

Second Year in Cambridge

Clare College, Cambridge
October 1975 to June 1976



Adrian Hall

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Second Year in Cambridge

October to December 1975

Notes written in September 2024:

My second year at Cambridge spanned from October 1975 (nearly 49 years ago) to June 1976. Thinking over that year, three things stand out as 'themes': firstly, it was an academically intense year, culminating in the gruelling Part 1 Tripos exams, with 9 engineering subjects; secondly, I was heavily involved with the Christian Union, both at a College level and at an intercollegiate (University) level; and thirdly, there was a constant focus on Pakistan, starting with application for the position, and once accepted, preparation for the trip.

The year represented a 'high point' of my Cambridge career, a kind of plateau. But perhaps the overriding experience was in my prayer times, both in the daily discipline of Quiet Times, and in more extended seasons of intercession and prayer, seeing the Lord answer in amazing ways.

Such memories inspire and encourage me now, as with advancing years I feel perhaps less confident, as the stakes are higher and life seems more complex. Yet the Lord does not change, his love and faithfulness remain ever constant. So I am challenged to trust in the Lord afresh, as in 1975 and 1976...

Term 4 (October – December 1975)

These notes were written in 1977 during my travels through Greece...

Freshers' work, personal evangelism – Paul T, Peter K [first year engineers]. Not finding it easy. Social life – girls from Homerton [Teachers College]. A good introduction, but not really friends of my own – as they tended to be friends of Ben, Ed etc. Dave C told me about a prophecy given at his father's church: "The Lord wants rugged people..." Concept of being 'rugged' for the Lord in the midst of a soft generation. Letter to [a close relative] – a kind of treatise of the Christian faith. Probably useful for me in helping me get the arguments clear in my own mind. The reply carried a note of real hope and encouragement: "Jesus lived. Jesus lives!" Interview with Arthur P, BMMF. Possibility of going to India, but – some hope! I discussed this with my parents at home, but their reaction was that all evangelism to those of other faiths was arrogance – and that whilst at University I should concentrate on engineering...

So reads the note written in haste in 1977 as part of my analysis of 'The first six years'. But this note does not tell the whole story...

Letter to a close relative, 4 November 1975

Letter to a close relative, written from 7 Castle End, Chesterton Road, Cambridge, dated 4th November 1975:

First of all, thank you very much for such a very enjoyable stay during July – Gosh! I hope I remembered to write a thank you letter after my stay! So much seems to have happened since then. I expect you know all news about GPDH's retirement and his (various) letters to the Times, including the one that got the First Sea Lord hopping mad (at least for a day or two)... I must say terms at Cambridge for me have gone like [ascending graph], where the ordinate is 'enjoyment' measured to a scale of 'thrills per second'...

This term so far has been tremendous. Partly because I feel much happier about the work, now that I've 'caught up' (this time last year I hadn't even arrived at Cambridge), and also physically fit: I've taken up rowing, joining in with the Novices, and have been rowing at Stroke for the last two outings.... And then friendships are deeper and more meaningful. I have a superb room – very modern and luxurious. I've also been trying to get a sensible amount of sleep at night... sometimes... which reminds me, on Friday there's an all-night film showing of War and Peace, the original Russian version – from 11.30 pm on Friday evening to 7.00 am Saturday morning that I'm thinking of going to (whew!)

After 10 days of term, I walked Tom B – whom I'd never seen before in my life, saying: "You and I have a year in common." He's just returned from Kenya, having taught for a year at Mgalu High School [Mbale-Dabida], taking over from me – so it has been tremendous catching up on local news, and seeing the Taita Hills afresh, through his impressions...

I also had the opportunity (and time)... almost as never before, to do some hard thinking about the Christian faith and the reasoning behind it – in a sense to put Christianity 'on trial' and to look at it in a detached and objective sort of way. Although there is very much more reading and thinking to be done (not much time in the middle of full term), I reached some pretty definite and exciting conclusions, some of which I'd like in all openness to share with you – grateful for your response or reaction or comeback.

The thing that first impressed me as I began to study the fundamentals of Christian belief was the 'make-or-break', 'all-or-nothing' nature of its intellectual basis. Either Christianity *is* true or it *isn't*. Either Jesus is "the way, the truth and the life" or he isn't. If he isn't, then the whole thing falls flat on its face and it isn't worth wasting time doing Christian things or trying to salvage fragments of 'truthfulness' from the wreckage. If, on the other hand, Christianity *is* true, then it is wholly true, and you can't go half measures – nothing short of out-and-out commitment of one's whole personality to God through Christ, with all that this implies in terms of really 'living it out' is justifiable!

