

# **SERVING GOD IN HIS CHURCH IN OUR GENERATION: LEARNING FROM THE PAST WHILE LIVING IN THE PRESENT**

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## **Prologue: a cautionary tale**

It was August 1976. Weeks of blazing sunshine had led to hose pipe bans and to the need for stand pipes in the UK. But I was in France, spending most of that month as a volunteer with a missionary organisation which, every summer, drafted in young people to work alongside local churches in the work of evangelism.

Some of us spoke French, others did not. Since much of our work involved going from door to door with Christian literature, those without French learned set phrases (not quite the wisest way of evangelising!) Since France was – and still is – heavily secularised and many French people viewed evangelicals as no different from cults or sects, it was important to lay to rest misgivings which some might have had when confronted at their door by zealous young people who were eager to pass on gospel literature. Hence one of the set phrases, which those without any French learned, went something like this: ‘We are not Jehovah’s Witnesses, we are not Mormons, and we are not from a cult.’ While the intention was good, the result could be disastrous.

One day I was on the top floor of a block of flats and could hear a conversation on the lower floor which two Scandinavians on the team were having with the occupant of an apartment. ‘Conversation’ is, perhaps, an exaggeration. What I heard went something like this.

‘Hello. We are not Jehovah’s Witnesses, we are not Mormons, and we are not part of a cult.’

‘Very good, I’m glad to hear you say that. What are you then?’

‘We are not Jehovah’s Witnesses, we are not Mormons, we are not from a cult.’

‘Yes, yes, I’ve understood that, but what are you and why are you calling on me?’

For the third time the hapless Scandinavians repeated their set phrases parrot fashion, whereupon the exasperated occupant of the flat slammed the door.

The moral of this story? Apart from the obvious lesson that people need to know the language of those whom they seek to evangelise, one should beware of so emphasising the negatives that one never gets round to the positives.

## Introduction

As will become clear in due course, in the area of gospel fellowship and co-operation amongst churches the Bible has a negative and a positive emphasis. Just as all that glitters is not gold, even so not everyone who claims to be a gospel teacher is necessarily passing on the genuine article. False teaching must be resisted, and this requires a certain negative emphasis, an emphasis which is not at all congenial in a day and age which emphasises inclusivism as over against exclusivism. On the other hand the true gospel is wonderfully inclusive, in that it proclaims a salvation which is open to every conceivable type of person who repents and believes. That such believers should belong together is a great positive emphasis found in the Bible.

Affinity is the name of a Christian body which is Bible-based and church-centred and which seeks, in various ways, to enhance Christian witness in society and to strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship and gospel co-operation. It is made up of numerous churches, as well as church bodies which are 'corporate partners', and other Christian organisations, such as theological training institutions and missionary bodies, and individual Christians. It seeks to fulfil its mission in a variety of ways.

A booklet entitled *They Have Forgotten*<sup>1</sup>, which was published in 2012 and complimentary copies of which were circulated in June 2012 to a large number of evangelical ministers and retired ministers<sup>2</sup> in England and Wales<sup>3</sup>, argues that Affinity is compromised with respect to ecumenism<sup>4</sup>. The charge is a serious one and in seeking to establish her case the author, Ruth Palgrave, quotes extensively from statements of the former British Evangelical Council<sup>5</sup> (hereafter referred to as the BEC, the abbreviation by which it was commonly known) and from those made by the late Dr Lloyd-Jones, especially in sermons or addresses which he gave at meetings convened under the auspices of the BEC. She seeks to demonstrate that Affinity has, in a number of ways, adopted a somewhat different policy from that advocated by Dr Lloyd-Jones and pursued by the BEC. Evidently there are those who both believe and claim that Ms Palgrave has indeed made good her charge: the commendatory 'blurbs' on the back cover and inside cover from numerous ministers or retired ministers are evidence of this.

The issues raised by the booklet are very serious indeed for they are concerned with the nature of gospel fellowship and co-operation amongst evangelical churches. My *main* purpose in writing is to explore these issues, biblically, theologically, and historically, and then to apply the biblical teaching to the situation in which gospel churches find themselves at present in the UK. To this extent I am simply using Ms Palgrave's booklet as a peg upon which to hang my thoughts. But since it is Ms Palgrave's booklet which has proved to be the catalyst for what I write, I shall also seek to interact with what she has written. My piece, therefore, will be something of an *apologia* for Affinity's position, as well as a

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<sup>1</sup>Palgrave.

