as well as antibiotics and vaccines. In some cases not enough was known about them until it was discovered that some patients were getting side effects from them. We all know

of the women who were given a certain drug when they were pregnant which resulted in their babies being born terribly deformed. Our family doctors are entirely in the hands of the scientific chemists and their own British Medical Association, when they prescribe drugs to their patients. In the spring of 1984 I was spraying insecticide on some plants in our garden, quite ignorant of the fact that along with many thousands of other human beings, I was polluting the upper atmosphere of our world and greatly damaging our weather pattern, when a gust of wind blew some spray in my left eye. I washed it out at once with some eye lotion we had in the house, then went round to our doctor at the health centre. After looking at my eyes he asked me some questions about my sight, which I said was good with my glasses, but that I had noticed a small shadow on the top right hand side of the left eye affected by the spray. He said that in that case he would not treat my eye but sent me to the eye hospital in Brighton. The eye doctor treated the sprayed eye and said that for my age my sight was quite good, but when I pointed out that my doctor had referred me to him because of a small shadow at the top of my left eye, he arranged for me to have a full examination in a few weeks time. At this second examination I was told I had the beginnings of glaucoma, it could not be cured where damage had already occurred, but I would be given eye drops which, with regular use, would keep it from spreading, by keeping the pressure down, but that I would have to attend the hospital at regular intervals for examination for the remainder of my life. The specialist put me in the care of a nurse who was to put the first drops in my eyes to show me how to administer them. When I asked why the right eye had to also have the drops, I was told that eye might also be affected unless prevented by daily application of the drops. Nobody told me that my form of glaucoma was common to old folk my age, it was not the acute type that can occur in younger people which can, without treatment, cause blindness. The nurse asked me to put drops in my eyes as she had shown me. Not being able to see what I was doing by feeling for the position from my nose, drops ran down my cheeks. I told her that more than one drop had gone in both eyes. She told me not to worry about that, I would soon get used to it and that there was no

harm if more than one drop went in. I believed her. I had to attend each month for examination, and could renew the drops through my own doctor. At the end of the first month a different doctor at the hospital attended to me. He prescribed some new drops, which I had to start using the next day. Within half an hour of the first drop in each eye I developed a pain in my forehead and all the sinuses in my nose seemed to be contracting. The pain became excruciating. We 'phoned the Eye Hospital and was told to stop the new drops and continue with the first ones. At the next visit to the hospital the doctor said he had never heard of anyone having an adverse reaction to the drops that gave me pain. The following month's visit, changes had been made at the hospital, the position of the surgeries was different and I had another doctor. He said he was trying some new drops on my eyes, I was to start applying the next day, they were adrenalin drops. The first drop my wife put in after breakfast, in both eyes as instructed. Joan always administered my drops to save me spilling them down my face. By the second drop at midday I began to feel unwell and after the evening drops I went to bed earlier than usual. When I awoke the next morning I felt terrible, there were pains all around my stomach and back, I felt very depressed and weak. I could not understand why, from being a very fit man at the age of 82 years, doing cycle tours with Joan during the summer as well as long hikes and swimming in the sea, I had suddenly deteriorated. Joan helped me around to the Health Centre to see our doctor. He asked me about the new drops for my eyes, when I said they were adrenalin he became suspicious and referred to one of his books, then said, "I see some people do get a bad reaction from adrenalin, sometimes acute anxiety." I said, "I've got that alright." He 'phoned the Eye Hospital and was told to stop the adrenalin and instruct me to continue with the first drops. When I made my next visit to the hospital, the doctor said he had not known any patients who had reacted badly to adrenalin, and from that moment I began to get a nagging doubt that some of us old folk were being used for experiments. After ceasing the adrenalin I still did not feel as well as I had before treatment. This was in the year 1985, in the late summer, after I had been on the first drops for over one year, and during which time my visits to the eye hospital were changed to

intervals of six months. My health seemed to be further deteriorating. Early in the winter of 1985 I awoke one morning and the room seemed to be spinning around. I could not get out of bed and Joan had to help me out and get me into the bathroom. I had to keep my eyes closed or I would have fallen down. A bit later Joan got me back into bed and called the doctor. After examination he said I had Menieres disease, all that could be done was to lie down until the attacks went off, but he prescribed some tablets that would help me in case the attacks recurred. I still continued with the first drops in my eyes as I had been assured by the doctors they had no bad reaction. That winter of 1985 - 86 was one of the coldest in Great Britain for many years. Old age pensioners such as myself, whose job in life has been such that it was not possible to save money for old age, other than the weekly contributions into the State pension fund, now, with the great increases in inflation since we retired, find we only just have enough for very basic needs by being economical, with nothing for other things we ought really to have. When "Age Concern" advised us to make application to see if we were entitled to more heating allowance, the replies I received on three different occasions, were that I was already getting an allowance added to my weekly pension. The last amount they showed me at the time I was taken ill was about £4, at a time when, by being very economical, we could only keep our fuel bill down to £12 per week - that is for coal for our open fire in the living room, and both gas and electricity for water heating, lighting, and cooking. Joan got a morning job of two hours on three mornings per week, which brought in another £12 pound per week, but which she needed for articles of clothing and renewal of household goods not allowed for on my pension amount. I have not bought a single article of clothing for myself for at least fifteen years. Every item I am wearing at the time of writing this has been given to me, either by our sons who have passed on their 'left offs' or new pull-overs and shirts they have bought for my birthday or as Christmas presents, and also two good friends of ours have given me their good quality 'left offs.' I have long ago got over the feeling of indignity at having to wear other folks clothes, when I remember the poor people I used to visit when I worked within the Church, whose conditions were far worse than mine. My circumstances

today, as compared with those of their bad days, would seem to them that I was among the privileged classes. Yet that winter of 1985-86 was a really tough one for us. For some winters before, while writing this book, I have put on an old fur coat, given to me by a neighbour, underneath which I had two thick pullovers and a jacket, and sat by my typewriter with an old blanket wrapped around my legs and my feet in a cardboard box of screwed up paper. The only heating I could afford to put on, until the afternoon, was <sup>from</sup> two gas rings on our cooker in the kitchen, which opens up into our living room, where I am again sitting now writing this in front of an unlighted coal fire, because we dare not light the fire until 4.o.c., in the afternoon. In this way we can just make one bag of coal, which costs £6, last one week, and this is about one half of our total weekly fuel bill, without the gas and electricity bills. Our bedrooms are not heated, unless in extremely cold weather we put on a small electric fire for a limited period to take the chill off. The temperature figures given by the authorities, state that old people should not sleep in a room under 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Our bedroom thermometer, which has proved since to be very accurate, registered never over 35 degrees fahrenheit, during that cold winter of 1985-86, which was just above freezing. Inevitably, after my first attack of Menieres disease, I developed bronchitis. My doctor was away, so another one came and prescribed what he said was an antibiotic in tablet form. My bronchitis was still as bad by the time my own doctor returned. He decided to give me a different antibiotic following upon the one I had just completed. With this I was still taking the tablets prescribed in case I should have a return of the Menieres disease and was still putting the drops in my eyes that I had been told were harmless. The bronchitis began to clear but I felt very unwell and weak, and could not understand why, seeing that during the summer months before, I was a very fit man, swimming in the sea every fine day, doing cycling tours and long hikes with my wife, I should suddenly go down hill like this. Then my digestive system went wrong and I was getting pains, not only internally, but all the nerves outwardly in my abdomen and back became very painful. Joan gently massaged my skin to try to relieve the pain. I was passing

mucus in my stools. My doctor could not understand what was wrong, so decided to refer me to the hospital to be examined by a consultant. Being a slightly built man my weight, for many years, has been just under nine stone. I had dropped to almost eight stone. Each week for a number of weeks an ambulance came to pick up elderly people having treatment, to take them to the hospital, including me. I could hardly walk from our front door to the ambulance and Joan and an ambulance man had to help me. All kinds of tests were made, blood tests for this, that, and the other, they all proved normal. Then X-rays were taken which showed nothing wrong, and I became more confirmed in the suspicion I had when my doctor kept prescribing new drugs. I had never taken any drugs whatever since the times when, as a child, I was occasionally ill and was given what were mostly herbal remedies. Then later in life, as a young man when I had 'flu, I was given the new antibiotics when they first were being used. But for many years I had nothing at all in the drugs line, not so much as an aspirin. Then suddenly in my old age I am given firstly the eye drops, which up to the first attack of Menieres disease I had been taking for one and half years, then from this time I was given one drug after another. When I suggested to two different consultants at the hospital that I thought it was the drugs I had been given, they did not even reply. They wanted me to go into hospital for observation, and I envisaged more probing around my very sore inside and outside, with more drugs to take, so I refused to go. It was now the month of June and my illness had gone on continually from November of the previous year. We were due to go for a couple of weeks holiday with Joan's sister in the Isle of Wight. I told the doctor at the hospital and his staff that I was going, so they booked another appointment for me after we returned from holiday. But by this time I had already suspected what had caused me to go from being a very fit elderly man to a weak invalid hardly able to walk. The bottle of drops for my eyes was contained in a small cardboard box, and with the bottle was a folded pamphlet. The printing, which was large enough for me to read, showed the prescription and gave some technical, medical details. Then there was some small print which was too small for me without a magnifying glass, but I had never bothered because the hospital nurse who showed me how to administer them

told me they were harmless and not to worry if more than one drop went in. But I had become suspicious, so took the pamphlet out of the box containing the bottle, got my magnifying glass and read the small print. There to my surprise was something the hospital staff had not told me. It said that there are some types of people who might get an adverse reaction from the drops, so instructed that immediately after putting a drop in, a finger should be pressed in the corner of the eye over the tear duct to prevent the substance going into the throat and being swallowed. So apparently for one and half years, unknown to me, I had been taking some of the drops down into my stomach. The instructions said the finger should be pressed for one minute. I wondered what would happen when that minute expired, for the substance in the drop was supposed to remain in the eye until the next drop was administered, so could still go down the tear duct. I decided at once not only to stop taking the drugs the doctor had giving me, but to stop the drops as well. When I told my doctor this, he said I could give up the drugs if I wished, but on no account was I to stop the eye drops or I might go blind. I said, that at my age there could not be all that number of years left to me, and that I wanted those years to have some quality, not to be feeling half dead and incapable as I had been. My beginnings of glaucoma was only the result of the ageing process. I thanked him for all he had been trying to do for me, but said I was convinced that my deterioration in health was caused by the foreign chemical substances my body had never been used to taking. Incidentally, as I look at this typing now after three years since I gave up the drops and drugs, I realise that my eyes are as good now as they were before I ever went to the eye hospital. No doubt their examination might show some further regression with ageing, but I am not conscious of any difference in my enjoyment of the countryside when Joan and I go on our long walks and cycle rides again, and I swim in the sea whenever the weather is warm enough, and I am grateful to be able to do this at my present age of 87 years. What helped me make the decision to give up the hospital and doctors were two things that happened just at the time when I was being taken to the hospital each week by ambulance. My June 1986 copy of the National Geographic Society magazine came at the time when the B.B.C.,



had a programme on television entitled 'Alternative Medicine.' The National Geographic magazine had an article entitled 'Our Immune System, The Wars Within.' Now many years ago, as I have recorded in the early pages of this book, when I was a student being trained for work overseas, as part of my training I took a course of medical studies, mainly on tropical diseases, but our introductory lectures were all about our immune system. Now while in the early nineteen-twenties they did not know what our medical scientists know today, basically what we were taught has not changed. However, this information in the magazine article was an amazing revelation of a wonderful universe within myself. Through the latest scientific discoveries which have been made possible by the new scanning electron microscope. They show, in the article, not just diagrams of our cells, but reproductions of the actual cells themselves, magnified many thousands of times. The first ~~page~~<sup>Colour</sup> page shows a human defence cell seeking to engulf droplets of oil. Another reproduction a couple of pages further on, shows one of our helper 'T' cells being attacked by an 'AIDS' virus. Now when we have in mind that these cells are so small that 230 million of them would fit on the full stop at the end of this sentence, it can be seen what an amazing scientific invention the electron microscope is that can reproduce one single one of them the size of the page of the magazine. I do not want to make actual quotations from the article here, as this would mean writing for permission to do so. I have gone through this procedure from time to time throughout the years in writing this book, and while in each case I have been granted permission, I can assure the reader that it takes up quite a length of time, and at 87 years of age I have no means of knowing how many more years I may still have to continue, so I do not want to hang about, but get this book finished. However, if readers of this would like to read the enlightening article for themselves, I would advise them to write for a copy of the Geographic magazine for the month of June, 1986. The address of their office in Great Britain is : National Geographic Society, Post Office Box 19, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 6AD. When you go through the article, you will be amazed at the world within yourself that goes on working for you quite involuntarily without you being conscious of the complex system of internal bodyguards, many millions of them, all working for you ceaselessly, day and night, to

keep you healthy and happy, and all that they ask of us is that we feed them with the right materials from which they produce, in their laboratories, the chemicals they need to carry out their various tasks, and by means of which they communicate with each other. They also require, to enable their processes to circulate in our blood, that we take sufficient physical exercise. It so happened at this stage in my illness - and this is another example of things happening to me just at the right time - that the Geographic magazine article and the television <sup>series</sup> on 'Alternative Medicine' both came just as I had decided to give up all the doctor's drugs, and the eye drops, and treat myself in line with what I had now learned. From time to time, in my long life, things that the lecturer said to us students when we took the missionary medical course in 1923 - 24 have come to mind. One thing in particular has influenced me, although I never fully grasped how I could apply it to myself until my illness in old age. He said in effect, that people think that a doctor cures them of a complaint by giving them some suitable medicine, whereas what the doctor does is to assist the body in its own healing process, "the cure is within yourself." That illness of mine, which began during November 1985 and lasted until July 1986, led me to discover that the cure within myself was the basis of all that the Rabbi Yeoshua ben Joseph taught in Israel, when he enabled people to be cured nearly two thousand years ago, and who was not the miracle worker his followers created after his death, when they turned Him into the legendary Christ, the only son of a God who lives in some heaven above the clouds, and who sent His son down to earth to save mankind. The history of the Christian Church for almost two millennium shows how that contrary to saving mankind and bringing peace to this world, the Church has propagated dogmas, myths and legends obliquely opposed to that which the real rabbi Jesus of Galilee taught and demonstrated, and has brought divisions, conflicts and wars among mankind. I shall have a bit more to say about this as I bring this book to a close, but will get back now to the Source of my own cure. The presenter of the television programmes on 'Alternative Medicine' said that for many years in Great Britain doctors had been trained to treat a patients symptoms, rather than to treat the whole person. In a further series they showed how doctors are

trained in France, where they are taught, not only conventional medicine, but must take a course of psychology and another course on herbal medicine. The series on our television screens included Faith Healing, something which, in the past, has not been generally recognised by our medical profession. It was only a matter of weeks after my seeing that T.V., series and reading the article in the National Geographic magazine, that I heard another talk on the Radio on Faith Healing. A man who was a school teacher, described what happened to him. He was attending to a photocopying machine when a brilliant flash of light exploded in his face. He was completely blinded, was under the care of an eye hospital, was examined by a number of specialists, who, after months of trying to help him, finally said there was no cure, as the parts of the eyes which convey sight to the brain were completely destroyed, he would always be blind. He was determined to see again - I would ask readers of this to note this important fact, that man was determined within himself that he would see again. He contacted the Church of England Faith Healing Division and attended their faith healing sessions. The hands of the priests carrying out the healing were laid upon him, and prayers were said, but at that first session nothing seemed to be happening. He was encouraged to continue attending and must believe that he could be cured. So at his second session he tried to enter more fully into the healing service, but still he could not see. At the third session, he conditioned his mind well before hand that he would really believe he would be made to see again. They got well into the healing service when suddenly he felt something was happening, opened his eyes and could see hazy objects and lights, he was thrilled, this was the beginning of his sight being restored, he really did believe now. Things became clearer and within a few days he could see quite well again. He notified his doctor, and the eye hospital, and it was arranged that he should be examined. He was passed to each of the eye surgeons who had previously examined him after his accident. Finally they made a statement that, never before had they seen anything like this, for those parts of the eyes which had been destroyed had now been completely regenerated. "Regenerated" this was the word which caught my ears and fitted in with everything I had been learning as I had sought recovery from my own illness. Since my student days I had known vaguely something of the system of regeneration going on

constantly within our bodies and in all living matter. Today, with the advance in education since my boyhood days at the beginning of this twentieth century, children learn in their biology lessons about the process going on in our bodies known as metabolism, by which nutritive matter is built up into living matter. They also learn about that amazing gift to all living creatures, humans and other animals, born upon this planet of ours, which we call the immune system. I touched briefly upon this when I described the article in the Geographic magazine. It is a whole world within each of us, many millions of microscopic creatures all designed to protect us from many more millions of hostile microbes constantly attacking us day and night, seeking to get entry into our system. If an enemy microbe does get in, immediately one of the sentries always on duty, will send a chemical signal to the killer "T" cells and one will attack the invader, kill it, then leave to the cells whose job it is to do the cleaning up, to dispose of the body and any other cells who may have been casualties in the attack by the invader. This may be going on this very minute in the one who is reading these lines, and you may know nothing of it, for it is going on all the time in all of us. Only occasionally when a vicious virus gets in, which the "T" cells have not been trained to identify and does quite a bit of damage before the immune system has built up a means of dealing with it, do we feel really ill, such as when we get a new form of influenza. There is also the problem where there is an occasional person who has been born with a deficiency in the immune system or the chemical producing laboratories within each of us. Seeing that each human being born is created in flesh and blood from nothing else than a group of genetic systems all inherited from thousands of forebears going back thousands of years in time, from primitive man unto today, it is always possible that one or more defective genes that some of those forebears have passed on, and which they may have acquired by accident or disease, or ignorance, or their unwise choice of a wrong life style, may be inherited by some unfortunate baby today, which reduces its chance of an efficient immune system. This is one of the problems to be solved by scientists today who are working at the possibility of genetic engineering in the future. All these things came flooding into my mind at the time of my illness in

that winter of 1985 - 86. However, it much more importantly to me, fitted in with the continual studies I had been pursuing ever since I had resigned from the ordained ministry to take up work in the welfare department of industry. Since then I have read only the books of accredited scholars and theologians, as well as those works of the archaeologists responsible for the digging up of the very ancient documents that had been buried in antiquity, after that section of the Christian Church, which got control of the Roman Empire, thought they had all been destroyed when Constantine the Great ordered them to be confiscated as heresies and burnt. It is for this reason that it has been so difficult for the best part of two thousand years, to discover who the real Jesus was and what He really taught. The only documents circulated were those re-written and sanctioned by the Roman Christian Church, which were biased in line with the dogmas developed by combining that early gnostic Christian group's beliefs with some of those from Constantine's own Sun god's religion. It is only in this remarkable century through which I have been privileged to live that the Truth has been brought to the surface. How long now will I have, to help propagate this new knowledge? Please remember what I said earlier in this book, I was "one from the people, chosen to go to the people," and my job in this life is "to know in order to make known." I was conceived in the first year of this century, and I have now reached the last decade of this century, by the grace of the ONE Who is the Ground of all Being and Who gives Being to every human who discovers this Truth. As I write the closing pages of this book we have now entered the year 1990, we have not got long now to prepare our younger folk as they enter the Twenty-First century. We cannot expect them to carry forward the myths and legends and superstitions which we inherited, nor the creeds and dogmas which imprisoned our minds and created more fear than love for a severe God in the sky. The Christian Church still points people in the wrong direction, from childhood, when they teach children to sing, "There's a friend for little children, above the bright blue sky," and adults are taught to sing, "Come down, O Love Divine, seek Thou this soul of mine," believing that if all the prayers go up, all the blessings will come down, ignoring the real Jesus who said, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

If I am asked, after the many years of my quest, have I found the real Jesus, I can say definitely yes, but not the mythical Jesus, the real one, I am sure, is the historical Jesus. Jewish history has evidence which seems to be most authentic, and the original Jesus as a real person who lived in Palestine is recorded. He is mentioned a number of times explicitly by the name of 'Yeshua of Nazareth.' He is also mentioned under another name, because of a scandalous story current in the second century A.D., that Jesus was the son of a Roman soldier in the occupying forces whose name was Pandera, so Jesus was called Ben Pandera. There is no proof of this and may have been spread to disparage Him. This name is recorded in the Jewish Talmud, which was revised about the fifth century A.D., or a little later, and was compiled from documents dating before, during, and after the time of Jesus's life in Galilee. Also we must know that the early followers of Jesus, in our Gospel records seem to show Jesus as being pro Roman. All three synoptic Gospels in the present Bible record the incident when Jesus was asked if the Jewish people should be compelled to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor Caesar, Jesus asked them to show Him a coin, then pointing to the face on the coin He asked, "whose is this image and superscription?" they said, "Caesar's," "then," said Jesus, "give to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, and to God the things that are God's."

The same Gospels show Jesus as despising the Jewish religious leaders, especially the Temple hierarchy, choosing rather to accept invitations to take a meal in the homes of tax collectors for the Romans. These things alone taken from the Christian Gospels, show a different Jesus from the Jesus the Christ figure of St. Paul. We must disregard Paul to find the real Jesus, who I was seeking. I spent over forty years of patient searching through every publication I could find which dealt with the origins of Christianity, or books relevant to this, mostly through the public libraries system, as most books were too dear for me to buy, also they were published chiefly for academics or for universities, and for this reason some books took many weeks from my public library application before I received them. Where a book proved to be one

I should have of my own for frequent reference, when any members of my family asked me what I would like for Christmas or my birthday, I would ask for one of the newly published books in which, I had seen from the public library copy, there was up-to-date information. If any readers would like to pursue any of the studies I have undertaken in my quest for the Truth, I would advise them to look through the bibliography I have attached to this book, as near as I can remember they are listed in the order I discovered them over about fifty years. Many of them use academic, philosophical or theological terms, and the layman not accustomed to this will need a dictionary by his side, but also a number of the books are written with lay people in mind. But, as I was saying, after more than forty years of this kind of study, and also more than thirty years before that, as a fundamentalist Christian, my mind from childhood onwards, thoroughly soaked in the myths and creeds of the Christian Church, what can I without doubt say ~~that~~ I know now ? Of course my pilgrimage is not yet at an end, for it never ends on earth, but goes on into the beyond, and this is why I chose for my title 'From Here To Somewhere.' This <sup>is</sup> what has made the journey so interesting to me, and sometimes exiting when I have discovered clues leading to the Truth. But the quest is not fully attained yet, nor will it be in this mortal life, and this is what makes the continuing journey into the beyond so exiting to me, more to reach out for and more wonderfully enlightening experiences to discover. So this is why I chose for the opening of the prologue of this book, the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, "To travel hopefully is a better thing ~~than~~ to arrive, and the true success is to labour." However, I am greatly encouraged to go forward hopefully, because of what I have, in my last stage of the journey on this earth, already discovered, and it is my duty as one from among the people, chosen to go to the people, to make this discovery known to all. I did not find the Truth in the Christian religion. That has only inhibited the Truth for nearly two thousand years. The only ancient religion that comes nearest to the discovery of what is called enlightenment is Buddhism. It is usually referred to as being a religion, yet when I first read the story of Buddha in the book given to me by my chaplain in the R.A.F., entitled The Story of Religion by Charles F. Potter, it was

quite obvious that Buddha never intended it should be a religion. There is no God mentioned in what he taught, nor any creeds or dogmas. He claimed he had discovered 'enlightenment' and was prepared to show anyone who was interested, how he attained it. Some Christian writers say the Buddha was an atheist, but he could only have been an atheist in the same sense as Karl Marx was called one, because he said that God was the product of man's own mind. What Marx meant was that man's mind has produced an image of a god somewhere up in the sky. But we had already reached a time of scientific progress by the time Marx developed his philosophy, we know now far more about the vastness of the universe around us. Buddha lived in an age when men still believed that the earth is flat and that the sky was a vast dome standing upon the pillars of the earth, above which there was a series of seven heavens, God dwelling in the highest, the seventh. In Buddha's time, and for hundreds of years after, all the Hebrew documents were written, from which ultimately Christianity sprang. So that today the English Bible is nothing else than a collection, translated into English, of writings produced in the days when the writers were influenced by the flat earth mentality. This is why Christians cannot possibly relate to the 'Ultimate' within themselves, the Source of Life and Love, while they build up so much tension reaching up in their minds to a God above Who, if they send up the right petitions, will send down His blessings to them. Christianity has always sent people in the wrong direction in their search for God. Buddha was much nearer to the discovery. Charles F. Potter in his chapter on Buddha, says he was the one who found salvation in psychology. He also shows the faults of Buddha's teaching, he says it is negative and pessimistic. It places a low value on human life and despises the human body. He says, "We do not agree with Buddha's bitter characterisation of it as "This nine-holed frame, this body foul, this charnel-house." Potter goes on to show Buddha's estimate of family life, especially his low valuation of woman. Knowing now more accurately what the real historical Jesus really taught, I am in full agreement with Charles Potter. So why, if Buddha did not want to found a religion, has Buddhism become



probably the greatest religion in the world from the point of view of its numbers of adherents in all countries, at first in the Far East and Middle East, with Christianity preventing its spread through Europe for many years, until this century. ~~Today~~ there are adherents in all European countries and America ? The answer to this is the same as that which happened with Christianity, it was the followers of Buddha who created and spread the religion after his death, developing from his speeches and writings, myths, dogmas and religious rites as the way to the 'enlightenment' that Buddha claimed to have discovered. Five to six centuries later the followers of the Rabbi Yeoshua Ben Joseph, turned Him into the mystical Jesus the Christ, taking His sayings - for He does not appear to have written anything down, unless that also was burned on the orders of both the emperors, first Diocletian and after him Constantine - and creating from those sayings, plus His death, the mythical religion Christianity has been ever since. Of course the Christian writers borrowed bits and pieces from both Buddhism and the Greek myths and philosophies and tied <sup>them</sup> all up with the Hebrew prophesies. This is not the time nor place to go into this now, I am just trying to get together all the many things that crowded together in my mind that brought me to see something vital that led me to a complete recovery from my illness in the year 1986. But if the readers of this are eager to know what I mean by <sup>my</sup> comparison between the origins of Christianity with the origins of Buddhism I will give just this one example, the birth story of Buddha and the birth of Jesus. Both births are claimed by its respective followers to be the result of a miracle, followed by further fantastic, unnatural happenings. Buddhism being several centuries earlier than Christianity, and nearer to the highly imaginative concepts of primitive religions, is coloured with much more fanciful happenings even than Christianity. Nevertheless there are some similarities. Keep in mind that in both cases it was not those around whom these religions were created, who were responsible for the fantastic stories written about them. Buddha says nothing at all about his birth, only his childhood. We have no record of Jesus saying anything at all either about his birth or childhood, the stories in both these religions were created by their followers after their respective deaths.