Christianity is Christ, and it all depends on Him, so with Christ we must begin. I went through the gospel records, looking at the life and words of Jesus as recorded by the evangelists, and I began to realize, as never before, how formidable, and yet how self-centred, were his claims. John for example records a series of sayings (or perhaps he condensed the sense of Jesus' claims to a series of sayings) beginning "I am" –

- (i) "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14 v 6).
- (ii) "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8 v 12).
- (iii) "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6 v 35).
- (iv) (Referring to the significance and purpose behind his death) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10 v 11).
- (v) "I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved..." (John 19 v 9).
- (vi) "I am the true vine... He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15 v 1, 5).
- (vii) If all this isn't enough, he also claims, after he raised Lazarus from the dead: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11 v 25, 26).

Perhaps most sensational of all, also in John's Gospel (which probably contains the closest insight into Jesus' nature – John was 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', particularly close), Jesus is recorded to have said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, *I AM*" (John 8 v 58). In verse 59 we read, not surprisingly, that the Jews took up stones to throw at him, because his answer had a double stigma attached to it: not only did Jesus say that He exists before time began, but any self-respecting Jew knew that 'I am' was the name given to Yahweh, the only (true) God.

That Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (= God the Son, God himself) is made abundantly clear in the other gospels. For example, Mark, who was Peter's biographer, records Jesus as having asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" and the disciples repeated all the popular answers of their time, just as today you might have said, "Some say a great moral teacher, others one of the prophets (of which Allah is the greatest), others a sort of Hari Krishna or guru, others a revolutionary with ideas too far ahead of his time, others an extra-terrestrial being from another planet, others just a very good man (who has since been surrounded by myth) etc." The Jesus asked, "But who do *you* say that I am?" and Peter replied, "You are the Christ" or "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew), and Jesus congratulates him and commissions him as the 'rock' on which He will build his church.

The verses I have quoted are not 'proof-texts' lifted out of the gospel narratives... You only have to read the gospels to see that the whole account of Jesus' life is impregnated with the sense that Jesus is more than just a man – that He has divine authority and power. The beginning of Luke, for example, is full of phrases like: "And demons also came out of many, crying, 'You are the Son of God!'" (Luke 4 v 41). "And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4 v 36). When Simon Peter saw the great shoal of fish he had miraculously caught, his reaction was to fall down at Jesus' feet saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5 v 8). When the paralytic was let down through the roof Jesus said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you," and when the scribes and Pharisees questioned the authority of Jesus, he replied, "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? *But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins*" and he told the paralytic to take up his bed and walk, and he did (Luke 5 v 20 to 25).

At the end of the famous Sermon on the Mount, Matthew records that the crowds were astonished at Jesus' teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. Finally, from Jesus' own words as recorded in the gospels, we are told the purpose of Jesus' coming into the world, and the significance of his death and resurrection: "I came," he said, "that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father" (John 10 v 10, 11, 17, 18); and "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20 v 28).

Faced with Christ's claims about himself, and his divine authority and power which seems to emerge from the accounts of his life in the gospels, it would appear at first that there might be five possible interpretations:

- (1) That the whole thing is a frame up; the gospel stories are a fabrication invented by a fanatical group of first century Jews who had lived with Jesus, followed him, been impressed by his character, created the myth of his divinity, refused to accept the fact that he had died when he did, and deluded themselves into thinking that he had somehow risen from the dead and was actually still alive.
- (2) That the gospel records are partly true. Anything miraculous or supernatural, or any claim to divinity on Jesus' part, was added later in the writing.
- (3) That the gospels are by and large a true account of Jesus' life and teaching. That he did actually make the claims that are recorded. But he was mad. (It is not uncommon

- for loonies to go around saying that they are God, or Jesus come again, or the Son of God and such like.)
- (4) That the gospels are largely a true account of Jesus' life and teaching, and he did make the claims that are recorded. But he was in fact only human. His teaching about himself is wrong and he knew it, and so he goes down as the greatest blasphemer, liar and hypocrite that has ever lived.
 - (5) That the gospels are at least mainly true, in the account they give of the life and teaching of Jesus. And that he did what they say he did, and that he is all that he says he is.

I will now deal briefly with each argument.

Alternative (1): If you agree with the first conclusion, then I challenge you simply to *read* the gospels themselves, openly, candidly, discarding preconceived opinions as to their validity, and simply see whether they read like fairy-tales or eye-witness accounts. (Each gospel takes 1 – 2 hours, reading them (at first) in a good modern translation (e.g. Good News for Modern Man), like a novel). A few facts which would seem to indicate that they are not a fabrication are:

- (a) The four gospels are not 'identical' in any part; neither do they seriously contradict each other.
- (b) The narratives are full of odd details, almost 'irrelevant' in that they do not contribute to dramatic or literary effect, but are most likely included because the disciples are writing about events that actually took place, e.g. "They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first (John 20 v 4).
- (c) There is no attempt to 'cover up' or make excuses for the apostles' failures and mistakes. Mark, as I said, was Peter's 'secretary' but Mark records that Jesus rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God but of man" (Mark 8 v 33), when Peter tried to persuade Jesus to avoid going to his death. No attempt is made in this gospel to conceal the fact that Peter denied Jesus three times on the night of his betrayal (Mark 14 v 66), that he had fallen asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane, and that even during the climax (perhaps) of the 3 years of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Transfiguration, Peter had put his foot in it, and said the wrong thing (Mark 9 v 5, 6).