<sup>2</sup>I received a copy in June 2012 and know other men who also received a copy in that month.

<sup>3</sup>It is possible that the booklet has been more widely circulated but at the date of writing (December 2012) I have only spoken with ministers in England and Wales who have received a copy.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, the heading to page 21: 'Affinity's Departure from Scriptural and key BEC principles of separation from the WCC and its apostate denominations/organisations'. See also the reference at the bottom of p. 21 to the continuing of 'drift', which is linked to the renaming of the BEC as Affinity and to its agenda to 'develop the Anglican dimension'. Other quotations are given on p. 24 and these are then followed by these words of Ms Palgrave: 'Affinity's fundamental departure from BEC key principles has been the cause of immense sadness to those men who stood with Dr Lloyd-Jones and the BEC in its early days. They have seen the very principles they stood for in order to make a clear and strong stand against the Ecumenical Movement overturned and indeed "forgotten".'

<sup>5</sup>The British Evangelical Council was a council which was set up in the 1950s and with which Dr Lloyd-Jones became publicly identified from 1967 until his death. In the first decade of this century it 'became' Affinity. I shall explain the history and nature of the BEC later in this paper.

brotherly critique of Ms Palgrave's booklet: brotherly, for she has written in good faith and has taken the trouble to quote extensively from various sources in support of what she writes; a critique because, as I shall seek to demonstrate, she has missed or glossed over important facts; has quoted very selectively; has all but failed to realise the importance of the fact that while biblical principles never change, the context to which they apply constantly changes and what was a proper application of a principle in one generation may very well be improper in another generation; has failed to paint in adequately the historical background, so that what purports to be a serious piece of research is, in fact, more in the nature of a pamphlet, using that term in a pejorative sense; and she has failed to see that both Dr Lloyd-Jones and some of the people whom she quotes in support of her position did some of the very things which she criticises (as do, in fact, some of the people who write commendatory blurbs). I shall seek to demonstrate that Dr Lloyd-Jones's position was far more nuanced than is realised by many of those who believe that they agree with his position as well as by those who are critical of it. Sadly, since Ms Palgrave has named names, I shall have to point out that some of her heroes did not have such a nuanced position but were, quite simply, inconsistent, not to say, partial in the way in which they applied (or, rather, failed to apply) the principles which they espoused. It is regrettable to have to do this; but Ms Palgrave has fired an arrow and cannot now recall it. By naming people she inevitably places upon any who interact with her booklet the obligation to point out where she is mistaken, even if that involves criticism of brothers who have now gone to be with the Lord.

## **A BIBLICAL TEACHING**

### **I Biblical Teaching on Unity and 'Separation'**

The biblical teaching achieves a remarkable balance in its twin emphases upon the unity of God's people and their consequent separation from that which is false. I shall first give a brief overview of these two themes in the Old Testament and then consider some New Testament specifics.

#### **1. Old Testament**

At the very dawn of redemptive history we read of two – and only two – groups of people: the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent<sup>6</sup>. The seed of the woman refers to the coming Deliverer, the Messiah, but also to all those who are in union with him: thus, Paul can write of the God of peace shortly crushing Satan under the feet of God's people<sup>7</sup>. The seed of the serpent refers to those who do not belong to Christ: they are of their father the devil<sup>8</sup>. Of course until we come to faith in Christ we are all children of wrath and in league with Satan<sup>9</sup>.

As the drama of redemptive history unfolds we read of Noah and his family as distinct from the world about them, and then of the line of Shem, until a massively significant turning point is reached with the call of Abraham. Through the line of Isaac and Jacob the twelve tribes of Israel come into being, and the book of Exodus tells the story of the forging of a people, a people who are delivered by blood sacrifice from the judgment of God and, through baptism into Moses<sup>10</sup>, from the tyranny of their Egyptian overlords. The rest of the Old Testament tells the story of this people, with all their spiritual and moral

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<sup>6</sup>Gen. 3:15

<sup>7</sup>Rom. 16:20

<sup>8</sup>Jn. 8:44

<sup>9</sup>Eph. 2:1-3

<sup>10</sup>1 Cor. 10:2

vicissitudes, as they are called to be a distinctive and different people from the nations around them. The message is quite clear: Israel was to be separate and distinct from the surrounding nations. This was a vivid picture of the fact that the people of God are to be different from 'the world', even when the world takes on a very religious guise. Indeed, much of the Old Testament is concerned with the way in which the people of God compromised themselves by following the gods of other nations, with the inevitable and consequent adoption of the corrupt way of life associated with the worship of such false gods<sup>11</sup>.

