

PART 7: RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND, EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT, 1929-1952

This section¹ covers the period from my early childhood to my acceptance as a candidate for the Methodist Ministry and my secondment to Richmond College for training in September 1955. It is divided into four parts, each of which spans a discrete part of my life:

Phase I: Rishton, 1929-49

Phase II: Farnborough and the FAE, 1949

Phase III: National Service, UK and Egypt, 1950-52

Together these four phases range over my life as an engineer, my conversion to Christianity, my marriage to Molly and my call to preach and to ordained ministry. Here I attempt to identify and describe significant factors in my religious background, experience and development; to note those who have influenced me and how and why they have done so; to draw out the idiosyncratic features/characteristics of my spirituality and trace out how they have evolved.

When I had completed writing notes on Phase III on 11.3.11, it made much more sense to include the planned Phase IV in the next part of the Notes and that I have done. So this section now concludes with Section III, my return from Egypt.

Some of the appendages in the original are not reproduced here.

PHASE I: RISHTON 1929-1949

I was baptized on the 4th August 1929 by the Rev S Gibson in the United Methodist Church, Rishton (Mary Street). My ‘abode’ is given as 24, Heavy Street, my paternal grandmother’s home and, of course, my first home. Thinking about the event, the thought occurred to me for the first time that my grandmother would be present. That thought profoundly affected me. The thought changed my feelings about my baptism. My parents attended church only on special occasions. My father had a thorough-going and rigorous Wesleyan upbringing, but had long lapsed from church adherence. Sadly, I do not know very much about my mother’s upbringing, religious

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My Grandmother Lovell.

or otherwise. Her father had been brought up an Anglican and I have a feeling he was quite committed to the church as a boy and young man. But he never went to church when I knew him – not even to my mother's wedding. The impression I was given was that some event or other had led to his disaffection with the church and/or Christianity. So, for my mother and father, I surmise, my baptism would be important because they would want to give me the best start in life and the right thing to do was to have me christened as soon as possible. And that they did. Significantly, I think, in Mary Street not in the Wesleyan Chapel, High Street, which was my grandmother's church. I think it is significant because it indicates that my mother had been/was associated with Mary Street in some way or another. It was the church to which she was attracted because it was the church in which she chose to be married. This is an interesting new line of thought for me. Mary Street was much more nonconformist than High Street; the building was nowhere near as fine or as large and extensive as High Street, which had a prestigious Wesleyan Day School, which I attended; all in all, ecclesiastically and socially Mary Street was seen, and probably was, the poor relative of High Street. As will be seen, I had experiences of both churches.

Spiritually and religiously, my grandmother differed greatly from my parents. She was a devout Christian and a committed member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. My father loved and revered her greatly: all the time I knew him had a photograph of her beside his bed and spoke of her often with affection and gratitude. Twice a year, he said, she read the Bible through and he said, knew it thoroughly. My impression of her from my father, my Uncle Bob and my Aunts Constance and Ruth and Adie, was that she was a wise, loving, caring Christian woman, humane and tolerant – quite different from my grandfather, who was a devout but bigoted and narrow Methodist. She had little education but she was intelligent – my father said she could spell any word.

As I have said, the thought that my grandmother was at my baptism which I have never thought about before, profoundly affected me. Suddenly and unexpectedly it led to a moving experience which changed my attitude to my baptism and enhanced my relationship with my grandmother. Undoubtedly it has added value and significance to my appreciation of my baptism: She knew the meaning and importance of the sacrament; she would have prayed for me and my future life; she blessed me then and now by her presence. To have had her prayers during the early years of my life is of great importance to me.

Ever since I can remember I have felt a close affinity to my grandmother.

According to a note of dates by Auntie Constance she died on the 1st October 1932.² I have vague but warm memories of going to her house for tea – I rather think I was taken there and left for tea. According to my parents it was then that I acquired a taste for lemon with fish! I have more distinct memories of being taken for walks by my Great Aunt Nan who was quite severe. One occasion is very clear. It is of a walk on the canal bank. I must have been somewhat difficult because she threatened to give me to the man on a canal boat that happened to be passing! As I recall them they were happy events. As I think of them I have a warm feeling even though I cannot recall any details of the visit. In contrast I have a very clear picture of what I believe to be the day of her death. My father was at work. My mother was kneeling in front of me doing up my coat and instructing me carefully that I had to go to my grandma's home with a message. Was I sure I knew the way? If Auntie C's date is correct, I would be 3¼ years old. Much later in life, in my teens when I first experienced it, I would occasionally find myself quite spontaneously describing something or other much more eloquently and fluently than I would normally do. From the first time that it happened, without thinking about it, I associated it with a gift from my grandmother. Yesterday morning when I had these thoughts about my baptism, I suddenly felt very close to my grandmother. A lovely warm deeply satisfying feeling of love, warmth and closeness to her suffused me. New and wonderful dimensions of my relationship with her seemed to be born. As the day proceeded they developed and they had a semblance of permanence about them. It was lovely but strangely mystical. On the one hand, I longed to know more about her and wished she had lived longer; on the other hand I was filled with joyful expectation at the possibility of seeing her in heaven. All in all an incredible relational experience of the communion of saints, entirely unexpected. My religious and spiritual background was richer, is richer, richer than I ever thought it was.

³This incredible experience revealed to me the dimensions and depths of my familial religious background in ways in which I was previously unaware. I realized that an enormously rich spiritual heritage had leapt over my parent's generation and entered into my life. The impact and influence of that is immeasurable. I can only thank God for it.

Morally, religiously and spiritually, this phase, 1929-49, was one of turbulence; I swung from one state of faith, conviction and commitment.

2 Date correct, it is the one on her tombstone. My grandfather died on 4th March 1911.

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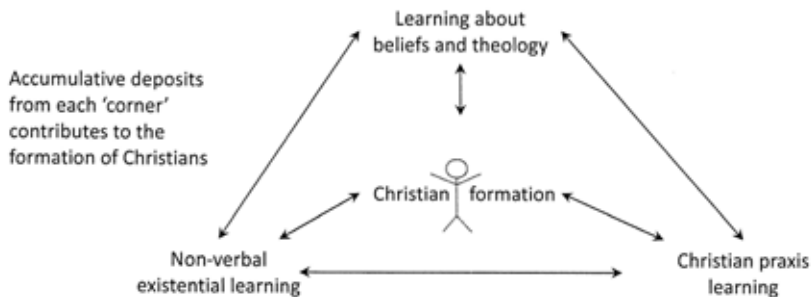
I was variously devout and committed, agnostic, bolshie, insufferable and downright rude and troublesome. Movement, development and counter-development can be discerned but no gradual patter of progress. Here I attempt to depict my religious and irreligious nature as it evolved by describing, as best I am able, how I behaved and acted in relation to Christianity and key incidences that occurred.

c1931-43 Rishton: Sunday School Scholar to Christian Disciple

From as early as I can remember I went to Sunday School during the afternoon at Mary Street and then later in addition to ‘Morning Star’ (which met before the morning service and then we went into the service for a short time prior to dismissal). My first memories are of the beginners department which met in what was called ‘The New Room’. Sessions were very happy events which I remember with great affection. It is the atmosphere, ethos and relationships that I remember and can still relive rather than the activities and content of which I have no memory – except the taking off and putting on of our coats which were highly personal encounters. Atmosphere and ethos were warm, caring and loving; they wrapped themselves around me and gave me, as I recall and interpret the experiences, a sense of wellbeing, happiness and security; they made me feel wanted and important. The teacher I remember with deep gratitude was Miss Joyce Leaming, a beautiful, loving young lady who epitomized for me throughout her life everything that was finest in womanhood and in being a Christian. I admired and loved her then as long as I knew here. As a child and as long as she lived she took an interest in me and influenced me greatly. I can see her boyfriend (fiancé, Leonard Sleigh⁴ to whom she was later married, coming into the Room at the end of the session presumably to meet her and ‘walk out’ with her. (I think I was jealous of him!) Presumably he was a teacher in another department. Little did I know that even at the early age I was experiencing something of the spiritual affective qualities of the kingdom of God, Koinonia. (Greek for fellowship, community etc.) It was these profound existential experiences which were the deep and lasting learning events. I think God for them. Clearly they are vitally important, possibly making a deeper formative impact that teaching content – which is

4 Leonard was an extremely fine young man. I respected him as much as I did Joyce. I think it was after she had died that I wrote to him about the impact she had had upon me. He will appear later in this section. He was Eric Beaghan’s Uncle and Joyce his aunt. I do not think I have a copy of the letter. I had told Joyce herself about this.

of course important and influential. As I thought about this I found myself drawing the following diagram.



They each receive and give to each other through complex patterns of persona and interpersonal and prayerful interactions. The one can lead to the other.

Later Sunday School experiences were somewhat different and not of the same quality. Singing was a significant feature of Sunday School and church services with which I was ill at ease and still am. It was particularly painful for me and still is in small groups; I can lose my voice in a crowd but it is much more difficult in a small group. In such situations, being unable to sing in tune, I feel variously awkward, embarrassed, frustrated, marginalized, an outsider. Occasionally I can sing a few lines in tune when I am standing beside someone with whom I can harmonize. But it is rare. For the most part to attempt to sing is disastrous! I have built up some defences – singing very quietly, miming the words. In short, being musically out of tune/harmony causes me to feel psychologically/spiritually out of harmony with myself and the group and especially certain kinds of leaders. The worst scenario is in a small group with a keen musical minded leader who is trying to get us all to sing heartily and well. A few years ago whilst attending a course on Iona I had a particularly bad experience of this. A lady leader was somewhat obsessive about getting us to sing songs or other ‘warm up’/‘breaking the ice’ activities! I reacted very badly and got into a fraught relationship with her: all reminiscent of my experiences with Billy Shaw.