Alternative (2): This has already been dealt with. The 'miraculous' bits or Divine-authority-of-Jesus bits do not appear inserted here and there like currents in a cake. If in fact you were to go through the gospels striking out every allusion to the miraculous, or supernatural, or divine, I doubt if you would be left with anything worth serious consideration.

Alternatives (3) and (4): These conclusions are connected, and one answer will suffice for both. I said at the beginning of this discourse, that on studying the gospel narratives I have been impressed by the formidable, and yet self-centred nature of Jesus' claims. But what is even more remarkable is the fact that such claims were made by one whose life was so utterly *selfless*. When Jesus saw the widow of Nain with her dead son in a funeral procession, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep," and raised her son to life (Luke 7 v 13), even though (as he knew) the report that followed was one of embarrassment to him (v 17). After John the Baptist's execution, Jesus naturally wanted to get away from the crowds to be alone. "Now when Jesus heard this (John's death) he withdrew from there in a boat to a lonely place apart. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. As he went ashore, he saw a great throng; and *he had compassion on them* and healed their sick" (Matthew 14 v 14). The followed the famous feeding of the 5,000. For almost 3 years Jesus had no permanent home ("foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9 v 57). Towards the end, it seemed, he hadn't a penny to his name, for he couldn't even produce a coin of his own to use as a visual aid for his "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Luke 20 v 24). The soldiers who crucified Jesus took his only possessions, his clothes, and cast lots for his tunic. In fact Jesus had nothing left to give – except himself. As he explained in the breaking of bread at the Last Supper, "Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you." And of the wine, "This is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many" (Matthew 26 v 26 – 28). Even as he hung

on the cross – an innocent man dying a criminal’s death – Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23 v 34), and as he was dying, he thought of his mother Mary, and asked John to look after her (John 19 v 26). Jesus showed supreme love: “Greater love,” as he said, “has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15 v 13). And when you consider the sound sense of his teaching, the wit and brilliance with which he answered the Pharisees’ complaints, his generally calm and unhurried manner of life, his humanity as he struggled with temptation in the wilderness and at Gethsemane, the poise and patience with which he endured the trial, the torture and the cross, it is hard to make out a convincing case that he was a psychic, or schizophrenic, or mental, or self-deluded, or on drugs etc. It seems more likely that he was just sane...

Which leaves us with the fifth possible conclusion in the face of the evidence of the gospels: that they are by and large an accurate account of what Jesus did and said; that what he said about himself – the claims he made – are true. It therefore follows that all that Jesus said about God, and man’s relationship to Him, about sin, judgment, death, about salvation and eternal life, are also likely to be true.

These are some of the things that Jesus said:

- (a) “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven” In other words, there is no salvation by good works, by trying to keep the Law. Indeed we have all broken it, for Jesus’ summary of the Law begins, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and soul and strength. This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22 v 37, 38). Not many of us have kept that, let alone, “Love thy neighbour as thyself”.
- (b) During Jesus’ discussions with the Pharisees, he announces some of the terrible consequences of sin: “You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he” (John 8 v 24); and John 8 v 34: “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin” (is that not true from experience?) But – and this is not so obvious, v 36: “If the Son shall set you free you shall be free indeed.”
- (c) How? Why? Because, as Paul explains in 1 Timothy 1 v 15: “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” And in John 10 v 10 Jesus declares: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”, and he goes on to talk about himself as the Good Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep, as has already been discussed. Christ was, as it were, a substitute for us, suffering the punishment we deserved, dying where we should have died; for God, who is Holy and Just cannot allow sin to go unpunished. In Jewish language, Jesus was himself a ‘full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world’. Just as the high priest in Israel laid his hands upon the head of a live goat – symbolizing the transfer of the people’s sins – and then sent it away to die in the wilderness (the original ‘scapegoat’ – see Leviticus 11), so “Christ himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Peter 2 v 24).
- (d) The price of sin has already been paid, and all now depends upon our response to what Christ has done. Indifference counts as rejection, for “He who is now with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters” (Luke 11 v 23). There are just two alternatives: (i) “*He who believes in the Son* has eternal life; *he who does not obey the Son* shall not see life but the wrath of God rests upon him” (John 3 v 36). Why? Because he does not accept God’s forgiveness as a result of Christ’s death upon the cross, and so he is not forgiven. It is interesting to note that almost all we know about ‘hell’ comes not from the Old Testament, nor from Paul’s writings, but from the lips of Jesus himself (e.g. Matthew 25 v 41). (ii) “He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life; he does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life” (John 5 v 24).
- (e) What is this eternal life constantly referred to? “This is eternal life, that they may *know* Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent” (John 17 v 3) – a living relationship with God. How do we enter into it? “I am the door. If anyone enters by me he will be saved” (John 10 v 9).
- (f) And what does this actually involve? First of all, repentance. “Now after John was arrested Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; *repent* and believe in the gospel!’” (Mark 1 v