But if Israel was to keep herself free from mingling with the nations and adopting their customs<sup>12</sup>, she was also to remember that she was one people in covenant with the LORD. Tragically, division was something which dogged her steps. The book of Judges records some of the inter-tribal disputes<sup>13</sup> and at the very end of the book we learn of Israel's need of a king to unify them<sup>14</sup>. However, the first book of Samuel records the conflict between the followers of Saul and those of David, while the second book of Samuel informs us of the fact that this conflict did not end with Saul's death. Further division and conflict are experienced during the time of Absalom and, after something of a golden era during the reign of Solomon, division amongst God's people becomes far darker with the break of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, from allegiance to the rightful, though foolish, king Rehoboam. The people of God are terribly divided between Israel and Judah.

A number of points should be borne in mind from this brief overview of Old Testament history. First, the divisions and conflicts which occurred amongst God's people were always linked to something deeper, namely departure from the LORD and unfaithfulness to their covenant with him. This is an important point to bear in mind because too often unity amongst God's people and divisions amongst them are viewed in a vacuum, as if unity were something which could exist apart from faithfulness to the LORD and to his truth. The Old Testament record tells us that this cannot be. Secondly, as Augustine memorably put it, what is latent in the Old Testament becomes patent in the New: with respect to the matter now under consideration, what the New Testament spells out so clearly is the fact that not all who were descended from Abraham were the true spiritual seed of Abraham<sup>15</sup>. This, of course, means that there was 'an Israel within Israel', an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* ('a little church within a church'). Put somewhat differently, there was 'a remnant' of faithful Israelites within the nation of Israel<sup>16</sup>. The third important point to bear in mind is that, while there are undoubtedly points of continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church<sup>17</sup>, a major shift occurs in this present gospel age with respect to the doctrine of the church. It is, therefore, to the New Testament material that I now turn.

## 2. New Testament

Although it is true that there was 'an Israel within Israel', the people of God in the post Mosaic era were identified, *in an external sense*, with the nation of Israel. In the New Testament period, especially after Pentecost, there is a massive change. The people of God are no longer identified, in an external

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<sup>11</sup>Ps. 106 gives an overview of this depressing aspect of Israel's history

<sup>12</sup>Ps. 106:35

<sup>13</sup>While this simmers beneath the surface through much of the book, it erupts towards the end, in chapters 19-21, where there is the very real danger that one of the tribes of Israel will become extinct.

<sup>14</sup>21:25

<sup>15</sup>Luke 3:8; Rom. 9:6-18; Gal. 4:21-31

<sup>16</sup>1 Kings 19:18

<sup>17</sup>As over against dispensational teaching, which finds no support for an Old Testament doctrine of the church, and against those who see no continuity between the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament church, reference should be made to the following passages: Rom. 11:17-24, Gal. 6:16, Eph. 2:11-22. Furthermore, the term *ekklesia* is used by Stephen of the Old Testament people of God in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). Further on this, see Murray *Vol. 2* pp. 321-323.

way, with any one nation but, rather, as those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith is professed openly by way of baptism and thereby one identifies with the people of God. (It is accepted that amongst evangelicals there has long been a difference concerning the status of children within the church. Thus the Westminster Confession states: 'The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel [not confined to one nation, as before under the law], consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; *and of their children...*'<sup>18</sup> [emphasis mine]. The Savoy Declaration, by contrast, though committed to the baptism of the children of a believer<sup>19</sup>, does not include the children of those professing the true religion within its definition of the visible church<sup>20</sup>. These differences, however, do not affect the general thrust or thesis of what I am saying.) This pattern can be seen in numerous places in the New Testament<sup>21</sup>.