Another dimension of feeling out of it was relational – the parents and close relatives of most of the children in the classes I attended were core members of the church; they were part of the establishment. My parents attended church only occasionally for special events and Saturday night

concerts. My status was revealed to me one afternoon in the senior class in the 'top vestry'. Mr Harry Pomfret – a technical college lecturer, organist, core member whose daughter Joyce was a member of the class and who I discovered the other day signed my baptismal certificate – was calling the register. It went something like this, Eric, Alan, Betty...Lovell. Without thinking, my instantaneous response was, 'Here Pomfret'. There was a deadly silence. It was unheard of to address such people as other than Mr Pomfret. However, I did not apologize and he never did that again. But it hurt because I knew I was being put in my place or more precisely the place he thought I should be in. That's what it did to me but was it simply a slip of the tongue, a reversal to his college practice? How vitally important is it that all gatherings of the church should be inclusive and seen and felt to be so by the participants. To know and to learn that is surely part of any Christian educational programme.

Teachers (and preachers) considered it was their responsibility to warn us of the dangers of 'drink' (alcohol) and to persuade us to be teetotal. Two incidents of such 'teaching' stay with me, one positive and the other negative. One relates to Leonard Sleight who was, I believe, a manager of a cotton mill. In this capacity, he went to social occasions and dinners where alcohol was served and almost everyone participated. He told how he had been made fun of and nagged and taunted when he declined an alcoholic drink and asked for a soft one which was not generally available so he ended up with a glass of water – a tumbler not a wine glass which made him stand out. After several embarrassing incidents of this kind, he found himself in discussion with someone about why he didn't just fit in. One thing he said to this person was that a good host would provide for the tastes of his/her guests and meet them without fuss or embarrassment and thus put them at their ease. On many socio-religious levels this was and remains powerful teaching which had a great impact on me. On the one hand I admired the way in which he believed out what he believed and his social courage. On the other I was impressed by what I was learning about being a guest and a host.

The other incident was quite different. It was a lesson about the evil of drink and of drinking (alcohol that is). Ruminating on this my juvenile mind struggled with this sequence of thoughts: drink is evil, my father drinks on Friday evenings, my father is evil but whilst he is not perfect, he is not evil, he is good and kind and much more convivial and loving when he has had a few drinks so how can drink be evil? And in any case he is much more of a man than some Mary Street men and more honourable and I like him better. Clearly, I was trying to square the logical circle

revolving in my mind and to resolve the implications of simplistic teaching which ignored its relational implications for some of the pupils. And I was resisting a breach in my relationship with my father that accepting what the teacher was saying had the potential to cause. It was and is a salutary lesson highly relevant to moral education especially when those being taught came from diverse ethical backgrounds. It simply must be contextual: pressing the validity of one ethical system without examining with students the implications of considering and pursuing it might have for them and those they love is dangerous, possibly immoral and certainly irresponsible.

Most of the children I was with in Sunday School became junior church members when they were about eleven or twelve years of age I think. At that point I made a conscious decision that I would not become a member at the end of the preparatory classes. My decision was respected by people like Leonard Sleight. During the service, however, when all my classmates started to move forward to be made members, I stood up to let them pass me and was about to sit down when Eric Beagham's father came up behind me and tried quite hard to push me forward saying something to the effect that I should not be so stubborn and different. I resisted him and took my seat. (In fact, according to my diary, I did not become a member of the Methodist Church until the 4th February 1951 and at that time I was in Tel-el-Kebir.) But I did make a decision 'to accept Jesus Christ as the Lord

THE METHODIST CHURCH DECISION CARD.

I HAVE decided to accept *JESUS CHRIST*
as the *LORD* and *SAVIOUR* of my life

I WILL endeavour by *HIS* help to obey *HIS*
call and follow *HIM*.

Name *George Lovell* Date *9th of May 1943.*

Address *25 Clarke St. Rishton*

Church I wish to join *Mary Street Methodist Church*

and Saviour of my life' as the card below shows. In spite of the wish stated I do not think I became a member of Mary Street. My memory is that this happened during a special service somewhat later than the incident recorded above. (But I may be quite wrong about the chronology.) I was 13 years old and in my first year at Accrington Junior Technical School. It was a real decision following a moving spiritual experience, the highlight of my Sunday School career.

Other socio-religious influences running in parallel to this were my attendance at Rishton Wesleyan Day School described in Section 4:2. Then there was the 'Gymu' started I guess at the beginning of the war by a group of young men in the church including Leonard Sleigh and one or two whose names I have forgotten (Barnes comes to mind) who were not as religious as the others. It was a new kind of organisation, a precursor to the youth club. Meetings were in the early evenings – I remember the new and strange experience of making my way home through streets dimly lit with gas lamps. Quite an adventure. We played games, did exercises and handicrafts. Later, the Reverend Raymond Hindle, a beloved minister, set up the first youth club – but must have been in 1941/42. What I remember most clearly was a series of sessions entitled 'The Pentateuch' which Mr Hindle led. I really warmed to what was a serious study of the Pentateuch and its formation: my first introduction to Biblical exegesis and criticism. How times change – I cannot imagine such a subject being on the agenda of a youth club today!

Other people and some books were profoundly involved in my moral and religious formation. I find it difficult to assess the impact my parents and relatives had upon me: I made an attempt to do so in Section 4:1. I do not recall any conversations with them on religious or spiritual things, nor do I remember them praying with me but they must have encouraged my prayers although I have no recollections of them doing so. What I do remember was their complete commitment to telling the truth and fairness: they were honest and fair through and through and they deplored 'showing off', pretentiousness. 'Decency' was one of their key concepts. They articulated and lived these qualities as did most of my close relatives. This is not the place to assess the impact of my relatives upon me, indeed it is probably not possible for me to do so. But I must mention one incident relating to my uncle Bob, who made a great impact upon me and who I think I tried to emulate in some things. When I was about eleven, I suppose, I was sent on a visit to him in Penygroes, North Wales. I had not seen him for years. He was divorced from his wife Alice and lived with Auntie Enid and her daughter Susan. He had been ostracised by the family because of

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MR 4 December, 1980

OBITUARY

The Rev Raymond Hindle

I first knew Raymond Hindle when we were students together at Hartley Victoria College, Manchester in the years 1925 to 1928. The two colleges were gradually merging at that time. He was in residence at Victoria; I was living at Hartley; but we saw much of each other, for the training was on a joint basis. In those years Raymond served as Victoria College choir-master and he carried his love of good music through all the years of his ministry. He loved to accompany groups and parties on the piano for community-singing.

Raymond heard the call to the ministry while engaging wholeheartedly in Church and Sunday school work at Waterside, Bacup, Lancashire, where his wife-to-be, Eliza, was also happily involved.

Prior to college-training, he served a year's probation at Shrewsbury. College days over, he went on to serve at Whitehaven, St Columb, Rochdale, Longton (Stoke-on-Trent), Huddersfield, Todmorden, Great Harwood, Barrowford (Nelson), Ambleside, Workson, and Attleborough.

We were colleagues in the Great Harwood circuit, and it was a joy to me to renew our friendship and work alongside him. He was a much-loved minister — self-effacing but very competent and conscientious. He was a fine expository preacher whose congregations never failed to receive rich food for thought. His success as a preacher gained a great deal from his pastoral work, for he was a true shepherd to the flock. His pastoral visitation was both helpful and methodical — never haphazard. Every member and adherent was faithfully

visited in turn. He made the effort, however great the strain, to get to know all the members of the family by name. To the business side of church work he brought a carefully-trained and methodical administrative skill. He was not one who rushed into hasty decisions; careful and prayerful thought lay behind his suggestions and recommendations.

He was a very pleasant and approachable minister, his kindly smile betokening a welcoming attitude. You felt he was glad to discuss with you any matters of personal religious importance. But behind the welcoming smile you knew there were strong Christian convictions which would never be betrayed merely for the sake of appearing friendly. In important matters of conscience he was uncompromising. But he FELT other people's needs; he tried to sit where they sat.

Raymond was fond of his garden; he was also interested in sport, especially cricket, and he loved the English countryside. It was a great disappointment to him, and to his many friends, when a breakdown of health compelled him to accept an early retirement. For the last twenty-two years of his life he perforce had to be an interested and involved "spectator" of ministerial work and service — an encourager and supporter of his ministerial brethren.

He died at his home in Blackpool lovingly cared for by his dear wife and daughter, in the eightieth year of his age, and the fifty-second year of his ministry. Home and family life had always been very precious to him and it became the gateway through which he passed to the peace of heaven. — Clifford Brown

having left Alice and his son Robert for Enid. Questions to my parents about what happened and why were evaded: they pretended not to hear them or simply changed the subject in an uneasy way. On the first morning of my stay I went out with my Uncle, he was in a wheel chair because he had multiple sclerosis. When we got away from the house, he stopped his chair, turned to me and looking me in the eye said, 'I want you to know how it is here. I am not married to your Auntie Enid and Susan is her daughter not mine, but we all love each other and live as a family. So now you know. Ok.' No one had ever talked to me like that before. I was taken aback but deeply thankful for addressing me so frankly in an adult way, that has remained for me a model of openness and a way of relating. The Reverend George Bramwell Evens, a Methodist minister, author and broadcaster under the pseudonym of Romany greatly impressed and interested me. I read many of his books, *A Romany and Rag*, *Out with Romany*, etc. and still have some on my shelves and I listened to his broadcasts. I remember him taking a service at Mary

Street. His dog, Raq, went into the pulpit with him. As he talked to us he sketched the birds and animals on a board behind his back without turning around to see what he had drawn. Incredible. He brought the countryside and wildlife and farming alive for me and made religious to be an acceptable and normal part of life.