14, 15). Repentance is not just vaguely feeling sorry but being willing to break completely from all that your conscience tells you is wrong. Repentance is also a command (Acts 17 v 30), as Paul preached at Athens: “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent...”

It is necessary also to realize the hardship and self-denial and suffering involved in being a follower of Christ. Matthew 16 v 24: “And Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would seek to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.’” “for which of you desiring to build a tower (or desiring to be a true Christian) does not first sit down and count the cost” (Luke 15 v 27)? It is no woolly or half-hearted or indefinite thing to become a true Christian. Jesus, in conversation with Nicodemus (John Chapter 3) answers, “Unless one is born anew he cannot see the Kingdom of God” – just as a human fetus cannot see the world outside his mother’s womb until it is born. The step of committing oneself to Christ for the first time, and the changes that should accompany it, is so radical that it can really only be described in terms of a ‘new birth’. You begin all over again. As Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 5 v 17, “If any man is in Christ, *he is a new creation*. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Jesus’ words in Revelation 3 v 20, as he appears in a vision to John, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.” In a sense, all that is necessary is simply and humbly to accept Christ, knowing that if you come to Him, he accepts you just as you are (John 6 v 37). In this way you enter into a relationship with God that lasts for eternity and cannot be broken. “To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God” (John 1 v 12). You receive the Holy Spirit, the Comforter (= strengthener) or Counsellor, able to transform your character to be like Christ.

Finally, you receive the deepest, purest, fullest Joy that man can ever experience – the Joy that God has always intended you to have. Peter writes of Christians, “Without having seen Him you love Him. Though you do not now see Him you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy” (1 Peter 1 v 8), or “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Tell me what you feel about all this...

Clare Christian Union Prayer Letter, December 1975

Clare Christian Union Prayer Letter enclosed with hand-written note from Adrian T (probably put in my pigeonhole early December 1975):

Dear Adrian, One prayer-letter hot off the press for your entertainment / use. Give my love to Huddersfield – it seems as tho’ you’ll be there before I will. Hope you have a good Christmas. God Bless, Adrian.

CHRISTIAN UNION PRAYER LETTER

The distinctive mark of the Christian, according to Jesus, is that we love one another (John 13 v 35) – and that love is to be modeled on His love for us (John 15 v 12). One way Jesus showed His love was by praying for His disciples (John 14 v 16, 17; John 17 v 9 to 26), and that example is surely almost reason enough for a prayer letter. If our love for one another is even the slightest reflection of His love, it will show itself in prayer.

We have a lot to thank God for this term, particularly in respect of those in the first year. Praise Him for those who came up rather nervous and unsure what to expect, yet have settled in well and even enjoyed themselves! For those who are already making their presence felt in the CU and teaching us such a lot about worship and joy in praying together. Thank God for the Freshers’ Lunch – for Alan G and the Water into Wine Band, and for the encouraging numbers each Sunday. Pray for the Exploratory Bible Study Group – for Dave R and Steve B as they lead it and for members of the group – Gareth, Andrew, Charles, Nicholas and David.

At the end of this academic year some of our number will be moving on to 'better things' – please really pray for them, that God would clearly show what His will for the future is and that they would be open and obedient to His guidance. Why not pray specifically for those in your Bible Study Group?

Anne G – will be studying Administrative Studies at Yale for two years. This vac – industrial tour in Sheffield.

Andrew S – applying soon for jobs, one possibility is in the Met Office.

Alistair M – no definite plans, possible research applicable to work abroad later or possibly changing Tripos.

Janet H – going to the Middlesex Hospital (to work) after Clare.

Terry D – going to study moral and clinical Theology in Rome for seven years; probably ordained sometime then.

Peter C – unsure but thinking in terms of social work.

Tim L – job applications this vac to Civil Engineering Consultants.

Gregor D – finish thesis then possible further research in Cambridge or teaching.

Steve U – considering research here or elsewhere.

Steve B – possibly ODI Fellowship with two years training (economics, planning) in Africa.