The New Testament clearly distinguishes between what is known as 'the church universal' and 'the church local'. In Matt. 16:18 Jesus is clearly referring to those who, throughout history, would believe upon him, while in Matt. 18:17 he clearly must be referring to a more localised entity. Some evangelicals believe that the New Testament employs the term 'church' in a third way, namely, that of the church within a given region: thus, although Galatians 1:2 refers to a number of churches in the Galatian area, Acts 9:31 refers to 'the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria'. (Some manuscripts have 'churches' and some versions follow these manuscripts. The better attested reading, however, is the singular). Historically, Presbyterians and Episcopalians accept this third understanding of the word 'church', while Independents, Congregationalists, and Baptists have tended not to accept this third level of meaning. This having been said, it is possible for someone who holds to a congregational form of church government and to the independence of the local church still to accept that there is a third, regional level to the meaning of the term. While this is an important issue, it is one upon which churches within Affinity are not agreed and the main thrust of the present paper is largely unaffected by whichever view one takes on this question.

The Reformers' distinction between the invisible church and the visible church is also important at this point. The point of the distinction was simply to acknowledge that only God knows the ultimate truth about people: therefore, it is possible for those who have professed faith and joined themselves to the visible church not to be truly regenerate; similarly, it is possible for someone who has come to true saving faith in Christ not to belong, for whatever reason, to a visible congregation of the Lord's people.

The spiritual unity which exists amongst the Lord's people derives from the fact that they have all been given to Christ by the Father<sup>22</sup>, are all united to Christ<sup>23</sup>, are all the seed of Abraham through faith in Christ<sup>24</sup>, are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit<sup>25</sup>, and have all been adopted into the family of God<sup>26</sup>. As such, all the people of God are part of one olive tree<sup>27</sup>, constitute one bride<sup>28</sup>, and one flock<sup>29</sup>. This is why disunity amongst the Lord's people is such a scandalous thing. The unity already exists and is a

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<sup>18</sup> WC Chapter XXV. II

<sup>19</sup> Savoy Chapter 29, paragraph 4

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Chapter 26 paragraph 2

<sup>21</sup> Acts 2:40-47; Acts 10:44-48

<sup>22</sup> Jn. 17:2

<sup>23</sup> Jn. 17:23; Rom. 6:1-10; Eph. 1:3-4

<sup>24</sup> Gal. 3:26-29

<sup>25</sup> Rom. 8:9-11; Eph. 2:22

<sup>26</sup> Gal. 3:26

<sup>27</sup> Rom. 11:17-24

<sup>28</sup> Eph. 5:22-33

<sup>29</sup> Jn. 10:16

'given': it is created by the Spirit and no effort is to be spared to maintain it<sup>30</sup>. We should not, however, as has been the tendency within the so-called ecumenical movement, pit the Spirit against truth. The Holy Spirit is 'the Spirit of truth'<sup>31</sup>. Consequently, unity is always unity in the truth<sup>32</sup>. This means that God's people are to be concerned to distance themselves from that which is false as much as they are to maintain unity with those who believe the truth. The New Testament contains many commands and warnings to churches<sup>33</sup> and to those with pastoral oversight<sup>34</sup> with respect to those who purvey false teaching.

While the spiritual unity which exists amongst the Lord's people is a unity which exists amongst *all* the Lord's people, in all places and all periods<sup>35</sup>, the New Testament makes it very plain that believers belong to local churches and that unity is to be expressed both *within* the local church<sup>36</sup> and amongst local churches<sup>37</sup>. If the local churches were to express unity within themselves and amongst themselves, it was no less the case that it was in the local church and amongst the churches that false teaching was to be resisted and dealt with<sup>38</sup>. It is quite clear that the separation which the New Testament enjoins is *not* to be equated with physical isolation or with total separation from people in every context<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, a certain separation from godless and evil people was not to be understood as requiring avoidance of *all* contact with *all* godless and evil people<sup>40</sup>.

Before concluding this summary of New Testament teaching it should be pointed out that the teaching and practice of our Lord and of his apostles take account both of the different kinds of error which may

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<sup>30</sup> Eph. 4:3-6

<sup>31</sup> Jn. 15:26

<sup>32</sup> Jn. 17:17-23

<sup>33</sup> Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1; Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Jn. 4:1-3; 5:21; 2 Jn. 10-11; Jude 3-4

<sup>34</sup> Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:16-18, 20-21; Titus 1:9

<sup>35</sup> Jn. 17:20-21. The letter to the Ephesians particularly emphasises this. There are, of course, complex arguments, involving both textual criticism of 1:1 (some manuscripts not having the words 'in Ephesus', other manuscripts having those words) and consideration of the content of the letter, in support of the view, on the one hand, that the letter was addressed to the church at Ephesus and, on the other hand, that it was a circular letter addressed to believers who resided in the locality or region of Ephesus and to those in the city itself, Ephesus being the chief city. Although I favour this latter view (for the arguments for and against the various positions, see Hendriksen pp. 56 - 61), whichever view one takes, it is evident that Paul is dealing with the church universal in this letter. This is clear from 2:11-22 and from 4:1-16. Hebrews 12:23 emphasises that God's people on earth are part of the company of God's people through all periods. The book of Revelation also emphasises the spiritual unity of believers on earth with those who have already died.