Both the birth of Buddha and the birth of Jesus are claimed to be the result of a miracle. In the case of Jesus, it is claimed he was born of a virgin mother. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph but, according to the version by St. Matthew, before Joseph was able to have intercourse with her he found she was pregnant. He was very annoyed, but "not wanting to make her a public example" decided to put her away quietly. But while he was making up his mind, "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream" and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, for that which was conceived in her is of the Spirit of God. St. Luke has a different version of this, he says the angel appeared to Mary personally, not Joseph, then goes on with the story of them going to Bethlehem to be taxed, quite against the Jewish custom of those days that a woman never left her home when in the last stages of pregnancy, besides which, history - both Jewish and Roman - tells us that the taxation imposed by Caesar Augustus, did not take place until about ten years after the birth of Jesus. But, of course, these pretty Christmas stories our children are still told, are full of miracles. However, in comparison with the birth of Buddha the Christian birth stories are tame and almost dull. This is the story in the Buddhist scriptures, in brief. King Suddhodana of the Sakya tribe in India, took to himself a Queen-bride. Resting on a couch in the State bedchamber, she had a dream that four kings carried her, bed and all, to the Himalaya mountains and placed the bed under a tree seven leagues high. Four Queens bathed, dressed, and anointed her, and escorted her to a holy bed in a golden mansion on a mountain of silver. A white elephant descended bearing a lotus in his trunk, circled the bed three times, struck the Queen's right side, and entered her womb. When the Queen told her husband of this dream, he called sixty-four wise men and asked their interpretation of the dream. They said, "Be not anxious, O King, the Queen has conceived a male, not a female, and thou shalt have a son. If he dwells in a house he will become a King, a universal monarch; if he leaves his house and goes forth from the world, he will become a Buddha, a remover in the world of the veil of ignorance." Then there was, according to the Buddhist scriptures, an earthquake and thirty-two

miracles occurred, including the curing of the blind, deaf, dumb and lame, and the putting out of the fires in all hells. There are still more miracles to come in the account of Buddha's birth. There is no definite claim that it was a virgin birth, and it is not clear whether the elephant got into the act before or after the King had enjoyed his honeymoon pleasure with his new lovely Queen Maya. What we must remember is, the further we go back in history, before the process of evolution had rolled on to the stage it is today, the people thought and communicated with each other in phantasy language. Everything discovered by archaeologists uncovering the burial places in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries, points to this fact. It may be it was their way of escaping from the realities of a life they could not understand. It was five to six centuries further on from Buddha to Jesus of Nazareth, by which time a little more enlightenment had come to some parts of the world and the phantasy language was more restrained, although the Hebrew writings that have come down to us in the Bible, still retain much phantasy language. But neither Buddha nor Jesus were responsible for the language in the scriptures of the religions about them, created by their followers after their deaths. Buddha was determined not to make another religion out of his discovery of 'enlightenment,' and one of the facts that supports this is his refusal to appoint someone to succeed him after his death, this is also borne out by what he said to his disciples. He left no creeds or dogmas, but just eight simple rules, which he called the "Eightfold Path," right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. By what his speeches reveal, as recorded in the Buddhist scriptures, I think I can sum it all up as "be a true human being while on this earth, with moderation in everything." This is a rule by which I have lived for many years now, but it did not bring me my enlightenment, there is something else. The one thing Buddha did get right was, that we cannot find the Truth by looking and seeking outside of ourselves, but only by going deep down within ourselves. and this, I finally discovered, was the vital Truth that the real Jesus of Nazareth taught, the historical Jesus, but He had something plus that Buddha had not found, for Jesus can direct to what it IS we seek within

ourselves, and how and where we go to find IT. For many years I had some inkling of it when reading the Christian Church's documents in the New Testament section of the English Bible, but only in the Gospels, not the epistles, for the letters of St. Paul, <sup>and</sup> the Johannine writings and Apocalyptic documents, are concerned with mythology, phantasy, and the dogmas of the newly formed Christian Church. The first three Gospels are bits and pieces of history covering about just three years of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, without any attempt at chronological accuracy. Mark, the first to be written out of the four, is mostly a list of all the miracles Jesus is said to have performed, because in those days if a man could perform miracles or heal people, it showed he had authority from God. St Luke's Gospel is different as he attempts a biography of Jesus, beginning with His birth, after tracing His cousin's mother's descent, as being from the priestly line from ancient Aaron who was responsible for appointing the first priests from his tribe, the tribe being known thereafter as the Levites. The cousin of Jesus was John the baptist, who St. Luke shows as being a descendant of this priestly line. Then after dealing with John the baptist, Luke goes on to trace the descent of Joseph the father of Jesus. Why does he bother to do this when he is about to tell us that by a miracle from God, Jesus was born of a virgin before Joseph her husband had sexual intercourse with her? To answer this the reader should know something of the Jewish history of those primitive days, their fantastical way of writing or communicating their religious ideas, their hopes and expectations, especially at the time when Jesus was born, their insatiable yearning to be freed from the Roman oppressor and be ruled by Jehovah their God. Now, for nearly two thousand years the Christian Church has been teaching us that the Jews were expecting a Messiah (which means an anointed One of God) and when He came they did not recognise Him and rejected Him by putting Him to death, so He went <sup>in spirit</sup> to the gentile nations instead. They mean, of course, through Christianity. This is quite untrue and should not, in these more enlightened days, be allowed to be propagated. The truth is, that in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, the Jewish people were expecting two Messiahs (anointed ones), and this is why St. Luke gives two different lineages, one who was to come from the priestly line of the Levites from Aaron, and the other from the royal line of King David.

Luke is quite clearly showing that Jesus fits in both the categories as both the priest and the royal descendant from King David. So there we have one Messiah fulfilling the function of two. The belief that there would be a priestly messiah besides a royal one, was introduced by a new sect of devout men which came into being about the second to first century before Jesus. They gathered many more followers during the first century B.C., when the Roman forces occupied their holy land. They became known as the 'Essenes'. Initially they were priests who had descended from the house of Zadoc who officiated for King David. Zadoc the priest is mentioned several times in the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament, in connection <sup>with</sup> his support of King David, and it is no doubt the reason why, when the composer Handel wrote music for the coronation of the English King George II in the year 1727, he gave it the title of "Zadoc the Priest," and this music has been performed at every English coronation since. Well the priest in Israel who descended from him, and became the leader of the Essene movement, was given the title of "The Teacher of Righteousness." The movement which began before Jesus was born, had a greater influence in Israel during the life time of Jesus of Nazareth, and for this reason some scholars of the older school, thought that the Teacher of Righteousness could have been Jesus, especially because of the sufferings he endured for his cause, and in the end was put to death. But modern scholars who have studied the question more closely think not. Although Jesus taught many things in line with the Essenes, and his cousin John the Baptist was an Essene, his life style was different from theirs. He did not shut himself off from this world, he did not despise the flesh in order to seek the things of the spirit and a world to come which will be better than this. Jesus was a man from the people who went to the people, he ate and drank with ~~the~~ folk who were looked upon by religious Jews as outcasts, so that his enemies called him a "wine-bibber and a gluttonous man." He urged people to use their intelligence, to observe, to behold the birds of the air, see the grass of the field, the wildflowers that spring up, the seed that is sown and the harvest that follows, and do not think that this is a wicked world and that God is in some heaven in the sky away from it all, He is among you and within you. But although the Christian church has allowed some of this to

be included in the Gospels that were rewritten on the order of Constantine, the bits and pieces of what Jesus really did say were swamped in all the flood of dogma, myth and legend, that forms the <sup>larger</sup> part of each Gospel. To anyone who, instead of taking the Bible as being every single word dictated by God just as it is, examines these Gospels in a scholarly way sincerely trying to find the Truth, these few sayings of Jesus which have not been modified to fit in with the Church's dogmas, will stand out as contradictions to the main contents of the books. Some years before the discovery by archaeologists of the documents (scrolls) which escaped being burnt at the command of Constantine, and which were buried, but today, since their discovery, take us much nearer to what Jesus really did teach, I noticed a text in the Gospel of Luke which held my attention. In chapter 17, verses 20 - 21, Jesus is being questioned by some Jews as to where and when the Kingdom of God would come. He knew, of course, that the Jews always believed that one day heaven would be established on earth in their land of ~~Canaan~~, now Israel, and that Jehovah would rule over them as His special people. All the other nations, which they called heathen, would view them in envy and would say, "wish we had Jehovah ruling over us and we had heaven like that in our land." So, according to the English translation of the Greek in our Bible, St. Luke says Jesus replied "the Kingdom of God does not come by observation." Now, for many years those of us who have had to study these things, know that our old English version of the Bible, the Authorized King James Version, does not always give us the most correct translation into English of either the Hebrew in the Old Testament, or the Greek in the New Testament. So for this reason, when I was a student, one of our lecturers, knowing that we were not either Hebrew nor Greek scholars, advised us to purchase an "Analytical Concordance to the Bible" by Dr. Robert Young, LL.D. It gives every single word in Hebrew from the Old Testament, and every Greek word in the New Testament. I have possessed one ever since the year 1925. It is invaluable in finding the real meaning of these ancient words. So I consulted my concordance to find what this word "observation" means in English. In our English language we have so many single words which we use for different aspects or meanings of the same word, so that when we use the word, we have to arrange the context of the sentence to show in which sense we mean the word, but in Hebrew and Greek they have

different words for each meaning or aspect. For instance the word 'love,' we have only the one word, <sup>but</sup> in both Hebrew and Greek they have several, there is one for the 'love' between man and woman, others for "I 'love' the fellowship I get at my club, or church congregation," "I 'love' to sit quietly listening to soothing music," or if you feel so inclined, "I 'love' to have a damned good argument." When I looked for the word "observation" I found that "observe" had four different Greek words in the New Testament, and four Hebrew words in the Old Testament, but the word "observation" is used once only in the whole of the Bible, and the English translation if given fully, means "intense watching for something you are expecting," So this was the answer Jesus gave to the man who asked when this kingdom of God would come, He replied, "it will never come to you from outside of yourself," and to make Himself clear He continued, "if they say to you, Lo, out there, or Lo, up there, go not after them, for the kingdom of God is within you," and that word "within" is used only twice in the New Testament and the translation into Greek really means inside, and not "among" you, as some other writers of Gospels have used when describing something coming down from some heaven in the sky to be established on earth. Why am I going into all these minute details in telling the readers of this, how I became enlightened, which resulted in my being completely cured of my illness? For this reason. Why I had not discovered this Truth earlier in life, was because I had been so brain washed from childhood into taking everything about the mythical Jesus literally, that I could not discern the difference between the mythical Jesus and the historical Jesus. With all the knowledge I had gained through nearly eighty years of my life, being influenced by the ancient thought forms from childhood, then when later in adulthood I made my own studies in an attempt to discover the Truth, the only documents available to me were those prescribed by the Church authorities, they had inherited from the Roman Orthodox group, who had suppressed the writings and teachings of the original followers of the historical Jesus, rewrote their own scriptures, after they had burnt all they could find of the original writings, with the help of the Roman political and military powers, and permitted to be written only in Latin or Greek. The people, who were mostly illiterate, were not allowed to read them <sup>even</sup> if they were able,

all that they knew about these scriptures was from what the priests read to them from the pulpits. Then came a time of enlightenment spreading throughout Europe about the fifteenth century. With regard to the Christian Church, most readers will have heard of Martin Luther, who brought about the Reformation. But that reformation really began in England over a century before through a brilliant scholar named John Wycliffe ( sometimes written Wiclif ) . Luther used to call himself a 'Hussite' acknowledging that he had been taught much by Huss. But John Wycliffe of England was the acknowledged teacher of Huss of Bohemia a century before the birth of Luther. Wycliffe was a scholar of great prestige at Oxford as Master of Balliol about 1360, yet he had a remarkable influence with the common people, and he believed in the right of the individual to decide his or her own religious matters by going direct to the scriptures and using their own reason in interpreting them. He knew there was only a Latin Bible available in England, which only scholars could read, but as Wycliffe was also an educator, he believed people would soon learn to read if they had the Bible in English, so set about translating the Latin Bible into English. As soon as he had one section translated, he had it copied by students, who went on foot throughout Great Britain giving to the delighted people the scriptures in their every day speech. A century later another Protestant Englishman, named William Tyndale, went to work with Martin Luther at Wittenburg, where he completed the translation of the New Testament. He had begun a translation of the Old Testament when he was arrested as a heretic and burned at the stake. Now while these great men accomplished so much good in enabling the poorer folk to read and write, they could have had no understanding of the content of those scriptures they were propagating. Their translation from the Latin Bible contained the same myths, fantasies and miraculous legends invented about the first century A.D., and following centuries, and perpetuated up to this present century by the Roman Catholic Church and its offshoots. As I have said earlier in this book, this is probably the most important and amazing century in this world's history as regards man's sudden leap forward in evolution, in the scientific knowledge he has gained, and his bewilderment not knowing



for sure where things will lead in the twenty-first century we are soon to enter. Mankind has made many mistakes on the way forward, and some of the most knowledgable people are wondering if it might be too late to put some of those mistakes right before we destroy this planet as man has known it, on his way forward over millions of years. But, of all the advances we have made, scientifically and in our understanding of the universe of which we are an essential part, nothing has given me such a thrill as the find of the ancient documents, uncovered, first in Egypt, and then in Jordan. This is why I look upon this twentieth century through which I have been privileged to live, as the most enlightening. During this century mankind has learned how to harness atomic power, he has found cures for some diseases that used to kill off thousands of people per year, but sometimes creating side effects which have lowered the quality of life in the meantime. At this very moment, deep down under the ground in Switzerland, <sup>through</sup> many miles of machinery and equipment in which they have created heat hotter than the centre of the sun, scientists are seeking to produce atomic particles, the very stuff that created the universe itself. Yet these things do not thrill me like the discovery of the Truth after being hidden for nearly two thousand years. We did, of course, know something of the other Gospels and writings which were classed as heresies, from bits and pieces taken from those which were quoted in documents by various Church Fathers of the Roman Orthodox church, when they were endeavouring to show that <sup>gnostic</sup> teaching was false. There had also been mention made of a Gospel of Peter by the bishop of Antioch in A.D. 180, and in the last century the year 1886, a copy of that Gospel was located in a valley of the upper Nile, but no English translation of it was published then. But in this century many of those Gospels which had escaped being burnt were unearthed, as well as records of the Essenes.

In December 1945, far up the River Nile, an Egyptian peasant was digging for fertiliser in the soft soil near the village of Nag Hammadi, when he unearthed a large earthenware jar. Within the jar he found some papyrus scrolls. Taking them out he saw they were thirteen leather-bound volumes of papyrus manuscripts. He took them home and dumped the bound scroll books, and lots of papyrus leaves, on the straw piled on the ground near to the oven. Later his mother came in to light the fire, grabbed up

some of the straw with which to kindle the fire, saw the papyrus leaves, thought they were there to be burnt and set light to them. Fortunately not many were burned, when the son discovered what his mother had done, he took steps to see that no more were destroyed. Unfortunately he and his brothers were being investigated by the police at that time because they were accused of avenging their father's death by killing another Egyptian. They thought the police might come and see the manuscripts. So the man who found the scrolls asked the local Egyptian priest if he would take care of some of them. He had a school teacher acquaintance to whom the priest gave a manuscript. He could not understand what the writings were about any more than the finder did, as they were written in ancient languages, and would need language experts to decipher. The teacher sent it to a friend in Cairo to find out what it was worth. Before long they were being sold through antiquities dealers on the black market in Cairo. This soon caught the attention of officials of the Egyptian government and very soon many of the thirteen codices found, were in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, with a number of them smuggled out of Egypt and sold to experts in America and Europe. Then came the conflict with the hierarchy of the Christian Church. Some of the gnostic Gospels as they are called, were given the title of the "Secret Sayings of Jesus." and while they contained many texts that are in the accepted Christian Gospels, they are given a little different wording and a very different meaning. In Europe the ancient language experts were translating the documents from the Coptic into their own languages, mainly German, French and English. In England the Church of England authorities would not permit any English translations to be published for circulation among the ordinary people. However, some English translations were being published for students in philosophical and theological academies and universities in the United States of America, and copies of those came across to Great Britain. Our scholars and language experts studied them and one or two of our most brilliant scholars were invited to go out to the Middle East to take part in further translation of the documents. Within two years from the Nag Hammadi find, another much larger store of scrolls was discovered at an almost inaccessible spot on the rocky shore of the Dead Sea.

The place which is known as Qumran is in Jordanian territory, and is also not many miles away from Jerusalem in Israel. The scrolls which were found in caves are sometimes referred to as the Qumran documents, but more often as The Dead Sea Scrolls. These documents have proved to be a library collected over a number of years, before, during and after the life time of Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore they show us the kind of religious ideas that were current at that time, and certainly show us the origins of Christianity. They were the work of the Essenes, the sect I have mentioned earlier, but from all that I have read in my many years of studies, Jesus does not appear to have been a member of the sect but was sympathetic with many of their ideas. However, I do not want to dwell upon this archaeological discovery in this book for this reason, that the earlier discovery at Nag Hammadi, now that I have read the English translations of the Gnostic Gospels unearthed, has taken me much nearer to the solution of the problem I set myself over forty years ago when I set myself the quest for the rest of my life, to find out who this Jesus really was and what message He really did bring to this world. Added to this I wanted to know what really is this God and religion business all about? The conflict is still going on at present, for while the Church hierarchy had reluctantly, after seeing copies of one Gnostic document circulating in America, to consent to its publication in Great Britain, and although the scrolls were discovered in 1945, it was not until 1960 that the publishers Collins, in their Fontana Books series, published "The Secret Sayings of Jesus, According to the Gospel of Thomas." I was out of the ordained ministry by then and held a good position in the Welfare section of industry, as well as a teaching post in an "Approved" School, so I was then out of touch with those who might have told me about it. A few years later I was browsing in a second hand book shop, and there it was being sold for two or three pence - the publishing price new was, in old currency, two shillings and six pence - I grabbed it and have kept it ever since. But the Church did not object too strongly about this Gospel because, of all the Gnostic Gospels found, it is the nearest to the Gospels in the Church's own Bible today. Nevertheless, although it has this similarity,

it reveals a quite different Jesus from the one shown in the Gospels re-written by the Roman Orthodox church, under the command of Constantine in the Fourth century A.D. and circulated by the Christian Church ever since. For one thing, the Gnostic Gospels reveal a more human Jesus, whereas the Roman Church portrayed Him as the only Son of God sent down from heaven to live as a human being, yet appearing somewhat aloof from us, sometimes wearing a halo, sometimes a crown of thorns, and sometimes hanging on a cross with an agonising look on His face, blood oozing from the thorns around His forehead, and trickling from a wound on His side. But always with an other-than-this-world look on His face, and a genteel and elite build of physical frame. The Gnostic Gospels on the other hand show Jesus as one from among the people who was dedicated to their Hebrew cause, that which their sacred Book, the TORAH had foretold, the 'End of Days' that would come when the Messiah would come as deliverer to set Israel free from oppression, and Jehovah would reign over them through the High Priest and the Temple hierarchy. This expectation was revived very strongly after the Romans conquered and occupied Israel during the First century B.C. Any powerful preacher who arose at that time, to stir the people to a better way of life, so as <sup>to</sup> please Jehovah, that He might hasten the day He has promised, was thought possibly to be that Messiah, the people were ready enough to follow anyone who showed any promise. Later another group of people arose who believed they should bring delivery about by force, they were known as Zealots. They were ready to lay down their lives for the cause and some of their outstanding leaders did. The most outstanding of them are still remembered and celebrated on certain days in the Jewish year today. Most of the common people who supported these movements and who attempted insurrection from time to time were from the territory around Galilee where Jesus was born and raised, and where He began His preaching. Inevitably the Roman authorities, seeing the crowds of people who followed Him, to hear Him preach and see Him cure folk from their illnesses, suspected that He was another insurrectionist, and He knew throughout all His three years of ministry that He was suspect. But we know He was not a Zealot from what He taught, and we know He was not one of the many magicians roaming around curing people by magic formulæ.

incantations and spells, but having said this, let me make it quite clear that I am not saying Jesus did not know anything about them, for it was impossible for Him, in the years He was in Galilee, not to have known them. Writers, Roman, Greek and Jewish, who lived near to that period, have left records showing how the magicians worked their spells and carried out their rites and cures. Some who sought to discredit Jesus, claim that He was no more than a magician, and one named Celsus, who was a follower and teacher of the philosophy of Plato, wrote of Jesus, "After growing up in Galilee, Jesus went as a hired labourer to Egypt. There he learned some of those magical rites on which the Egyptians pride themselves. He came back (to Palestine) hoping for great things from his powers and because of them proclaimed himself a God." This quotation is taken from a book by a very early Church Father named Origen, who wrote the book to refute what Celsus had said, because Celsus had made a study of the new cult of Christianity and wrote a treatise attacking it. So Origen wrote a reply to it and in so doing, quoted much of it almost sentence by sentence. Origen gave the title to his refutation, "Against Celsus." This, by the way, is how we learned much that was contained in the writings that were called heresies and burnt by the Roman Orthodox Church at the command of the Emperor Constantine, there were a number of early Church Fathers who wrote books and articles refuting the teachings of the Gnostics and Essenes and in so doing quoted very much of their content. However, when a number of these documents were discovered not to have been destroyed but buried in the caves both at Nag Hammadi in Egypt and at Qumram by the Dead Sea, we learned so much more. Of course, the Church authorities, after the first of those unearthed documents had been translated into English, prevented them from being circulated among the ordinary members of their churches and the public in general, they saw that they remained with the scholars and in universities. However, the work of completing all the documents found is not finished yet, and just a few weeks ago, at the time of writing this, I heard on the Sunday morning programme of <sup>BBC</sup> Radio Four, a discussion between a number of professors and scholars from Great Britain, America and Europe, deploring the fact that while the few documents were released between the 1960's and 1970's, they have not been permitted to see one further translation

since. One elderly lady professor said that if they have to wait until all the documents are finished, she will be gone and will not see any of them. Another male professor asked why they cannot see at least those that are ready. Another said he had given the whole of his life to the study of antiquities and ancient languages yet he is not allowed to see one of the further documents that are completed, he also said they would all be dead and never see them. This is now the year 1990 and the first finds were made in 1945, why the delay and why the secrecy? A Jewish professor from Jerusalem offered some excuse, he said he knew the team working on the documents in Jerusalem, they are honest and dedicated to their task. He said the work is difficult because of the piecing together of thousands of fragments of scrolls like a jigsaw puzzle. However, he said there were only a few translators on such a big task, so they were going to add a few more soon. From my enquiries over the past years I have the impression that the matter goes deeper than this. When I discovered, ~~in~~ reading through a Bibliography at the end of a book on this subject, that an English translation of the Nag Hammadi documents, translated by Members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project in America under the direction of James M. Robinson, was, and perhaps still is, published by Harper & Row in the U.S.A., and London, knowing that it would be an expensive book, I went to the lady head librarian at our public library. Over the years she has become used to my asking for books that are not in our county libraries lists. Her maxim is that if a book is published then she and her staff will do their utmost to obtain it through the national libraries system, if it is not in any of our county libraries. They have always got the book I needed although sometimes it has taken many weeks, but this time I set them a problem. I filled up the usual request form and paid a small fee and my request was sent on to our county libraries headquarters. I let things lie for about a month as I had other books to read which I had already obtained. Then as I entered the reference section of the library to look through some other volumes, I saw the head librarian near by and asked her if she had heard anything of my request. She paused for a moment or two as though not sure what to say, then said she received a call from the chief librarian at headquarters saying that they were having some difficulties.

She did not know what the difficulties were, but the chief librarian said they were still trying. I let things go for another three weeks or more, then went into the library at a quiet moment with few people there. One of the assistants was at the desk, I asked her if there was anything for me in yet. She asked me to wait a moment and walked over to the head librarian who was the other side of the section, who glanced across to me, then entered into what looked a serious conversation with the assistant, occasionally glancing in my direction. The head lady came to me and said she did not know what was going on at headquarters, the chief librarian had 'phoned her again, he was still having difficulties but he was still trying. Then she asked me what the book was about and I explained it would be quite a large volume as it would contain the English translations of several Gnostic Gospels discovered in Egypt. Suddenly I felt everyone was looking at me with suspicion, what was I up to ? I was back in the atmosphere of the second World War when, as I have recounted earlier in this book, during my first three years of my six years in the R.A.F., one of my duties was to show films to the personnel about espionage and the methods used by enemy agents seeking to obtain secret military information, the difference now being that I was the agent, not seeking classified Ministry of Defence documents, but secret documents the Christian Church hierarchy would not want the general public to know. Why have the public libraries not included these books on the Gnostic Gospels among their stock ? When the Dead Sea scrolls were translated into English by Professor John M. Allegro, a lecturer at the Manchester University, and published in the year 1956, the publishers say that the book has been continuously in print ever since, and has been translated into many foreign languages. Certainly copies of this book were in our libraries and I found the copy I read in the public library at Worthing, that was in the 1970's. But, of course, those documents discovered were collected by the Essenes, and what they show is the relationship between that movement with its beliefs and organisation before and during the life time of Jesus of Nazareth, and that created by the early followers of Jesus which became the Christian Church. Both were essentially Hebrew movements that looked for the fulfilment of Jehovah's promise to establish heaven on earth among them

according to His promise made to them through their Old Testament prophets. They were not concerned about any heaven after this life, but that heavenly state in their Holy land of Palestine. This why they caused the Roman occupying powers so much trouble, for if Jehovah was to reign over Israel through the two Messiahs, the high priestly one in the Temple and the royal one descended from King David, then the Roman occupying army would have to be expelled. This led to the formation of the Zealots who supported the Essene movement, some of them being prominent Essenes. Unlike the originators of the movement in its early stages, who were prepared to wait patiently for Jehovah to fulfil His promises, ~~in the~~ meantime to engage in constant prayer, reading of the Law and a strict disciplined way of life, the Zealots believed they had to help Jehovah establish His kingdom of heaven on earth, in the land of Israel, by using physical force. Something like the extreme Muslim fundamentalists today who believe that Allah calls them to engage in a jihād (holy war) to overcome those evil powers around them who do not accept Islam as a way of life, nor follow the teaching of Muhammad their prophet. So it is easy to see that the Essene documents found at Qumran on the Dead Sea coast have not disturbed the authorities of the Christian Church. The Essenes used the same ancient Hebrew books as those in the Church's Old Testament section of the Bible today, which recount many stories of bloodthirsty wars fought for Jehovah, and, of course, the history of the Christian Church recounts the many occasions when the Church has supported armed forces that have conquered other countries so that Christian missionaries <sup>could</sup> go in and convert the people to Christianity. But when we examine the Gnostic Gospels unearthed at Nag Hammadi we have an entirely different story. I had already a hint of this when I read the one Gnostic Gospel the Church did allow to be published, the Gospel of Thomas. For many years I had puzzled over that one text in St. Luke's Gospel which stands out as a contradiction to all the other things <sup>in</sup> those rewritten and modified Gospels sanctioned by the Church, as being from Jesus. When He is asked when and where the Kingdom of God will come, He says, not here nor up there, for "the Kingdom of God is within you." When I saw that same text in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas much more fully quoted and explicit, I wanted to know more, for in this particular Gospel after saying God's kingdom has no location on earth, He continues



"When you know yourselves, then you will be known; and you will know that you are the sons of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you are in poverty, and you are poverty."