Several conferences / working parties are happening over the vac with contingents from Clare. Pray those involved would not only benefit themselves but me more equipped to help others because of them: Bede House (Dec 8 to 13) – Arthur, Mike, Steve the B, Peter C; Pastorate Conference – Peter K, Dave C, Dave and Pamela T; CICCUC Conference – Jill, Helen, Lesley, Adrian H, Tim, Andrew S.

Adrian T is attending a selection conference for the C of E ministry on Dec 15, while John W has to decide which Theology College to apply to. Please pray for them, also for Clare Chapel – thank God for Prof Moule, the Dean, and David Tennant and pray for their work, that God would be glorified. Remember in prayer the chapel wardens – Jill M, Judy S, Mark H, John W, Leslie H and Dave R.

Three points for next term:

- (1) Thank God very much for Tim L and all he has done for us. Pray for Adrian T as he takes over and John P as he continues.
- (2) Who'll lead BS groups next year and what'll we study?
- (3) Janet Blackburn [link missionary in Maiduguri, Nigeria] – on furlough at the moment, we hope one BS group will write to her regularly next term – any offers?

Finally, pray that God would use each one of us at home this vac: "Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere" [2 Corinthians 2 v 14]. Yours warmly in Christ, Tim and John.

Christmas Vac 1975, the Golden Vac

These notes were written in 1977 during my travels through Greece...

After a long, featureless slog at work, and then beautiful sunsets over the Wolds, and a last Honda ride: December 18th – the miracle of passing my Driving Test, concurrent with a healing work of the Spirit. I found that the Lord could be trusted in the sphere of friendships and relationships, in the practical as well as the emotional aspects. Wonderful times with Cathy F and Wendy R, walking along the beach in winter and playing silly games. In the realm of casual relationships, 'mixing and mingling', there is a line, and you can go right up to it without crossing it. Using the 'Lands of Love' analogy, this vac I had passed well and truly out of the 'frigid' mountains, and into the happy green and pleasant land of friendships...

The Golden 10 Days – stayed with Richard C at East Grinstead. Talked about God's guidance in our lives. The CICCUC conference [at Herne Bay Court, Kent], with Ben, the Homerton crowd and Patsy Evans [youth worker at Holy Trinity]. A 'low key' conference, with much learned about relating to one another. Then to Virginia Water to stay with Richard T-D and family. Prayer just before his departure to New Zealand, Hugh's return to Haileybury and mine to Cambridge. Different places but the same Lord; separated from each other but One in Him. What a privilege to serve the Lord – what greater master could we serve?

So reads the note written in haste in 1977 as part of my analysis of 'The first six years'. But this note does not tell the whole story...

1976

Term 5 (January to March 1976)

These notes were written in 1977 during my travels through Greece...

The monotony of 'back to Cambridge' after such a superb vac began to give way to frustration over summer vac employment – as every firm turned me down (over 30 refusals in all), and mounting tension as BMMF informed me that it was 'just possible' that I would be able to join a technical team in India or Pakistan. How to fit in India with Engineering (Part II experience) and still get to Inverpolly [North-west Scotland]?

Lent bumps – a disastrous collision with a motor launch [Sir Robert Taylor], but carrying our oars on the way back I was asked to be College Representative [for CICCUC] for next year (including the Lent Mission) – a ministry I was anxious to fulfill. 'Coll Rep's' day with Rev Jonathan Fletcher [David Fletcher's younger brother, who said "this is the most exciting spiritual leadership position for any student in England today"] "who does not care for the perishing, seek the wandering, heal the maimed and nourish the sound..." The musical "If my people..."

So reads the note written in haste in 1977 as part of my analysis of 'The first six years'. But this note does not tell the whole story...

In an email to a relative sent in August 2024 I wrote:

Great to hear that you have taken up rowing!

When I was about your age, I also took up rowing... Actually it was partly for medical reasons, as when I got back to England after a year in Kenya I came down with TB and was in hospital for 5 weeks. So when I started my engineering degree at Cambridge the doctor advised me to take up rowing, to help restore muscle mass and strength!

Clare College (Cambridge) had a very active and keen boat club, and I enjoyed rowing on the stroke side of an 'eight'. The river Cam is quite narrow, so you can't row two eights side by side. So, they had what was called the 'bumping races' – all boats would cast off in a line, about 3 to 4 boat-lengths apart, and when the cannon fired (Bang!) you had to row furiously to 'bump' the boat in front, while avoiding getting bumped by the boat coming up from behind. Once a 'bump' had taken place, both boats had to pull into the tow path and the race was over for them. If you completed the course without either bumping the boat in front or getting bumped by the boat behind, you had 'rowed over'. The course was at least 5 km, so it was quite an effort to row over – all good fun!