<sup>36</sup> E.g., 1 Cor. 1:10; 12:12-13; Phil.1:27

<sup>37</sup> This is implied by the following: the fact that local churches followed a similar pattern in certain areas of their corporate life and were expected to do so (1 Cor. 7:7; 14:32-34); that Paul expected the letter to the Colossians to be read by the Laodicean church and his letter to the Laodiceans to be read by the Colossian church (Col. 4:16); the greetings which are sent by one church to another (1 Cor. 16:19); the itinerant nature of the ministry of gospel workers across various churches (3 Jn. 5-8) and the wrongness of not recognising such men (3 Jn. 9-10); the messages of the risen Lord to the seven churches of Asia Minor recorded in Rev. 2-3 require that each church hear 'what the Spirit says to the churches', not what was said to each individual church (Rev. 2:7, etc.).

<sup>38</sup> 2 Cor. 6:14-18, although often cited as applying to marriage, actually refers to maintaining the doctrinal and moral purity of the church, free from association with those who would undermine this purity. The letter to the Galatians is a clarion call to the Galatian churches not to succumb to the false judaizing teaching. 2 Jn. 10-11 is referring to giving hospitality to false teachers, who would use the home of a believer as a base for spreading false teaching. It possibly also refers to the church meeting in the house and that such a false teacher was not, therefore, to be welcomed into the fellowship of the church or to be allowed to teach there.

<sup>39</sup> Heb. 7:26 informs us of the glorious truth that Jesus was holy, blameless, pure, and set apart from sinners, or separate from sinners. Yet the four Gospels are full of material which shows Jesus 'rubbing shoulders' with all sorts of people, including morally disreputable characters and religious teachers who were clearly seriously adrift and astray: Matt. 9:9-11; Luke 7:36-50; Jn. 3:1-21; 4:1-42; etc.

<sup>40</sup> This is clearly the thrust of 1 Cor. 5:9-13. The Corinthians had misunderstood something which Paul had written to them about this. He now makes clear that it is those who called themselves a brother or a sister with whom they were not to associate (v.11). Furthermore, this was an association of a fellowship kind: the prohibition of eating would not extend to a Christian wife, for example, not eating with a husband who had been excommunicated by the church.

exist<sup>41</sup> and the different kinds of treatment to be accorded to those who are in error. There are, for example, those whose understanding may simply be deficient, who need their grasp of truth to be enhanced: in such a situation all that is needed is further instruction<sup>42</sup>. There are those who are sincerely mistaken because they have misunderstood Scripture: in such a case their need is simply to be patiently corrected<sup>43</sup>. There are those who have not grasped something or who are not yet able to grasp something because they are spiritually immature, where that immaturity is culpable: in this type of situation, there may well be need for rebuke<sup>44</sup>. There may be cases where Christians have taken up with a wrong or false belief which has serious entailments which massively distort the gospel, but those who have taken up with such a wrong belief may not actually have thought through all these implications and entailments: in this type of case one should not attribute to those who have taken up with the false belief all the erroneous entailments which flow from it but, rather, point out what those entailments are and, since they are clearly distortions of the gospel, demonstrate that the initial wrong belief is bound to be false<sup>45</sup>. There is clearly a difference between genuine disciples of Jesus Christ who are deceived and those who are not disciples but who deceive them<sup>46</sup>. Again there is clearly a difference between an enemy of the gospel and someone – even as prominent a preacher as the apostle Peter – who truly believes the gospel but whose behaviour is effectively denying the gospel<sup>47</sup>. Where, however, someone is clearly preaching or teaching a message other than the authentic gospel (and it is not the case that the person is a believer who is simply muddled for some reason or other), such a person is to be anathema<sup>48</sup>. It goes without saying that such a person should not be allowed to preach in the church<sup>49</sup>. To allow such a person to preach or to be supportive of such or to identify with him is to be guilty of sharing in his wicked work<sup>50</sup>.