A different genre of books amongst the comparatively small number of my parent's shelves greatly influenced and shaped me. I must have read them when I was 10-12 years old. First of these were books by Patrick McGill (1889-1963), 'The Navvy Poet', (I knew him as the 'buck navvies poet'). I knew little about him until I started to write these notes and I looked him up on the internet. What an incredible man he was. His life story enhances my admiration for him. He wrote out of and about his life experiences of being a navvy. I devoured *Moleskin Joe* and *Children of the Dead End*. (The latter is described as an autobiographical novel. It is only now that I realise that PG worked extensively as a navvy. He knew what he was writing about. I still have my parents' copy of *Moleskin Joe*; it is inscribed E. Lovell and it has just occurred to me that it is the only thing I have written by my Mother.)

⁵Quite amazingly these books took me deep into the navvies' world. I became absorbed and caught up in their pathos, pain, camaraderie, loyalty and some incredible relationships. Living in a mining and cotton working class community in the depression of the 1930s may have helped me to do so, not least because there were some connections. The impact of the experience was enormous and lifelong. I was overawed by the phenomenal strength, stamina, endurance, courage and sacrificial bravery of the navvies. They needed all these qualities to survive individually and collectively because the work was arduous and sometimes dangerous; their working and living conditions were appalling. Some of their feats left me awestruck. Men and women were mercilessly exploited. They experienced exhaustion, misery and deprivation. I became painfully aware of and overwhelmed by the human cost to them of building railways, harvesting root crops and labouring on projects such as Kinlochleven. Yet the amazing thing was, that even in these conditions and circumstances the navvies could be magnanimous (they helped and saved one another), they showed great concern and tenderness, they were at times chivalrous and even developed caring and loving relationships. I found this extraordinary. For me, then and now, there was something mystical and spiritual about all of this. I began to develop an understanding of what happens to human beings in the shadow of great human enterprises. New dimensions of

morality opened up as vicariously I experienced the injustice and unfairness the navvies suffered. Through McGill's vivid raw writing I was enabled to stand in their shoes and see life through their eyes. I was beginning to learn an invaluable skill, to look at things through other people's eyes which has informed my life and ministry. I was learning – or was it acquiring by osmosis – the spiritual discipline of standing alongside and taking the side of the underdog. The propensity to do this has remained but at times I have sadly become prejudiced against them.⁶ These books contributed much to my moral and spiritual development and formation. I thank God for these vicarious but powerful encounters with humanity in in the raw and the real.

⁷Reflecting on what I have written above about relationships between navvies, I realise that it omits the vicious downside of interpersonal relationships – the rivalry and physical violence which, not surprisingly was commonplace amongst men and women fighting/struggling to survive. So I am not presenting a rounded picture of their life and relationships but I am describing as accurately as I can the impact that selected events have had upon me from the time I first read them and throughout my life since.

⁸Another of my parent's books which I discovered and read whilst I was ill in bed when I was 11 or 12 years old was *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1874) by Marcus Clarke. (When my parents discovered I had read it they were horrified and cross in equal measure!) It was certainly not reading for a child – or was it? Nothing was left to the imagination about the cruelty and horror of life on a prisoners' ship, in the penal settlement on Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) and the cannibalism escaping prisoners resorted to in their attempts against enormous odds to escape during the period 1927-46. It is generally accepted that the well-researched novel accurately portrays the conditions under which prisoners were transported, imprisoned and brutally treated during that time. (Wikipedia give summaries of the true all-too-short life of the author and the plot of the novel; these are appended to this part in my manuscript.)

Here, I note the two major life-long effects of the book upon me. First, it deepened, extended and reinforced my feelings and growing convictions

6 I need to trace this out at some point. At the height of the debate about 'mission alongside the poor' in the early 80s in the Methodist Church, I argued that to accomplish the mission of the Church it was necessary to walk alongside the poor and the rich and wrote some papers for discussion but they were never published (see Shelf file 'Articles and Papers').

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about injustice, unfairness and gratuitous violence and cruelty. At the same time it developed my innate capacity to empathise and take the side of those who are the hapless victims of brutal inhuman systems and vicious people. Living, as I was, in a working class family and community in the great depression, I was brought up by and amongst people who had first hand personal experience of injustice, deprivation and exploitation and what was involved in maintaining a sense of worth and dignity in such pernicious industrial and social systems. Clearly significantly different in degree, it was nonetheless part of the same sense of oppression and humiliation.

The second thing I got from this book derives from profiles burnt into my mind of two contrasting Anglican priests who were chaplains to the settlement. The Reverend James North, a major character in the novel, was a drunkard (probably an alcoholic) whose failure to get up on time after a bout of heavy drinking the night before resulted in the death of a convict at the flogging triangle, a device to which they were strapped for the brutal punishment sometimes for petty crimes or breaches of the rules. Another main character, Rufus Dawes, also a prisoner was ordered to carry out the flogging, refused and was flogged himself. North later begs for his forgiveness and calls him 'brother'. As I remember it, whenever North failed prisoners he apologised to them and offered them in their agony a plug of tobacco to chew – an act of great kindness; it was against all the rules to give prisoners what was considered a great luxury. (I understood this because my father and other miners chewed tobacco underground ostensibly to counter the effect of the coal dust on their mouths and throats and also a solace seeing that they could not smoke underground.) North's behaviour was counter cultural big time! In stark contrast North's successor, Meakin, was a dainty, self-righteous, 'holy' prig who saw his duty as lecturing prisoners writhing in agony during or after a flogging on their sinfulness and quoting Old Testament texts about the terrible punishment that awaited them in Hades and took delight in doing so.

The contrast between the attitudes and behaviour of these two men had an enormous and abiding impact on me. It etched indelibly into my soul an elementary typology by which I began to classify preachers, pastors, priests and ministers. Instinctively I warmed – and still do – to North and despised Meakin. Even at that early age I had met lay and ordained Christians who I found myself placing on the spectrum spanning the extremes; some veered towards one end of the spectrum, others to the opposite end. I knew where I would place myself and would like to be placed and the approach I would try to emulate. I had no intuition or desire to become an alcoholic but I knew I too would fail people because of my weaknesses and I would

have to deal with people in distressing situations sometimes through no fault of their own at other times it would be partly or wholly through their own fault. And that I too would be in those situations. Indeed I had been there! Throughout, I have tried to mould my approach on that of North and later of Jesus Christ. Those who have done so have ministered to me. On the other hand I have tried to avoid the condescension, hypocrisy and censoriousness of Meakin with varying measures of success: being the recipient of it is hellish; embodying it is destructive. North's humanity and humility were key elements in his attractive spirituality. I treasure them as saving graces.

I cannot overestimate the influence that these few books have had upon me. I have always felt that they were 'her' books and I thank her in my heart for them.

⁹Reflecting on what I have written so far in this section, I realize it is more about the formative influences and the things to which I aspired than about the realities of my moral and religious character with which they were interacting. These formative forces were, in fact, operating with varying degrees of success and failure upon the same pretty rough and unpromising raw material deeply flawed. At least that is how I see myself at that time and continue to do so. Much work has been done to some effect but even now so much more needs to be done to make me what I want to be and so much more to make me what God destines me to be. A basic purpose of these notes is to aid those processes.

At this point I find myself facing two difficulties. One is that of assessing with any degree of objectivity and reliability my moral and spiritual state and character. The other is about self-disclosure. John Bayley, after describing how he kept a cap pistol secret, says:

So much of childhood seems to have been spent in secret, and most of its pleasure comes from this. Most of the memories I have of it too. ¹⁰

This came as something of a disclosure to me of my own childhood. Whilst it was difficult to keep some of my outer life secret my inner life was a place of precious privacy and secrecy – and still is I suppose although much of it I have shared with soul friends. However, I am struggling with unresolved dilemmas: how much of my hidden life that it is necessary and

9 15.2.11

10 *Iris and The Friends: A Year Of Memories* (Duckworth, 1999), p23. I think Richard Hoggart speaks of the 'silence of childhood', a telling phrase but I do not have the reference.

wise to have in these notes especially that of which I am ashamed or about which I am embarrassed and how much can I bring myself to share? I have come to a compromise solution. I must reveal sufficient information about it in order:

- to indicate that I really have a shadow side to my being and character and behaviour;
- to show that I know that I have and that I am trying to deal with it as creatively and effectively as I can and that I look to Christianity to redeem it;
- to demonstrate that my references to it are genuine, not simply the right or pious thing to say, not being spiritually correct statements, not false humility.

There are references to the downsides of my being which, whilst it ties me into the common human lot, is a source of pain, regret, tension ... I must work at it but only in and through the saving work of Christianity will I be redeemed.

During the period of my life covered by this section, 1929-49, several things were happening in this downside of life. I will mention them without illustrating them, although each of them have multiple examples; that is about as far as I feel I can go at this point. I was cowardly; I bullied my younger brother, Frank; I was envious and jealous and it was probably in part the preferential treatment of my sister by Aunties Ruth and Louie¹¹ which caused me to refuse to speak to her for a couple of years (this was unforgiveable because it was the 'silent' punishment my father used and which I so much hated); I am not sure whether I was selfish but I was possessive and protective of my things and 'space'; I was easily upset and offended; I was insecure, secretive; I had an overactive sexual imagination and curiosity. Alongside these things, I was shy; the thought of public speaking or performing petrified me; I was easily intimidated, physically and personally and I think mentally – I generally felt inferior.

