

How It All Began

Chapter One

Perhaps I should begin by describing what the 'All' is all about! This is the 'Come Back to God' Campaign on the one hand, but more significantly perhaps, the visionary Teaching Ministry that has always under girded it. The 'Campaign' began in 1956: but the visionary aspect began in 1949 when I received, what I believed then to be, a Commission from the Lord Himself. At the time I was only just over two years old in Christ and knew very little about the experience of God from any academic background, but, in God's goodness, He taught me a lot in terms of a living spiritual experience among other men. The circumstances in which the vision came will be later described, but the effect of it was for me to believe God for a College that would teach what we described as 'Soul Surgery', but what we now know to be a Healing and Deliverance Ministry within a wider understanding of how God penetrates a soul for its own good. Even so, the term "Soul Surgery" is an apt one for the nature of the work that is involved, so long as we do not mistake the term for some of the psychic efforts in modern America!

Today, in the 21st century, 'Adelaide College', the name given to the visionary teaching concept of 1949, has become a fifty-bedroom reality having a student body and a teaching staff. Included in the College is a print shop, a recording studio with a video studio of a high standard; together with a professional catering department serving both college and conference requirements as may be necessary. The conference ministry of the 'Come Back to God' Campaign has been owned for the blessing of thousands who have attended Campaign Conferences ever since their inception in 1965. In almost every one of these the Campaign's healing and deliverance ministries have played a significant part in that blessing, together with the team music and singing groups. The singing, music and teaching reached a much wider area when the Team broadcast over Trans World Radio, and the Isle of Man radio, for over seven years. A unique feature of the work has been the Evangelical Enquiry Bureau which was the only effective Protestant reply to the highly successful Catholic Enquiry Centre. All the major denominations made attempts which were short-lived: only the E.E.B. sustained an attempt for several years using all the national newspapers of the time, plus a goodly number of lesser papers. The E.E.B. functioned for over ten years without a penny support from the denominations or societies such as the Evangelical Alliance for example. However, thousands were reached and many were saved or helped as a result.

But did it all begin there? Has all that we have mentioned, plus the Campaign's church planting or church rescue activity, begun with the teaching and visions of 1948-9? In one sense that is true, but in another it cannot be. Personal experience of salvation precedes personal experience of spiritual vision, and it was when the converting power of God reached me in the February of 1946 that God's personal use of me became a possibility. Historically it has to be the Berlin Airlift, but only the

year of spiritual experience prior to that difficult time made it possible for God to give the vision to His servant. So perhaps we should begin the story there, a February night in 1946, the 17th to be exact, at about five minutes to nine in the O.D. ('Other Denominations') Chapel on R.A.F. St. Athan in Glamorgan. It was there that I gave my heart to God, and began to walk a pathway which has affected the rest of my life to date. Even so, the story begins a little further back still, to the time in the September of 1945, when I arrived at R.A.F. St. Athan to complete my Flight Engineer training. From then on round to the following February, a strange compulsion to hear all that the Padre tried to share at the compulsory church services, increasingly gripped me. Along with that compulsion came a sense of need never before so strongly felt, until, on a Sunday in the following February I was found in the evening service (non-compulsory) of that O.D. Chapel, one among three others!! In all those empty seats there was certainly no place to hide! That night the Padre spoke of how God had lifted the burden of others, and met the need they felt, through faith in the Lord Jesus. I bowed my young head that night and asked God to do the same for me - and right there and then God certainly did! All things changed across the on-going months of 1946 and paved the way for Christian service to begin.

After my conversion to Christ I remained at St. Athan for another year and a half, during which time I became a faithful member of a growing fellowship. After completing my course and qualifying as a Flight Engineer, I was posted (after eighteen months) to R.A.F. Bircham Newton to begin a 'conversion' course from Lancaster Bombers, on which I had originally trained, to the York, that was the R.A.F. Transport version of the same. In the months prior to leaving St. Athan, I had preached for the first time in small Welsh Chapels situated near to the R.A.F. Station. This was on the insistence of the Padre - I felt that my preaching efforts were lamentable, and I had no desire to repeat any after the first disasters. Nevertheless, the Padre still insisted and I had to persist, until, on the last Sunday prior to leaving St Athans I was able to preach at both the morning and evening meetings before leaving a day or so later.