### **3. Concluding thoughts on biblical principles relating to unity and separation**

The Scriptures teach both the unity of God's people and their distinctive difference from those who are not the Lord's people. The distinction between the church and the world applies even where the world takes a 'churchly' or ecclesiastical form. The unity which God's people enjoy is 'in the truth' and must never be at the expense of the truth. Every effort must be made to maintain and express that unity, both within the local church and amongst churches. Since unity is to be in the truth, maintaining and expressing that unity does not mean that one acquiesces in the sins and errors of brothers and sisters or of other churches. Exhortation may well be part of the expression of that unity.

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<sup>41</sup> In a fine paper given at the 1985 BEC Study Conference *Union and Separation*, the late Robert Sheehan drew attention to numerous different categories of error. To a certain extent I am indebted to Mr Sheehan for that paper.

<sup>42</sup> Acts 18:24-28.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor. 6:9-11.

<sup>44</sup> 1 Cor. 3:1-4; Heb. 5:11 - 6:3.

<sup>45</sup> 1 Cor. 15:12-34. It appears that what some of the Corinthians were denying was the resurrection of the body at the end of this age, not the resurrection of Christ. This was probably the result of a heavily over-realised eschatology. Paul's whole mode of argument is to point out the entailments of such a position and how it would effectively deny a cardinal element of the gospel, namely, that of the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>46</sup> This can be seen from the different way our Lord treated his disciples when they failed to grasp his teaching concerning his impending death and resurrection and the way in which he pronounced the 'woes' upon the teachers of the law and the Pharisees in Matt. 23.

<sup>47</sup> Thus the 'enemies of the cross of Christ' to whom Paul refers in Philippi. 3:18 are in a different situation from Peter in Gal. 2:11-21, where Paul realises that a beloved brother was acting inconsistently with what he really believed and was, therefore, to be confronted.

<sup>48</sup> Gal. 1:8-9.

<sup>49</sup> 2 Jn. 10

<sup>50</sup> 2 Jn. 11

## II Biblical Teaching on Wider Issues

### 1. Unity and separation do not exist in a 'vacuum'

The Bible's teaching on unity and separation does not, of course, exist in a vacuum. The Bible contains many commandments which relate to many areas of life. The Bible also has teaching on many issues. There is much in the Scripture concerning the need of the fruit of the Spirit to be in one's life, of the need to love the Lord, to love his people and to love the lost. There is teaching on the need for preachers to be spiritually empowered. There is teaching, both by way of precept and example, of the need to have spiritual vision, and of the need to serve God in our generation<sup>51</sup>.

It is also clear that gospel work, while requiring a fidelity to the truth which will mean that one will not give the world what it wants<sup>52</sup>, demands that we be culturally flexible<sup>53</sup>. One of the reasons why the gospel *demand*s cultural flexibility is this: if one refuses to be flexible on merely cultural issues which are not required by God's law or by the gospel, then one is effectively elevating those cultural norms to the level of God's law or the gospel. As such one is then either adding to the law or to the gospel. Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees recorded in Matt. 15:1-9 was essentially about this: by their traditions the Pharisees were breaking the command of God<sup>54</sup> and nullifying the Word of God<sup>55</sup>. The Westminster Confession of Faith encapsulates the biblical teaching thus: 'God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship'<sup>56</sup>. Whereas the practices of the Pharisees dealt with in Matthew 15:1-9 were clearly but man made rules, it is instructive to consider other passages of Scripture where things which were once commanded by God have passed into the realm of the merely cultural. Thus Paul circumcises Timothy, *not* because this was in any way biblically requisite but in order to be culturally sensitive<sup>57</sup>. By contrast, where there was the danger of such an issue being elevated above the merely cultural, Paul would not yield on the issue: thus, he did not have Titus circumcised (nor did others insist on this)<sup>58</sup>. In 1 Cor. 9:19-22 Paul makes it quite clear that being in Christ meant that, while always subject to the law of Christ, on matters which were merely cultural he was extraordinarily flexible. By 'merely cultural' I am referring to matters which are culturally 'neutral'.