These lines in the original are set out in verse, but they cannot be shown as such in the English translation. If this was from the one Gospel permitted by the Church to be published, what would I find in the others? If I find in this Gospel a Jesus who tells His followers they can know God only by going, not outside of themselves, to some location where they believe God is, but deep within themselves, they must know themselves and the potential in every human being before they can find God, would the other Gnostic Gospels support this? I determined when I walked out of our public library that I would go to any lengths to see the contents of those Gnostic Gospels for myself. I let the matter lie for another three weeks as I was on other research in the meantime, then went to the library this time to say I would be away for two weeks, so if anything came in for me would they please note the day of my return, which they wrote on my request form. My wife and I were going to Scotland to the wedding of our youngest actor son, who was to be married to a Scottish actress, who was at that time in the cast of an I.T.V., television series which was being rehearsed in Scotland. We made a holiday of the occasion and stayed at a large house at Cardross, belonging to another actress friend who was away on location. Our second day there I went into the lounge and on a small table saw a paper back of the Pelican books series, opened up and flattened down with the front and back covers uppermost. Casually I looked at it, then blinked and shook my head, I thought I had been working too hard and was seeing things that were not there. I looked closer and in large black letters I saw, "THE Gnostic GOSPELS" with the name of the author Elaine Pagels. I picked up the book and looked inside the front cover. It told me that Professor Pagels, after receiving her doctorate at Harvard University, taught at Columbia University, then after one or two other things it said she had participated with other scholars in editing several of the texts from the Nag Hammadi documents. It was obvious I had not got the whole of the Gospels that had been translated into English, but as I looked through the book I found that Professor Pagels had touched upon almost all of the

Gnostic Gospels which have now been translated, briefly outlining the contents of each of them, and what is most important, showing how much they differed from the Christian tradition and certainly quite different from the modified Gospels sanctioned by the Church authorities. This book was a Godsend to me, it had been published in London a few years previously, why had not the public libraries a copy of this ? For part of our holiday we had to stay in Glasgow over the wedding period, but each day at Cardross after finding this book, <sup>and</sup> after touring around in the daytime, I settled down each evening reading Elaine Pagels' commentaries on these Gnostic Gospels. I wanted my own copy when we returned home. The day after we got back I went to our bookshop and ordered it. Within one week a 'phone call informed me it had arrived and the very next day after purchasing it, I had a 'phone call from the public library to say that at last they had received the Nag Hammadi Library I had ordered three months before, but there was a note attached to it saying I could retain it for only two weeks. I went at once and from the note I saw it had been loaned to me by the Sheffield University Library. Of course I was grateful for their help, but I knew two weeks did not give me enough time to study each Gospel in any depth. So I made as many hurried notes as possible, but now having Professor Pagels' valuable book I could better understand the contents, for I was now able to examine them through the eyes of experts. The most important comparison I am able to make, which helps me to the point of my life long quest, is between the mythical Jesus and the human Jesus, how His immediate followers understood who he was and what he taught, and what they made of Him after his death. We have to keep in mind that the Gnostics whose writings we have now discovered, were Jewish Gnostics and their form of Gnosticism derives from the Hebrew religion. Experts in antiquity have traced Gnostics much further back in time than the Hebrews, in ancient Babylon and Persia, but in the Western world we are concerned about that which influenced the beginnings of Christianity. If the reader is not sure what Gnostic means, it is a term for one who claims to have special mystical knowledge which has arrived from within himself, not knowledge gained from outside. The theological term is esoteric as against exoteric.

These Gnostic documents are written in the thought forms of the Hebrews in their era two thousand years ago, when they still thought the earth was flat and the blue sky was a dome above which there are seven levels of heaven, God being in the highest, the seventh. Now while the Gnostics retain the fantasy way of communicating their thoughts and ideas, both in speech and writing, and use the thought forms of the Hebrew tradition, the terms and phrases they used were not expected to be taken literally, they portrayed fanciful happenings that had a symbolic meaning. They were in the style of communication the Jewish people had used for many hundreds of years. For instance, those Old Testament books translated into English which so many Christians take as the word of God, literally word for word, all historically true, have never been told by the Church authorities who know, that half of all that is written in the Old Testament is related in the form of the Hebrew 'Midrash Haggada' and is there to help the untaught masses of simple people, hundreds of year before Jesus was born, what Jehovah required of them. The 'Midrash' is an explanatory commentary, and the 'Haggada' is a short narrative or fable or something like a fairy story, designed to root the commentary into the minds of the simple people. Jesus improved on this Hebrew method, in the parables He told. He had a genius for telling short stories that has never been surpassed, but He took His stories from everything in daily life around the people and from all we observe in this wonderful world around us, because He wanted people to know that God is not in some heaven far removed from us, but within every human being and around us everywhere on earth. If I had preached this from a pulpit when I was a minister I would have been accused of propagating pantheism, as though that was a dirty word or something very evil. Yet many times in my over forty years of preaching to congregations in many parts of Great Britain, and for two years in Australia, I have quoted the words, 'Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet,' and many of my people said what a lovely thought that is. But I do not think many of them knew the name of the poet who wrote it, and if some did know it was Alfred Tennyson, not many would have known that he gave the title to the poem 'The Higher Pantheism.' Now that I know much clearer what Jesus really did teach, I know He was a pantheist.

Buddha taught men to seek peace by controlling their minds and developing their consciousness of man's relationship to the whole universe. He seems to be contradictory in how man should consider his earthly body, sometimes rejecting it and nearly starving himself to death, at other times pampering it and enjoying the best of food and drink. There is a tradition, the origin of which has been difficult to trace, that Buddha's death was due to overindulgence in dried boars flesh, at a feast prepared for him and his disciples. Jesus taught that while fasting on certain occasions is of great benefit spiritually, mentally and physically, a man's right relationship to God is only possible in his right relationship to the rest of humanity, and this requires a moderately disciplined life style. Whoever attains to this relationship to the Unseen on this earth and in all humanity, finds Wholeness of life. It became evident to me that the conflict between the Gnostics the Christians who formed the beginning of the Catholic orthodox Church, was the difference between a human Jesus and the mythical Jesus the Christ, the only begotten Son of God sent down from heaven to earth. Both movements were formed by those who were steeped in the religious beliefs of the Jewish people, their early beginnings when chosen by Jehovah through their forefather Abraham, up to Moses who gave them the Law, the proclamations of their prophets, and the apocalyptic books with their very strange imagery of things that were yet to come, written to be understood by those for whom they were intended, but would not be understood by their persecutors. All these early religious ideas and philosophies of life of two thousand years ago are now out dated, we have, in the process of evolution, passed beyond them. In this twentieth century the most extraordinary changes have come into the life of mankind on this earth which make it impossible for us to think in the thought forms of those of the flat earth mentality, we certainly cannot carry their ideas with us into the twenty-first century. Yet we can learn some things from them in the stage to which they had advanced in their era. We now know how very wrong the early Church Fathers were in concocting a religious system that imprisoned the minds of the unenlightened folk by denying them any direct access to the Unseen Source of Life - which for want of a more appropriate word, we call God - unless they approached through a mediator, no man or woman could approach God direct. So the Church created a system

whereby the ordinary worshipper would always be held strictly under the authority of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The Son of God, after being sent by His Father to earth to die for mankind, was resurrected, ascended back to heaven, and sits now at the right hand of His Father, this is the Church's creed recited by worshippers. But before returning He, Jesus the Son, delegated His authority to a representative on earth. He became the first bishop of Rome and later was called the Pope. As the membership of the Church grew, he was unable to officiate among the thousands of followers, so delegated his authority to bishops under him, they delegated their authority to priests under them, and each worshipper could contact the end of that chain and was entirely under the control of the priest and dependent upon him for any contact with God. When you are born he gives you the rite of baptism and you are made a member of Christ's flock. When at a later age you are confirmed, you are now an adult member and the priest administers to you the rite of the Eucharist. When you are married he performs the rite of joining man and woman together on behalf of God, and when you die he performs the last rites over you and you are alright for heaven and have a safe landing on the other side. However, during the fifth century A.D., the Pope and Bishops decided that the ordinary member of the Church could have some contact with heaven. They said that Mary the mother of Jesus was in heaven near her son and she was prepared to pass on to Him a request from any Catholic Christian who would send up a prayer to her personally. The way to do it is this. You make the sign of the cross, or light a candle, or if you prefer, count your rosary beads, then say, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us." Now while this privilege was granted as far back as the year 431 A.D., at the Council of Ephesus, in this Twentieth Century archaeologists have discovered by digging deeper beneath some ruins in Nazareth than had previously been attempted, some inscriptions scratched on the walls of ruined houses left by the Romans, that there was a cult of Mary in existence as early as the second or third century A.D. The Crusaders, in the twelfth century, had built a church over a place which they claimed had been the home of Mary in Nazareth. This church was now in ruins, but digging beneath it they found the ruins of a Byzantine church. Up to this century nobody had dug deeper than the Byzantine period. There was a priest archaeologist

named Father Prosper Viaud, who with a few helpers, in the years 1889 - 90, dug beneath the Byzantine layer and discovered some ruins of houses in the town of Nazareth in which people had lived in the days of Jesus up to the time when the Romans destroyed them. But it was not until this century in the years from 1955 to 1970 that a larger team of archaeologists led by Father B. Bagatti dug beneath the ruins of a Byzantine Church which claimed to be the site of the home where Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus had lived. On the walls of one house they found graffiti that gave tangible proof that people in about the second century A.D., venerated the place as being the home where Joseph and Mary had lived, and among the graffiti there were the words repeated in several languages, 'Hail Mary.' But this does not prove they had devised the cult of Mary as the Roman Catholic Church did in the fifth century. In the second century there were a great number of Gnostic movements in existence, who were at that time being harassed by the Romans and met in secret, at first in each others homes and in synagogues, before finally fleeing from Israel to Egypt where their writings were collected and buried. In reading the English translations of those documents, I saw that most of them showed the writer as claiming that his or her own inner intuitive experience that brought them enlightenment, came after being initiated into the secret by someone they venerated. Most of them, of course, claimed to have known Jesus personally and were <sup>initiated</sup> by Him, but others had disciples who gave them the secret. In a number of the documents the writers claimed that after those they venerated had died - Jesus by being crucified, and others at the hands of the Romans - they actually received the spirit of the person who brought them enlightenment, into themselves. St. Paul outdid this way of enlightenment, by claiming he had never known Jesus as a human in the flesh, but the spirit of Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus and from that moment received the spirit of Jesus into himself, and said "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He is seeing Jesus as the mythical Christ. Paul's sect was originally one of the Gnostic groups, with the one difference that it spread among the gentiles outside Israel, the other Gnostics arose from within Israel. The earliest followers of Jesus immediately after His death created the myth of His resurrection, then

the Ascension into heaven, then other miracle stories began to pass from one to another by word of mouth originally, before anything was written down. Some of the earliest miracle stories created were concerning the birth of Jesus. Before His birth, we are told, an angel appeared to Mary in her home, after she had been betrothed to Joseph, and before the actual marriage had been celebrated. The angel told her she would be pregnant before she had intercourse with Joseph because God would create the baby within her. Most readers of this will know the Christmas story, whether Christian or non Christian, but I have not found one Christian in all the many churches over many years, for which I have been responsible, who know the back-ground and conditions of a Jewish marriage in the days of Jesus of Nazareth. There are, however, Jewish documents published which record the customs of those days. Betrothal was a formal act of property transfer wherein the groom gave his bride an amount of money, or something of value prescribed by the chief Rabbi of that area. As the groom handed the gift to the bride he told her that through this act she now became betrothed to him "according to the laws of Moses and Israel." The main part of the marriage act is now accomplished, there will be in course of time the celebration, but the betrothal had been witnessed by the Rabbi officiating and registered in his book. Now there was nothing in their law that stated that if, in the meantime, they found the strain of waiting a bit too much, particularly in that hot climate, they could not have sexual intercourse if they felt they must. The betrothed couple would be often in each others company, and could Mary and Joseph have been nearer to each other? What did the archaeologists discover when they dug down to the place that had been venerated by the earliest of the followers of Jesus as being the home of Joseph and Mary? They found, what was claimed by the inscriptions scratched on the ruins of the walls, the remains of the homes of both Mary and Joseph next door to each other. So why the pretence that Joseph and Mary, humans as they were, could not be impelled by the most powerful human urge, sex. Reason tells us that if the Creator of the universe brought humans into being by intricate laws governing genetic patterns in the chromosomes of male and female combining, would He bypass His own laws in creating a human body in which His only Son could live as a human being on earth, (which is what

Christianity teaches ) by giving Him a body that is other than truly human ? Of course, we know now that the real historical Jesus was truly a human being and we have sufficient evidence for this. So how did all these fanciful miracle stories begin. The answer is they began hundreds of years before Jesus was born. It was at least three hundred years before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth when Alexander the Great led his mighty army to conquer the remainder of the Mediterranean countries not annexed by Greece, then on into Asia. Alexander was a Macedonian but Macedonia was closely tied up with Greece and was greatly influenced by Hellenism. Now, as I have made clear throughout this book, I am writing this in ordinary, more or less basic English, for ordinary folk to understand. If I were to go into these matters in depth, this book would run into several volumes, whereas I want to show just enough for readers to see the stages through which I went before discovering what I now know. Where I cannot avoid using a theological, philosophical or academic word or phrase I will explain it. Hellenism means the adoption of the manners, culture, and language of the Ancient Greeks. Alexander was obsessed with Hellenism, and was determined to spread the Greek culture in every land he occupied. Something like the British Empire in the Victorian period and in my boyhood, when, after our armed forces conquered parts of Africa, India, Egypt and many other countries around the world, they opened those lands for Christian missionaries to go in and convert the people to Christianity. Alexander had tutors and instructors in the Greek language and culture to follow his conquering army. Most of the Mediterranean countries between Greece and Egypt had for some years gradually absorbed much Greek culture and used the Greek language for business and commercial purposes between the countries, and although for many years the conquering powers, including the Romans, found the Jewish people in Israel the most insular and obstinate, by the time of Jesus, they too were using the Greek language in trade and commerce, and many folk were versed in the mythical stories of the Greek writers and philosophers. The Jews who lived outside Israel, were educated, not only in their Hebrew Law, but in the writings of the Greek philosophers as well. St. Paul, for instance,



in his writings in the New Testament of the Bible, shows that he was not only conversant with the Greek philosophies and mythology, but had studied much of the Stoic philosophy in his education at Tarsus, and probably listened to lectures in his student days, by the greatest exponent on Stoicism at the university of Tarsus, the philosopher Seneca. Paul also knew that much of the Greek mythology was known to the ordinary Jewish people who had mixed some of it with their own Hebrew mythological stories. He claimed he was a strict pharisee and besides his education at Tarsus, he had studied Hebrew Law at Jerusalem and was very zealous that the Law should be kept to the letter. But it was impossible for him to see things exactly as a Jew of Palestine because of his Greek education and background. So when, on one of his visits to Jerusalem he heard of an early Gnostic movement claiming that the Jesus whom the Romans had crucified had risen from the dead, and that one of their leading members, a young man named Stephen had stood in the Temple precinct and proclaimed that Jesus had come to destroy it, Paul joined in at once to demand death for blasphemy to the young man. Paul followed this by going to the chief Rabbi, asked him for a letter authorising him to go to Damascus, where he had heard there was another of these Gnostic groups ( they were not yet called Christians, because up to this time Paul had not yet invented the name, they were sometimes referred to as "Followers of the Way.") Paul wanted the letter of authority to have members of the group arrested and brought back to Jerusalem to be judged as blasphemers of the Law of Moses. Then, according to his own account, he was approaching Damascus, which means he had been on the road, with those who had accompanied him, for probably four or five days, it is midday when the sun is at its hottest and most folk are in the shade having a siesta. He suddenly had the traumatic experience he describes, hears a voice, asks who it is and the voice says "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Then tells Paul to go into Damascus and he will be told what to do. He was converted, then after working with them around Damascus, he went off for three years into the Arabian desert. This was a period of meditation that all prophets undertook when they felt called to take a message from God to the people. Now it is almost certain that it was during this period in the desert that he formulated the new mythical religion he was to launch upon the world which has

imprisoned the minds and done so much psychological damage to so many millions of human beings for nearly two thousand years. What was Paul's religion ? It was a concoction of Greek mythology mixed with the fantasy stories of the Hebrew scriptures. It was not the sort of theology he could preach in Israel. The Gnostic groups there who formed the majority of the early followers of Jesus, had their own theory of his resurrection, Jesus, they said, rose bodily in the flesh, one after another claimed they had spoken with him. He appeared to Mary Magdalen first, then to a succession of disciples sometimes singly and sometimes when they were gathered together. But Paul's resurrection was wholly mythical, he says in reply to those who claimed they had known Jesus in the flesh, "henceforth we know no man after the flesh; and even if some have known Christ in the flesh, from now onwards we know Him that way no more. (2 Corinthians 5: 16 ). He goes on in several of his epistles about this fleshly body being of no value, it is the spirit that matters, and we get the impression that he despised this human body and sought only to seek the spiritual. Now this is something the real Jesus never taught, and proof for this is found in the first three Gospels alone. But, of course it is all part of Paul's mixture of Hellenism, Esseneism, and Gnosticism, all tied up with the legends and Law of the Hebrew religion. The Jews who had never left Palestine were not so ready to accept Paul's form of Christianity, they quarrelled with him, so he left Israel and decided to go to the Jews who were dispersed in various groups scattered around the Mediterranean countries, in one of which Paul himself had been born and brought up. They were more likely to accept his story of the Christ who had been resurrected. They knew the story of Adonis the son of the god king, who because of his remarkable beauty was the favourite of the goddess Aphrodite, who, to preserve his beauty gave him to Persephone the queen of the underworld. The death and resurrection of Adonis represented the cycle of nature. They also knew stories of virgin births. Although this goes far back to thousands of years before Jesus, in the cults of the Great Mother Goddess, it was developed and perpetuated in Egypt and was current in the cult of Isis the mother goddess in the days of Jesus. Isis was the fertility

goddess who gave life from within herself. Also in the Hebrew scriptures dating back hundreds of years they had stories of the sons of God who produced offspring from the daughters of men. In the book of Genesis, chapter 6, we get the impression that these sons of God were more than human and when they produced offspring from the daughters of men <sup>the offspring</sup> became "mighty men...of renown." So it can be seen that the mythical stories of <sup>the</sup> virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, propagated by the early followers of Jesus were folklore to them, and there is every possibility that, as the stories were spread only by word of mouth in those days, and bits and pieces could be added in the telling and retelling, there would be some folk who claimed that they had actually seen Jesus and had converse with him. Unless, of course, those other stories current at the time were true, stories that said that Jesus did not die at all. One story was that Jesus had been resuscitated when Joseph of Arimathaea, after being given permission by Pilate to take Jesus down from the cross and bury him in Joseph's own tomb, with his helpers, took Jesus away and nursed him back to health, and this is why the tomb was empty on the third day when he was supposed to have risen from the dead. However, the story that persisted in those days and still persists today, is that Jesus was never put on the cross at all, but a substitute was hung there in his place. Now while Joseph of Arimathaea is mentioned in all four Gospels in the English Bible, another man known as Simon of Cyrene is mentioned in only three of them, but all three agree that because Jesus had been beaten up and was too weak to carry the cross to his death, Simon was compelled to carry it for him. But this is all they claim, so are they keeping the whole truth from us? Remember, they are not the original Gospels, but modified copies written after the originals were burnt. We do know, however, of the original Gospel of Mark. The modern scholar professor Morton Smith discovered a portion of a manuscript in an old book in the monastery at Mar Saba in Israel, which proved to be part of a letter from one of the earliest and most important of the Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria, who admits in the letter that there was a secret Gospel

of Mark, concealed in a church in Alexandria, and Clement quotes one or two texts from it that are being questioned by a man to whom Clement is replying in this discovered portion of his letter. Why was that Gospel of Mark suppressed and its information kept from the people? It would seem that even before Constantine the Great ordered the burning of very many of the earliest writings, those Gnostic members who followed St. Paul in forming what they called the Orthodox Christian Church, were already discarding from the original records anything which did not fit in with the dogmas and creeds they were formulating as Christianity. Claims such as the one that Jesus did not die on the cross but a substitute took his place, were obliterated. Yet what was my surprise, when, after the difficulty in obtaining the English translation of the Nag Hammadi documents, in reading through them I found, in the Apocalypse of Peter, these words; "are they hammering the feet and hands of another? Who is this one above the cross, who is glad and laughing?" The Savior said to me "He whom you saw being glad and laughing above the cross is the Living Jesus. But he into whose hands and feet they are driving the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute. They put to shame that which remained in his likeness. And look at him, and look at me!" Then later I read through another document entitled "Second Treatise of the Great Seth," and I read, "it was another...who drank the gall and the vinegar; it was not I. They struck me with the reed; it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing in the height over...their error...And I was laughing at their ignorance." Now this could have been a symbolic way of communicating, and we do know they used fantasy stories and comments to veil their secret knowledge and conceal the identity of the writers, and only they who had been initiated into their secrets would know how to interpret what they wrote. Also there were a few Gnostics who taught that Jesus was not a human being at all, but that he was a spiritual being who adapted himself to human thought forms and ways. However, as most of the Gnostics saw Jesus as a human being, what do they say he taught? I have already pointed out further back, how that when the Roman Orthodox Church rewrote the Gospels, after destroying all previous versions, they let slip

the most important truth that Jesus ever uttered. that stands out like white against black, contradicting the mythology that occupies most of the pages of the New Testament. When the Jews asked him when they would know that God had come through the Messiah to set up His kingdom among them, Jesus said God would never come that way, because He is already here, deep within every human being. That text haunted me for years, but when I saw it much more explicitly written in the <sup>Gnostic</sup> Gospel of Thomas, I knew I had the Truth at last. After saying the kingdom of God is within you and ~~outside~~ you, Jesus continues, "When you know yourselves, then you will be known; and you will know that you are the sons of the living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you are in poverty, and you are poverty." To think that for most years of my life I was seeking God in the wrong direction. Worse still, I was assisting the Christian Church to point other people in the wrong direction to God. It took me until my old age before I fully understood what one of our lecturers, when I was a student, meant when he said, "we become Godlike, not in spite of our humanity, but in and through our humanity." Of course, I had to change, not only my direction to God, but my understanding of Who or What God is. Believe me, after being brain washed as a child, and being influenced in the same thought forms as an adult, it is difficult to dispel from one's mind the image of an elderly Gentleman in the sky. When I read, or listened to talks on the mysterious universe, in which this world is a minute part, I knew the image of a God above the clouds was wrong. Yet when I sought to pray to whatever God there is, my brain, having been programmed for the whole of my life in the wrong direction, immediately sent out all the usual, habitual messages, through the nervous system, upward goes the mind, and with it up go all the muscles and nerves of the body, then up goes all the tension. If readers of this think I am exaggerating I would ask them to make a simple test. Next Sunday when on the television they show a religious service in a fundamentalist Christian Church, watch, as the service progresses and the hands begin clapping in time with the emotional hymn being sung. Watch, in particular the faces and upper parts of the bodies of those who are being worked up with the emotion of the service. See when the shoulders begin to rise,

then the hands move up with palms open towards the ceiling of the church, the head drops back and the face looks up as well, some close their eyes, the brows knit with a strained look on the face. The more we strain to go up, the more tension we build up, <sup>but</sup> the more we let go in order to go down, the more relaxed we become. However we think of God, as the Creator, as the Life Force of the universe, as the Ground of Being, the Ultimate, Wholeness or the All, we can never find Him by going up, only by going down. I am not being unkind to the fundamentalists, I am not criticising them in an unfriendly way for I know they have been sincere in absorbing all that Christianity has taught them. I can only say to them, "My friends, I have been through it all myself, every stage you are going through and beyond, yes, I have passed through it all for over seventy years of my life before I found the Truth for myself," and now that I know, I am bound to make it known, for that is my calling in this life. Not so much to enlighten the academics or intellectuals, my calling is among my own people, working people like myself. But before I describe how I found the Truth for myself, I have just one more thing to make clear, so that you can see every stage through which I had to go. This deals with the "Guilt Complex" most of us have inherited as a legacy from Christianity as developed by St. Paul and amended and modified by others between the first and fifth centuries A.D. As a boy of twelve years of age, a couple of months before the first World War, I was being prepared for confirmation in the Church of England. I had to learn the catechism so that I could repeat it by memory. In those days we still used the prayer book which had been legalised under what was known as "The Act of Uniformity" of the seventeenth century. The catechism begins by asking the one who is being confirmed "What is your name." I gave mine and the second question is, "Who gave you this name?" I still remember every word even at eighty-eight years of age. Answer: "My Godfathers and Godmothers in my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Question 3. "What did your Godfathers and Godmothers then for you?"