Imagine my feelings when, on arrival at R.A.F. Bircham Newton, I found the Church closed and unkempt! I was refused permission to open and use the closed church, but the Wing Commander referred me to the Padre, a local, 76 year old, retired Methodist minister of the old school! The Rev. Rose only too eagerly gave his permission and soon the Chapel was opening again, swept and clean. Mary Harris, now with the Lord, who was one of the team serving the unit through the Salvation Army Canteen, gave me a hand to do so, and soon the previously disused chapel was in use again for Divine Worship. The seemingly extinct Fellowship came to life, rising from zero to thirty-five in the nine weeks I was in training there, and where God allowed me to lead my first soul to Christ, five such converts in all. At Bircham Newton I first learned how to preach to the 'Wood family' (empty pews). Little did I know that that was to be the case more often than not in the years to come? Like Isaiah's commission in Isaiah chapter six and verses eight to eleven, the subsequent ministry to be fulfilled was to be mainly in the places where the Christian

church had failed or was struggling - a 'failure' ministry - rather than in the well-shod influential places of apparent Christian success.

Another feature of the Bircham Newton experience, that was to be a pattern for things to come, lay in my inability to see a part of the Church die. It may only have been a disused R.A.F. Chapel, once a feature perhaps of a wartime camp life when the serving Air Force felt the need of Divine strength and pastoral comfort. That was, perhaps, no longer important over two years into "peace". Even so, for me its neglect was unacceptable, and in my efforts to restore a testimony to Christ in that building laid the seeds of a church rescue service which has been a feature of the 'Come Back to God' Campaign in its earlier years.

It must be right to ask how someone with so limited an experience, and only an elementary education, more or less, could preach twice on a Sunday and Wednesday night for good measure!! It might also be right to ask how one so inexperienced could defend the Faith once there was a reaction to it from the enemy of souls, as there was bound to be. I learned one of the most startling lessons of my Christian life when a spiritual counterattack occurred some six weeks after my arrival at R.A.F. Bircham Newton. I became aware forever that what was happening around me was certainly something that God was doing, but as this account later declares, I and my friends thought that this was how Christianity always worked - none of the events described seemed in any way unusual!! This particular enemy attack took the form of a well-educated, professed atheist, a University graduate with a BSc. degree, ridiculing all that was going on in the re-opened chapel and declaring it to be nonsense. This so angered the newly-awakened enthusiasts that they challenged this BSc. chap to a verbal duel and made all the arrangements for it to happen, before telling me that I was to be the leading protagonist on the Lord's side!! All that may seem very well, but although I looked as if I had come from a Public School, etc., the truth was that I had left school at the age of fourteen years, and had none of the usual educational qualifications whatsoever! It was true that I had to take a six months intensive educational course at Hendon Technical College prior to aircrew training, in order to get my education up to the standard required by the Air Force in wartime, but that in no way fitted me to verbally deal with a chap from a university background, plus whatever else he had managed to achieve on the way.

As I looked at the totally confident and eager faces of those young people, who had come to tell me - and at the same moment to take me - to this 'battle' for the Lord's honour as they saw it, I knew, for their spiritual well-being also, that I couldn't back off. Being so slightly grounded in the things of God themselves, my defeat would be a spiritual disaster for them, but there was no way that I could avoid that happening. I knew that there was no way that I was ever going to retreat from it, so in some trepidation I went with the four or five enthusiasts to a room in the accommodation block where my opponent was waiting, flanked on each side by other equally sophisticated R.A.F. Airmen. The opponent opened fire as soon as I was seated, using words in his destructive, atheistic question that I had never even heard before, let alone understand what exactly he was asking or questioning! As I

opened my mouth to say something, I heard my own voice replying to the question to the discomfiture of the opponent, using words that I had never heard before either!! Needless to say I was utterly confounded, let alone my opponent.

And so it went on. I simply sat as my own voice was used to rout the atheistic opposition until the day was won, an hour or so later. The enthusiasts almost chaired me out, so great was their joy. I sat later in silent wonder at the realisation of how real God was, and how exact was His power to substantiate truth. I read in my New Testament, reading the Lord's promise that His servants were not to take thought when called to testify before kings etc., because He would fill their mouths for reply. I discovered that God could still do it in 1947, a confidence that has helped me greatly in later days when a faith in God's unchanged supernatural ability was an absolute essential.

At that time two books came into my hands. One was the R.S.V. New Testament that had just been issued and the other was George Dempster's 'Finding Men for Christ'. I had never read the Bible before in a modern translation, and finding the Scripture easier to read, I read the whole of that New Testament in the nine weeks of my Bircham Newton stay. It was like I had discovered a new way of life with God, even though I was then over a year and a half saved. I had never read George Dempster before, either, and rarely had I ever cried over a book; but I cried over the stories in that one. My growing congregation was stirred by my wonder over the New Testament as I gave them large portions of it - and much moved by the descriptions of George Dempster's ministry into the need of those who were 'down and out.' So five were saved - and a response to closed or non-existent churches was born - nine weeks which were to shape the life-service of a young Flight Engineer for ever.