It goes without saying that, because of God's common grace, there may well be aspects of culture which are morally 'good'; equally, because of human depravity, there may be matters which are morally 'bad'; there will also be other issues which are neither, but which are 'merely cultural'. It is to these matters that I refer. Of course, one of the perennial problems which the church of Christ has to face arises when some regard something as 'merely cultural' when it is, in fact, morally good or morally bad. Equally, the church has to respond biblically when some regard something as morally good or morally bad when, in reality, it *is* merely cultural. It is indisputable that this is something of a pressure point in inter-church relationships today, but I shall not pursue this matter now because it is, strictly speaking, beyond the scope of this paper.

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<sup>51</sup> The phrase relates to David (Acts 13:36). The situation which David faced was clearly different from that faced by Moses, which was also different from that faced by Joshua, etc.

<sup>52</sup> 1 Cor. 1:22-25.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Cor. 9:19-23.

<sup>54</sup> v. 3

<sup>55</sup> v.6

<sup>56</sup> WC Chapter XX.II

<sup>57</sup> Acts 16:2-3.

<sup>58</sup> Gal. 2:3



I shall seek later in this paper to bring out the importance and significance of these observations with respect to the questions which arise concerning the application of biblical principles relating to gospel unity and the way one deals with false teachings and false teachers.

## **2. When biblical commands conflict**

It is a simple fact of experience, and one which Scripture considers in numerous places, that sometimes it is impossible to honour one command without breaking another. This has long been recognised by philosophers and by theologians. For example, one believes that one should keep one's promises. One also believes that one should save life. Let us imagine that someone has agreed to have dinner with a friend at a restaurant at 7.30 p.m. While driving there and passing through an area where there is no mobile phone signal, our imaginary person sees a child drowning in a lake. The spot is very isolated and our driver has no grounds to believe that anyone else will be able to save the child. He jumps in to save him only to discover that the child is clearly suffering from hypothermia and needs to be taken urgently to hospital for treatment. He realises that this will mean that he will not be able to keep his dinner appointment and his friend will be considerably inconvenienced. He has kept one command – saving life – at the expense of breaking the command to keep one's promise. It is, of course, an extreme example which I have drawn, but it nicely illustrates the point that in such a situation one has to go 'behind' the commandments to the principles which underpin them and, effectively recognising a 'hierarchy' of principles, one honours the command which enshrines the higher principle.

This is something which we see in Scripture. Jesus referred to 'the more important' or 'weightier' matters of the law<sup>59</sup>. Of course he went on to say that these should be practised without neglecting those matters which were evidently of less weight<sup>60</sup>. But what if keeping one command involves an inevitable breaking of another command? One cannot simply say that the highest principle is that we should always obey God because that is the precise problem: there are situations where one cannot obey one command without breaking another. At that point one must 'grade' the principles which lie behind specific commands of God so that one is truly honouring to him. This, surely, is what Paul did in 2 Corinthians 1:15 - 2:1. Aaron did the same thing when he did not eat the sin offering whose blood had not been brought into the holy place, which the priests were commanded to eat<sup>61</sup>. As the great Puritan Bible commentator Matthew Poole observes on these verses, the substance of the sacrifice had been observed, though Aaron and Eleazar and Ithamar had mistaken one circumstance; and, Poole further observes, the sin offering was not to be eaten with sorrow but with rejoicing and thanksgiving, and it was impossible for Aaron and his two surviving sons to do this when two other sons had been put to death by the LORD for offering unauthorised fire<sup>62</sup>. The great celebration of the Passover in Hezekiah's reign, recorded in 2 Chronicles 30, also illustrates the same thing: it proved impossible to celebrate the Passover and to observe every detail as laid down in the law of Moses; but it was better to have celebrated it thus (though this involved breaches of the law of God) than it would have been not to have celebrated it (which would also have been a breach of God's law).

I shall seek to demonstrate later in this paper that the principles I have just enunciated are relevant to the question of church union and separation. I shall further seek to prove that one of the great weaknesses of Ms Palgrave's booklet is that she approaches these matters in a 'single issue' type of way and that she inevitably fails to come to grips with the difficulties which arise when keeping one command involves the breaking of another.

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<sup>59</sup> Matt. 23:23

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Lev. 10:16-20

<sup>62</sup> Poole p. 220, comments on vv. 16-20 especially v. 20.