If my People... – 1976

*Keep looking down, we're seated in the heavenlies,
God's mighty power has raised us from the dead.
Keep looking down, above all principalities,
For you have died and risen with the Lord.
And in His name we have authority,
And in His name we shall prevail;
And in His name we dare to face the enemy,
And in His name we cannot fail...*

Keep looking down...

*Lord, achieve your holy purpose,
Wake your church to intercede;
All across this dark'ning nation
Bid your people humbly plead.*

*Send the seasons of refreshing
Promised in your Holy Word;
Healing, peace and restoration,
Righteousness and joy restored.*

*Separate the church apostate
From the living church of God,
Purge and purify your people,
Turn their hearts of serve the Lord.*

*Hold aloft the Spirit's standard
Over all the earth below;
Let the blood-washed now assemble,
Let the mighty army grow!*

*Send us for the into the battle
In the armour of the light;
By the power of the Spirit,
Overcoming Satan's might.*

*In the face of persecution
Faithful even unto death;
Shrinking not from toil or suffering,
Praising till our dying breath.*

Easter Vac 1976

Saw N and E before their long trip abroad (to Europe and Greece), and suggested that N should try and make it up with Dad...

31 March 1976 – the last firm had refused summer vacation work (“We regret... regrettably... it is to be regretted that... with regret...”). Every door was closed; but the Lord told me clearly that I was going to Pakistan. That day, in the park at Legbourne, I confronted my father because he had refused to see N. I told him that the morally right thing to do was to see him and make it up with him, to forgive him. My father was livid; I don't think I have ever seen anyone so furious... (At the same time the music of “If my people...” kept playing though my mind ... “Separate the church apostate from the living church of God...” “Keep looking down, we're seated in the heavenlies...”). My father gave me a long manuscript to read (setting out the reasons for his estrangement from his son). I noticed that the paper had been torn in two, but had since been taped together (who tore it and why?) Part of the document gave a wonderful picture of Dad's background and life history, a picture I had only glimpsed before and was now able to see in more detail – but Oh, how sad to have such a

picture clouded by such bitter circumstances. I had a lot to pray about that evening, but that night I had a vivid dream that the long awaited news from BMMF had arrived and was waiting for me at the breakfast table...

1 April 1976 – and there it was! A letter of acceptance from BMMF, to work with ZOR Engineers Ltd (with Stephen M). All that was needed was 'confirmation' (i.e. medical and various administrative formalities), but...

The steps of a man are from the LORD, and he establishes him in whose way he delights... (Psalm 37 v 23)

Looking back on these events, because the trip itself was so successful, and so clearly paved the way for the future, this was one of the greatest and most wonderful answers to prayer I have ever received. There were other doors yet to be opened, but when (at that time) all other doors had been closed, this was truly the OPEN DOOR that Jesus had set before me...

Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut... (Revelation 3 v 8)

Praise the Lord for the doors he had closed and for the door he had opened!

BMMF Conference – a stimulating and exciting time. Dave C got himself sorted out. It was there that we first met Heather S. We all hoped to go to Nepal together.

Term 6 (April – June 1976)

- A high plateau, with three simple, clear objectives: (i) Coll Rep; (ii) Tripos Part I; and (iii) Pakistan (preparation for)
- May 16th – unity within the Clare CU, freedom of witness and sharing the gospel – suitable preparation for the Mission next year.
- First began to 'click' with the First Year group – Estelle D, Jon C, Mike W, Mark H and Rosie M. Ian S professed faith during the term.
- Examination build up to Part I. Mammoth revision programme, making me very preoccupied with exams, so that Heather and Dave both found it impossible to get through to me. This was the last time I really 'enjoyed' hiving off and being on my own.
- Superb series of BR's on James given by Dick Lucas

Letter from Dan B

Letter from Dan B, Karachi, Pakistan, 26th May 1976

Dear Adrian,

Re: Summer Work Experience

This is just a brief line to welcome you to Z! And give you an outline of what we have in mind.

1. I presume you will be arriving in Karachi, where you will be met, (provided we have adequate warning of your flight arrival details / flight number and date). Ruth and I will be happy to provide accommodation for you. It will be nice to have you here for a few days and we shall fit in a couple of site visits and possibly a visit to our K Project site – (K Rural Health Care Project).
2. We propose locating you in Lahore, where Dennis M is the Technical Manager, and he will arrange your site programme. We have noted what Anne C wrote about the need for *actual engineering* (as against labouring) and will try and give you a worthwhile time. We have one very large building project – which should be at an interesting stage – and several smaller sites, but all buildings – not roads etc.
3. It should be possible at some stage to give you time to visit the hills – Murree and further north to Tarbela Dam (for example).
4. We understand you are meeting all your own expenses.. You should allow at least £2 per day for board and food, plus extra for travel and spending money. You will receive

a small allowance, based on what we would pay a Pakistani for similar work. You will have to observe normal Company discipline, hours etc. Any expenses incurred for the work (e.g. travel to out of the way sites – for work – will be paid by us!) It is possible to get student concessions on air and rail – provide you have your ‘credentials’.