¹²It has not been too difficult to dig out key facts of my religious background, experiences and development over this period even though it has taken quite a lot of time. Proceeding from this to trying to describe or even profile my spiritual and religious character or personality I am finding very difficult. I attempted a similar exercise in relation to my class and cultural consciousness by focusing on the features of it in Section 6. Perhaps

11 She was a lifelong friend of Auntie Ruth until she married Mr Beech. They shared a house later with L's two sisters they ran a boarding house in Morecambe.

12 18.2.11

this could serve as a model for doing this in relation to my spiritual and religious character at some stage. Howbeit, I do not feel in the mood to try to do this now. I may be better to attempt it at the end of the section, i.e. at the point when I was entering Richmond College.

What I feel about my religious and spiritual character at the time is that I espoused Christian principles and values and the way of being and living as a Christian that I had or was learning and beginning to interpret it. I was a practising believer within the limits of my understanding. I was a convinced but not a born-again Christian, struggling against the downside of my nature.

c 1943-46 A Practising Christian and a Sunday School Teacher¹³

I can date the close of this phase with some accuracy because I still have a letter from Leonard Sleight accepting my resignation as a Sunday School teacher which he wrote on the 10th October 1946 (appended in original manuscript). At the beginning of this phase I was 14 years old and at the end 17; this period spans my second year at Accrington Junior Technical School, my time at Bristol Aircraft Company and approximately the first half of my time at Cherry Tree Machine Company; during the first part of it I was trying to live a Christian life but gradually I declined into reacting against this mode of believing and living and became agnostic. This decline was, I think, associated with my employment at Cherry Tree Machine Company, if not caused by it. Certainly working in that company in the shop fitting shop floor and in the foundry led to a coarseness of my personality and particularly of the foul language I used. (In part this was a defence and survival mechanism in the foundry. But it was much more than that, because I used the foul language in my relationships outside the foundry especially with grammar school boys to shock them and to indicate I was living much of my life in a different culture and community than they were. I was, in fact, differentiating myself in a crude way in a curious mixture of bravado, inverted snobbery, anger at my lot and jealousy at the superiority of their education and situation and some pride in the masculinity and toughness of my working life. And of course I was an adolescent! It is only retrospect that I am able to see this. At that time I was simply giving vent to my disappointment, anger and psychological confusion.) However, this decline was gradual and had not reached its worst form by 1946.

During the earlier part I was quite religious. As far as I can remember

I took my Sunday School teaching seriously and that involved attending training/preparation classes. I was greatly influenced by Mr Frank Nuttall, a member of Mary Street and a local preacher. He was a newcomer to Rishton. I think he came from Blackburn to open and/or run a traditional corner shop near to my house in Knowles Street. He was a breath of fresh air, a great favourite of the young people. Numbers of the youth club regularly invited him to speak to them particularly on Christianity, sex and moral issues. He was open and frank (sorry to pun!) without any hint of patronisation, cant or condescension. He was a very good, popular, well-loved and greatly respected preacher; a man of integrity who exercised a distinguished minority in the pulpit and behind the counter of his shop. Crippled with osteoarthritis he was always of a good cheerful spirit and approachable. And, importantly to me, I was not a member of the family clique of Mary Street. He was different but was in his distance from them he had status and standing. I owe an enormous amount to him. The sitting room at the back of the shop was a place where we had endless conversations about the deep things of Christianity and life. (See a letter I had from him in 1964 which is appended in the original.) It was during this period that I took to writing mini sermons which were never preached but which I shared with Mr Nuttall and which we discussed in detail and at length. I do not think any of them survived but the memory does of walking up Clarke and Knowle Streets and taking them to him in the shop to him and then later discussing them. He stood by me and with deep understanding and sensitivity reached out and kept in touch as I drifted from the faith.

However, I gradually became disillusioned by the church, began to question the validity of Christianity, became estranged from some of the church people and their attitudes, and lapsed from devotions and gradually drifted away. The crunch came in a rebellious act undertaken partly in bravado and partly to test the Sunday School officers. I had been to a united service at High Street Methodist Church and was walking up the High Street with a string of Mary Street people. As we passed the Roebuck Pub I wheeled to the left and entered it in full view of some of the Sunday School Officers! Although the pub was very near my home, I had never previously entered it. Doing this, I took myself by surprise. It was a spontaneous act intended to provoke. Not knowing what to do or how to behave once I had entered, I walked straight through to a side door and up the street to my home. Fairly soon after this, after a Sunday School session, the Superintendent, Mr Frank Ashworth¹⁴ took me aside to talk to me about the incident. The conversation led me to resign as a teacher,

14 Local government officer

the subject of Leonard Sleigh's letter. Details of the conversation are long forgotten. Ostensibly I resigned because I claimed they did not trust me – a typical adolescent response to a reasonable challenge given the prevailing beliefs in that church about alcohol at that time. I took offence because I wanted to!

Two incidents came to mind. During the earlier part of the period I used to go to the evening service. Trying to be helpful and become more involved, I took it upon myself to take the collection off the communion table into the vestry. After a few Sundays, someone took me aside quietly and said that was old Mr Leaming's job. Mr Leaming was a kind and dignified Christian gentleman (a farmer), I am sure he did not object and would have encouraged me, and certainly he never said anything to me. How unwise. [Incidentally, when I was young I thought God came and took the collection away after the service!]

The other incident occurred soon after the end of the war. A retiring collection had been arranged to raise funds towards rebuilding European churches. I walked past Billy Sleigh who was supervising this collection. I remember him coming after me as I walked down the steps (the chapel was on the first floor) and asking me why I hadn't contributed. We had a heated exchange, he was at the top of the first flight of stairs and I was at the bottom, my argument was that the people's houses should be built before churches and that church authorities should be more concerned about people than about church buildings. I felt very strongly about this even at that age – and I hadn't time for Billy Sleigh.

c1946-49: Insufferable Adolescent Agnostic and Fellow Traveller¹⁵

Degenerative and regenerative forces were both operative in this period, the one set coarsening my behaviour and the other refining it. The degenerative ones expressed aspects of the culture of the engineering works and my adolescent rebellion which was working out of my earlier frustrations and resentments. I say aspects of the works' culture because there were in it challenging Christian elements. Harold Starr already mentioned (6.6) to whom I was apprenticed for a time, was a devout Methodist whose witness to the faith was exemplary and there was a labourer whose name I have forgotten who was in impressive Salvationist. In male company my language could be common and uncouth. I attended evening services with a group of other young men but it was only to disturb the worship

15 3.3.11

by 'singing' raucously. (We occupied a back pew on the left of the chapel. A devout old couple always sat in the pew in front. We must have ruined their evening worship but to their credit they never turned on us.) Also we used to talk and snigger during prayers and the sermon. How preachers coped I do not know. All in all I was insufferable and agnostic but strangely a Christian fellow traveller. I smoked (cigarettes and a pipe); I had the occasional drink. I was rude to people, refusing to shake hands with people in the church, for instance in offensive ways.

More seriously, however, my moral standards were slipping. With a group of other boys I travelled on the railway on tickets which they had cleverly forged. Two of my friends were involved with others in elaborate and criminally clever acts of examination cheating which they pulled off 'successfully'. One of them confided to me in depth and at length over this. To my lasting shame, by default I failed to challenge his/their behaviour; caught up with the thrill of the nefarious adventure and the nervous tension of the excitement experienced even in the planning and the thought of it, I condoned it. Even worse, I pointed out dangers and weaknesses in the scheme that they had not thought of. I am appalled at this trait in my moral fabric. God forgive me. Not being involved in the examinations at all, I gained nothing materially from the escapade but I lost much self-esteem and integrity. Would that I had been made of the moral stuff which would have challenged them as I believe I certainly would do now even though I would have problems in knowing what to do about the confidences if the challenge were not acted upon. (In well over sixty years this is the first time I have written or spoken about the incident. I feel the need to write about them now, howbeit in a veiled or cryptic way to authenticate the notes and unburden myself without embarrassing others because they will be dead if these notes ever became public.)

These events – the only ones in which I have been seriously implicated in criminal events, howbeit as an accessory before the acts – illustrate my dangerous moral drifting during this period. Thank God that there were significant regenerative forces active in my life through some important people and organisations. I became actively involved in the MAYC club based in High Street. In turn that brought me back into touch with a very different side of Miss Annie Butler (see s6.3-4) and with Molly Taylor as she was then and is now Lovell! The youth club provided great and redeeming opportunities for leisure, fellowship with young people of my own age in a Christian context and free, open constructive discussion and argument and debate on any and every topic in which every view including the Christian was heard and rigorously examined. Eventually I led the 'Hiking Section'

and we had some exciting and enjoyable outings including a Youth Hostel weekend at Slaidburn. (See *Youth Progress* pp 1-2 in the Rishton file.) There was a debating group which took part in the Circuit Club's competition and won some prizes – Molly was a speaker and I a chairman! This was great fun and a chance to learn about public speaking – we were coached by a local elocution teacher – Miss Fannie Moyle. Gradually Molly and I started to become more involved in doing things together in the club and gradually we became attracted to each other and started to go out together – and the rest is history of almost 60 years of marriage!

Molly and my relationship with her and her family enormously affected my return to Christianity and my appreciation of it. I started to attend evening services at High Street principally to see and meet Molly (she was in the choir and a Sunday School teacher). Her father greatly impressed me by his approach to life, his lack of acquisitiveness, his generosity and hospitality. He was well read and able and willing to discuss things in a constructive manner quite openly. I was impressed by and respectful of Molly's commitment to Christianity and willingness to discuss and explore it with me. She brought me back into the church and to the Christian faith as will become apparent later in these notes.