Answer: "They did promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh." There are two more things they promised for me which I will not bore readers with. But what an imposition ! I know the argument of the church hierarchy that a baby is not capable of choosing for itself until it is old enough. Which shows that the Church Fathers have never understood the psychology of a child. Every baby born is a human being in its own right and does make its own choices. Because of its lack of knowledge we protect it, and as parents we have to learn how to protect it without alienating it, this takes time and patience and, above all, love. No person irritates me more than the unwise mother who, when her child has been told he or she must not do something or have something, the child asks "why, Mummy, why can't I ?" the mother answers, "because I say so !" or "because Mummy knows best." This is no answer to give a child, it does not enlighten the child, it only gives the child the feeling that the mother is not at all concerned about what he or she wants, the mother is only concerned about what she herself wants. The catechism I have remembered since a child, imposes upon a child, through its Godparents, something which the Church hierarchy claims God demands. God imposes nothing upon us if we understand what Jesus of Nazareth taught, He has given to each of us the potential for a life of wholeness and happiness, the choices are ours. Unfortunately while God does not impose anything upon us as individual humans in our own right, other humans who have gained power do indeed impose upon us. The Christian Church became a powerful organisation which, for at least one thousand & five hundred years, imprisoned the minds of the masses of humanity by imposing something upon us which conflicted with our humanity. So that instead of living a life of wholeness and happiness, inhibited us from the truly human way of life, repressed our normal way of life, with a promise of heaven to come as a reward, and fed us in this life with myths, fears and superstitions and a totally untrue picture of a God in the sky. If any of us dared to ask "why ?" we were told "because God says so," and that they were His authority on earth. What is it which is of paramount importance in human life and relationships, with which Christianity so conflicted, that over hundreds of years it created myriads of

abnormal humans? It is the most powerfully important gift to every man and woman which enables us to become part of the creative process of this universe, yet because of the legacy left by Christian teaching in the past, we still have so many psychiatrically sick folk today, like poor Bernard whose tragedy I recorded earlier in this book, and Cecil a few years later, but, of course, I have met a number of borderline cases in my professional work in the past. Then we are constantly reminded by our news media of the sexual aberrations, including child abuse, rapes and murder. If a reader of this thinks I am wrongly laying the blame on the Christian Church, I would ask you to turn back a page or two and read again the catechism I learned as a child and still remember in my old age. After telling us that this is a "wicked world" it continues, "and all the sinful lusts of the flesh." How many sinful lusts are there? I have asked this question of a few people and so far nobody has answered sex. There has been a pause while they think, and I have broken the silence by uttering this three letter word. Then I ask, "can you think of any others?" One or two have said "well I suppose alcohol." To which I reply that I am not sure because I have worked with so many priests and parsons, Church of England, Roman Catholic and other denominations, but not among the Methodists, who like their bottle of wine or glass of beer, that it cannot be looked upon by the Church as a sinful lust. No, it is obvious that in the eyes of Christianity there is only one sinful lust, and that is anything to do with sex. What does the real Jesus tell us about it? Well, of course, <sup>the Church</sup> <sub>A</sub> does not tell us about that, it tells us only about the mythical Jesus who they present as a celibate. Yet they tell us he was the son of God who took upon himself our human flesh so as to live as one of us. When I ask, was he really truly human if he did not become part of the human procreative process? they turn out a string of creeds and dogmas that do not answer the question. They tell us he drank wine with outcasts so that his enemies called him a "wine bibber," and they say he turned water into wine at a wedding, but sex - Sssh! you must not use that word in the presence of Jesus. However, what do the historians tell us about him, and in particular what do his own Jewish writers tell us about him? Those who knew the contemporary evidence in the days of Jesus, give us the correct historical context. To put it



plainly, those who formed the early Christian Church knew the facts of the real human Jesus, but wanted to <sup>create</sup> from his death another Greek mythological story tied up with the belief in the coming Messiah of the Hebrews. But the Jewish writers who were not interested in Christianity give us the historical facts, as also do several of the Gnostic writers in their documents which have now been discovered. As I read through the English translation of these Gnostic documents, I very soon found what I was seeking. In the document entitled "Dialogue of the Savior," we read that Jesus had three especially chosen disciples to whom he could impart his special teaching, one of them was a female Mary Magdalene, the other two were males Thomas and Matthew. This pleased me, seeing that I have been a life long feminist and believe that Wholeness of human life depends upon a right balance of female and male, even as the unseen atoms of which this universe is created, depend upon the correct relationship between negative and positive. The document that tells us this, also praises her above the two males. The Gnostic group that called itself Orthodox and later became Christian, placed Peter as the chief of the disciples, and in the Gospel of Mary (whether this means it was written by Mary, or by somebody else about Mary, is not clear) records a complaint by Peter that Mary is dominating the conversation with Jesus and not giving the rightful place to Peter and other disciples, he asks Jesus to silence her and is quickly put in his place. Mary says to Jesus that she hardly dares speak because "Peter makes me hesitate; I am afraid of him, because he hates the female race." Well, Christianity for many hundreds of years since they gained power, has treated women as less than second class citizens. Only in this twentieth century, helped by two world wars, have women been given their rightful place in society. Jesus gave woman her rightful place before Christianity distorted what he taught. But the Jewish disciples, having been brought up in a male dominated religion, quarrelled over this preference for Mary by Jesus. In this same Gospel of Mary, it shows the disciples disheartened and afraid after the crucifixion, and some asked Mary to encourage them by telling them what Jesus had told her secretly. Peter, furious, asks, "Did he really speak privately with a woman, and not openly to us, did he prefer her to us?" The disciple Levi tries to mediate in the dispute,

he said, "Peter, you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Saviour made her worthy, who are you, indeed, to reject her? Surely the Master knew her very well. That is why he loved her more than us." This statement that Jesus loved Mary Magdalene is much more explicitly written in the Gnostic Gospel of Philip, where he says, ... "the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. But Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it... they said to him "Why do you love her more than all of us?" The Saviour answered and said to them, "Why do I not love you as I love her?" This confirmed in my mind that Jesus was truly human. I had already seen from what he taught that he did not consider this to be a "wicked world," when he advised his hearers to observe everything in it and learn from the laws that govern it. What about his views on sex? The Christian Church, claiming to speak in his name, taught me that sex was a "sinful lust." Does the Church still teach this today? The Church of England have a more up to date version of the prayer book now, what do they demand in the catechism now? I went into our Parish Church recently to find out. I found the English language in the new prayer book is a bit more modern, but apart from this the content of the catechism is exactly the same as the version I have memorised. Still the Church says this is a wicked world, and those who would be Christians must renounce it and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. According to my English dictionaries, renounce means to reject, abjure, declair against, abandon, repudiate. The Roman Catholic Church, which was largely responsible for spreading Christianity into the Western World, demanded that its priests and nuns who entered a religious order, must vow to renounce their earthly flesh and become celibate. They pictured Jesus as being the Son of God, born of a virgin, but because he was not sired by a human male, was not fully human as we are, so could not be married to a human woman. The early followers of Jesus knew this was not true. What do the Jewish scholars who know about the period and customs when Jesus lived, say about his status. They say he was a Rabbi, this is an historical fact. It was unheard of at that time for a Rabbi not to be married. In all their Scriptures from the beginning over and over again, God's command to them was "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." The people were told that a sign

of God's pleasure with them would be in His granting them many children. Of course, it was a relic of primitive days when their forefathers worshiped the fertility gods, but the average Jew of the days of Jesus may not have known anything about that, any more than the average Christian today knows anything of the origins of the Christian religion. The Jews believed that their God Yahveh (Jehovah) had chosen them to be His special people and would settle them in the promised land, and it was their duty to keep His law and produce as many children as possible. A Rabbi therefore, was expected not only to instruct and help the people, but to set them a good example. <sup>Jesus</sup> ~~A~~ would hardly have been accepted among them, as he was, had he not been a married man with children. Who was Mary Magdalene, the mysterious woman who appears every now and again in the story of the Christian's own Gospels? In the Gnostic Gospels discovered this century, we see her much more intimately with Jesus, and some of the disciples led by Peter, being jealous because she was given more attention by Jesus than the disciples themselves. After all, the ancient writers and historians only had three years of his active life that they could observe and about which they could write. He was thirty years of age when he began those three years teaching and healing the people, and in those days every Jewish young man would have been married by time he was eighteen to twenty years of age, he could have had four or five children by time he began his ministry. The Christian's own Gospels tell us he was very fond of children, and when the disciples turned away children being brought to Jesus by their mothers, Jesus rebuked the disciples and told them never to turn away children but let them come to him, "and he took them up in his arms and blessed them." There are so many essentially human situations in this story of the human Jesus, that to me they outweigh the almost impossible legends and miracles of the mythical Jesus which make him something out of this world altogether. If I am to understand what Jesus taught I must see him as a human being who discovered the Truth for himself and felt he must pass on that Truth to other human beings. He discovered what Buddha had discovered five hundred years before Jesus but carried the discovery further than Buddha. Those who have developed a new

philosophy or religion, during the many years since man evolved to the stage where he was able to use his reason, have all built upon the same basic premise, namely that all normal human beings are endowed with an intuitive understanding of man's utter dependence for his existence upon Something other than himself, Which, or Who, unites man to the Source of Life. Buddha knew this, but discovered that he could relate to this unseen Source within himself, he did not need any religion. All religions direct to a God outside of one's self. Charles F. Potter says of Buddha that he "found salvation in psychology." There seems to be no doubt among some experts that Jesus brought about his cures of sick folk by psychology, and I have no doubt from my reading of the Gnostic Gospels, that he taught his followers they could relate to the Unseen Source of Life only deep within themselves. self-knowledge is knowledge of God. I confess I do not like the word "God" it is so misleading after the image it has created in the human mind for hundreds of years. In the Gnostic writings Jesus is not shown as using the term God, he uses Father sometimes, and he speaks of knowing "All things," In the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says "the Kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will realise that you are the sons of the living Father." Now there is no religion that can bring this to you, because it is already a fact of life born in every human being who comes into this life, whether he or she realises it or not. It does not take much intelligence to see that if Jesus impressed this upon the mind of a sick person coming to him to be cured, the sudden realisation that the cure he thought would come to him miraculously from somewhere outside of him, was already within him, would tick off a positive response within himself that would enable the cure to work. This brings me back once more to what our brilliant medical lecturer said when I was in a class of students under his tuition, "the doctor does not cure you, he assists nature to do its own job, the cure is within yourself." You cannot get this enlightenment from the mythical Jesus, he is always outside of us somewhere, we can get it only from the human Jesus who was, being truly human, part of the Unseen Source of Life as you and I are, but learned how to relate to IT or HIM, in a way that gives WHOLENESS to life. This is no longer a theory to me, it is a personal experience, I am cured.

This is how my cure came. I left the readers of this further back in these pages, where I was being taken each week in an ambulance to hospital, assisted into the ambulance by my wife and a male attendant as I was hardly able to walk, puzzled, because only weeks before I was a very fit man of 83 years. None of the consultants who examined me could find what was wrong, yet my digestive system was disorderd, I had pains in my back and abdomen, was in great discomfort and every now and again was having attacks of vertigo and had to go to bed until it went. I had my suspicion that it was the drugs I had been given, following upon the eye drops I had been taking for one and haf years before, but the doctors would not listen. To them I was another old person with a geriatrics complaint that they were going to treat. I got to the point where I decided to stop taking any more drugs, went away with my wife for our holiday with her sister in the Isle of Wight, and made up my mind I was going to get back to normal. Now before I go any further let me make this quite clear. If the reader of this has never, in his or her life, bothered about any religion, then this cure would be much easier for you to apply than it was for me. If I count my life in the Christian religion from the time when I was a choir boy in the Church of England, up to the time as a Methodist I resigned from the ordained ministry, because, at that stage, I had suspected there was something wrong about this Christ theory, somebody in the Church hierarchy was being very dishonest in continuing to propagate what they know is built upon a false premiss. Then from my resignation to this present time, applying myself to many years of intense study to get to the bottom of this religion business, altogether not less than seventy-five years directing my brain and nervous system in the opposite direction from that which leads to the Source of Life which gives WHOLENESS to all who find it. I had to discard all this and turn around in the opposite direction before I could apply the cure. It took time and patience and faith, not faith in a dogwa or religious rite but a commitment to a PRESENCE in every human being. I had already seen indications of this in my studies, especially in the writings of one enlightened scholar who said that religion was a hindrance to the understanding of God. But I began to make my move towards this experience during that holiday

in July 1986. The journey there from home was no difficulty as the youngest of our three sons helped with transport. I started gently on the first afternoon there by having a short walk around the lanes. I had given up the drugs and eye drops about a week before we started. We were fortunate in having two weeks of beautiful warm sunny weather. My wife's sister's house is just outside Ryde and on all previous holidays we usually have walked into town and walked back again, it is all down hill going, and all up hill coming back. So, at first, we began by slowly walking down through the town to Ryde promenade then alternately sitting on a seat watching people on the beach and in the sea, walking a bit further, then sitting again. As I saw some swimming in the sea, I said to myself, "I'm going to be in there before long." I said further back in these pages, that my weight before being taken ill was nine stones, and had been steadily that for some years. When I was weighed at the hospital I had come down to eight stone, and just before we left home for the holiday my wife checked my weight and I was still eight stone. We purchased 'bus touring tickets and visited places of interest and walked about in the grounds open to visitors, each day gradually increasing my walking distance. After the first three days of walking down through Ryde and taking the 'bus back, I decided I would walk back slowly as well, my legs were beginning to get stronger. Each day I was improving, although I had not yet got rid of the effects of the drugs. The second week I began by going into the sea, just for a short dip. Each day afterwards I went in for a proper swim, and by the time to return home I not only felt much better but looked as bronzed by the sun as though I had been for a holiday in Spain. As soon as we arrived home Joan checked my weight on the same scales that showed me being eight stone when we left. Both of us could not believe our eyes, for after dropping to eight stone over a period of several months, I had gone right back to nine stone in two weeks. My next appointment at the hospital was in five days time. The day before we were due to go we went into Worthing, and I went into the sea again. The next day the ambulance came at the appointed time. I said to Joan, "I can't go in an ambulance they'll think I'm ill." She said "well you were ill, you had better look as though you still are !" It was a different attendant

who came to the door to help the poor old pensioner to the ambulance, I said, "that's alright, I can walk." At the hospital a nurse called me to be weighed, she had my record papers in her hand, then entered the weight shown on the scales, nine stone, saw the entry for last time, looked at me and asked, "what is your name?" I told her, She said, "it says here your previous weight was eight stone," "That's correct," I replied. "Well the scales show nine stone now," she said. "That's also correct," I replied. She looked puzzled, told me to go back in the waiting section with Joan and took my records into the doctor's consulting room. When my name was called Joan came in with me as she had done previously, and we found we had another new consultant, this time one who looked in his fifties, seemed to have more experience, gave me more confidence because he asked the right questions and was the first to listen to what I had to say. He kept referring to my record papers and discussed them with the sister who had been present with all the previous doctors. He said I looked very well, and I said I felt quite well and that we were not long back from holiday. He asked where we went and I told him the Isle of Wight. He entered that on my notes and I wondered if he thought it might be a good place to which he could send other patients. Then he asked me, "tell me, what do you think it was that made you as ill as you were?" I replied "the drugs doctor, I have never before taken drugs all my life, and it is many years since I even had antibiotics for 'flue. Then suddenly I am given one drug after another beginning with the eye drops." He asked me to tell him the names of the drugs, and Joan helped me to recall some of the names. When I got to one of them the doctor said, "I don't think I would have given you that." He said it seemed I had quite recovered and that I would not need to attend the hospital again, and he signed me off. I left the hospital feeling elated believing I had found the cure for all illnesses. I had not, I had only half the secret, I had more to learn yet. Feeling so much better I began to increase my work load. I was at that time eighty-three years of age, had given up teaching as all my children had got through university and other academies and colleges of further education and were supporting themselves. But I had retained a limited

amount of musical instrument repair work for the music shop in Brighton whose repairs I had carried out for some years. I increased this again because my wife and I found it difficult to live on only an old age pension. Then I was asked if I would re-start a class for elderly people I originated in the nineteen-seventies when I made simple little table-harps with charts under the strings, enabling elderly folk who had never played a note of music in their lives, to play immediately by following lines and spots on the charts under the strings. A few of the elderly folk had passed away since then and their instruments had been left for any other elderly folk who would like them. This, of course, was voluntary work which I was glad to do, so I re-opened the class. Then I was asked if I would undertake a much more exacting project for our Methodist Church in Steyning. All work for the Church, of course, is voluntary when one is not a minister or paid worker, and ever since I had retired I retained my full membership of the Church granted me by headquarters at Westminster, hoping that, while I might not be able to penetrate the minds of the older folk who were too set in their beliefs to welcome a new understanding of things spiritual, I might stand more chance with the children. But it was hopeless, the adults in charge of the children looked upon me as a "modernist" as though this is something evil instead of a movement in line with evolution. I was not really bothered if they had this attitude towards me because, through my music classes in the Grammar School and in the Adult Education Centre, I had a far greater congregation - or audience - outside than I ever had in all my many years within the Church. Between terms we met in each others homes for musical evenings, somebody would have a problem, or there would be a news item that would start off a discussion among us, and knowing that I had been a minister they ask my opinion and I have been involved in far more meaningful discussions than I ever had in the Church. Then also my children, now all adults, bring some of their friends home occasionally, especially the theatre friends of our two sons who are actors, and those we have met when Joan and I have gone to see plays in which our sons have had parts, I have long been under the impression that the Church, which has for so long been the media through which religion, myths and creeds have been propagated, is never going to make an about turn and propagate the



way to WHOLENESS which mankind has so long sought, and in the coming twenty-first century the Church will see the theatre take over in bringing new thought forms and spiritual experiences to mankind. I had reached the point when I felt it was a hopeless waste of time and effort attending church each Sunday, listening to sermons still using ancient thought forms and often quite naive statements, to adults who ought to be given something more in keeping with the knowledge we have reached today. I also felt that by remaining a member, hoping to give the people something far better if they would discard their outmoded myths and dogmas, I was still part of an organisation continuing to propagate something that is basically untrue. I decided I would quietly absent myself, then if somebody asks me why they have not seen me, tell them the truth. Just at that time the <sup>steward</sup> and treasurer of the church came to me with a request. He had been in one of my music classes and also came to my home occasionally to get some practice. This was the year 1987. Notification had been circulated from Methodist headquarters to all Methodist churches in Great Britain that the following year 1988, was the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of John Wesley's conversion. For any readers of this who may not know who John Wesley was, I must explain that he was a Church of England parson in the eighteenth century who, with his brother Charles and some friends, deplored the lethargy and corruption of the clergy, their oppression and neglect of the working classes, and the shocking living conditions in which the poor lived, formed a group of themselves and other like minded friends at Oxford University, to devote themselves to a disciplined and methodical way of life - through which they were dubbed "Methodists" - to preach Christianity to the poor and seek to bring them better conditions. John Wesley was a "High Churchman" keeping rigidly to the rites and creeds of Christianity, and he was also a powerful and compelling preacher. The Church hierarchy did not like what he was preaching, forbade him to preach in any of their churches and finally expelled him. So he preached in the open air to mostly the under-privileged people, travelled all over Great Britain on horse back, and brought about what is known in the history books of Britain as "The Religious Revival" of the eighteenth century. So, to commemorate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his conversion, the headquarters organisers suggested various projects

that individual churches could undertake. One thing they wanted which they hoped most churches would enter. Those with musical knowledge were asked to enter a competition by writing and submitting a new song or hymn for 1988. The lady church organist said that although she could play music she could not compose it. Some of the church members had been in my music classes and knew I used to arrange other composers music for their lessons, this steward was one of them, so came to ask if I would enter. Now the organisers had asked that the theme of the song would be about Wesley's conversion on 24th May, 1738. This date, not only each century, or half century, or bicentenary, but every year, is celebrated throughout Methodism in special services or functions and has always been treated as though it was the most important day when <sup>Wesley</sup> A went to the meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, and said, "I felt my heart strangely warmed." We have to keep in mind that he was 35 years of age at this point, had been an ordained priest since his university days and lectured in university. He had spent two years in America on missionary work among the new settlers, had returned home feeling a hopeless failure. At 32 years of age he stood by his father's death bed when his father looked at him and quietly said, "The inward witness, son, the inward witness; this is the proof, the strongest proof of Christianity." This was just before he sailed for America. Out there he became involved in two love affairs. Both of them came to nothing and do not show Wesley as an ardent lover. However, he appears to have liked the company of young ladies, they often came to him for advice and the letters he wrote to a number of them, written in such loving poetic language, are surely nothing other than love letters. But the lady he almost married was the widow Grace Murray who had lost her husband at sea and moved down from Newcastle to London. She was a nurse and Wesley used her to nurse sick cases among his workers. She later returned to Newcastle and it was there that John Wesley proposed to her. She replied, "This is too great a blessing for me; I can't tell how to believe it. This is all I could have wished for under heaven." Unfortunately Wesley had a rival, a man named Bennet who was in charge of Wesley's work in the north of England. John Wesley got to the point where he was convinced she ought to marry Bennet and wrote to her to say so. She ran to Wesley "in an agony of tears, and begged him not to talk so, unless he designed

to kill her." I am quoting from The Life of John Wesley by John Telford, B.A. I am not including this book in my Bibliography as it does not help the purpose of my book. But in spite of her outburst, Grace Murray does not seem to be able to make up her own mind. After another few days she said to Wesley, "I love you a thousand times better than I ever loved John Bennet in my life. But I am afraid, if I don't marry him, he'll run mad." But it was Wesley's brother Charles who settled the matter. When he heard the news he was filled with dismay. Charles himself had "married a lady of birth and position, and was overwhelmed by the idea that John should marry a woman who before her marriage had been a servant. He started in haste for the north to avert what he considered would be nothing less than a general disaster." So we see there were snobs in the Christian Church in those days. Takes us back to St. Augustine and his mother Monica. John Wesley did say that he wished to marry her, not for her birth, but for her own character and worth. However he did finally marry, when he was forty-eight years old, to another widow. There seemed to be many eligible widows fluttering around Wesley in those days. This one was a Mrs. Vazeille, whose late husband was a merchant in the City of London, who left her and their four children, quite a good fortune for those days. It is quite evident from John Wesley's own life style that he was not interested in acquiring money for himself, he only welcomed it to give away to the needy. So he made sure his new wife invested her money for herself and her children. The marriage was disastrous, worse than my own first marriage was. John Wesley bore his marriage for only four to five years, I did manage to tolerate mine for thirty years because of my position in the Church and also because I did not want my children to suffer unhappiness. I will not take time nor space describing Wesley's disastrous marriage, but will give this one incident. Because of the attention other women were still giving John Wesley, and he, obviously liking their company, his new wife insisted upon accompanying him on his frequent preaching journeys. One journey was to the north of Ireland. Another preacher of Wesley's was also there taking part in the campaign. He recorded that he walked into one of the rooms they were using and found Mrs. Wesley foaming with rage. Her husband was on the floor. She had been dragging him about by his hair, and still held in her hand some of the locks that she had pulled out of

his head in her fury. Hampson, the preacher who witnessed this, says in his record, that he found it hard to restrain himself when he saw this pitiable sight, then continues, "More than once she laid violent hands upon him and tore those venerable locks which had suffered sufficiently from the ravages of time." All this I knew and had in mind at the time when asked by the Methodist Church steward to write a song for 1988 concerning Wesley's conversion two hundred and fifty years ago, and does surely reveal the true John Wesley. All religions have been created after the leader of a movement has died and his followers immediately make of him, either a God, or Saint, or something else other than human. I hope I have shown readers of this, in the foregoing lines, John Wesley the human being. When the church steward showed me the literature setting out what the celebrations would include, I saw that our Queen was going to attend a service in St. Paul's Cathedral on the 24th May, the day when Wesley's conversion is commemorated. Individual churches were going to put on plays or pageants, when members would dress up in the costumes of Wesley's days, would ride on horse back as he did or in coaches as used by his preachers, and so forth. I asked the steward what are they trying to do? Do they think then, they can bring back Wesley from the eighteenth century and put him down with his followers, with what they preached, in this Twentieth century? There was much they had not learned in Wesley's days, the Church was still thinking and teaching in the ancient flat earth thought forms. Of course the Almighty used Wesley for that century, and when Charles Wesley wrote, and John Wesley sang the hymn, "To serve the present age my calling to pursue," they meant the eighteenth century, not the twentieth nor twenty-first centuries. What was the most important thing Wesley did during that century? He preached religion, and many times in his journals he talks of bringing religion to the people. But the mythical religion he took to the people had no basis in fact, it just was not true. The great value of Wesley was his humanism. He took his own humanity to masses of underprivileged downtrodden human beings whose lives had no meaning nor purpose, other than just to exist, lifted them up, gave them dignity, taught them to understand that they were of equal value in the eyes of Almighty God as the privileged people who went to church every Sunday, the same people and churches that had thrown Wesley

out because his preaching stung their consciences. This resulted in Wesley having to set up their own meeting places, he would not call them churches because he still remained loyal to the established Church of England, it was an obsession with John Wesley, but was obviously the result of his mother's brainwashing. His mother Susanna was the daughter of Dr. Samuel Annesly, Vicar of St. Giles, Cripplegate, a Nonconformist of great importance. He was descended from Viscount Valentia. Susanna, Wesley's mother, was a lady both by birth and breeding, something we must keep in mind when studying the character of her children, and in particular, John Wesley. Although Susanna's father was the leading Nonconformist of those days, she had made up her mind early in life she was going back into the established Church of England, and by the time she married John's father Samuel Wesley, who was also Nonconformist, she had taken him along with herself, back into the established Church, which in those days by its rites and creeds, was termed "High Church." Susanna controlled the minds of her children from birth onwards, and imposed upon them disciplines which, when we read the account today, seem unbelievable. I cannot give the full story here but I will just quote what she herself said about teaching her children obedience. "I insist upon conquering the will of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. But when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents, till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root in the mind." Her children's education began at five years of age, and she insisted on educating them personally for the first year. This mother of the Wesleys appears to have had an obsession that she was going to live her life in more than one body, her own and in each of her children, they would think as she thinks, act as she acts, choose as she chooses and, above all be controlled by the same religion. There is no thought anywhere in this that a child is a human being in its own right, with its own personality and right to make its own choices. Of course the child needs guidance, and as parents our instinct is to protect them, and influence by our own example, but not brainwash them as the Wesleys were. When, later in life John Wesley was discussing his High Churchmanship,

he spoke disparaging of his education, when, in his own words, he said the "vehement prejudice of my education" had sunk deep into his mind. This is the man the Methodist Church wanted to bring back into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the one whom today's Methodists have clothed with the <sup>prophet's</sup> mantle, and almost canonised as a saint; the man into whose mind his mother had programmed all his inhibitions, prohibitions, and subconscious repressed emotions, and who, only after the privileged and wealthy hierarchy of the High Church of England cast him out, did he, unwillingly at first, turn to the downtrodden, struggling masses of the poor and labouring class. He had, of course, in his student days at university, been aware of the great needs of the poor, and from his limited income gave a percentage of it to what, in those days, they called charity. He and his friends also visited a prison where most inmates were in for debt. Those that were illiterate they taught to read and write. However, Wesley's desire and his studies at Oxford were to the end that he might become a priest in the Church of England, which would have ensured that he would serve to privileged people throughout his life, for most of the poor did not go to church, except those who were servants in a rich man's household, and there were special pews at the back of the church for them. They still existed in my boyhood and I saw them. I was more privileged because I was a choir boy in the chancel. When John Wesley turned to the poor, he wanted one thing only, to take religion to them, but when he saw their needs he endeavoured to lift them up to a more dignified way of life. But Wesley himself, for the rest of his life remained a half developed human being, because he could not eradicate from his mind the religion his mother had programmed into it, that made him a 'holier than thou' other than human personality. I outlined much of the foregoing to the steward who asked me to write a song for the celebrations. I told him I did not think Wesley's conversion was the most important experience in his life, that was only another step forward following upon what he learned from his father at his death bed, he would need to give up his religion before finding the Truth. I told the steward I would write a song, not about Wesley's conversion, but about the last message John Wesley gave to his followers on his own

deathbed. They are words that occasionally appear in Methodist writings but up to the present I have not met any Methodist who seems to comprehend what Wesley meant. When they first brought him home ill and put him to bed on Friday 25th February, 1791, ill though he was with a high fever, he was still full of his religious dogmas. Two days later he seemed as though he wanted to get up so they sat him in an arm chair. His head seemed a little affected by the fever, his temperature was very high, but two or three times he quoted his favourite text, "I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me." When he was a bit depressed he always quoted this text. Why did this man, who lived such a rigidly religious life and believed he had moved on to the experience of sanctification, mean when he said he was the chief of sinners? On the day that is still celebrated as his conversion, after saying he felt his heart strangely warmed, he goes on to say that an assurance was given him that Christ "had taken away my sins, even mine," what were his sins? Well, from the beginning of his life as a child, he was brought up with the same prayer book as the Church still retained two hundred years later when I was brought up with the same version. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the Establish Church of England, after the government at Westminster passed the "Act of Uniformity," withdrew all former versions of the prayer book and published a new version. It was not until the year 1872 when the government passed, to give its correct title, "The Act of Uniformity Amendment Act" whereby shortened services were authorised, but the wording of the prayer book was not changed. So, the catechism that Wesley had to learn was the same as I had to learn two hundred years after him, and although another amendment was passed during this twentieth century, I see from the up-to-date prayer book that the catechism is still the same. Therefore, John Wesley at his confirmation had to promise and vow that, among other things, he would renounce "all the sinful lusts of the flesh." As I have shown some lines further back, the plurality of lusts all stem from the one thing, namely, Sex. Now we see John Wesley on his death bed with a high fever, bothered about something, something perhaps preying on his mind. He is heard speaking of a young lady he had only lately known and believed he had converted. He said he believed "she had real religion," then goes on to say "how necessary for every one to be

on the right foundation." Then out comes his text again, "I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me." Then continues, "We must be justified by faith, and then go on to sanctification." This is all about the young lady. She lived at Balham, which in those days was the fashionable suburb of London, long before London was built around as it is today. Beyond Balham was only open countryside. Only the privileged class lived in Balham, and young ladies of fashion would gather at garden parties and other functions. But what a peculiar thing to hear this eighty-eight year old parson say on his deathbed, he who had spent his life in holy things, he, who although he loved the company of young ladies, could never get himself to marry one of them, then at forty-eight years of age married a widow with four children, says he could not allow it to interfere with his preaching and travelling, the woman gets frantic and vicious, we can never know now the real reason why, had John Wesley left it too late at forty-eight years and was incapable of consummating the marriage? However, the marriage broke up and they separated. Now on Wesley's deathbed, those gathered around his bedside to hear his last words, were surely puzzled when they heard him, speaking of the young lady of Balham, while still insisting that he was the chief of sinners, pause, and then say, "What are all the pretty things at Balham to a dying man?" Was it regret? He was going and was leaving no offspring to follow him, nor any wife, for his former widow wife had died ten years before him. The fact is this, Wesley had not lived a full human life, for whether or not he was capable of producing offspring, he had not fulfilled the creative function, sex, and it does not need a psychiatrist to tell us why Wesley kept on bemoaning his sins even if he did not commit them. I am a man, and in keeping with all normal men, know that when a man is sexually frustrated, in his mind he has his fantasies. We may know the old saying, "We cannot prevent the crows from flying over our heads, but we can stop them making nests in our hair." It takes much determined discipline for a man who is suddenly separated from his wife for a long period to sublimate his sexual impulses, as many of us were during the second World War. So too, when <sup>a</sup> young man like John Wesley, at the time his sex impulse was at its strongest, is in the company of lovely young ladies, occasionally with one on his lap, or with his arms around