5. As far as Church involvement is concerned, this will be largely up to you. You will find many personal opportunities to witness and at St Andrews, Lahore, possibly opportunities for testimony etc.

We shall be praying that you will enjoy your visit and find it useful professionally and a blessing spiritually. Yours sincerely, D A B.

Photographs from Summer 1976

Some photographs I took during the summer of 1976...

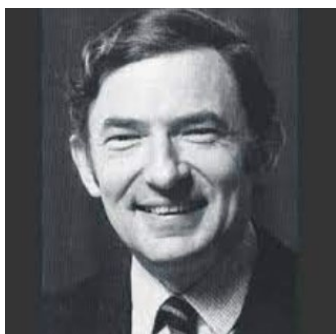


The Colony (Wilflete and Castel End), Clare College



Punting (and swimming) on a hot summer's day after second year exams...

David Watson – “You are my God...”



Tribute to David Watson (Excerpts from autobiography, ‘You are my God’, Hodder & Stroughton, 1983).

“Would you like me to explain exactly how you can find God through Jesus Christ?” asked John Collins... We agreed to have breakfast together the next day at the Garden House Hotel where he was staying. It was a sumptuous feast: fruit juice, kippers, eggs and bacon, toast, coffee – the lot, because John wanted as much time as possible to explain to me the way to God... He began by asking if I felt any need of God... Perhaps in my more reflective moments I was not too sure of the purpose of my life. “Is that what you mean by a need of God?” I asked John. He explained that a sense of purpose is certainly included, but that our primary need of God consists in our need of forgiveness... “Yes,” I said after further discussion, “I’m prepared to admit that I have sinned and so need forgiveness.”

John then described the next step as believing that Christ had died for my sins. “Oh dear,” I thought to myself. “Here are these religious clichés which don’t mean a thing. Anyway, how can the death of Jesus all those years ago possibly have any relevance to me today?” John unexpectedly took a piece of toast and placed it on his upturned left hand. “Let this hand represent you, and this toast represent your sin.” Looking at the semi-burnt piece of cold toast I thought it was a fair analogy. “Now, let my right hand represent Jesus, who had no sin on him at all. There is a verse in the Bible which speaks about the cross like this: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord (God in heaven) has laid on him (Jesus) the sin of us all”... As he said that, John transferred the toast from his left hand to his right hand. “Now,” he said, once again with that winsome smile, almost like a chess player saying checkmate, “where is your sin?” My arrogant self despised the simplicity of it all; but logically it was plain as could be. “I suppose my sin is on Jesus,” I replied, going along with his analogy. In my heart I was beginning to see it, even though my mind wanted something much more intellectually profound. Perhaps that was the meaning of the cross. Perhaps Jesus did somehow take upon himself the sin and guilt of us so that we, sinners though we all are, could be free to know the love and forgiveness of God, without any barrier at all. John referred to several other verses in the Bible which made exactly the same point...

So we went to the final step to knowing God. John took me to a promise of Jesus that I had never heard before, from Revelation 3 v 20: ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in.’ We talked a little more, and I could see that faith simply means taking a person at their word. If, in prayer, I asked Jesus into my life, I had his promise that he would come in, and so make God real in my experience... That evening, alone in my room, I read the booklet *Becoming a Christian* by John Stott, Rector of All Souls, Langham Place, London, where John Collins was a curate. The booklet was largely a summary of our breakfast conversation, but with all its simplicity it was compellingly clear in its logical reasoning. Steadily I realized that, if these things were true, I wanted them to become real in my own life. Awkwardly I slipped on to my knees beside my bed and prayed the prayer at the end of the booklet... Absolutely nothing happened. No visions, no feelings, no experiences, nothing. Everything seemed just the same as before. I felt let down; and yet as I climbed into bed I had a quiet sense of peace that I had done the right thing... I wrote a note to John Collins to say that I had done it, and what next? Two days later I had a charming reply to encourage me, and he mentioned that he was asking a friend of his to call on me. “Oh no!” I thought. “I really have fallen into a religious trap” – and I did not want to become religious. But I was astonished, on my return from lectures that very same morning, to find a hand-written note on my table. For years I had been a cricket enthusiast; I was not a very good performer... but of my various cricketing heroes, none was greater than David Sheppard. With my studying at Cambridge, living in Sussex and being English, the one cricketer who evoked in me an enormous admiration was, naturally, the person who had recently been made Captain of Cambridge, Sussex and England... Imagine my astonishment, therefore, when I read this short note on my table:

John Collins wrote this morning suggesting that I look you up. I will look in after lunch, but do not stay in especially. Yours, David Sheppard...