The Miss Annie Butler I now got to know was a very different person from the one I had experienced as a child in the Wesleyan Day School. She was an acceptable local preacher but it was in her role as the Youth Club Leader that she had an incredible impact upon Molly and me and lots of other young people. She was a tall, large and somewhat gawky woman. She was a tower of strength. Well educated and read she was approachable and formidable at the same time; she was warm and objective; open and committed. We grew to love her. The raging and wide ranging discussions during club evenings, committee meetings and most memorable of all in her house after Sunday evening services were life changing. The atmosphere on Sunday evenings was electric – discussion and delicious drop scotch pancakes were a great combination. I remember conversations with her about the effects upon me of walking in the hills and mountains, about my life and vocation and my difficulties with English – she gave me free private tuition which was enormously helpful and confidence building.

My attendance at Mary Street was much more respectful and reverent – I recall the lovely atmosphere of quiet worship in the gas lit chapel on winter evenings – the hiss of the gas mantles added a hushing dimension to the ethos.

Yet another influence on me during this period was that in May 1947 I

left Cherry Tree Machine Company for the more sedate and sophisticated life of working at Howard and Bullough's in their drawing offices. I completed my H.N.C. studies and seriously thought about my future career led me to apply for a post with the Ministry of Supply which took me to the RAE at Farnborough and to another phase in my spiritual and religious development.

PHASE II: FARNBOROUGH AND THE RAE, SEPTEMBER 1949 – JANUARY 1950

Personally, religiously and spiritually this was a period of quiet undramatic consolidation. I had outgrown my adolescence. Molly and I were seriously committed to each other. I was living and working in a very different culture and community from that in which I had grown up, it was more sophisticated and predominantly middle or upper working class with sprinkling (if that is the right word) of upper-middle class people in my section and department at the RAE. I described this in sections 5 and 6. In this radically new context I was trying to find myself and to relate to it constructively. It was a time of learning fast – social as well as technical learning.

During this time Norman Heaps and I became close friends. He was a Methodist but theologically quite different from anyone I had previously known we went to North Camp Methodist Church which he attended regularly together occasionally. Ian Keiller, my immediate boss, was an Anglican lay reader – not that we ever discussed religion. The head of my Division, W. C. Clothier, a very fine man, was also an Anglican. I think I went to some meetings of the RAE Christian Union.

Soon after I settled in the Hostel at Farnborough I went to a harvest Festival service at Farnborough Street Methodist Church. Arriving early I was overwhelmed by the most incredible harvest display that covered the whole front of the Church. The sight, scent and atmosphere moved me almost to tears. I became homesick. This chapel and some of its leaders became very important to me during the next few years. Sadly it is now closed.

Gradually I was becoming more and more closely associated – or was it associating myself with the Methodist Church and Christianity. At that time I described myself as a nonconformist although I am not sure if I knew what the term meant! And I continued to do so for some time afterwards.

So, religiously and spiritually, it could be described as a latent period.

PHASE III: NATIONAL SERVICE, FEBRUARY 1950 — JANUARY 1952

¹⁶Seismic spiritual shifts occurred in my life during this period which shaped the remainder of my life: I became a Christian; I started preaching; I became a member of the Methodist Church, (in that order!); felt called to overseas lay ministry as an engineer; engaged in Bible study and Christian leadership causes; lived out the first eighteen months of my thorough-going Christian life. And I was privileged to greatly benefit from the ministry of one of the most outstanding and able ministers I have met, The Reverend Garfield Evans. It was for me formative and foundational. During this period I kept a fairly detailed diary. In this section I will attempt to describe and reflect on definitive experiences.

1. A Providential Encounter With My Vocational Destiny

From the 1st to the 15th July 1950 I was on embarkation leave in Rishton. (This means that I was home for my 21st birthday but I cannot remember the event nor how we celebrated it!) On the 2nd I went with Molly and all her family to Rakefoot Methodist Church, Crawshawbooth, afternoon Sunday School Anniversary celebrations. This made an enormous impact on me so much that I kept the service sheet.

The preacher was the Reverend Derrick A. Greeves a thirty seven years old Methodist Minister. From 1943-47 he was a chaplain to a paratroop regiment; from there he went to the London, South Norwood Circuit. (1947-1952) He was in fact the minister of Parchmore Road Methodist Church! (*Garlick's Methodist Registry*, 1983, p 154.) I had never met anyone like him; handsome, well educated, urbane, middle class, courageous (he had parachuted into action with his men) and clearly physically fit – and spiritually vital and alive. He told us about the church of which he was obviously proud to be the minister and excited about it: it was full and overflowing, it was engaged in ministry to and work with all kinds of people in the church and its multiple youth and leisure organizations. The Sunday School and educational programmes were thriving. He was a religious broadcaster. He was in love with Christianity and his work as a Methodist minister. His commitment and enthusiasm excited me and my imagination. Through his eyes I, something of an agnostic at the service primarily to be with Molly and to share with her and her family one of their annual trips

to Rakefoot, which they had attended when they lived in Crawshawbooth and, I think, her father had been a Sunday School teacher. It was an eye-opening experience on the possibilities of the post-war church. I had not any idea whatsoever that sixteen years later I would be the minister of that self-same church at critical point between its possible closure and its renewal through transforming it into a church, youth and community development centre and that being its minister would change the foundation and shape of my ministry radically from that point to this. Had anyone even suggested at that time that I might become a minister I would have dismissed it out of hand.

At the time I had no idea of the service becoming in retrospect one of this meaningful experiences of life, mysteriously coincidental. So much so that after some deliberation I felt compelled to describe it in the title as a 'providential encounter with my vocational destiny' because that is what it feels like. It was compounded only a few months later by meeting George Apps who was also from Thornton Heath. But more of that later.

2. Conversion

¹⁷The story of my conversion also started whilst I was on embarkation leave. It happened like this. Whilst I was packing my kit back in preparation for returning to camp, I was having a conversation with my father. One of the things he said was that now I was engaged to Molly (we were engaged in May, the 27th) I should in all fairness make up my mind one way or another about where I stood in relation to Christianity and the church. This prompted me to throw into my kitbag the copy of the Bible presented to me 'for regular attendance at Mary Street' Methodist Sunday School. This small copy of the Authorised Version, the King James Bible of 1611, the found hundredth anniversary of which we are celebrating this year, is still one of my prized possessions. (I keep it in a leather sleeve which Bruce Nelmes made for me in Tel-el-Kebir when he discovered how important it had become to me.) My thoughts as I did this were that I would read some of it and I would probably end up as an unbeliever or as an agnostic. But I did not want to consider what the implications of such a conclusion would be for my relationship with Molly.

During the voyage to Egypt I started to read from my Bible Matthew's Gospel and to discuss what I was reading and Christianity with Bob Cottam who as a nominal Anglican.¹⁸ Also I went to the services on board

¹⁷ 8.3.11

¹⁸ I note that it is scored and annotated. I think that this was done later.

conducted by a somewhat superior Anglican chaplain. I tried to have some conversation with him but he did not seem to want to engage with me. I felt he was stand-offish and snobbish. The more I read the more excited I became about Jesus as a teacher; I saw him and almost worshipped him as an incredible teacher. The conviction grew in me and possessed me, that if only we could learn to teach in the way that he did we could transform the world in the way that he did. My respect for him was enormous. Gradually, however, my admiration for Jesus and my respect changed into veneration and love and worship as I saw him not only as a great man but as the Son of God. I cannot trace out the stages and steps in my thinking and feeling but know that I arrived at Port Said as a Christian, believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Risen Christ and thinking I was the only one who knew about Pentecost!

Again we are back to this underlying theme of my life which keeps on recurring: education, education, education; teachers, teachers, teachers. It is all of-a-piece that theme of education and the notion of good teachers should open up the Christian way for me.

3. Encounters With Fundamentalism

Once settled in Tel-el-Kebir, I started to go to the church on the camp for 'other denominations', i.e. those who were not Anglicans or Roman Catholics. The members were a mixed group of men, some wives of the regular soldiers and a few children. Theologically and church-wise they were quite mixed. Brian Wiseman, who became a close friend, was a Methodist local preacher, middle of the road theologically. Some tended to be evangelical and a few especially from the RAMC were fundamentalists. It was a lively fellowship of committed Christians. As I read through my diary for the time I was in Tel-el-Kebir I was impressed by how serious we were about private and public practise of our faith and studying it together. Also I was struck by my serious application to private devotions and bible study.

Soon after I had established myself in Tel-el-Kebir, feeling the need to learn more about the Bible through studying it, I enrolled for a Bible correspondence course at my own initiative. I would have benefited from some sound advice at this stage but none was readily available. I pursued it diligently for some time but abandoned it eventually over a dispute about the two accounts of creation in Genesis. The notes were arguing that they must be taken literally but as I worked at them myself I could see they were different accounts and could not/should not be reconciled simplistically. Perhaps I was recalling something of the youth club sessions

on the Pentateuch with the Reverend Raymond Hindle! I raised this with my correspondence tutor but he did not satisfy me with his answers. This was my first encounter with literalism; the concept was new to me. Quite quickly I decided that I could not and would not be a biblical literalist nor a fundamentalist and have never gone back on those decisions, I suppose I became a literal evangelical at that time.