Grace Murray, proposing to her and telling her he loved her, is it possible that he was so unhuman, he who, at his conversion felt his "heart strangely warmed," did not also feel strangely warmed in another way when holding a woman and telling her he loved her? Even the monks who have shut themselves away in monasteries to deny and despise the flesh in order to become spiritually transcendent, have, in many cases, <sup>developed</sup> sexual aberrations, and if any readers of this think I am exaggerating, I would advise them to read Aldus Huxley's book "The Devils of Loudun." John Wesley did a wiser thing than the monks, for after being conditioned by his mother into rigid and extreme disciplines of the flesh, he took his sublimated sex-life into the open air, where he travelled both by foot and on horse-back all over Great Britain and Ireland for many years, while suffering the wrath of the Church hierarchy and the threats of the howling mobs that would have stoned him or clubbed him to death, to begin with. From being a frail child he became a wiry, tough and energetic man, and very courageous. However, the Truth came to him finally, on his death bed, and this is what I wanted to write my song for 1988 about, and the steward, who did not mind what I wrote, so long as someone from the church sent something, agreed I should make my own choice. What was it I had seen which had convinced me that John Wesley had seen something on his death bed that he wanted to say to his friends gathered around his bed? I have been by the bedsides of a number of folk passing out of this life, and know that it is a time when recollections of the past come flooding back into the minds of the dying. When Grace Murray was torn from John Wesley, through the objections and manipulation of others by his brother Charles, a month after her marriage to John Bennet, John Wesley wrote a poem of thirty one verses, entitled "Reflections upon Past Providences," in which he described the course of his love, the history and attractions of the young lady with whom he had fallen in love, and the cruel blow which robbed him of such happiness. It also bears witness to his susceptibility to female charms. I will give just two verses to show what I mean.

Oft, as through giddy youth I roved,  
And danced along the flowery way,  
By chance or thoughtless passion moved,  
An easy, unresisting prey,  
I fell, while love's envenomed dart  
Thrilled through my nerves, and tore my  
heart.

In early dawn of life, serene,  
Mild, sweet, and tender was her mood;  
Her pleasing form spoke all within  
Soft and compassionately good;  
Listening to every wretch's care,  
Mingling with each her friendly tear.

When I first read these words I felt an overwhelming sense of sympathy with John Wesley, for I saw the human Wesley, not the preacher obsessed with a mythical religion, aspiring to be something other than human, which was the cause of his waiting until he was forty-six years of age before he fell in love with Grace Murray. Reading the poem convinces me that he would have married Grace Murray had he not been thwarted by his brother. It was only two years later when he, quite suddenly, without his brother's knowledge, married the widow Mrs. Vazeille, probably on the rebound. Within four months things began to go wrong. His new wife was insanely jealous, opened his letters to see what he had written to lady members of his flock and what they wrote to him. She insisted on travelling with him on all his preaching tours, so they had to go by carriage instead of horse-back. But did the fact of his being away so much exacerbate the problem? The agreement insisted upon by Wesley when he married the lady, seems unfair to the wife and all in Wesley's favour. He said that he and Mrs Wesley had agreed before the marriage that he should not preach one sermon less or travel one mile the less on account of the marriage. "If I thought I should, my dear," he told her, "as well as I love you, I would never see your face more." That does not sound to me like a man in love, rather like a man who loves his work more than his wife, and is not the way the One we call God, is seen to work in Nature. I am convinced after examining in detail everything he said on his death bed that the Truth came to him in the end, and that what he struggled to say three times in his weakness, to those gathered around the bed to hear his last words, contained the message he wanted his followers to take to future generations. So this was the theme of my song for 1988. The whole of my life from teenage, has been spent with this man John Wesley in mind. When at eighteen years of age my mother, with the help of the little lady who was the deaconess of Speke Hall, persuaded me to leave the Church of England and follow the teachings of John Wesley, up until the time when, as a candidate for ordination in the Methodist Church I was put on to something which led me to discover that Christianity was based upon a falsity, I read almost exclusively Methodist literature and John Wesley's dogmas and disciplines. Even when, after returning from two years work with a relief mission along the borders of Soviet Russia, I was placed as a London City Missionary back with the Church of England to perform the duties of a curate, I preached nothing else but what I was learning from

John Wesley. When I was studying for ordination I did what most candidates did, went up to visit John Wesley's old house in City Road, London, which for many years has been a museum, displaying Wesley's personal effects and lots of other things relating to Methodism of his days. The bedroom where he died is still kept, more or less, as it was, his own bed where he spoke his last words, his arm chair where they propped him up to give him a couple of hours out of bed, until he became too ill to be moved. The day I went there were no other visitors there, I had the place to myself, so the curator, after showing me the rooms where the displays were laid out, took me into the bedroom. It was smaller than I expected, for I had seen the famous picture showing all the notable people gathered around the bed to say farewell to Wesley as he departed to the other life beyond this, and to hear his last words, and it would need to be a large room to hold them all. There was a copy of this picture on the bedroom wall and I looked up to it. The curator said, "you are wondering how they got all those people in this small room?" I smiled. He said, "well all those people did come to visit Wesley, but not all at the same time, but the artist wanted to show them all in one picture, so enlarged the room a bit." He then said he had something to attend to down stairs, but as most young candidates liked to have a period of quiet meditation in this bedroom, he would leave me for a few minutes and come up when he was ready. Then added that if like many of the candidates, I aspired one day to become President of Conference, I might like to sit in Wesley's armchair and imagine I am on my way there. He went out and closed the door. I had not the slightest desire to be President of Conference, but I sat briefly in Wesley's chair. All the time I was thinking and asking myself the question, "how can we go back to all this?" Everything was so dreary, depressing, and dead. The implements laid out that Wesley used were amateurish, clumsy and primitive by today's standards, but the atmosphere took me back to the dark, unenlightened past of two hundred years ago. Wesley's Chapel is next to his house, and near to his Chapel is his tomb where he is buried. I visited these and left feeling a bit depressed and all the while the conflict in my mind between what I had absorbed into my mind from Wesley, through my mother originally, then from the fundamentalist

Christians at Speke Hall, who based everything on what John Wesley had preached and written, and the new enlightenment which was coming to me through the studies given to me by Methodist Headquarters in preparation for ordination. A great amount of research had been carried out by experts, brilliant scholars, and archaeologists since Wesley's eighteenth century, and things had come to light that John Wesley could never have dreamed about, we know the origins of Christianity today, where he only had faint inklings of them as bits and pieces infiltrated into the writings of the early Church Fathers. Of course I can accept the argument that the Almighty Creator of the Universe, however we comprehend Who or What He is, knowing, in His wisdom, the slow pace of man's evolution, and man's feeling of insecurity and utter dependence upon something other and greater than himself, <sup>allowed man to create</sup> for himself religions, so that he had gods to whom he could relate, and give man some meaning and purpose to his insecure life. John Wesley no doubt was used by God in the eighteenth century to raise the poor from their degradation and meaningless way of life, and give them dignity and more purpose to their lives. But this does not stop the process of evolution, and every child at school today learns about, or should learn about, the ages of the rocks of this planet, and how by carbon dating scientists can read the story of our progress from the animal stage to the more intelligent, reasoning people we can choose to be today. To me it is sad when I see people trying to go back into the past, or seeking to bring the past into the present. Also nothing pleased so many of us when we saw on our T.V., screens, pictures of the new Russia, now that they have at last escaped from the bonds of the restricting form of communism imposed upon the people for over seventy years. Unfortunately, with the peoples' new freedom to make their own choices, many people have chosen to go back to the old religion that played such a big part in subjecting the people to a corrupt regime under the Tsars of the old Russia. When on our television screen I saw, for the first time after nearly seventy years, a Russian Orthodox service being performed in one of the few Cathedrals that survived after the closing, and in many cases destruction of churches and cathedrals, when I was working with the relief mission among thousands of starving

Russians fleeing from the famine of the early nineteen-twenties, who told us what was happening inside Russia then, I was surprised to see that the performance of the orthodox service is exactly the same now as it was when I used to go into the Cathedral in Riga, during the performance of the Eucharist, just so that I could hear the beautiful, almost hypnotic music that continues throughout the whole service. The basic dogma of the Russian Orthodox Church is this, that God comes to the worshipper only in the celebration of the divine liturgy, or the Eucharist. The whole of the service is a well rehearsed theatrical performance with the accompaniment of choir music from beginning to end. There was no organ nor any musical instrument used in the Cathedral into which I went occasionally, nor was there any in the Cathedral shown on our T.V. screens, which was celebrating the one thousand years since the Orthodox Church was established in Russia, and allowed the B.B.C., cameras to film the celebration of the Eucharist in June 1988. A precentor leads the choir, which is never seen but is in an enclosure above the arches in the dome of the Cathedral. The sound of the music fills the dome and descends to the worshippers below. The precentor is usually a trained priest with a fine tenor voice, who intones a line of a creed or prayer on a single note, while the choir weaves harmonies softly around his single note, then he rises up a tone a little louder, then up another with a gradual crescendo from the choir. In the meantime the worshippers, mostly women with headscarves covering their hair and tied under their chins are standing facing the altar, for there are no seats and they stand anywhere, for later the Metropolitan and his assistant priests will move among the people. Something is going on all the time, candles are being lighted around a beautifully decorated altar and servers are moving about carrying silver platters. A server rings a small silver bell, the precentor's voice rises up to a beautifully clear top note, the choir swells in harmony around him, while the eyes of the people are fixed upon two large gilded doors which are slowly opening as the music rises, and there coming through the golden doors, dressed in white robes and head dress, is the well built, powerfully looking Metropolitan with a beard, looking like the figure in many ancient masterpiece paintings of God the Father coming forth to meet his children. The people are

in awe of him, for he has the power of their eternal life or eternal death. He comes forward and servers take off his white robes and dress him in other suitable garments and stoles for him, by his prayers and actions on behalf of God, to turn the bread wafers in the silver platters and the wine in the chalice, into the body and blood of Jesus, the mythical Son of God. The people, of course, know nothing of man's dim primitive past, when blood sacrifices were made to appease the gods, from which this ritual of Christianity is a relic. The service culminates with the Metropolitan and his priest helpers moving among the people, dipping wafers into the wine and placing them on the tongues of those who want to receive the Eucharist. The people have witnessed the presence of God and they now take a part of Him home within them. This is the nearest they believe they can ever get to God in this life, they hope the church will enable them to see Him after they die. The Jesus they have taken in the Eucharist will need to be renewed the next Sunday, in the meantime each of the followers of the Orthodox Church have, hanging on a wall in his or her home, an icon in which is a picture of their favourite saint, and if any problem arises or unfortunate happening in the family, they can turn to the icon, make the sign of the cross and tell the saint their problem, they believe he will intercede with God on their behalf. It is something like a lucky charm or talisman protecting them from harm or evil. This is encouraged by the Russian Orthodox Church, for they have the making and selling of the icons in their hands. While it is hopeful seeing a more democratic form of government in Russia now with the promise of an improved standard of life for the people and the freedom to chose their own religion, it is a pity that while they are willing not to compel atheism to be taught any longer in the schools, they do not seem to have anything more enlightening to give the younger generation in place of that which they are taking away, so are encouraging a retrograde step back in to the ignorant myths and superstitions of their dark suppressed past. All religions are inhibitory, all religions are divisive, and at this very moment there are still wars and conflicts going on in this world between peoples of conflicting religious ideas. In the third century A.D., there was a philosopher named Plotinus who said, "Mankind is poised midway between the gods and the beasts." We have had nearly two thousand years

since Plotinus said that, and in the process of evolution we should have been a little nearer to the understanding of what man's consciousness of the 'gods' means. Instead, the newly formed Christianity with its primitive ideas from an even more ancient past, then, having incorporated into that the Roman cult of Sol Invictus (Sun god), received its authority and political power from the Roman Emperor, and spread its inhibiting religion all over the Western world just at the time when Plotinus, with an influential circle of intellectuals, founded the Neoplatonic school of philosophy. Had Plotinus got in first, mankind, no doubt, would have been much nearer to the understanding of the Source of Being, from which we, each of us, derive our own being. The history of evolution shows set-backs from time to time, some writers show them as growing pains. Well, the period from first to twentieth century must have been one long growing pain, but now, in this twentieth century itself, through which I have been privileged to live, we have brilliant scholars and scientists who know things that the old philosophers only dreamed about. If any readers of this want to pursue this subject further, I would advise them to read, what is probably the latest and most informatory book on the subject and has the title "Up from Eden" by Ken Wilber, it is listed in my bibliography, but any readers not accustomed to philosophical, theological, or psychological terms, would need a good dictionary for reference. I too, in my progress from primitive, mythical religion, to an understanding of a relationship to the 'Ground of Being,' had my own set-back, through undertaking the writing of the Song for 1988 about Wesley's last words upon his death-bed. I had got to the point where I decided I could not any longer remain with with a Church, the members of which refused to see that they were still propagating the thought forms of the dim primitive past. I had seen, when I resigned from the ministry thirty-two years before, that all religions were a hindrance to an understanding of mankind's relationship to the 'Ultimate' or 'Ground of Being' or the 'Thou' or a 'God.' How can we abolish religions? We have seen what happened in Soviet Russia when they tried to do so, and I remember standing with my brother near the border between Russia and the Baltic States where we were working, he was pointing to an arch over the railway on which were the words in Russian telling travellers who had permission to go in, "You are entering the Gates

of Paradise," and my brother had a pamphlet which he showed me, which had been given to him by one of the Russian border guards a few days before when my brother had been given permission to go with the Latvian guards up to the border post to speak to the Russian guards, for my brother being an enthusiastic fundamentalist <sup>Christian</sup> was determined to preach his Gospel to someone inside, what we called in those days, 'Bolshevik Russia.' One of the Russian guards said to my brother "this is our Bible now," and handed him a copy of the first edition of a pamphlet which was being circulated in all Russian schools. My brother handed it to me and said that the title in Russian - BEZ BOZHNEIK - means Atheism, and this has been systematically taught to younger generations for many years. But if the Communist government was abolishing religion from Russia, what did they offer the people in place of that which they took away? Nothing except the theory of dialectical materialism which millions of illiterate peasants did not understand and who struggled to make a bare living out of the bit of material world where they lived. That theory, after having been applied to the Russian people for over seventy years, has now been shown not to have benefitted those many millions of needy people, their standard of living is far below that of all European countries, nothing better has been given in place of that which was taken from them. From time to time I have quoted things which my mind has retained since my student days which can still be applied today. One thing I have had very much in mind when puzzling over how to bring a change in the thought forms in the minds of Christians who will go forward into the Twenty-first century. When, additional to my theological studies, I chose to read psychology, I had as my text book, what would today be considered out of date. It was designed mostly for those preparing to become teachers. Dealing with the mind of a person obsessed with something he could not rid himself of, this phrase was used which I have never seen in any other book on psychology, "the expulsive power of a new affection." I cannot remember the title of the book, nor the name of the author to give him credit, and as it was published somewhere about seventy to eighty years ago, there is no question of copyright involved. What it meant to me is that if you want someone to drop something which is wrong or harmful, you present to him something which is so attractive or more desirable, that in reaching out



to take it, he drops that which he is holding. Now I have applied that on several occasions to my own children quite literally, the occasion I remember most vividly is when I applied it to my first little son Peter, when he was a toddler and was sitting up to the table being laid. I saw him reach over and pick up a sharp knife. I knew that if I tried to take it from him he would grip it tighter and cut himself. Quickly I grabbed a souvenir off the sideboard. It was a small wooden object with colourful designs and a small bell on top. As I tinkled it I held it in front of his eyes. Both his little hands reached out to take it from me, and in so doing he dropped the knife harmlessly on the table. Since then I have done that not only with my own children, involving other objects, but up to date with my grandchildren. Psychologically I wanted something like this to hold before the minds of the Christians in our Methodist Church to help expel the archaic thought forms they hang on to so doggedly for fear of being led away from the straight and narrow path. I thought if I wrote my song around the last words of John Wesley on his death bed, it might be the beginning of an understanding of what Wesley really wanted his future followers to propagate as we move on within an evolving universe. Could this be "the expulsive power of a new affection" that would free them from the inhibiting ideas that are preventing them from experiencing something far better, in fact "the best of all" for these are the very words of Wesley on his death bed. What is the official account in his biography? For the first four days after they brought him home to die, to those gathered around his bed he quoted his favourite dogmas and spoke in particular of the one lady he had conversed with only a couple of days before he was taken ill, saying he was sure "she had real religion." On the fifth day, after a very restless night and having become much weaker, he was heard quietly singing one of his brother's hymns, after which the account reads, "He lay still a while, then asked for pen and ink. When they were brought, he was too weak to use them. Some time after he said "I want to write." The pen was put into his hand, and the paper held before him. "I cannot," he said. Miss Ritchie, one of the company, answered, "Let me write for you, sir; tell me what you would say." "Nothing," he replied, "but that God is with us." In the afternoon he wished to get up. While his

clothes were being brought, he broke out singing with such vigour that all his friends were astonished (here the hymn he sang is quoted). "When helped into his chair, Wesley seemed to change for death." The account goes on to describe his extreme weakness, so that they called up friends who were downstairs. The record thereafter is as follows. "After they rose from prayer he took Mr. Broadbent's hand, drew him near, and with the utmost placidness saluted him, and said, 'Farewell, farewell.' He thus took leave of all who were in the room. When someone entered, he strove to speak. Finding that his friends could not understand what he said, he paused, and with all his remaining strength, cried out, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' Then, lifting up his dying arm in token of victory, and raising his feeble voice with a holy triumph not to be expressed, he again repeated the heart-reviving words, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' " After this his mind seemed to wander, he was heard repeating the grace he said at meals, and uttering other things quietly that could not be understood. But surely he had said all he wanted to say. Did they understand what he meant? The record just quoted says "his friends could not understand what he said," so he "raised his feeble voice ....and again repeated ...the words ... "God is with us." Why were these friends around his bed side? They were doing what all followers of a great teacher did in those days, especially one who had claimed to be preaching the very words of God to them, they were to witness his passing over into the presence of that God whom the preacher had served, and to hear his last words as he went. Well, he spoke his last words to them, for the only other word they heard him say after that was "Farewell." What about his passing into the Presence of God? Surely his last words settled that question, if they could only have understood. The Christian Church for two thousand years has taught mankind that there are two spheres, one where God lives somewhere above, and ours on this planet earth. Each of us humans, when our time on earth is ended, goes before the judgment seat of God, and if we qualify by having more good points weighed against us than bad points, we are accepted in heaven, which comes from an old Hebrew religious idea, or we can, on the other hand, accept the Christian belief that God made it possible for humans to have all the past forgiven, by <sup>sending</sup> His Son to earth

to die for all mankind as a sacrifice acceptable to God as a propitiation for our sins. This is what the Christian Church had been teaching for two thousand years. To quote from the first epistle of John, "Jesus Christ the righteous .....is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Now if St. Paul did write the epistle to the Romans, which some scholars doubt, then he ties up the propitiation for sins required by God with the love of God, he says in the third chapter of Romans, after stating that God sent Jesus Christ into this world "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood ..... for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," then goes on in the next chapter to declare that "God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Surely these are contradictory terms. The Greek word used by Paul for propitiation means the same as our word in any English dictionary means, it is an appeasement, and an appeasement in any language means to pacify, to quiet, to calm, to dispel anger by making substantial concessions or payment, and those of us brought up under the influence of Christianity, have always had in mind a picture of an irate God, demanding some payment from us for our sins, and when He knew we could not possibly pay him what would satisfy Him, said He would give us a last chance, He would send His only Son down from heaven to become a human being and die for us, and only if we accept this way of payment, would He condescend to have anything to do with us. Fortunately for those of us who have discovered what the real historical Jesus taught, we know now that what the Christian Church has taught for so long is nothing more than a relic from an archaic past, when unenlightened man feared all kinds of gods and sought to appease them by leaving offerings to them beneath certain trees of the forest. Later, in mankind's slow evolutionary progress, there was a period when they sacrificed their own sons and daughters on an altar to their particular gods. In the Old Testament of the Bible there is a story showing Abraham about to slay his son and burn him on an altar to his God Jehovah, when, it is said, he heard the voice of God telling him he must not sacrifice his son, but instead he could offer in place of his son, an animal. Abraham saw a ram caught in the shrubbery and offered that, and from that time onwards the Hebrews had certain

days of the year when they offered sacrifices of animals to Jehovah, and as the course of their history progressed they built a Temple at Jerusalem where they had a special altar upon which they offered these sacrifices. The first followers of Jesus, from whom Christianity sprang, were all Jews, so were well acquainted with the idea of a God who had to be appeased by any who had broken any of the laws they believed He had laid down for their conduct, but as man was unable to pay the price for his sin, God provided him with an alternative way which was in the sacrificial rite of the burnt offering on the altar. The early Christians created from this the new dogma whereby God himself supplied for all time and for every human the one sacrifice He was prepared for ever to accept, instead of the lambs offered by the Hebrews, He would give His only begotten Son and that only through His sacrifice would God accept any human. Of course, this dogma was formed some years after Jesus was put to death by the Romans, and was quite contrary to all that He taught about the God of Love, the understanding of Whose nature Jesus made quite clear in His story of the Prodigal Son quoted earlier in these pages. The Christian Church from its beginnings until today has always propagated this dogma, and the Holy God resides up above in the heavens, and sinful man down here on earth. John Wesley was brought up from childhood in this belief, then trained at university as a priest whose ministry would be chiefly involved in administering a symbolic rite to all who would accept God's sacrifice of His Son, that rite being the taking of bread and wine in what they term the Eucharist - sometimes called Holy Communion - when people were made to believe that the bread and wine miraculously becomes the body and blood of Christ the sacrificial Son of God within them. John Wesley believed this and taught it throughout his life of preaching right until his death bed. Even after he had appointed his own preachers and set up preaching houses, after they cast Wesley out of the Church, he insisted that his preachers attended the Eucharist regularly in the Church of England, which in those days was termed 'High Church.'

Now we see John Wesley, in his last hours on his death bed, going through the same experience as all other human beings in those last moments as they pass from this life into the beyond, and I know this from my many years of ministry when I have been by the death beds of both Christians

and non-Christians, and saw and heard what they experienced in their last moments. In the case of old Mr. Thomas in the Eastend of London, whose story I recorded earlier in this book, I was not present at the actual moment of his passing, but the state of elation his untaught, simple, but sincere little wife was in, as I stood by his bedside the morning after his passing, and she described to me what he saw and said and did, bearing in mind that for several weeks he had been so ill and emaciated, that he could not see nor hear nor raise his head off his pillow, I knew there was no possibility of her creating the details she recounted to me. Of course that was at the beginning of my work with the Church and was my first case of ministering to a dying man. Since then, over a period of more than fifty years, I have had a number of similar cases like that of Mr. Thomas. Usually the situation has been like this. I was told of a sick person who was not expected to live, went to visit him or her, sometimes the patient would be conscious enough to take in what I said or read to him or her from the Scriptures, but where a person was semi-conscious, or even a couple of cases where they were unconscious, I knew enough from the psychology I had read as a student, that in the case of unconsciousness, if one speaks closely into the ear of the person, quietly, but firmly and persistently, what the speaker says will be programmed into the brain, even although the patient is not taking in the message consciously and voluntarily, and can be recalled when the person is again conscious. The theory is that the 'involuntary system' in each of us goes on working even when we are unconscious. When we are unconscious in sleep our heart muscles and nerves go on pumping our blood around us and our lungs continue to breathe without any conscious effort on our part, these functions being energised by the 'Life Force' within each of us. It keeps the whole of the universe working, and which no scientist yet fully understands. So while the brain is still alive it is capable under certain conditions, of storing message which the mind later can recall. I remember vividly the time when I discovered this by a real experience. For some time I had known I could reach the inner minds of dying folk by speaking quietly close to the ear of one who was semi conscious, for after Mr. Thomas I did the same with others from time to time over a number of years, but they were all elderly people passing out of this life. Then one day I had the same experience with a sad case of a lad of sixteen years.