Without attempting to be dogmatic, it is my personal belief that those who put their trust in God's love and mercy *insofar as they understand him*, will be accepted by him. As a motorist may cross a bridge on a motorway without realising that the bridge is even there (let alone any details about it), so it may be possible for a person to come to know God 'over the bridge' of Christ without knowing anything about him. That person's understanding, joy, assurance, faith and hope will all naturally be limited, until he does discover the truth about Christ. But personally I do not believe from the scriptures that there is no hope at all for those who do not, or cannot, call themselves Christians. If in their hearts they have truly responded to God, however little they know about his Son or his gift of salvation, God may well accept them on that Day of Judgment. What *is* clear, however, is that those of us who do know, or can know, have no excuse whatsoever if we "neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2 v 3). At least we can rest assured that God, who is Judge over all the earth, will do what is right...

What is the nature of death? There is much confusion about this, understandably, and the Bible significantly talks about 'the shadow of death'. We do not see clearly what it is, nor what lies ahead of us. Sometimes death is referred to as a horizon. A horizon marks the limit of what I can see now, but does not mark the limit of where I can go later. There is something beyond a horizon... death ruthlessly breaks the deepest bonds of love. God's answer to physical death is that, instead of a physical body which is subject to pain and sickness, weariness and decay, he gives us a spiritual or resurrection body. In Paul's great chapter on this theme (1 Corinthians 15), he takes the analogy of a seed sown in the ground and dying before it can bear fruit, and he writes: "What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body." There is scarcely any resemblance between a small seed sown in the ground and the lovely flower developing from it. Had we no previous experience, it would be impossible to imagine the transformed beauty of the flower by looking carefully at the small and unimpressive seed. Yet there is a continuity between the two. Out of death springs a much more glorious life. So it is with our spiritual body.

For those who die in Christ the future will be unimaginably wonderful. The expression used several times is 'falling asleep' (see 1 Thessalonians 4 v 18-18, 1 Corinthians 15 v 20). When we fall asleep after a tiring day, the next thing we know is waking refreshed the following morning. So it will be for the Christian. We fall asleep in Christ, and then wake up on the resurrection morning with our new spiritual bodies. From a human perspective, hundreds of years may have elapsed between death and resurrection. But time is a human limitation. "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3 v 8). When Jesus was hanging on the cross, he promised the dying thief who cried to him for help, 'Truly, I say to you, *today* you will be with me in Paradise' (Luke 23 v 43)... We cannot know exactly what we shall be like after death. The apostle John put it like this: "It is not clear what we shall become. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is" (1 John 3 v 2). That should be sufficient for us. Heaven is being 'with Christ' when we shall be 'like him'. There will be a wonderful sense of being fully in God's presence, in an unspoilt and unbroken atmosphere of love, joy and praise...

Although it would be a mistake to base our beliefs on the experience of those who have clinically died but later have been restored to life, it is worth noting that those who were Christians nearly all speak of walking peacefully into a garden full of staggeringly beautiful colours and exquisite music (or similar description), so that it is with great reluctance that they came back to earth again... for those who know God and are trusting in Christ as their Saviour and Lord, there is nothing to fear, and it is sufficient to know that we shall be like him and perfectly with him. Nothing could be more wonderful than that. Never fear the worst. *The best is yet to be*. When I die, it is my firm conviction that I shall be more alive than ever, experiencing the full reality of all that God has prepared for us in Christ... The actual moment of dying is still shrouded in mystery, but as I keep my eyes on Jesus I am not afraid. Jesus has already been through death for us, and will be with us when we walk through it ourselves. In those great words of the Twenty-Third Psalm: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me..."

...

Photographs taken in Autumn 1975



Above: Clare Bridge; Below: Fellows' Garden, Clare College



Above: Wren Library, St John's College



Above: Senate House, Great St Mary's



Photographs taken in Autumn 1975 (continued)



Above: Entrance Gateway, Trinity College; Below: Trinity Hall



Above right: King's College; Below: Bridge of Sighs, St John's College



Photographs taken in Winter 1975/1976



Above (left and right): The Colony (Wilflete and Castle End), Clare College

Below left: Close friends (brothers); Below right: Mother and V at Legbourne

Right: Richard C's house in East Grinstead



Photographs of Cambridge taken in Winter 1975/1976



Above: St John's College; Below: View from Clare Old Court



Above: King's and Clare Colleges; Below left: Mathematical Bridge, Queen's College



Photographs of Clare Rowing Club taken in Winter, early 1976



Above: Clare Vllls rowing up the Cam; Below: Our VIII – I am second from the left

Above: Clare Boat Club House; Below: River Cam in winter