4. Molly's Experience of Christianity and Mine

Naturally, Molly and I corresponded at length about my becoming an enthusiastic Christian. Whilst Molly was undoubtedly pleased about what had happened to me and possibly that she had played an important part in it happening, she had problems with the way in which it happened. She had not had a similar dramatic conversion experience; she had quietly, naturally and gradually become a Christian without a 'Damascus Road' religious experience. That led her to feel that she had missed out on something and whether she had a genuine experience of Christianity. Gradualism versus conversion was very much an issue amongst young Christians at the time and had been discussed by us in Miss Butler's group. At its worst it was considered that those who had been converted dramatically were first class Christians, others second class. Our correspondence is long lost, but what I think I was arguing then as I would now, is that it is the quality of a person's Christian life that matters, not how they entered the Kingdom of God; their state of grace not the way in which that state was brought to life or its existence.

It was not until the summer of 1956 when I devoured William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* that I realized that our psychological makeup determines or conditions the kinds of religious experience of which we are capable.¹⁹

19 16.9.12 Since writing this I have found some notes of a seminar I preached on religious capacity and some notes of books including *Varieties of Religious Experience*. I have put them in the Christian life sermon file. Some of them are not well-written but I have left them as they are. The sermon notes are not dated but I think they could well have been written before I read James' book. If so I must have had questions about whether all people could have certain kinds of experience before I read James. I argued that just as people have different and physical and emotional natures and faculties so they have different spiritual ones.

R/

Off Harwood Circuit
April 3rd 1951.

From the Local Preaching Meeting.

Dear Mr. Lovel.

It was the unanimous
decision of both Ministers & Local Preachers
that I write to you, to let you know
how pleased they are, and what joy
is theirs, to hear you are taking
a keen interest in Religion Services
where you are Stationed. It is a
grand work Preaching the good
news, of Jesus Christ our Lord, what
he can be to one who tries to follow
and serve Him. Well you accept our
good wishes, & may God's richest
Blessing rest upon all that you do.

On behalf of the Local Preaching
Meeting

Yours sincerely
Wm. B. Gutter

5. Church Membership and Leadership and Preaching

²⁰Converted to Christianity I soon became involved in the church in ways in which I had never been involved before, partly because I really wanted to be and partly through opportunities created by circumstances. The church membership was quite different from anything I had known before: it did not for instance have a long established history and tradition in the way that churches in Rishton had; the membership changed frequently, National Servicemen would be there for about eighteen months at the most and regular soldiers about three years. Consequently it was a much more open society. For most of my time in Tel-el-Kebir we did not have a Free Church padre living on the Base, we were served by one stationed in Fayid. (The Reverend Garfield Evans came to serve the Base in the middle of June 1951.)

So it was up to members to organize the church and run meetings and lead services. Quite soon I became involved in all the activities and eventually because a leader and a preacher/speaker much involved in all the affairs and discussion groups. Circumstances were such that I took services and preached before I became a member! My diary records that my first service was at the chapel in Tel-el-Kebir on 5th November 1950 when I preached on Romans 12:4-5 to a congregation of nine! It must have been an evening service because I note in my diary for the 14th January 1951 that I preached my first morning sermon. On the 4th February 1951 I was made a member of the Methodist Church. Amongst my papers I found a copy of the preaching plan, the first on which I appeared, for February and March 1951, see below

ALL SAINTS CHURCH									
SERVICE SUNDAY	TIME	FEBRUARY				MARCH			
		4	11	18	25	4	11	18	25
Morning	10.00 hrs	Padre Harris Communion	G. LOVELL	Padre Harris	Rev. G. T. H. REED at St. Marks 10.15	Padre Harris	B. WISEMAN	Padre Harris	Padre Harris Communion
Evensong	18.30 hrs	B. Wiseman	B. Wiseman	N. Yarham	G. Lovell	G. Lovell	N. Yarham	B. Wiseman	G. Lovell

Leaders: { B. WISEMAN
G. LOVELL.

Tuesday 18.30 Forams Fellowship :

Non-Resident Padre :-
PADRE HARRIS

On the reverse side it says:

– PLAN –
ALL SAINTS CHURCH
(Near Garrison HQ)
This church is for ALL NON CONFORMISTS
and is not well supported.
So why not come on Sunday?

Not the best kind of publicity!

Four services in eight weeks was quite a heavy load as I was already leading regular discussion groups and had a demanding lecturing schedule on the engineering course. But I was enjoying it all and feeling very fulfilled. I felt I was making significant contributions to the life of a church for the first time in my life and this was confirmed by the tribute paid to me by Padre Garfield Evans (see my diary entry for 31.1.52 and the letter above).

In July/August 1951, I pursued the possibility of doing the studies which would lead to the Connexional Written Examinations which all local preachers have to take before they can be admitted to ‘full plan’. But it seems my lecturing responsibilities prevented me from proceeding with the arrangements the Local Preachers’ Department were able and willing to make. The correspondence (in background file on preaching) indicates this was a serious attempt to become an accredited local preacher.

6. Christian Leadership Courses and Conventions

Conventions, courses and rallies played an important part in my religious and spiritual development through introducing me to a broad based ecumenical understanding and experience of Christianity and contemporary moral issues. The chaplains who led these courses that impressed me most were those with a profound spirituality deeply committed to the basic Christian beliefs who had a meaningful relationship with Christ – a living faith – and whose approach to the faith, Bible and moral issues was informed, scholarly, intelligent and down-to-earth through being in touch with human realities. Looking back I see that I was attracted to presentations of Christianity which were suffused by emotional and spiritual intelligence and based on sound thinking. A Methodist chaplain, The Reverend David S. T. Izzett, serving in Egypt at that time, embroidered these characteristics. I mention him several times in relation to courses and rather in my diary. I think he was a senior chaplain at the time (he

Methodist Recorder
10th June 1999

OBITUARIES

The Rev David Izzett

DAVID Stewart Thomas Izzett was born at Croydon in 1910. He was born into a Methodist family; his father being a draper. Educated at Croydon High School for Boys, he then moved on to Kings College London where he obtained an honours degree in English, an AKC, and represented the college at rugby.

At the age of 22 David joined the staff of the English Mission College at Cairo for a year's VSO-style experience. During the next year at home he was candidated and then entered Wesley House, Cambridge. His academic prowess won him a share in the Finch Travelling Scholarship (with Raymond George) and he went to Berlin to complete his studies.

In 1938 he was sent by the MMS (Methodist Missionary Society) to Ceylon where he served for five years. Here he learnt Sinhalese, serving first as a teacher and then as principal of Wesley College, Colombo. The school was commandeered during the war and in 1943 David became an army chaplain, serving in Burma and Palestine.

While on leave he met up with Eleanor, whom he had known in Cambridge days, and after a fortnight they were married. After a spell at home he was posted to Egypt where he served for three years - a very happy period of ministry where a number of service personnel accepted Christ, 12 of whom went on to serve in the ministry of various denominations. After further postings at home, he came with his family, by then of four children, to serve as the senior Methodist chaplain based at the Garrison church at Aldershot. There a happy home backed up a creative period of ministry. David finished service after 23 years in the army, reaching the rank of colonel.

Thus in 1966 at the age of 56 he moved to his first home station, as superintendent of the Watford circuit. Service in the Winchmore Hill church followed, a difficult time for David who felt abandoned by official Methodism. On retirement he resigned from the ministry and moved abroad again, this time to Bethlehem where he served as field secretary for the Bible Lands Society, taking a special interest in their work with blind Arab children. Eleanor died in 1977.

A year later he married Lucy and came to live in Hemel Hempstead. There the love and care he was offered, and the words of a particular Covenant service, challenged David to apply for reinstatement to the ministry. He became a much loved colleague and friend in the cir-

cult. He preached with an amazing depth of scholarship which was accessible to ordinary people, continuing that preaching ministry - more recently from a chair - right through until the Easter Day just prior to his final illness.

David was a man of tremendous intellect and breadth of interests.

He was one of the top British experts on pre-cancelled stamps and was made a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society; he spoke with enormous knowledge of the archaeology of the Holy Land; he was a keen gardener; he chaired the local Probus club; he read widely and deeply; nationally he was president of the Bible Lands Society and vice-president of the Garden Tomb Association; he valued his membership of both the Wesley College

(Colombo) Old Boys Association and the Burma Star Association; he led more than 30 groups to the Middle East. David also delighted in his children, Paul, Mark, Timothy and Hilary, and their families, and was cared for with great devotion by Lucy.

David's life was a pilgrimage in every sense of the word. To many places, into many areas of secular, intellectual and community life, and a spiritual pilgrimage as well, from a strong evangelical root off into what seemed at the time to be wider fields, but then in his later years returning to those roots and especially to the theme of God's grace. In his own words, "It has all been by God's grace, all of grace". He died in his 89th year and in the 54th year of his ministry. - Martin Turner

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July 1910, Croydon. m. 1. 1945
(w). 2. 1978. 1d, 3s.
Education: 1917-28 Croydon High
Sch.; 1928-32 Finch Travelling
Scholar, Berlin Univ.; 1934-37
Wesley House. *Appointments:* 1938-
43 Ceylon Dt; 1940-43 Principal,
Wesley Coll., Colombo; 1943-66
Chaplain H.M.F.; 1962-66 Assistant
Chaplain-General; 1966-72 Watford;
1972-75 London, Finsbury Park and
Southgate.
Connexional Committees: 1966-74
Methodist Missionary Society; 1981
New Testament Examiner, Methodist
Study Centre; 1952-82 Bible Lands
Society (Chairman 1982); 1967
Garden Tomb, Jerusalem, Trustee;
Near and Middle East Committee
(BCC), (Member). *Local Council
Committees:* 1971-72 Mayor's
Chaplain, Watford; 1970-72
President, Watford Council of
Churches. *Publications:* *If Any Man*
(Play 1948); *Leading Tours to the
Holy Land* (1962-82); *In the Steps
of St. Paul. Hobbies and Recreations:*
Member Royal Philatelic Soc.,
Archaeology.