When I recorded this case in my journal, which was submitted to headquarters periodically, I gave it the title of "The Yellow Skeleton," for that was how he looked as he lay upon his bed. I was on my way home for my midday meal and, as I did in all good weather, walked home from my chapel mission centre in Putney to our home in Roehampton. My way was through a pedestrian only lane, with small working class houses both sides, and square paving stones reaching from oneside to the other. It was, and still is known today as Quill Lane. From time to time I visited most of the houses there and was known to most of the people. But there was one house where I had never had a reply when I knocked. Either the man who lived there was always out, or was one of those who peered through the curtains to see who was knocking, saw it was the Pastor from the Platt Chapel, the title given me by the people, or <sup>perhaps</sup> my visits were coincidental with the times when the man was spending a couple of weeks in prison. He was notorious in the district and some of the neighbours said everybody in the lane hated him. He had been a prize fighter but although he was past the age for the sport, he wanted to fight anybody within striking distance when he was drunk, which was quite frequent, and according to the neighbours, when he was in these drunken fighting moods he unleashed his uncontrolled aggression on the members of his own family. As his children got older, one by one they left home. His wife was dead by the time I had this my first contact with him, and the neighbours assured me that he had been very cruel to her, often beating her, they said it was he who had sent her to her grave. I knew him by the name of Jones, and most referred to him as Jones, but some told me he had other names, for on two or three occasions when he came out of a term in prison he changed his name. I had occasionally seen him passing along the street but did not know who he was, but apparently he knew who I was. It was a very hot day in early July, 1939 two months before the outbreak of the second World War when, on my way home I had just reached Quill Lane when he came along from the opposite direction. When he reached me he stopped and spoke to me. He said his son was very ill, could I please go and see him. I thought this was just another sick case to visit, so I said, "I see you are going out now

and I am just going home for a meal, will it be alright if I make it my first visit when I come back ?" He agreed, then added, "If when you knock, sir, nobody answers, I may be having a doze, because I was up all last night with my boy." Then paused, and added, "sir, he's all I've got left," then continued, "so if you don't get an answer, put your hand in the letter box and you will find a piece of string, pull it and it will open the latch, then walk upstairs, sir, and my boy's bedroom is at the top." I nodded. When I returned I went to the Chapel first to leave some equipment for the young peoples' club in the evening, then made my way to Quill Lane. At the third house on my right a woman was at her open door was, obviously, waiting for me. Jones's house was near the other end. As I came up to her she said, "I saw old Jones ~~talking to you~~ earlier, don't you be taken in by him, he'll make you believe anything." I said, "he tells me his son is ill and wants me to see him." She said, "You should have seen the row we had here yesterday," then told me that Jones had called the doctor <sup>who</sup> ~~was~~ so shocked at the condition of the lad that he immediately called for an ambulance to take him to hospital. When it arrived Jones would not let the two ambulance men in the house, he would only let the doctor in to treat the lad, but would not let them take him away. I asked her about the lad and she told me that when Jones's wife died their youngest child was still only a boy, he was now about sixteen years of age, all the other children had moved away from the district. It flashed through my mind why Jones had said to me, "sir, he's all I've got left," not only was the boy the only other person in the house, but the only one who could go to work to earn money for Jones to spend on drink. She told me I would find the house quite empty of furniture and even the lino on the floors had been taken up, all sold second hand to get money for drink. Why did Jones ask me to go, the only other person besides the doctor to let myself in, did he think I would work a miracle for the lad's recovery ?" I went to the house, knocked twice with no reply, so put my hand in the letter box as instructed, found the string and opened the door. The inside was just as I had been told, quite bare, it looked, and sounded as I walked on the boards, like an empty house. At the top of the stairs I saw Jones standing by a camp bed. He said, "sorry I was asleep sir," then explained that he slept on the landing to

be able to hear his son in the night. But it neither looked nor sounded genuine to me, he did not look nor sound like a man just awakened from his sleep. I could see the front bedroom door upstairs slightly opened and while it looked as though the room was bare, I could see the old lace curtains I had seen from outside, covering both downstairs and upstairs windows in the front of the house. Through those Jones could peep and see anyone at his front door and they could not see him. He may not have told even the doctor about the string in the letter box and the woman further down the lane told me that much of the row and shouting the day before was because the doctor and ambulance men had called the police and two police cars came, but although they also did only what they were legally permitted, telling Jones his boy was very seriously ill and must go to hospital but could not force him without a special warrant. Jones knew this and just stood at his door shouting at them all that his son was all he had left and they were not taking him away. No doubt Jones was peering through the curtain when I opened the door as he had instructed, to make sure the police were not there, he looked to me as though he had walked out of the bedroom on to the landing and not just got up from the camp bed. He pointed to the back bedroom, the door of which was slightly open, and said, "he's in there sir, do what you can for him, I'll stay out here sir." What did he think I could do, bring about a miraculous cure? I walked into the room, there was no furniture in it except a single bed with the head of the bed close to a window. It was a very hot day with the sun high in a cloudless blue sky, at the hottest time of the day, pouring through and being magnified by the glass on to a shrunken, vividly yellow face, of what looked like a yellow skeleton. There were thin fabric curtains one each side of the window, I walked over, leaned across the bed and drew them to shield the sun from the lad's face, they were poor quality but at least they shaded his face. I looked down at him. Both eyes were turned up under his top eyelids with only the whites showing, there was no movement at all and I thought he was dead. There was no chair in the room so I knelt by the bed and put my ear close to his face and could hear very soft breathing. So, doing what I had already discovered with other semi-conscious or unconscious patients was an effective means of communication with them,



I spoke quietly into his ear. I told him I was from the Platt Chapel and I had come because I wanted him to know that God knew all about his illness and suffering and wanted me to bring him a message of assurance and comfort. I could see from his colour that he had something seriously wrong with his liver. I did not know what the doctor had diagnosed but was convinced that the doctor knew that if he could not get the lad into the hospital quickly he would die. I felt sure he was breathing his last breaths at that moment, and I was convinced that I was telling him the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, and although, since those days I have progressed beyond the mythology of Christianity, I know from long personal experience now, the nearness of the Unseen One to all of us, Who can be known ONLY when we do not limit Him or prescribe Him within the limits and tenets of a religion. All religions can be a hindrance to a personal experience of the God within ourselves, and although I did not know this when I brought comfort to that suffering skeleton-like lad, I know now, by what I said to him, that I was progressing along the right lines. Kneeling close to the ear of that dying youth I said, "God is very concerned about you, He loves you as He loves every human being, whoever we are, whatever we have done, He never changes. He wants to take you away from your suffering, but you have nothing whatever to fear, for out in the great Unknown, there is only LOVE waiting for all of us." I quoted a few texts from the words of Jesus in the Gospels, and while I was speaking quietly, his face changed, his eyes came down from under his eyelids, his head turned towards me, and with a beautiful smile that transformed his skeleton face into something almost angelic, his eyes looked into mine as though trying to say "thank you," turned his head back again, half closed his eyes, and was gone. My God ! what a responsibility was mine, to help that lad into the Unseen. Yet I knew that God had been with him all the time, only now did he comprehend. I said a prayer committing him to God, then stood looking at him for a while, decided not to tell his father he had gone, but leave that for the doctor to tell him. Jones was still on the landing when I left the room. He asked, "what do you think of him, sir ?" I replied that I would rather leave that for the doctor to tell him, he was expected shortly. Pointing to his own bed Jones said, "I tell you the truth sir, I got down on my knees last night and asked the Almighty to forgive me and let me have my boy." I only said, "I'm glad

you did that, I'm sure God knows and will do what is best. I left the house and never saw Jones again. The next day I heard from the neighbours that after I left the doctor came and certified that the lad was dead. The doctor himself arranged with undertakers that the body was to be taken away at once. This time Jones could do nothing about it, for now it was not the ambulance men and police that Jones had to contend with, but the funeral director and his assistants, and Jones would have known he could not keep his son's dead body in the house. He did not come to me about a burial service at the cemetery. Jones had no money for a grave and, although one of the neighbours told me that a couple of Jones's other children attended for the burial, nobody seemed to know where the burial took place, it seemed to me that the lad was laid to rest in a pauper's grave. If Jones was genuine about his own prayers asking for forgiveness, he never turned up at our mission Chapel, and within a few weeks after my visit to his son, my holidays were due. I was entitled to three weeks, according to my length of service with the London City Mission, and I usually had two weeks with my family and one week's cycling tour alone. I was just two days before returning home when I heard on the news that the German troops had invaded Poland and the British government was about to declare war. I had already committed myself to the Royal Air Force in the event of war, so I hurried home to London and within another couple of days was stationed at Brize Norton. Coincidentally, just before I began my holiday period, I had another case of a man passing out of this life, who I was able to help considerably, but he was an elderly man, and he lived in a small cottage in a narrow lane that adjoined Quill Lane where the poor son of Jones died. I was doing some house to house visitation and had reached a row of small cottages on one side of a short lane, with only the backs of houses and yards opposite. It is known as Modder Place. As I knocked at one cottage I looked at my watch and saw it was time I went home for my meal, so decided to make this the last call. A lady answered the door, I gave her one of my Chapel pamphlets, and when she knew who I was asked me if I would be going next door, told me there was an elderly man alone there who was ill, she being told by the doctor that the man's illness was terminal. The neighbour said she went in and out to him to attend to his

needs, but that he was extremely worried about something. He should be in his bed but he is afraid to be, in case he never gets up again, so she had him propped up in a large old fashioned arm chair, with cushions and blankets around him. She asked if I would go in to see him. I decided I could not go home and leave the old invalid in his state of mind, I must go into him at once. The neighbour told me his name was Mr. Eagle. She got the key and opened his front door, which let us directly into his living room, there being no passageways in these small cottages. The neighbour said, "the pastor from the Platt Chapel has come to see you." Immediately, in a very agitated way, and with distress and anxiety in his voice, he called out, "he won't hear me, sir, he won't hear me." I asked, "Who won't hear you?" He said, "God, sir, I've been praying and He won't hear me." I wanted to allay his fear at once, so I said, "Wait, Mr. Eagle, you have not got that right, God has heard you, do you know how I know God has heard you?" A look of hope came over his face. I continued, "I know because I work for God, it is my full time job. God saw that the lady next door told me about you, so that I could come to you." It so happened that when the neighbour told Mr. Eagle who I was, she left the cottage and closed the door so that I could be alone with the sick man. I continued, "it is because God has heard you that I am here now." Then as simply as I could I told him that God was very concerned about him, because he felt that God did not want him. I said, "I suppose you are worrying because you have not bothered about God for years?" He said, "yes," I continued, "you have been thinking of things you have done in the past and that God might not forgive you?" "Yes sir," he said at once, with the sound of fear coming back to him. So I opened my New Testament and told him the story Jesus told of the loving Father's attitude to his errant son, who, when he did return home, before he could say he was sorry, his father flung his arms around him and welcomed him home. Then I told Mr. Eagle that I was a father and I loved my children very dearly, but if one of them did something wrong and I corrected and chastened him, I still loved him while I did so. Then I asked, "Am I better than God, Mr. Eagle?" He looked at me as though I had opened to his mind something he had never thought about. So I said, "No, of course I'm not better than God, and you and I are offsprings

of God, He is our Father and loves us and every human being ever born. He is very concerned about you and knows you have suffered enough remorse in your illness here, He wants you to know He has already forgiven you, but if you would like to say a prayer telling Him you are sorry for the past, and thank Him for His forgiveness, I will tell you in just a few words what to say, you just repeat them after me, we address Him as "our Father," so say this after me - "O God our Father" - the sick man put his hands together, looked up to the ceiling and with all the strength he could muster shouted up to the above, "O God" - I put my hand on his arm and said, "no, you do not need to shout, God is not up there Mr. Eagle, God is much nearer than that, He is right here in this room with us, He is much nearer to you than I am, you need only whisper and He knows." I began again very quietly and he repeated my words quietly and when we had finished and I had assured him that all was well between him and God, his face was transformed, all the stress and anxiety had gone and he was smiling. Before I left I told him I would come again as soon as I could. It was still lovely sunny weather in July, and the next afternoon when I was on my way to a meeting, I saw the lady next door doing her shopping in Putney High Street, she came up to me and said, "I don't know what you said to Mr. Eagle yesterday, but, my goodness, what a changed man he is. When I opened my front door this morning, he was standing by his open door taking in the sunshine. I have never seen him on his feet for many weeks. He said he would see if he could walk to the end of the street and back, and while I watched he did so. The man is so happy now." About a week later she sent a note to me to say he had passed away quietly in his sleep. She had contacted some relatives of his who were arranging his funeral. So now readers of this can see the stages through which I went in finally arriving at the TRUTH and meaning of this life for myself, not only in theory but in personal experience. In all of the death bed experiences I shared with dying folk, very few of them ever went into a church or knew what Christianity was supposed to be about, yet all of those I was able to help died peacefully and with a look of composure and rest on their faces. I knew I was progressing along the right way. Nevertheless, I was still only at the beginning of my enlightenment, those experiences beginning with my first appointment, after training, which placed me in the Baltic States, to the time when, with the outbreak

of the second World War I worked under the auspices of the London City Mission. I began my first advance away from the conception of a God up above, that first stage lasting about twelve years. The second stage began with my entering the Royal Air Force, when beginning my preparatory studies for the Methodist Church, my leaving the Church of England and becoming a Methodist Local Preacher even while still in the R.A.F. After the war becoming a lay pastor while taking a five years course of further studies for ordination as a Methodist minister, this second stage, through my more advanced studies, brought me insights into the origins of Christianity which compelled me to see that, as an ordained minister, I had committed myself to propagating something which was not true and that I would be dishonest if, for the sake of get a living, I continued to preach from the pulpit things which were no more than myth, legend and superstition, and which for two thousand years had pointed mankind to God in the wrong direction. I tried for a time to gradually enlighten the people under my care. Some said I was a modernist, as though this was something very bad, and twice I was called before my superiors and warned to be careful what I preached. But I was only in the second stage of my own enlightenment and was preaching, not a God above but an immanent God, which means that the essence of God indwells the whole universe, in opposition to transcendentalism, which holds that God has an existence apart from the material world. I knew I was preaching that which Jesus of Galilee had taught and I had years of experience with folk who had never been inside a church and therefore were not brainwashed in Christianity as I had been from childhood, who were greatly helped by what I told them, especially the number of those who I had helped on their death beds when passing from this life into the beyond. The case of Mr. Eagle was only one among others. I decided to resign from the ministry and enter the welfare department of industry, and at the same time I would devote the rest of my life searching deeply into this important matter. For I had discovered that all human beings are born with an intuitive conception of Something, or Someone, greater than ourselves upon which or Whom we are utterly dependent. What, or Who, is this Life Force which keeps us energised, and how can we relate to Him, or It? When primitive man had

no answer to his questions, he set about creating gods from his own imagination. He knew nothing of his own makeup, therefore did not know how to find God within himself. He was full of fears and superstitions which was a hindrance to a relationship of Love with the ONE Who is the very Ground of Being. We are at a further stage in man's evolution today, but mankind's progress has always been painful, we have learned by making many mistakes, sometimes tragic mistakes. We are coming at this juncture towards the end of the twentieth century. What are my children and grandchildren going to experience in the twenty-first century? I have my own observations, but I am not a prophet, I cannot foretell, I can only in this book record my own pilgrimage and progress and hope that those who come after me will find in this record something that will help them to find meaning and purpose for their brief lives on this planet. So I come to my last stage in my own enlightenment. This third stage is of much shorter duration, for in the second stage of my discovery of the immanent God, I was at the very threshold of knowing 'the ALL,' if I use the phrase of the real historical Jesus as recorded in the Gnostic Gospels.

I had reached the point where I felt I could no longer remain within any Christian Church which persisted in continuing to propagate the myths, legends, rites and dogmas created two thousand years ago, and several times amended, altered and added to, in the course of many years since, by a number of Church Fathers who differed from each other. I decided to leave the Methodist Church in Steyning and continue my work as a freelance once more. Just at that point one of the stewards of the church came to me to ask if I would write on behalf of the church, a song commemorating the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of John Wesley's conversion, and as I have already recorded, I said I would write only about his last words on his death bed, for I had read once more through his biography, this time comparing his death with those death-bed experiences I have described in the foregoing pages, and was convinced that John Wesley saw on his death-bed exactly that which those untaught simple folk saw, who had not had any religious teaching at all, other than having inherited a conception of a stern God in the sky, who might decide they did not qualify for a place in heaven hereafter. Death levels all human beings to the same conception of things spiritual in those moments of passing into the unseen. John Wesley,

having been brain -washed by a 'High Church' religious mother, was tormented and limited by the demands of the 'internalised parent' within himself, he could never really be himself. If he had understood his father's words on his own deathbed - "the inward witness, son, the inward witness, this is the proof," it would have been countermanded by his mother's hold on his mind, although he may not have been conscious of it. The whole of his life had been spent in preaching 'High Church' creeds and dogmas in his efforts to bring people to 'religion' as he termed it. All his prayers, and all the hymns his brother Charles wrote and John Wesley sang, were to a God above the sky - "Praise the Lord who reigns above," "Glory be to God on high," "O heavenly King, look down from above," and so forth. But the Truth came to him on his deathbed, although they who were gathered around did not understand what he was trying to say. They were there to witness his passing over to God up above, as they thought. Three times he uttered those words, trying to get them to understand what he meant, "I am not going over to God, He is here with us--with us - with us - and we will never be nearer to God than we are in this life, this human life." John Wesley had reached the point that I reached in the second stage of my enlightenment, when I discovered the Immanent God. During that stage I often used the quotation that St. Paul used when addressing the Greeks on Mars Hill, using the words of one of their poets he spoke of the "God in whom with live and move and have our being." For many years I got no further than that, but this further study of John Wesley's death so that I could write the song, led to my discovery of God within myself and how I can relate to Him. This is what happened. I was not long recovered after the illness caused by a succession of various drugs prescribed by doctors because I had suffered some attacks of Menieres disease, which I know now was caused by over stress of my central nervous system. Additional to that, for two years I had drops in my eyes, first one prescription then another and another, all of which had adverse side effects. After giving up all the drugs and being discharged from the hospital feeling quite well again, I became too confident. I began taking on too many activities again, at a time of life when I should be easing off, I was 85 years at the time. I re-opened one of my classes for elderly folk who possessed some of the Steyning Harps I made in the

nineteen-seventies, as I have already explained further back in these pages, but as I had given up all my classes when I was taken ill, this time I began a group of elderly folk at a modern block of flats for retired people. Kathy Holt the lady who was steward of the Methodist Church in Steyning when I first settled with my family in Steyning, and who supported me in the work among young people at the time I was being opposed by the minister, now, in her old age, twenty years later, had become an invalid, sold her house and bought one of the flats. We began by meeting in Kathy's flat, but when the lady warden of the flats, saw the value of our weekly meeting, she offered us the use of the community room. Just at that time the Methodist Church asked me to write the song for Wesley's commemoration, and at the same time the owners of the music shop in Brighton, for whom I had carried out repairs on various instruments for many years, when I needed to supplement my pension, in order to get my children through their education, came to me to ask if I would do some very difficult repairs for them. Since I had ceased doing their work they had to send repairs up to London, but the two instruments they brought to me, both previously had been very expensive modern piano-accordions, but were so badly damaged that no repairer would consider them, the work would be so time-consuming and difficult. They knew that I had several times taken on some most awkward jobs for them, so they came to persuade me. My children were no longer my financial responsibility they were all earning their own income, but with costs of the necessities of life continually going up and our pensions not being increased in keeping with rising costs, I knew that if we were to have only a cheap holiday we would need more than our pension and my wife's very small earnings. We usually go to a member of our family for holidays, where we take our pension books and live on our housekeeping money as we do at home, but, of course, we need cash for fares and extra holiday spending cash, so I took the two difficult repair jobs for the music shop. I had been warned by my doctor, and in the articles I had read on Menieres disease, that the attacks could recur within a year or two, but were usually not so violent. I had decided I was going to be alright, but had something else finally to learn. Once more, as has happened so many times in my life, things do not happen by chance, in the words of Shakespeare, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." What happened just had to happen so that



I could arrive at the final stage of my search for the Truth. Without my realising it, I had begun to build up a great deal of tension, after the summer months recovering from my illness, and six months before that when I was ill, best part of a year I had ceased to do anything of a stressful nature. I had now begun my song, writing first the words, for they were more important than the music. I was limited to the length of time the song should take, so had decided to cover eighty years of John Wesley's life in four verses with a chorus which consisted in just the words Wesley spoke on his deathbed. I had written nothing to add to this book for almost a year, so had started on this again, including chasing up new publications with the library services again, putting hours of work into the repairs and re-building of the two instruments for the music shop, writing music charts for the elderly folk who played the Steyning Harps as I had named them. Then the news came that Kathy Holt had died in hospital. Her relatives came down from Yorkshire to arrange for her funeral, and for agents to sell her flat. Our music group could no longer meet there. I was rushing around here and there, and on this particular day I cycled up to Steyning High Street to the shops. I put my bicycle outside the post office, when suddenly the world around me began to spin around. I remembered I had been told that if the attacks recurred they were usually not so violent. I leaned against the post office entrance and through a haze saw a man going in. I told him I was having a giddy turn and asked if he would please help me into the post office stationary section, and ask the lady to give me a chair to sit down. This was done and I told the lady the attack might go off in about ten minutes. After about that time things seemed to be spinning around less, so I said I would not ride my bicycle but would hold it to steady myself and would walk home. Walking on the pavement I turned into Church Street and was approaching the old picturesque thatched cottage, which is now a museum, when the vertigo got worse, and I knew I could not continue. I put my cycle against the wood fence outside the cottage, leaned against it and closed my eyes, as it eases things a bit if I could not see things spinning around, which makes one feel sea-sick. I had not been there half a minute when a man's voice spoke close to me, asking if I needed any help. I asked him if he would kindly 'phone my wife as our daughter was due to come to us from Worthing and would bring her car to me and take me home. I told him the number and he went to 'phone. Meanwhile

a lady from a house nearby came and brought a chair for me to sit down. The man who went to 'phone was soon back, said my daughter had not yet arrived so he had gone to his own house and brought his car, which I thought was kind of him. He and the lady helped me into the car and the lady said she would put my cycle in her front garden for my wife to collect. On the way we turned a corner which slowed us down, and the very helpful man said, "this is where I live." Briefly I opened my eyes and when I saw his house I knew I had seen him before. He got me home and my wife got me on a settee just in time to catch a bout of vomiting, which I always had with previous bad attacks. All the time, in my own mind, I was asking myself the question, why, as I had recovered so well from my illness and was learning how to relate to the cure within myself, had I gone back to this. The answer came a day or so later. After my wife had settled me down I slept for about two hours and when I awoke the vertigo had gone. After these attacks I always felt weak, so took things easy for the rest of that day. The next day I decided to walk along to the house of the man who so kindly took me home in his car, to thank him. He and his wife were both there so they asked me into their home. After telling me their name, Mr. and Mrs. Lambdin, I told them who I was and gave them a brief account of my past illness, how I had recovered so well and could not understand why I had gone back to an attack as I had yesterday. Mr. Lambdin said he thought he might be able to help me, said he had every sympathy with me as he had been through a similar illness himself. Tension, stress and over-activity of the central nervous system were the causes in his case, and, by what I had outlined of my own vocation and life-style, could also be the causes of mine. He told me he had for the whole of his life, been a watchmaker and jeweller, which required many hours each day of intense concentration, assembling minute parts under a magnifier. While my calling had been different from his, I knew what he said applied also to me. My life in the Church, from the time of my first appointment in the year 1925, when from then onwards I had the constant conflict of pleasing my superiors who demanded that I propagate something which I instinctively knew was not true, and yet daily seeking to relate sincerely to my own underprivileged people who were living a sub-standard way of life, and often in a degrading environment. With all this I had to keep up appearances of being a happily married family man, when there was constant friction in my home, which I did not want to

affect my children, all three of whom I loved very dearly. This part of my life lasted for thirty years and ended when my children were off my hands, although I would never have wanted it to end as traumatically as it did. The complete change in my life came with the meeting of my lovely Joan, after my superiors providentially changed the plan they had made for my next appointment and sent me instead to the Brighton Circuit. But then in this second half of my life on this earth, I built up a different kind of tension. For I can never escape the intuitive conviction, as one called "from the people, to go to the people," to know and make known the Truth. So, additional to having to work hard to bring up another family until each child was at a point in his and her education where they could take over their own lives, I took on the difficult task, in all my odd times between my work and part time teaching, and part time musical instrument work, in studying the origins of religions, and in particular that of Christianity, keeping abreast of the latest publications of scholars and archaeologists through the library services. Then twelve years ago - at the time of writing this - I began this book, at the same time, having given up most of my teaching, I increased my research into the origins of Christianity. This second life of mine, since meeting Joan, has now lasted forty years, so with the first thirty years of my former life I have built up not less than seventy years of tension and stretching of my nervous system. While Mr. Lambdin was explaining how he obtained relief from his nervous condition, he said he would show me a book which had helped him, and went into another room to get it. It was a book on Yoga. Now, up to this time, all I knew about Yoga was what I had seen at our Adult Education Centre at the Grammar School. When I was teaching music there I had passed by classes where the pupils were in certain postures or doing some exercises. There were some of my adult music pupils who also attended Yoga classes on other evenings and from them I had been informed that apart from improving their physical fitness, they also did relaxation exercises, but I was about to get some new enlightenment through meeting with Mr. Lambdin, he said I could borrow the book. Our Western minds with our pragmatic way of thinking and reasoning, cannot comprehend the thought forms of the people of the Eastern nations, and particularly those of very ancient times. This has been the difficulty with the kind of Christianity propagated in the Western world for so many centuries. Its

mystical and symbolic thought forms have been interpreted by the Western mind in a practical, literal and factual sense, instead of seeing them as figurative and symbolic. So too, all those friends of mine who have explained their Yoga exercises to me have given me the impression that they are entirely related to physical fitness. Even those who have explained the benefit obtained through their relaxation exercises, say how much fitter they are now that they can work off their tensions through their relaxation exercise, but the emphasis seems to be more physical rather than what does on in the mind and deep within the inner person. It is not denied that Western people do benefit greatly from the physical and breathing exercises with relaxation, but the old Yogis call these 'first results,' and what the true Yogi seeks and finds is ultimate 'Wholeness' - named by the ancient Hindus more than three thousand years ago as 'Atman.' This without doubt, does greatly benefit our physical make-up, but is far more enlightening and of greater value to the inner person deep within each of us. To go into this matter deeply would take almost another volume and <sup>be</sup> beyond the purpose of this book, which is the record of one man's progress with evolution. I happen to be one from among many millions of humans, ordinary folk like myself who have come up from the lowest stratum of society, but one who, from my earliest days of life here on this planet, had a deep intuitive conviction that there was something other than my dreary existence here, and that I must discover that 'OTHER' for myself so that I could make it known to my fellow men and women.