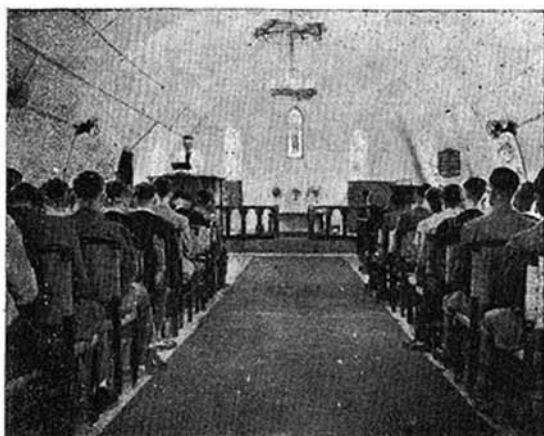
*Extract from
Garlick's Methodist
Registry, 1983*

eventually because Assistant Chaplain-General, 1962-66) probably based in Fayid. (See below for outlines of his life.)

Now to brief notes on the courses etc. noted in my diary - there may have been more.

Rally at St. Mark's Church Fayid, 10th November 1950

I note that there were some good talks and lectures but what really moved me deeply was an outstanding spiritual experience during the evening service of the 'Sacrament of the Lords' Supper', in St. Mark's Church (pictured overleaf). It was packed as in the photograph. I remember precisely where I was seated, two thirds from the front on the left black on the first seat on the left. During the service I had the most amazing and acute experience of the real presence of Christ – He was there. The awareness of His incredible presence was overwhelming. I felt alive as I had never felt before. I was overawed and yet bursting with the spiritual enlightenment and energy of the experience. Preventing myself from standing up and crying out in joy and wonder about the revelatory appearance was almost impossible. I was trembling with excitement and joy. I think I stood up and sat down again and moved into fervent prayer. The thrill of the moment returns as I struggle but fail to describe the experience adequately. I thank God for the experience. My belief in and occasional experiences of (but never as vivid as this one but nonetheless important) the 'real presence' of Christ at communion (and other times) has always been an important part of my devotional life since then and still is.



*I sat about
here!*

*St Mark's
Church
Fayid*

A Ten-day Christian Leadership Course in Ismailia, 26th February – 8th March 1951

Such courses were part of the basic education/training programme organized by the armed services' chaplains. They were also called Moral Leadership training courses. The one I went to we slept under canvas in

ST. MARK'S CHURCH, FAYID

(By the Fayid Education Centre, - Welfare buses B, C, D,
pass the door.)

RALLY

for

Church of Scotland and Free Church Fellowships
of the Canal Zone

"CHRISTIANITY THE CAREER"

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 11th.

- 3. 30 p. m.** Public Meeting.
Speakers : Rev. S. B. Harris S.C.F.
Miss G. Haymes.
(Chaplains' Assistant, R.A.F.)
Rev. C. F. Davison M.A., R.A.F.
Chairman : Rev. A. J. Potts R.A.F.
(Assistant Principal Chaplain, M.E.A.F)
- 4. 30 p. m.** Tea.
- 5. 45 p. m.** Service of Divine Worship.
Preacher ; Rev. T. H. Jones M. A., S. C. F.
- 6. 45 p. m.** Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

private tents and were treated like officers – Egyptian servants gave us tea in bed in the mornings! They were an admixture of lectures, discussions, services, leisure time (seeing and visiting Ismailia) and assault courses (two I think)! My diary indicates that I gained greatly from the whole experience. There were good lectures and discussions (I was commended for my summing up of a discussion on the 1st March!). The whole event was relaxing and renewing. Strangely one of the chaplains, The Reverend Harper, an Anglican priest was brought up in Rishton where his father was for a time the vicar. My farther knew him or of him. I found myself wishing I had been to college.

Seven-day Course at Timsah, 12th – 17th July 1951

(I have now discovered notes I took at this course which I append end of section)²¹

This was a time of deep fellowship and inspiring lectures and discussions. Padre Izzett led the course and was excellent. I think I had met him at the February/March leadership course, but he is not mentioned in my diary. On this course he greatly impressed me. On the next to the last day I heard Padre Garfield Evans speak for the first time. He was enormously impressive; I rated him the best most humorous speaker we had heard and considered he was the answer to our many prayers for a padre at Tel-el-Kebir – and he proved to be just that and more as will become clearer later.

The programme below shows that it had a serious agenda.

Weekend Convention in Fayid, 4th – 6th August 1951²²

During the opening sessions of this convention I regretted going for two reasons. Captain Forbat, a National Service. doctor who was Anglican and conservative evangelical if not a fundamentalist, who was one of the organisers had been secretive about the programme which I began to suspect was going to be theologically unacceptable to me. The other reason was that the fellowship was marred by discrimination between officers and other ranks which were in a minority. Fortunately, David Izzett was the principal speaker and he transformed the weekend into a great event for me.

21 16.3.11

22 10.3.11

DETAILED PROGRAMThursday 12 July

1815	Introductory Talk in Library (DSII)
2015	Religious Films

Friday 13 July

0830	Lecture: "Using the Bible" (DSII)
1030	Lecture: "John Wesley" (Rev D.G. Benson M.A.)
1730	Lecture: "Preparing to Preach" (DSII)
2015	Debate (in Mess)

Saturday 14 July

0830	Lecture: "The Synoptic Problem" (DSII)
1030	Lecture: "Methodism in the XIX Century" (Capt M.B. Atkinson, R.A.S.C.)
1730	Lecture: "Reading the Lesson" (DSII)

Sunday 15 July

0800	Holy Communion
1000	Morning Service (DSII)
2015	Hymn-singing in the Mess Talk on Hymns (DSII)

Monday 16 July

0830	Lecture: "The Early Church" (DSII)
1030	Lecture: "Methodism Today" (Rev S.B. Harris)
1730	Sermon Class
2015	Discussion on Modern Church Problems

Tuesday 17 July

0830	Lecture: "The World Church in the Twentieth Century" (Rev S.D. Lambert M.A.)
1030	Lecture: "From Sunday School to Conference - The Structure of the Methodist Church (DSII)
1730	Sunday School Work. Talk by F/Lt Bedford RAF.
2015	"How can I serve HM better?"

Note. All lectures will be followed by discussion.

DAILY ROUTINE

0630 hrs	Morning tea	1500 hrs	Nothing
0730 hrs	Breakfast (0830 hrs Sun)	1630 hrs	Tea
0815 hrs	Family Prayers	1730 hrs	Lecture
0830 hrs	Lecture	1900 hrs	Family Prayers (excerpt Sun and Mon)
1000 hrs	Break (Sun, 1100 hrs)	1930 hrs	Dinner
1030 hrs	Lecture	2015 hrs	As arranged
1230 hrs	Lunch		

#Something has anomaly in a military context!

After a horrendous journey I returned to Tel-el-Kebir in the early hours of the morning to find a negative response from MMS! More about that later.

One –day Conference at Timsah on the 18th August 1951

Padre Garfield Evans took me to this conference where he was the principal speaker on ‘Mohammedanism’ (sic) – a subject on which he was an expert. It was the first time I had heard a scholarly lecture on this religion – my introduction to the study of other faiths.

Later that year Garfield Evans had planned a pilgrimage to St Catherine’s Monastery, which is one of the oldest worshipping monasteries in the world. To my lasting disappointment it had to be cancelled because of some fighting that had erupted.

7. The Reverend Garfield Evans, Padre Extraordinary

Padre Evans came to Tel-el-Kebir in June 1951 to be the resident chaplain to non-conformists: he became the chaplain to the Base in effect. He was an incredible person, a Baptist minister, a scholar pastor and preacher. Born in Cardiff, possibly before the First World War, his father was a conscientious objector and he remember people shouting insults, breaking the windows of their house and being frightened by the awful abuse; he grew up speaking only Welsh until he was in his teens. His first job was caring and carrying coal to people’s houses. Eventually he got a place in Cardiff University to study for the ministry. He had an incredible gift for languages and under his tutor, H. H. Rowley, he soon mastered Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic as well as Greek. (When he came to Tel-el-Kebir he could speak seventeen languages and still counting. On his first visit to the office he addressed the Egyptians, Greeks and Welsh people in their native languages. We discovered he could master languages sufficiently well in six months to be able to address university audiences in their own language without notes.) Rowley was so impressed by him that he wished him to stay in the University as a lecturer and his assistant and pursue an academic career. Garfield Evans declined saying that he was called to be a minister and a missionary. In 1938 he was sent out by the Baptist Missionary Society to India ‘to combat the Muslim problem’. A year or so later he contracted polio and returned to England on a stretcher. Incredibly, if not miraculously, he recovered sufficiently to become an Army Chaplain in the 1939-45 war. Polio, however, left him with a limp and his face and mouth on the right I think was slightly distorted. As chaplain to a Welsh Border Regiment he accompanied a battalion as they took part in the invasion of Europe and fought their way south in the campaign. To

minister to the men under fire and in the dark, he committed large sections of the Gospels and complete Epistles to memory. During six months of the campaign, he told me he buried nine hundred of the thousand men in the battalion: he was still suffering in 1951 from this awful experience. After the war he was demobilized but could not settle in local ministry in civilian life and returned the Army as chaplain.

Padre Evans made an enormous and enduring impression upon me in many ways: he made deep meaningful personal Christian pastoral relationships; he was an extraordinarily good and powerful scholarly preacher with the common touch; he got on with all kinds of people; he was a good religious journalist (see the articles in the National Service file); he was humble and courageous. An incident occurred which illustrates his humility. One very hot afternoon he came to the drawing office where I was working alone on my engineering lectures and sat opposite me. He was in great distress. Captain Forbat had invited him to meet a group in the hospital. Garfield Evans thought it was to discuss the work of the church with reference to the hospital. Quite quickly he realized it was a theological inquisition centring on his understanding of the crucifixion. Apparently the questioning was vicious and their attitude judgemental. Once they had established that he did not subscribe to the substitutionary theory of the atonement in the way that they did, they pronounced their judgement that he was not a proper Christian and unfit to be a minister of the Gospel. Understandably he was devastated and wept in hurt and sadness as he poured out his soul to me. No one in his position had ever done that to me before nor had I seen a minister weep. His concern was for the bad effect of this fundamentalist group on the life of the church in Tel-el-Kebir.

²³Reading through my 1956 diary in preparation for writing about my time at Richmond College I discovered to my surprise that we met up with Garfield Evans in July and August 1956. I had forgotten about this. How strange. It seems he was stationed in Aldershot. He visited us on the 31st July. On the 24th July I visited him at his home to discuss whether I should do Hebrew in my second and third years after discussing the matter with him briefly on Sunday 22nd at Grosvenor Road where he was preaching. I had been very agitated about it since I spoke to him on Sunday because I could not see how I could manage to do so without working very hard and Molly was not in favour. He helped me tremendously. Although he could read the O.T. in Hebrew just like he can in English, he said never was it except for pleasure. (This may have swayed me at the time but I am not sure this would have been for me had I been as fluent as he was.) However,

I decided not to proceed with Hebrew and Dr Ward said that he did not think I would be adequately rewarded for the work I would have to put in to master the language or even to become properly acquainted with it. I note in my diary that the most impressive thing was to see a man with such enormous linguistic skills had renounced an academic life for the work of every day ministry.

Mr Evans was still in the area in October when Molly heard him preach at the evening service on 28th.

His heart was breaking in concern for Forbat and his colleagues and the other Christians who they might attack and mind rule to be heretics. I was deeply moved and upset but felt greatly honoured that he had confided in me and discussed seriously the implications. He was one of the finest Christians I ever knew.

On the 7th January 1952, three days before I left Tel-el-Kebir for the U.K, there was a terrible accident that revealed Garfield Evans' great courage: the armoury caught fire. There were violent explosions and bullets were apparently flying everywhere. At first it was treated lightly because it was believed that there were no soldiers in the buildings. Once it was established that two men were in the building, it was the Padre not the hardened soldiers who went in to try and get them out. Sadly it was too late to do anything but recover their bodies. Courage.

Garfield Evans has been to me in my Christian life and ministerial vocation what Mr Marsden was to me educationally. He became a role model in which fundamentalism and theological (or any other form) of intolerance had no place. Just before I left as he paid tribute to my work in Tel-el-Kebir he said that I was his best friend in Tel-el-Kebir. That moved me deeply; to be called the friend of such a man was an enormous gift. (See my diaries for the 6th and 7th January.)

Two coincidental meetings occurred. The first was on Armistice Sunday in 1952. I was telling Molly over breakfast in Aldershot about an incredible sermon he preached the previous year in Tel-el-Kebir. She saw a notice in the paper that he was preaching in Aldershot. We went. He preached the same sermon!

The other incident was later. Molly and I were visiting Winchester Cathedral, as I mounted the altar steps from one side he did so from the other and we met in front of the high altar. We never met again. Perhaps we will meet similarly in heaven.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:
WESLEY NORWEST
LONDON

CABLE ADDRESS:
WESLEY LONDON
CABLE CODE:
C-11-N

TELEPHONE NUMBER:
WELBECR
2541

METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

25 MARYLEBONE ROAD
LONDON N.W.1

E/M

2nd August 1951.

22334814, L/Cpl. Lovell,
C/o H.Q. Despatch Office,
2 B W., R.E.M.E.,
MELFII.

Dear Mr. Lovell,

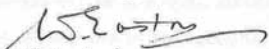
Mr. Clutterbuck has passed your letter on to me as I am concerned with overseas candidates. I am glad you are interested in overseas work and I enclose our little booklet "Service Overseas". From this you will see that we have no openings for an engineer.

Booklet at end of section.

There are two possibilities that occur to me. The first is that I would like you to reconsider your decision about the Ministry. I know it would mean putting off your marriage for a few years, but as a minister you could do good service anywhere, and your engineering experience would be an added advantage, especially overseas. The other suggestion is that we like to see Christian laymen working in overseas business houses and factories. Their witness is invaluable among the workers and in the community. I should talk this over again with your Chaplain.

My very good wishes, and I pray you may be guided to take the right course.

Yours sincerely,


(Rev. W. Easton).

8. Calls to Lay Ministry

Early in 1951 Padre Harris asked me to consider candidating for the Methodist Ministry, he felt that was my vocation. But I had no sense of call whatsoever. Having worked mostly with men, the thought of speaking at women's meetings appalled me. As I remember it, that was the main reason for rejecting the suggestion. In fact, at that time I do not think I had a call to preach or to become a local preacher – my preaching was done in response to a specific need just as my lecturing was. When I returned to the UK I remember feeling that I had finished with preaching.

During the summer of 1951, however I did have a call to serve overseas as an engineer lay missionary. Whether this was inspired by Garfield Evans I do not know. My sense is that it was around before he came. But there is

a brief note in my diary of a long conversation with him about the subject of my birthday in it I say that 'there is little doubt in my mind that my calling is to this field'.²⁴ Pursuing it caused great distress to me, Molly and my parents. Molly did not think she could cope with living abroad in a hot climate. She felt that I had been affected by Tel-el-Kebir and that I was 'out of my place' (whatever that means, diary 2nd August). My father and my mother were very angry and eventually said that I went ahead with the idea I need not come home. (At that time I found consolation in Psalm 27:10, 'though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me into his care.' and Matthew 10:35, 'For I am come to set a man at variance against his father,...' which is marked in the Bible I took with me and whist using daily at the time.) Naturally this was stressful and very disturbing. Notwithstanding I felt that I had to offer myself to the Methodist Ministry Society (MMS). And that I did. The response was that the only way in which they would be able to use my services would be as an ordained Methodist minister. Rightly or wrongly, I took that to be God saying that was not the way for me and did not pursue the 'calling' further but not without misgivings which I smothered. It resolved some relational problems which returned in another form.

9. Reflections

²⁵Several things have struck me as I have reflected on this phase of my religious and spiritual life. I note them as they come to me now. **First**, my conversion to Christianity was sound and has stood the test of the years. It occurred when I was in transition to living in an entirely different country, howbeit for a short time than that in which I had lived up to that point. In fact, I voluntarily and gladly set out on a new spiritual journey as I was on an enforced physical one. Possibly radical inner change is easier to make when one is experiencing outer change. I am not sure. But possibly it was easier to consolidate that change in an entirely new context for me: I was accepted for what I was when I arrived in Egypt/Tel-el-Kebir, not for what I had been. I was what I was. My past did not determine or condition how my contemporaries saw me. So I was in a context conducive to consolidating my new found faith. Working out the implications of my conversion and especially the missionary call with Molly and my parents by correspondence was quite another matter. We had to come to terms with what my conversion meant for our understanding of each other and our relationships. That was not easy, indeed it was very difficult and stressful

²⁴ See diary entries for 7th, 10th, 14th, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 30th and 31st July and 2nd and 7th August 1951

²⁵ 16.3.11

as indicated in the above notes. But we worked through things as best we could.

Second, I consider myself enormously fortunate and greatly blessed to have come under the influence of the men of the spiritual calibre and stature of David Izzett and Garfield Evans and laymen such as Brian Wiseman and a regular soldier whose name I cannot recall. They helped to save me from fundamentalism and a narrow way of living the Christian life and the bigotry of people like Forbat and their gross theological arrogance that rode so roughly over human sensitivity. They compensated for and corrected the effects of the Bible course and presented me with models of the Christian life which I found attractive and still do and which I adopted in many ways. The two padres introduced me to what I would roughly describe as scholarly pastoral ministry and preaching. Again, they were foundational models on which I have tried to shape my own ministry. They inspired me to love Christian scholarship and to see its enormous value in life and ministry. After some lectures by D. I., I wrote in my diary that I wished I had been to college. Little did I know or could have known that some five years later I would be at Richmond College!

Meeting these men and being a recipient of their friendship and ministry and sitting at their feet as they lectured and preached was a providential gift of grace for which I am eternally thankful.

Third, I am thankful that I kept a diary during this period, not a very well written one, but nonetheless it has helped me to reflect more perceptively on this period. I wish I had continued to keep it.

Fourth, I now realise that during this period there was a subtle shift occurring in my career axis, a sort of wavering or drift, which was to change my life. The strands of my life were:

- i. Drawing office work – rather dull
- ii. Running the engineering course – demanding but fulfilling
- iii. Church leadership and preaching – deeply satisfying and very interesting
- iv. Christian fellowship and studying Christianity – very interesting and fulfilling and stimulating

At the RAE it was my engineering work that had been the most stimulating and fulfilling. And it was stimulating and fulfilling. It is as

though the single engineering career axis was now in parallel with an emerging Christian work and lay ministry axis which eventually gave way to a ministerial vocational axis when I was accepted as a candidate in 1955.

And educational work and scholarship had been dominant interests. When I returned to Farnborough I was contemplating teaching engineering as a real career option and doing an maths degree to prepare myself for it.

This takes me to a new phase of my life: demobilization on return to UK; marriage; return to RAE; life in Aldershot; call to the ministry; candidature; Richmond College.