I had not read very far through Mr. Lambdin's book on Yoga, when I found I was reading something I had discovered in the Gnostic Gospels of the very earliest Christians, before Western Christianity suppressed the teachings of those first followers of Jesus of Galilee and sought to destroy all their writings. The Western Christian Church was formed in Rome nearly three hundred years after the Gnostic Christians spread their teachings. Why did the Roman Church bishops seek to destroy what the Gnostics taught? The answer is, that if the ordinary people know what the Christian Gnostics knew, and what Jesus of Galilee knew before them, and what Jesus must have learned from the Hindu teachers, for the Hindu mystics taught this truth at least a thousand years before Jesus was born, then the Roman Church hierarchy would have no authority over the people, for the Roman bishops had developed something that the Church Father, Clement bishop of Rome, had

authorised as the most important tenet of Roman Christianity, that God rules on high in heaven, but that He delegates His authority to bishops, priests, and deacons on earth. This dogma he created in the first century A.D. This means of course, that no worshipper can go direct to God, but can only approach Him through a mediator. It also means that each Christian is burdened with an exoteric religion and God experience, which means something outside of oneself. Whereas that which was taught by Buddha, the Hindu mystics, Jesus of Galilee, and the early Christian Gnostics, is an esoteric experience, the discovery of the Ultimate, Wholeness, the Source of Life, or God, within oneself. There is no doubt that those followers of Yoga who are still in the 'first results' stage, do indeed greatly benefit, for they are going along the right lines. I began in this way with Mr. Lambdin's book, and when I found the help I got from the relaxation exercises alone, I bought a copy of the book for myself and returned Mr. Lambdin's with gratitude. It is a good book for beginners and I have included the title in my Bibliography. Since my own introduction to Yoga I have read other books by Indian authors, but although the introductory book is by a British author, he is very knowledgeable and experienced. However, he, being brought up in the Western world culture and thought forms, although experienced in the Eastern world way of thinking and writing, inevitably writes with a different style than the Indian Yogi writers I have read. But, no doubt it is because I have read so many English translations of the works of Eastern writers that I am able to grasp how they transcend from this material world to experience the Ultimate in the unseen. I now understand what the real historical Jesus of Galilee meant when He said, "Know yourself, then you will know God." Everything came together in this last stage of my journey in this life. Not only did I learn what I have from Yoga, but it sent me back to a book I had read which my daughter in Australia had recommended. From time to time we have recommended books to each other, my daughter being interested in the same quest as myself, the discovery of the meaning and purpose of this life, and how mankind can relate to the unseen Ultimate, the Ground and Source of Being. The book to which I am referring is a Paperback and I had purchased it the year before my introduction to Yoga by Mr. Lambdin. Now a year later, my daughter telephoned me again on my birthday and this

time she advised me to get the book I have already mentioned further back in these pages. The first of these two books is by Bede Griffiths, a former Prior of Farnborough Abbey in England, who in the year 1955 went to India because after years of studying the Vedanta -- a Hindu philosophy based on the Vedas, which are the most ancient sacred writings of the Hindus -- he became dissatisfied with his progress in the Catholic Church, he said he had begun to find "there was something lacking not only in the Western world but in the Western Church." I felt I had sympathy with him because in the very same year -- 1955 -- I had resigned from full time work as a minister in a branch of the Protestant Church, for the very same reason. I began my new journey in a different direction, researching into the origins of Christianity and finally in my old age discovered that the Truth was in that taught by the Hindu mystics many centuries before Jesus of Galilee, who must have absorbed much of the Hindu mysticism. Bede Griffiths discovered his Truth in the very land where those early mystics taught and wrote, and from those who still know that Truth today. The title of his book is "The Marriage of East and West." The following book my daughter advised me to get is that written by Ken Wilbur, which goes much further back than Bede Griffiths, for it is a transpersonal view of human evolution and begins about the time when manlike creatures first appeared on the earth several millions of years ago when all mythical stories picture man in a prehistoric paradise, and the early story in the Bible shows as the 'garden of Eden.' The author then traces mankind's progress up to the present, and points to where we might be going. This second book advised by my daughter Margaret in Australia, is entitled 'Up from Eden' by Ken Wilbur. It may be a difficult book to read by ordinary folk not versed in philosophical and theological terms, but I would still advise readers of this, to get it and read it with the aid of a good dictionary. Although I have said further back that I obtained many of my books through the library services because I could not manage the cost, I must make it clear that this applies mostly to older publications. With these recent publications, on a number of occasions I have borrowed the book first and when I have seen it is just what I need for constant reference, I have let other things go in order to purchase my own copies. The first of these just mentioned is a paper back, so not expensive, the second is dearer by my income, but just at that time one of my sons and his wife sent me

as a present, some book tokens that more than covered the cost of these books. It is impossible to make notes, however copious, to cover all the references I may need in the future, I just must have my own copies of these books. So, it can be seen now why I say that everything came together just when I was writing the song about John Wesley for the Methodist Church. For many years it had been borne upon my mind that John Wesley had seen something on his death bed that he had never seen in all the years as a High Church parson and an evangelistic preacher among the working classes of Great Britain. Although I had decided I could no longer be part of an organisation that persisted in propagating a religion that was based upon a falsity, and directed people's view of a God up above somewhere, instead of to the Almighty Creator, the Source of Life and Love within each human being here on earth, I would make this my last chance of trying to get some of the younger adults to see that, if mankind is to survive as we go into the twenty-first century, we cannot take with us something that for nearly two thousand years has been so wrong and misleading, and has been one of the causes of the divisions among mankind, often resulting in strife and war. At the time of writing this I look back over the last thirty years and am reminded of the conflict and wars in the Middle East, among Jews and Arabs, between Muslims and Christians. In India between Sikhs and Hindus, the politico-religious conflicts in other far Eastern countries, as well as in the far West in the South American states. In Europe, the many conflicts and wars between Catholics and Protestants which are still perpetuated in Ireland today. Then, of course, today the whole world is aware of the conflict between Iran and the Western world, all founded upon their Muslim religion, which has been made so extreme among their millions of people, that when a British author wrote some disparaging words about their prophet Mohammed, they said it was blasphemy and wanted to murder him. I have not read Salman Rushdie's book, but I have read his lengthy defence of what he wrote, in the Sunday copy of "The Independent." In this he says his book 'The Satanic Verses' is a novel. So as it does not claim to be factual or historic I am not interested to read it. I have had little time for novels over the past thirty year, although I have read many before I began to research for this book. Now that I am bringing it to a close I hope, at my age, I shall have time to read for leisure and not hard work.

However, my hard work has brought me a wonderful reward. I do know now where I am going, my life has meaning and purpose, my pilgrimage on this planet has, at the end, taken me along a completely new path, along which I progress as I relate to the very Source of Life and Love, I have my being in the very Ground of Being. The journey has no end, it goes on into eternity and is always more wonderful further on, always 'From here to Somewhere'. Readers will want to know if my 'Song for 88' was chosen by the judges in the competition. It was not among the winners. I was commended for it, but it did not emphasise the conversion of Wesley, it dealt with what he said on his death bed, they chose those that held the theme 'Change of Heart.' Subsequently I had a long letter from the minister who is responsible for the education of youth in the Methodist Connexion and is the secretary of The Methodist Church Division of Education and Youth. Among many things he writes, "I like the words of your song very much, and assure you that the reasons for it not being included among the finalists are not because it has been rejected on theological grounds." Later in his letter he deals with the points I had made in a letter explaining why I had chosen my theme. He writes, "You are right in the way in which you have pointed out that the experience of the Wesley's was then interpreted through some archaic imagery, which did not do justice to the truth they had discovered. To some extent the church finds itself in this position today, as religious imagery of all kinds is fairly inappropriate, as the meaning it communicates to a 'secular society' is far from the meaning it really has. In our work with young people, we try to use appropriate imagery and certainly recognise that God speaks truth through many aspects of human experience, as well as through scripture." So here is one member of the Methodist hierarchy, with just a comparatively few like minded colleagues to support him - he is the Rev David J. Winwood - who, as they move into the twenty-first century, would like to leave behind the thought forms of the past, and shed some of the religious ideas and language which for so many centuries have been propagated as the final word of God. But I do not see this as the way into a new enlightened era, the solution is not in that which we discard, but in what we give in place of that which we throw away. A new way of expressing old beliefs in the God in the sky will not lead to the Truth. The Church will have to make an about turn and go right back into the past,



nearly two thousand years back into the past, to recover what the Christian Church has hidden from the Western World for so long. In their craving for power and control over the minds of the people, they tried to destroy the Truth for ever by burning as many of the early writings revealing this Truth as they could lay their hands upon, and forbidding the people to read anything except that which the Church wrote and taught. They captivated the minds of the Western world. Christianity was originally an Eastern religion but firstly by St. Paul's introduction of Greek philosophy and theology, then subsequently through Roman politics and organisation, after hundreds of years under the influence of the Christian Church, the Western mind became diametrically opposite to that of the Eastern mind. The Easterner thinks intuitively, everything in the earth around has a spiritual meaning. he relates to the Life Force in Mother Earth and in humanity. The Westerner thinks rationally, pragmatically and materialistically, and sees Mother Earth as something to be exploited and changed. During the past three or four centuries the Westerner has invaded the Eastern world, first of all by force with his military strength and advanced weapons, and during this century by flooding the Eastern markets with Western manufactured goods and gadgets, persuading the people that they will enhance their quality of life, but the Westerner being motivated mostly by the craze for making as much money as possible. The damage that Western influence has had on some Eastern countries and on this world in general, is only just being realised. Christianity taught the Westerner that the world is just a temporary abode for man, we are passing through it on the way to something far better, to a heaven somewhere in the sky where God lives. After we passed through the eras of the 'Renaissance' and the 'Reformation,' when men became more knowledgeable and intellectual, the people began to discard Christianity, but nothing was offered in its place that took us back to the thought forms of the far East, where all religions had their beginning, but where also the most advanced intuitive conception of the relation of mankind with the Unseen was discovered. The Easterner relates to the Ground of Being in Mother Earth, The Westerner manipulates what Mother Earth possess to suit his own ends, in particular her minerals, chemicals, metals and oils. He has now flooded Eastern countries with the things

he has invented with tragic results. This week, at the time of writing this, we were shown on our televisions a programme revealing some of the damage we have done to the upper atmosphere of this world, by the pollution we have sent up, mostly during this century. We were shown large cities in Europe and in the U.S.A., where a fog of poisonous gasses hangs like a canopy constantly over those cities. Then we were taken to India, the country where Bede Griffiths has now lived for many years and where he has written the book I have just mentioned, pleading for a marriage between East and West. We were shown the great damage that has been done to vast areas of that country, and in particular one city which has many huge industrial plants all belching out vast clouds of poisonous gasses up into the sky, which is completely blotted out by a dark blanket of fumes. The presenter of the programme told us that India is one of the worst countries in the world today for pollution. I thought of Bede Griffiths and was convinced in my own mind that if mankind is going to discover our true relationship to this earth and to the unseen Ultimate in it, then it can never be by a marriage between East and West. I had already discovered for myself that I could never know a right relationship to the Almighty, the Source of Life and Love, while my mind was still cluttered with all mythical dogmas of the Christian God-in-the-sky religion. So I had decided that if what I had written in my song had no impact upon the minds of the folk at the Methodist Church in Steyning, I would, at last, leave it and go back to the multitudes outside the Church among whom I had worked for so many years. I was given just ten minutes at a Sunday morning service, to present the song to the congregation, explain briefly what my words meant, have a lady soloist sing the verses and the congregation to sing the chorus. But the song had not won the competition, and it said nothing about John Wesley's 'warm heart' nor any of the other cosy little things they love to sing about. So the song died, and I knew I could now go. Just then our daughter Sallyanne came to me and said that she and her boy friend wanted to be married in this Methodist Church the following year, and they wanted to ask the minister if I could take some part in the service, perhaps take a reading. They had both been present with their lovely little daughter Zoe, just a few months before, at the wedding of our youngest son Nicholas with a Scottish girl in a Catholic Church in Glasgow, and the priest there allowed me to give a reading in the service.


Being a Catholic Church I decided I must be tactful, not to give any offence to the priest or any members of the bride's family, I would take my reading from the Bibles. I would rather had been allowed to read from Shakespeare, or anything appropriate from any other poets, but our actor son who was the bridegroom, had asked two of his actor friends to take readings from those sources. I knew that the verses in the epistles of St. Paul, on the subject of "love" were already in the printed forms of the wedding service in all churches, where else in the whole of the Bible can one find a eulogy to the young bride? The Bible is written and addressed almost entirely to the male. All the ancient documents were written in the days when women were second class citizens, and although Jesus of Galilee gave woman her rightful place with men, St. Paul, being a Pharisaic Jew, kept some of the old Hebrew ideas in his new form of Christianity. In 1 Corinthians, 14, he writes, "Let women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak,... and if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." In this same epistle he says some other somewhat disparaging things about women. However, in the Old Testament there is just one reading in praise of the young wife. The whole of the Book of Proverbs is addressed to the young male, but at the end of the last chapter, some wise old Father perhaps, had added what seems to be an epilogue to the wife, to whom he gives the title of "A Virtuous Woman." This is an unfortunate translation into English in the old authorised Bible, The modern English version more correctly translates it as "A Woman of Noble Character," So I read this. However, after this, just at the time when I decided I could no longer remain with a church where the people refused to move forward into new thought forms and experience of the 'Unseen,' and I had made this last effort, in my "Song for 88", and they had not accepted what I wrote, I would leave. Then my daughter, Sallyanne, said she and her fiance had decided to be married in our Methodist Church on the 2nd September 1989. She had been present at her brother's wedding in the Catholic Church in Scotland, had heard my reading there and asked would I give a reading at her wedding. I knew this meant I would have to remain with the church a few more months, but I also knew that the date of the wedding was most appropriate, so I agreed.

I did not tell any member of my family what I had in mind, not even Joan, my wife, for I wanted to make it a surprise. My daughter and her fiancé could not have chosen a more appropriate date for their wedding. Young people of their ages have no personal experience of the second World War, so announcements over the radio, television and in the news papers, that organisations, not only in Great Britain but throughout Europe, and in Commonwealth countries, were planning commemorations, <sup>had little interest,</sup> for it was exactly fifty years since, on Sunday 3rd September, 1939, Great Britain declared war on Hitler's Germany, and we heard our prime minister, then Neville Chamberlain, announce this over the radio. Not only that Sunday but the weekend, Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd, stand out in my memory, for as a reservist in the R.A.F., I was called up and entered my first R.A.F., station at Brize Norton on that Saturday and gathered with a crowd of other recruits around a radio set, to hear the prime minister's announcement on the Sunday. But it was not for this reason that made the wedding date appropriate for my purpose. Also on the radio, television, and newspapers, it was being shown that once in so many years the dates recur exactly as they were before. The first weekend in September is not always on the 2nd and 3rd as it was in 1939 when the second World War was declared, it was not the same until eleven years later, then again another eleven years, and then six years, and this rhythm goes on regularly. Between the 2nd and third of September, 1939 and the same recurring in 1989, were fifty years, made up of two elevens and one six, plus another two elevens, and these fifty years were being commemorated by thousands of people all over the world who had lived through the second World War. But I was not celebrating that period, for although I cannot forget that traumatic time in my life, I was far more engrossed with what happened when the next cycle of calendar time came round again after eleven years. Six of those eleven years, of course, were spent in the Royal Air Force, but the following five years were within the Methodist Church. In those days Methodist headquarters appointed its ministers to a church for three years, then changed them to new circuits. I was finishing my three years at Chessington, building up a new church and youth organisation, and had been told that my next move was to be in Derbyshire. Then came the tragic death of my lovely

daughter Christine, and, as I have already recorded in earlier pages of this book, the change of plan for me by the headquarters Stations Committee, when they cancelled my appointment to Derbyshire and placed me instead with the Brighton and Hove circuit to build up another new church a little way outside Brighton between Portslade and Mile Oak, on the Sussex Downs. This move brought about a complete change in my whole life. The moves of ministers always took place at the beginning of September, we arrived on our new circuits during the first weekend in September and introduced ourselves to our new congregations by conducting the first service of worship on the first Sunday in September. I had met my new superintendent minister earlier in August, but had not seen my district where I was to build up the new church and youth group. I had only been shown the area on a map and was told there was a group of people - about ten - and also a group of about the same number of young people, who were meeting in the meantime in a Community House up on the Sussex Downs above Portslade. I was also given the address of two members of the Hove Methodist Church who were to give me temporary accommodation, as there was no Manse ready for the minister yet and would not be for another six months.

It was a lovely sunny morning on Saturday 2nd September 1950, when I packed all the things I would need on the luggage rack and in the panniers of my motor-bike. I stood for a while looking across our extensive garden and beyond it the larger estate of North Lodge, nothing but trees, flowering bushes and a lake, behind which was hidden the large house. I turned around and looked across the road in front of our house where there were tall trees stretching well into the grounds of some former rich owners' estate, where each springtime we heard the cuckoo and many other kinds of birds. It was difficult to believe that in this part of Wimbledon Park we were a suburb of London. I knew that as a manse was not ready, I would still be coming home each Friday evening until Sunday morning when I would return again to the Sussex Downs and that this would be for six months, yet I felt depressed at the thought of leaving it all. What hurt me most was that I knew I would have to leave, not only the loveliest house I had ever lived in, but also all the lovely memories of my lovely Christine. The many walks I had gone with her from our wooded area, across Wimbledon Common, then down through the woods around the lake where I used to swim early every morning in the summer months, and on to Richmond Park. In those

days the whole of that route was connected with trees and shrubs all the way to Richmond Park, and after going into the park, on long walks we went all the way through one of the loveliest parks in England to Richmond Hill, or sometimes a shorter walk to the Roehampton gate and round back that way home. Now that Christine had gone, when I walked alone, I had to pass near to the spot on the side of the road going up hill, where Christine was killed. I had no idea that in a few years our house and all the lovely scenery around us would be razed to the ground and in place of the lovely tudor style homes, huge ugly high rise blocks of flats would be built. Also the road that runs down Roehampton Vale to Robin Hood Gate of Richmond Park where Christine was killed, has been widened to make two carriage ways, one each way. I could not foresee this on that Saturday morning 2nd September when I prepared to leave it all and go to my new work on the South Coast. I was still suffering from the shock of my lovely daughter being so tragically taken from me, I felt I could not leave all these things she had shared with me over the past five years since we had left all the harsh and dangerous war time conditions behind and enjoyed the peace of this beautiful home. I walked around through the apple trees and fruit bushes of our garden and thought of the time I had carried her out of the ruins of our bombed house in Barnes, and now in peace time it was one of our own great fearful war machines that had killed her. I wept as I walked around where nobody could see me, and when, at last I started up my motorcycle, I set off on my journey to the Sussex Downs very unwillingly and with a heavy heart. In Brighton, I called on my 'Super' first to let him see I had arrived, then made off to my temporary digs in Hove to leave my luggage. Then I went to the area where new houses had already been built from Portslade village and Mile Oak, upwards on the lower slopes of the Downs, so far I had seen this only on the map. I had the address of a lady who was leading the small group who were, for the time being, meeting at the Community House, also up on the Downs. I did not go to the lady immediately, I did not feel I was ready to meet anyone just yet. I walked around the new estate and found almost all the new houses were already occupied, and the builders were working on others. Then I left the houses and continued to go up over the Downs. The scenery was beautiful in those days. People who walk on these Downs today cannot imagine what they used to look like before farmers plowed

up very many acres of grass lands, cut down the hedge rows, copses and trees, so as to obtain as much acreage as possible on which to grow cereal crops, mainly wheat, in order to receive government grants and make much more money. Although this is a sore point with me, living near the Downs for so many years, and getting to know at least two of the farmers personally, I must leave this for the ecologists and scientists who are repeatedly showing us on our T.V., screens, the great damage man has done to our environment, not only in Great Britain but many other parts of the world. But on that sunny day, the 2nd September 1950, the Sussex Downs were beautiful. Further back in these pages I have recorded factually this move from Wimbledon to the Sussex Downs, but I did not disclose what really happened in  the very depths of my being, I have left it until now to reveal this. As I walked further over the Downs I felt some exhilaration, no doubt the sea air coming from the south, less polluted in those days, cheered me up a bit, and the view from the top on this lovely sunny, clear day, right across the Weald many miles to the North Downs in the distance, gave me a feeling of liberation. Yet all the while I could not get Christine out of my mind. Why was she not with me to enjoy all this as she had been in our walks and rambles, sometimes with my youth clubs and sometimes just the two of us? I wanted to keep walking, I did not want to meet anyone, I was solitary in my grief. My first wife back home had not helped me, she seemed to be incapable of any emotion. The only interest she had in my new appointment was, that in being the wife of the minister she was the first lady of the church and would lead the women's work. She never discussed it with me nor asked my advice. When I left to come down to the South, we did not kiss goodbye, we had not done that for years, I just said, "I'll be home on Friday evening," and she replied, "I see," and I left, and now I was alone on the Downs and I kept talking to Christine, believing that wherever she was she heard and understood. After a long walk I went down to Portslade Village to the lady whose address I had been given. I was not long with her. She told me what time the new members would be meeting in the Community House the next morning for the Sunday service and said some of the young people would be there. When I left I went to find Hove Library, for I had seen I would not be able to concentrate on studies or sermon writing in my

small temporary room near the laundry machinery at the back of the house. At the library I went upstairs to the reference room. There was plenty of space there and it was quiet, and once I was back among rows and rows of books I felt at home in the environment in which I had lived for so many years. I stayed there a long time looking through the books that interested me. Then walked along the sea front until it was time to go to the evening meal the two ladies said they would give me. After the meal I said I wanted to prepare something to say to the folk I would meet the next morning, and that being tired after my journey, I would retire to bed early. At the appropriate time on Sunday <sup>afternoon</sup> 3rd September 1950, I went on my motorbike to the Community House, up on the Downs above Portslade village. I was met at the entrance by a young woman who introduced herself to me as being the leader of the young people. She was the lively talkative type and between escorting me along a corridor to a large room where the folk were meeting, imparted to me quite a lot of information concerning what she and her husband were doing for the young people. Inside I saw about ten young people and as many adults. The young folk, naturally, were grouped together around the chairs where they were going to sit. Two or three of them were giving out hymn books, but they were near enough to where I was standing with their leader for her to point to this and that one and tell me their names. But they held my attention for only a matter of seconds, half a minute at most, for my eyes glanced across to the adults and into my view came a young lady standing alone at the back of the room, and the moment I saw her face I was transfixed. Where had I seen that lovely face before? It is difficult to describe what it is we see in such moments. It is an intuitive experience that takes place between two persons, very personal and not shared with other human beings. I knew that young lady although I had never met her like this before. Later I was introduced to her and told her name was Joan Willner. She was demure, her face openly honest and sincere, and when I looked into her lovely eyes I looked into the very soul of one who had nothing but love to give and receive. I knew in that instant my contact with her was permanent. My life changed, my depression left me, grief no longer overwhelmed me, death had been overtaken by new life, there was hope for the future, and I set about my new work with the enthusiasm I had



always enjoyed in my former projects among young people for the Methodist Church. The details of how I so quickly was able, with Joan's help, to build up a new Church and Youth group in the Portslade area, although for the time being we met in a temporary building, I have already described further back in this book. In this very important part of the sequence of events which, after many years, led to our daughter being married in the Methodist Church in Steyning, I am revealing so that it can be seen why I chose to read at that service what I did. On the first weekend in September every year, Joan and I have remembered our first meeting on the 3rd September, 1950. But this weekend 39 years later, was very special. Not only did the date coincide, but our daughter and her husband to be, had decided to marry in the very Methodist Church from which I was convinced I must resign as I could no longer be part of an organisation that refuses to move on, in keeping with evolution, away from the archaic thought forms of nearly two thousand years ago, and face the fact that Christianity with its dogmas about a God above the sky who sent His Son down to earth, is built upon ancient myths and legends which are not true. All the while I remain a member of the Christian Church I am consenting to the claim that its teaching is true, while I have passed beyond any symbolic meaning it may have, to my own personal discovery of where the Creator, the Absolute, the Life Force of the Universe is really found, deep within myself and in every human being, and is rightly related to only as I have a right relationship to every other human being. So when my daughter asked me if I would read something at her marriage service, and I knew the date coincided with that weekend in 1950, when I met her mother for the first time, I could see at once the link between one and the other. If I had not been sent to the Sussex Downs on 2nd September 1950 and met her mother on Sunday 3rd September, there would not have been any Sallyanne to marry in this church 39 years later. There would not be her brothers present, Tim with Caroline his wife and their three little boys, and no Nick who had married Jacqueline only a few months before in Scotland, no David with Joanna both engaged to be married the next year. So I decided to choose something that would reveal the past in the present. When we went to the rehearsal of the wedding, the minister asked me what I would be reading. I said a short poem by Francis Thompson, then before

he could ask what kind of poem I said, "I used to quote from Francis Thompson in my sermons." That seemed to satisfy him, but I knew I would not be reading any poems from his religious collection. I chose my poem from his section 'Poems on Children,' in which he looks back on his first love affair, but it is written as an adult looking back many years later. We had got through the rehearsal to the point where I had led the bride - my daughter - down the aisle to the Communion rail with the brides' maids following, and after the minister's instructions, we were still standing there when he asked me about my reading, then also asked if I would stand where I was to read my poem. I said I would rather go into the pulpit. When he saw I was intent on so doing he agreed. I had told nobody why I was doing this. Firstly I wanted to surprise everyone with my brief explanation of the dates coinciding and of my first meeting with Joan, and also I knew I was making this my farewell act inside that church. Only once in my 21 years at this church had I preached in that pulpit and that was on the occasion when, in a way I cannot explain, I was forewarned that the preacher would not be coming and I was to take some sermon notes with me. When the <sup>former</sup> minister returned from his winter holidays and heard, he forbade the stewards from ever asking me again and did everything he could to thwart my work among the youth of this church, which, Providentially, resulted in the County Youth Officer getting me into the Grammar School, where my work was enlarged to include adults. In that one sermon I preached from that pulpit, I quoted from Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven," On this my farewell I decided to read a much simpler poem on the poet's first love, in which his setting is on the very stretch of the Downs where I first met Joan, and where we had walked so often, and beneath which our daughter's wedding service was being held. No poem could have been more appropriate. I did not read it at the rehearsal because I wanted to surprise everybody and on the wedding day I very briefly explained what I have recorded here and selected only the verses applicable from the poem "Daisy." He begins with a description of the lovely scene in those days, which was still as lovely in those early days when Joan and I walked so often over these Downs, but unfortunately not so beautiful today, then in the second verse says, "The hills look over on the South, And southward dreams the sea; And with the sea-breeze hand in hand Came innocence and she." I think

the poet's memory had faded a bit by the time he wrote this, some years later. For he speaks of the wild raspberries they picked. Joan and I found only wild strawberries in our days, when we first met. So I had to change this one word to fit in with our own experience together. I did not include the sad note with which Francis Thompson ended his poem, ~~when~~, when reading this from the pulpit on the day of the wedding, I finished with the penultimate verse, "Still, still I seem to see her, still Look up with soft replies, And take the berries with her hand, And the love with her lovely eyes." For I see my love, not only in my memory as she was then, but as she is with me today, forty years later, at the time of writing this, even more lovely still.

I have taken several pages in recording this, my final break away from the Christian Church. It had taken me nearly forty years since I first began to see that the whole structure of Christianity had been built upon a falsity. For the whole of those years I had a conflict going on in my mind. In respect and gratitude towards those good folk who had taken and applied the best of the teachings of Jesus of Galilee, and had given so much help to otherfolk, even as I had been able to help so many needy and troubled people during my years within the Christian Church, I tried to stay within the organisation, telling myself I could apply the strange and superstitious creeds and dogmas symbolically and not mythically, yet all the while I could see that the Christian religion, in keeping with all other world religions, imprisoned the minds of its followers, setting up a kind of God who can only be approached in the way they prescribe in the limits of their dogmas, creeds and rites. "No other way," they shout, "the word of God says so," and they hold up a Book they claim was written at the dictation of God himself, while for over fifty years I had been learning from historians and scholars that there are no original writings which have been left by any of the founders of world religions. Take two of the greatest religions in numbers of followers, Christianity and Islam. Jesus of Galilee left nothing in writing that has ever been discovered, his followers made up, and wrote down, who they thought He was and why He came into this world. What they wrote was taken years later by other followers who modified and re-wrote the documents in keeping with what dogmas they had created. So too with Islam ( Mohammedanism ), the prophet Mohammed left nothing in writing, for he could neither read nor write,

he spoke forth what he believed Allah wanted him to declare and his listeners, also being mostly illiterate, uttered the saying among themselves. Their tradition says that Mohammed dictated each 'sura' of the Koran during or after a trance and that one of his listeners who could write, wrote down what he uttered on bits of leather, ribs of palm leaves, or flat stones, but what little theology there is in the Koran was built up some years after he was dead. I have read only the English translation of the Koran, but I was surprised at the several times in it where he mentions Abraham, Moses and Jesus as being the prophets he admired and said he followed. Then one utterance most historians agree he began with is, "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." But the damage that has been done in the minds of so many millions of Arabs all over the world is not so much by what Mohammed actually did say, but in the way the present leaders of the religion have manipulated the minds of the superstitious followers into believing that all other nations, particularly Western nations, who do not follow the prophet Mohammed, are infidels who do not live under Islam ( submission to Allah ), are rejected by Allah, and if any of them do not assent to the demands of the followers of Islam, it is the duty of Mohammedans to wage a holy war against these heathen lands. At the time of writing this, nations of the Western world, and other lands beyond, have been brought to the point of a third World War breaking out, because the leader of the Arab land of Iraq has stirred his people into believing that Allah wants them to wage a holy war against the Western countries and their supporters. However, while we may cry out against this and deplore the manipulation of the masses, we must never forget that in years past the Christian Church did this very same thing, sending their fighting forces all over the world to convert the heathen to Christianity, and in the process perpetrating cruelty, persecution and death. I think I have shown enough to give backing to the belief of many more enlightened and forward thinking people than myself, that if the human race is to survive on this planet, our children and grandchildren, as they go into the twenty-first century, will have to change their thinking and their life style, undo the mistakes of the past, abolish all divisive religions and relate their lives only to the Life Force of the Universe in Whom "we live and move and have our being," which means

relating rightly, each of us to every other human being on this planet, in whom the Life Creator also has His Being, restoring the "Green Earth," so much of which mankind in ignorance has destroyed, and living much closer to Nature, which also means slowing up the pace of life. This headlong, rushing generation has yet to learn that Nature is never in a hurry, and if we attempt to hurry it, things inevitably go wrong. Many years ago I used to take groups of young people from my Chapel in Putney on rambles through the lovely countryside in Surrey between Leith Hill and Dorking. On one of those walks, in one of the small villages, I saw a stone set in a wall near an old school. On this stone were engraved some words of the poet Chaucer. From time to time in my long life I have quoted the words, which I had memorised, to young people I was teaching. In my old age I wanted to know if that stone still existed. I could not remember in which village I had seen it. I was many weeks trying to find it, writing to people in the district and 'phoning others. Finally, with the help of the lady secretary of the Dorking & District Museum, we discovered it was still in the village of Abinger Hammer, never seen by the many people who rush along the now widened road in <sup>their</sup> cars or on the 'buses between Dorking and Guildford. Our son Nicholas was home at the time I was told of its location, so took my wife and myself to see it. It was just sixty years since I last saw it, so it was very weather worn, but we could just read the still engraven words. Over the years my memory had faded a bit and I had got the old English words of Chaucer in a little different order, but I had got his meaning right, and I was glad to get the authentic version. It reads, "There is no workman that can bothe worken well and hastilie.

This must be donne at leisure parfaitlie."

Chaucer, of course, wrote those words in the fourteenth century, but those of us who have always done hand craft work, as I have always done with musical instrument work, and still do for members of my family today, have always known that anything of good quality, or anything worthwhile in this life can never be done in a hurry. We have seen things grandually deteriorate over the past half century. Quality <sup>has</sup> largely gone, things are expendable, made to soon wear out, throw away and replace by one of a constantly changing style. So our world is becoming greatly polluted. So many things are made of plastic materials which do not easily

disintegrate and dissolve back as chemicals in the earth. So our world is becoming littered with unwanted plastic wastes. Some city authorities are having them dumped and buried outside the cities in open spaces, and some property developers are building over those dumps. To burn the plastic materials gives off toxic fumes and adds to the already greatly damaged upper atmosphere around our world. So this is the problem the whole world faces today. Those who would like to bring back the Eastern wisdom of the past and integrate it with Western civilisation and knowledge must see it is now too late. For all Eastern countries have taken Western technology with all its mechanical and industrial machinery. The poorest homes in many of Eastern countries now have radio sets and television, refrigerators and other Western gadgets, many of them made of plastic materials. Unfortunately their rulers have also taken Western war machines and deadly weapons with which they have equipped their fighting forces. At the present time it would not seem possible that the dream of a 'Marriage of East and West' as outlined by Bede Griffiths in his book, could ever come to fruition while Eastern nations are being incited to fight 'holy wars' for their god against the Western world. So where is this generation rushing with all speed as we anticipate our entry into the coming twenty-first century? The prophets of doom do not encourage us. But, of course, the prophets of doom are no longer the Jeremiah type crying out "Woe is me, the end is nigh," the prophets today are our scientists environmentalists. I listened to a talk quite recently on the spread of the, so far incurable disease 'Aids.' We were told of the millions of children all over the world who carry the deadly virus which one day could develop in them or else passed on to others. I had already read an article by another medical expert who said that if a cure is not soon found, then by half way through the next century half the world's human population could be dead. I had already seen a programme on television by environmentalists who showed that if we could not find a way of curing the damage already done to the upper atmosphere of this planet, and stop the pollution in our seas, and the destruction of trees in our rain forests, then before the end of the next century the whole of mankind could be wiped out. Is there no hope at all? I can assure the reader of this that there is no hope in seeking the solution from any religion. All

religions in the whole of this earth's human history, have been divisive, they split mankind up into opposing groups, indeed most of the wars in history were really religious wars. I have spent some time on this subject further back in this book. This is why I finally decided to leave the Christian Church entirely. Since my resignation from the Methodist ministry I had tried to remain loyal to those good men in the past who set me on the right path which ultimately led me to discover the Truth for myself.

When I took my farewell in the pulpit at my daughter's wedding I knew that if I stayed I would continue to set a barrier between myself and millions of my fellow men and women. I also knew that so long as I was a member of the Christian Church I would appear to be supporting something which I knew was based upon a falsity, what the people were being made to believe was not true. I had tried in my song to set their search for the Absolute in the opposite direction to that in which Christianity was pointing, but nobody seemed to understand. I knew that John Wesley, on his death bed, after years of converting countless numbers of human beings to Christianity, found the Truth himself. Surely I cannot be the only one who has read the authentic account of what Wesley really said in his last words, without allowing the Christian bias towards interpreting everything only as it fits in with the accepted dogmas and theological beliefs of the past, preventing me from pointing out that those early Methodists, and most Methodist followers ever since, have got it all wrong about what John Wesley said on his death bed. The fact is those followers gathered around his death bed to see him pass into the presence of God, as they thought, and to hear his last words, never heard his very last words. Two attendants only were up that last night, in case he should need some attention, while all the others had gone off to sleep. What did the two or three who were still awake hear? They heard him, with very feeble voice, trying to repeat the forty-sixth psalm. When I read this it stirred within me an intuitive sense which from time to time in my long life has never yet proved to be wrong. I immediately reached for my Bible. The copy I picked up I knew was the same version as that used by Wesley in the eighteenth century, and this I also knew does not always give us the correct translation into English of the Hebrew of the Old Testament, or the Greek of the New Testament. As I read my limited English version I saw at once <sup>from</sup> where he had taken the

words "God is with us" that three times, in his great weakness, three times he mustered up enough strength to say. They saw how earnest he was to make them understand something, and they were puzzled, thinking his mind was wandering. Oh no, his mind was not wandering, he had discovered something on his deathbed, I know he had because I too now have discovered that same Truth before I have reached my deathbed, although at the time of writing this I am the same age as he was when he passed over into the unseen. I continued to read the forty-sixth psalm. It begins with the words "God is ...a very present help," then here and there repeats the same thought, "God is in the midst," "The Lord of hosts is with us," then it ends in the last verse with the same statement, "The Lord of hosts is with us," but in the verse before the last one it gives us the clue. The English version, somewhat misleading, reads "Be still, and know that I am God." Of course, I knew that John Wesley had studied and was expert in the ancient Hebrew language. Indeed he was fluent in several ancient languages. Early in his career he knew both Greek and Latin, and later became a lecturer in Greek at the university. After mastering those languages he took further courses in Hebrew and Arabic. As I have said earlier in this book, I am not knowledgeable in either Hebrew nor Greek, so I have to consult my Analytical Concordance to the Bible by Dr. Young. I was not surprised when I found our English word for still had eleven different Hebrew words for different meanings, such as 'be silent,' 'cease' 'stand still' 'yet' 'any more' 'keep quiet' 'restrain' and one or two others, but I was surprised when I found that the one from the forty-sixth psalm, unlike some of the others that had a list of references under them, this one was all alone, the only time this word is used in the whole of the Bible. It is the Hebrew word 'raphah' and the nearest Dr. Young could get to an English translation is 'let go' or 'cause to fall' and the moment I read it <sup>I knew</sup> this was the secret John Wesley found on his death bed. For it was just at this time when I was learning the art of the ancient Hindu mystics method of relaxation. My introduction to Yoga was the book by James Hewitt, published among the 'Teach Yourself Books' by Hodder and Stoughton. The author begins by showing the difference between the way the Western mind understands and applies Yoga, and how the Eastern mind interprets it, particularly in India where it originated thousands of years ago and still predominates.



Many Westerners practising Yoga, use it for physical fitness, and do not understand the Eastern method of finding spiritual and psychological

"Wholeness." Yoga means 'union' when body and mind become perfectly still, the 'self' is transcended and one is conscious only, deep within oneself, of a union between the spiritual self and the 'Unseen' The Life Force of the universe, the 'ALL' The 'Ground of Being' the 'ABSOLUTE' which ever term you prefer, for they are all in a sense limited, and it is for lack of understanding that mankind has for so long given the 'Something' other than himself, the name of 'God.' This union with the 'ALL' who created us and the whole universe, and therefore whose offspring we are, can come only when we have got ourselves into an experience of great inner stillness. This is what the Psalmist knew who wrote the psalm that John Wesley was heard repeating on his deathbed. Some thousand or more years before Jesus of Galilee was born, this knowledge of the East that seems to have begun in India, spread to Persia - which is now Iran - and to Egypt and on to Middle Eastern lands including Israel where it influenced some of the rabbinical scholars, as it also influenced some of the Greek philosophers. So when the psalmist used the term 'be still' he meant 'let go' for all of us who practise this know what happens when we start to get into deep meditation. We feel

**OURSELVES** begin to fall into empty space, and in that moment, years of the human instinct of self preservation make us tense up to save ourselves, and spoil our union with the unseen ALL. This is where faith is necessary, we must believe that One is also LOVE and only wants to pass on to us His Wholeness, and once we do 'let go' as the Hebrew word means, we enter a very soothing and regenerating experience of deep relaxation. Without doubt this is what the great healer, Jesus of Galilee knew and practised and why he said to his followers 'find God <sup>with thy</sup> yourself' or "know yourself and you will know God." Pointing to the great Temple of Solomon he told them not to bother about the paraphernalia of the religious rites of this, then pointing to his body he said, 'this is the Temple of God,' and to his followers 'you are the Temples where God resides.' Was this not what John Wesley saw on his death bed? Now that I know the experience for myself I feel sure it was what he was trying to say and wanted his followers to take to future generations. Not to perpetuate his past life and message but to move on to the next stage of mankind's evolution. Now it could be

that some readers of this may think I am pushing my own theories in this last part of this book. Nothing could be further from the truth. Every flash of enlightenment, and every single piece of new information that has come to me, I have gained from far more knowledgeable people than myself, many of them brilliant scholars and experts in their fields of research. All the way through this book I acknowledge this and name their books I have read. I would also remind readers of the calling I chose, recorded in the early part of this book, when I saw the appeal in an advertisement, "Required, men from the people, to go to the people." And I also knew, in my search for the Truth, that my job and my duty in this life is "to know so that I might make known." Particularly to ordinary men and women like myself who, because their lives are taken up earning a living in order to survive, have no time to go into these matters, yet because of the intuitive, inner sense of need of 'Something' other than ourselves, clutch at any superstition that might help. The most popular superstition among the masses is the object endowed with magical power of protection which they touch when they say the words "touch wood," when they express some hope or wish. This, they may not know goes right back to primitive times when men touched a particular tree in the forest which they believed was possessed by a powerful god. They also left an offering underneath it. Later, when they could not always be near that tree, they carried a twig or small branch from it which they could touch when needing help. With our New Age enlightenment, people of this generation should have progressed far beyond this primitive superstition. Or is their ignorance the fault of the Christian Church through withholding the Truth from them? The most brilliantly enlightening book I have ever read for the purpose of writing this book of mine, is my last one, which I have already mentioned, when I said it is a very difficult book to be read by the ordinary 'man in the street' who is not accustomed to philosophical, theological, psychological and academic terms. It is the book by Ken Wilber entitled *Up From Eden*. I sought permission to use two quotations from it as I bring my own book to a conclusion. Permission has been granted and my thanks I include with the list of acknowledgements appended to this book. The author begins his preface with a quotation by the philosopher Plotinus. I must explain firstly who Plotinus was. He was a philosopher who came into prominence at the time when the branch of the early Christian Church which

accepted the Roman Emperor's grant of political power by incorporating his religious worship of Sol Invictus into their brand of Christianity, and changed their day of worship to Sun-day. Plotinus had been under the philosophical influence of Ammonius, who previously had been a Christian. Ammonius apparently could not accept all that the Christians were teaching and formed his own school of philosophy. Plotinus was under his tuition for eleven years and later held his own school of philosophy. It is thought by some historians that if the Roman Christians had not been given such political power they would never have become the mother Christian Church in the Western world, but that the teaching of Plotinus, which was based on the Eastern understanding of the Divine in all mankind, would have influenced the Western world instead, and brought two thousand years of enlightenment and not the <sup>spiritual</sup> retrogression we have suffered. The last words of Plotinus when he died were, "I am trying to bring back the divine in us to the divine in the All."

A thousand or more years before Plotinus the Indian wise men were teaching this and by the time of early Christianity all the Greek philosophers as well as the historical Jesus of Galilee, taught it. It was St. Paul who rejected this Truth, teaching instead that God was quite separate from man, that what the philosophers taught is foolishness to God who will only enter the life of a man if he accepts the sacrifice of the death of His Son as a propitiation for his sins, not knowing, or ignoring what Jesus had taught to the contrary. Having introduced Plotinus I quote from Ken Wilber's book. ("Mankind," said Plotinus, "is poised midway between the gods and the beasts," and the task of this volume is to trace the curve of history and prehistory that brought mankind to that delicate position.") Then after a volume of brilliant scholarly research, and pages packed with information, recognising the many mistakes mankind has made on the way up, and is still making in this headlong rushing world today, trying to create a substitute for transcendence, he ends his book with these words, "Men and women want the world because they are in truth the world, and they want immortality because they are in fact immortal. But instead of transcending their boundaries in truth, they merely attempt to break and refashion them at will, and caught in this Atman project of trying to make their earth into a substitute heaven, not only do they destroy the only earth they have, they forfeit the only heaven they might otherwise embrace."

So where am I now after my long journey through this twentieth century, now that we are approaching its end, have I found what I sought ?

I would remind the reader that at the beginning of this account of my journey through the Twentieth Century, my quest was for a better way of life, I wanted to escape from my dreary, unhealthy environment, but I also wanted to find some meaning and purpose to my life on this planet. As the reader will have seen in these pages, I was always making the right moves in my search, but so often being diverted by being pointed in the wrong direction.

So I did not make my discovery until in my old age. It came during my illness in the winter of 1985 - 86, the account of which I have given in the foregoing pages. I know now that I had to go through that traumatic experience so that I could discover the Truth for myself. It is my duty now to make this known to my fellow humans who, like me, want to know.

I know now that I can be of far greater help as a minister of Wholeness than I was as a minister of religion. I can say to any sick or suffering person reading this, do not add to your stress and pain by praying to any mythical God above, but go into deep meditation within yourself to the ONE Who is not only always with you but also deep within you. There is no suitable human name for Him or IT or however you can comprehend the One Who is the Life Force of the universe, the Creator of all things who is BEING and in Whom we can find our being. Jesus the Galilean always used the term his Jewish mystics used because they were not permitted to utter the name of Jehovah. They thought of Him as a good Father to all His offspring, so Jesus said that when we communicate with Him we address Him as "Our Father." He also said we communicate with Him in the deep secret, inner part of ourselves. I am an old man now and none of us can stop the ageing process, for all living things shed their outer forms and new forms spring up after them. But I have learned that we can delay the ageing process by a wise and correct life style and by slowing up the pace of what we term 'civilised life.' This generation is rushing headlong in a great hurry "from here to somewhere," and nobody seems to know where. I find great peace of mind in walking quietly around what civilisation has left of our countryside and observing how the Creative process in Nature is quietly restoring what man has been destroying. Nothing can stop the creation of WHOLENESS, for it goes on beyond this tiny planet, to a tranquillity our tiny minds cannot conceive, and our journey too goes on and on, always From Here to Somewhere. I have

every assurance that I am now going in the right direction in the quest I set for myself from my youth onwards. It is not just knowledge that I have gained, but a real deep personal experience of the immanent Unseen.

At the time of bringing this book to a close, something happened which focused the eyes of the whole world upon some Middle Eastern countries where, for thousands of years, there have been conflicts and wars, largely between tribes that follow opposing religions. This time the motives were also political and economic, nevertheless the President of Iraq, in order to get his people's support in the military action he was taking to invade and occupy the small state of Kuwait, stirred the emotions of the people by telling them they were fighting a holy war for their god Allah against the infidels of the Western World and against those Arab countries who were supporting the West. Now that is ended, and the United Nations forces have driven the President and remnants of his army back to Iraq, <sup>but</sup> we are still left with many problems that will take many years to solve. I have brought this book to a close at a very appropriate time, surely it gives credence to what I have tried to show in this book. For their sakes we cannot let the next generation take with them into the Twenty-first century the primitive ideas of various gods and their resultant conflicts between groups of mankind, each claiming theirs is the real authentic one. Peace in this world can only come when men and women in every land, learn how to relate to the ONE who is the Ultimate, immanent within all human beings, so that the relationship is not only deeply personal, but happily shared with all other human beings. I do not know if I will reach the beginning of the Twenty-first century, I shall have a good try. But my children and grandchildren will, and all I live for now is to pass on to them what I have learned, and by means of this book, to enlighten many more. My journey will go on, for the best is yet to be discovered, on into the unseen where there are delights that the human mind, in its limited stage, cannot possibly comprehend. Now that I have learned how to relate to the Wholeness of the One within myself, and within my fellow men and women, I am quite happy to move forward into the unseen where only Love awaits us. I will go on 'From Here to Somewhere,' and I am one of countless millions of human beings, all of us on a similar journey.

E P I L O G U E

Much has happened since I decided to bring this book to a close. All over this world changes have been taking place, some through a catastrophe, some through famines, and some where wars have taken place because the people have sought to be free of oppression and be allowed to rule their own lands. There are still reverberations from the "Gulf war", which has gone into history as the most destructive war in the record of mankind on this planet, and in such a relative short time too. But the most remarkable thing that has taken place in my history on this planet through the Twentieth Century, and I have now passed my ninetieth birthday and have seen how quickly this last decade of the century seems to be rushing to its conclusion, has been the disintegration of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, after 74 years from the bolshevik revolution, and after 67 years since I worked with the British American Mission along the borders of that vast country, bringing relief to many thousands of starving Russians escaping from the famine of the early "Twenties." Now all the states that were annexed to Russia, some by force, have been returned to the people for their own self rule, and Russia has the boundaries it had in the days of the Tsarist rule. What surprised me was how quickly the various peoples demanded that they should have their religions back again, and their churches re-opened for worship. There had already been some return to worship in Russia itself within the Russian Orthodox Church, but now the other states outside of Russia, <sup>want</sup> their own particular religions back, with the result that there were soon conflicts between those of one religion with those of another. Why do these people throughout the multitudes in these vast states feel so deeply that they must have their religions? As one who for the whole of my life being involved in religion, and having spent, at least, half of this Twentieth Century studying most of the major religions, I give as my answer that when Lenin took from the masses of poor, illiterate, hard-working, suffering people, <sup>their religion</sup> by means of his decree that only atheism should be taught throughout all the Soviet Socialist Republic, he gave them nothing better to replace that which he took away. He promised them the earth as their paradise, and those early folk are now dead, gone without any reward either on earth nor in some heaven in the sky. Now their children are struggling

## ( E P I L O G U E )

to recover the heaven their forbears would gladly have retained but were compelled to discard. I was not compelled to discard my mythical religion of Christianity and I did not finally discard it willingly until I was absolutely certain I had discovered something far superior to anything any religion can offer. Indeed all religions are a hindrance to a relationship with the UNSEEN, whatever name you care to give It or Him, for all religions point in the wrong direction and also set barriers with their man-made creeds and dogmas. They all point up and away from oneself, whereas the Unseen, the Absolute, the Life Force of the universe, or if the reader of this prefers the name God, then He is found only deep within oneself and also within every other human being. I do not like the name God because it has been misused for so long by so many religions and a wrong impression has been given that He is far removed from ourselves. The Rabbi of Galilee, the real Jesus of history, used the Jewish terms for God, nothing like our English translations, but He also often used the term 'our Father,' which, seeing He brought us into being and we are His offspring, I prefer, but here again we have to avoid thinking of Him as a supra Superman looking something like us. I have reached the stage in my progression when I never think of Him in any physical form at all, but as Consciousness or the Ground of Being in whom we have our being. The real Me is not the physical form seen by others, but deep within this form where the Unseen is to be found. Because I have spent so many years of my long life seeking the Unseen One in the wrong direction, it is requiring a strict discipline on my part in approaching the Absolute, the Father of all Life, in the only way that we can be conscious of His Presence. For the whole of my life I have been busy with many things, and in my old age I find it difficult stopping my mind from going around, working out what I am going to do next and the problems I have to solve. My only cure for this now as I approach my times of meditation, is to quote those words in the ancient psalm 46 that John Wesley quoted as his dying words, "Be still (let go) and know that I am God." When I let go I always find His Presence, the only way to know Wholeness, Happiness and LOVE.

How does all that I have learned tie-up with the present stage of mankind's evolution? Recently, at the time of writing this, we have had some surprising news on our T.V., screens, over our radio programmes, and in our press. Scientists, archaeologists, geologists and others who are recognised experts in the study of the universe, before and since mankind came into it, have discovered things which reverse some of the theories we have been taught in the past. We are told that the dinosaurs did not suddenly die out because a great meteor hit the earth, as previously taught, but because of the earth's erosion. In plain words the dinosaurs and other huge reptiles so increased in number, eating everything they could find, at first in the water, later the vegetable growth on land, without ever putting anything back into the world's surface. When the age of the Reptiles came to an end, certain small hair-covered creatures that laid eggs survived and became the first creatures in the Age of Mammals some millions of years after the Reptiles. From the Mammals mankind evolved, and now we have come to the time when we too have eroded the earth, and worse than the dinosaurs, we have damaged our upper ozone layer which protects us from the sun's rays. Additional to this our medical experts tell us that the disease known as 'Aids' has so spread among humans, that by halfway through the next century millions of people will die from it. This is not a pretty picture with which to end this book, but what pleased me was the report of the scientists who, for years, with the very remarkable equipment they now have, when going further into their study of the 'Big Bang' which brought the universe into being, after years believing they had reached the end of the universe and there was nothing beyond, now have discovered that there is a far greater universe stretching for millions and millions of light-years into the distance with apparently no end to it. Two of these very brilliant scientists now say they think there must be Something or Someone behind all this creating it, perhaps a God. Well, of course, I have tried to make it clear in this book, that two thousand years ago the Rabbi of Galilee who belonged to a school of thought shared by other teachers, taught that the only God there is, is not at a distance creating it all, but, Unseen, yet personally Present in it all, and can be known by all who seek.



Many times, in the Church of England burial service, I have heard the words read, "In the midst of life we are in death." But I have learned from many years experience, when being at the death beds of quite a number of folk, begining with my first pitiful experience in the East End of London, that In the midst of life we are in Eternity, and so very much closer than we think. It does not need a religion to discover this, that would only point in the wrong direction, it requires deep, personal, inward meditation in relaxation, when we become conscious of the IMMANENT ONE.

I am deeply grateful that I can continue my journey through this Twentieth Century with constant communication with the creative Life Force of the universe, then on into the Unseen where I shall know All. I want every reader of this book to know that this can be your experience too. I leave you with the words of the poet Alfred Tennyson, written in 1867.

"Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet -  
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."