## B THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT, THE BEC, AND THE TEACHING OF DR LLOYD-JONES

### Introduction

It would require one or more volumes to deal fully with these three issues: the reason for this is that the formation of the Ecumenical Movement and of the BEC and the teaching of Dr Lloyd-Jones all arose in certain historical contexts. While the principles of God's Word never change, the contexts into which these principles must be applied are ever changing. In a later section of this paper we shall see that the context today is considerably different from that which obtained in the days when Dr Lloyd-Jones exercised such influence within and through the BEC. But to provide the evidence to demonstrate this it will be necessary to say something not only about the context of that time but also about the historical background which explains that context. Only then will we be in a position rightly to understand our present time. It will, therefore, be necessary to paint with something of a broad brush in order to keep this within the limits of a paper or, at the very most, of a booklet.

### I Historical Background to the Ecumenical Movement

#### 1. The existence of 'denominations'

While it is true that in the early centuries the church had to express its unity and to face the threat of false teaching<sup>63</sup> (and, of course, this had already begun within the New Testament period itself), to understand the rise and existence of denominations one must really go back to the Reformation and post Reformation periods.

Although there were various groups outside the 'Catholic Church'<sup>64</sup>, the great rupture which split the Catholic Church occurred in the eleventh century at the time of the Great Schism in 1054 AD<sup>65</sup>, when the Eastern Church split from the Western Church over what is known as the '*filioque* clause'<sup>66</sup>. The next great 'split' occurred at the time of the Reformation and it is this with which we are chiefly concerned. This, of course, was a vastly complex phenomenon, stretching right across Europe, with differing emphases in differing countries<sup>67</sup>. While the issue of indulgences was the fuse which lit the touch paper, and while the question of how one comes into a right standing before God lay at the heart of the Reformation, what tore the church – and the society of that time – apart was the issue which lay behind both these matters, namely, that of authority: where does one hear God speak and how does the Lord exercise authority within his church? It is important to remember that Luther had initially been concerned with reforming doctrine and practice *within* the Roman Catholic Church and he was led on a step at a time<sup>68</sup>. But as time went on Luther became convinced that the Roman Catholic

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<sup>63</sup> With respect to dealing with false teaching, Gnosticism was a huge threat to the early church. At another level the Trinitarian and Christological controversies which gave rise to some of the great creeds were the result of the church's determination to clarify and express its belief and teaching concerning fundamental truth. Of course, these creeds were also 'symbols' of the church's unity. On the other hand the Donatist controversy really concerned the nature of the unity of those who were agreed on the fundamentals.

<sup>64</sup> One thinks of the Donatists of the third century and the Waldensians of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.

<sup>65</sup> Although some historians have raised questions concerning the interpretation of the events of 1054, Southern is surely right when he states: 'It was in 1054 that all the elements of disunity which had come to light over the centuries were first concentrated into a single event' (Southern, pp. 67-68).

<sup>66</sup> This was the clause which asserted that the Holy Spirit proceeds 'from the Father *and from the Son*'. There were many other factors which led to the Great Schism but this was the issue which crystallised matters or, to change the metaphor, which became the watershed.

<sup>67</sup> For a magisterial over view, which, while general, also contains a wealth of detail and is largely sympathetic, and which contains important material on the Reformation in the eastern part of Europe, MacCullough cannot be bettered.

<sup>68</sup> Although many regard Luther's nailing of his celebrated ninety five theses to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg as one of *the* great events or defining moments of the Reformation, it is clear from many of the theses that Luther had in mind to start a debate which was very much *within* the Roman Catholic Church of the time. Thus, the rightness of the papacy is clearly accepted in theses 5, 6, and 9, thesis 9 actually stating, 'the Holy Spirit through the pope is kind to us'. According to thesis 7

Church was heretical in its teaching, and the Church, in turn, condemned Luther as a heretic. At the heart of this collision between Luther and the Church lay the issue of authority: Luther drew his Christianity from the Bible, not from the Pope or the Councils of the Catholic Church.

This inevitably raised the question as to when a church is not a church; or, to put the same question somewhat differently, what are the marks of a true church? John Calvin subjected this question to sustained thought and analysis in his great work *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Charged, as the Reformers were by the Roman Catholic Church, with being schismatics, Calvin's retort was that it was not schism to separate from a 'church' which effectively repudiated the teaching of the gospel. Such a 'church' was not a true church. Thus, he writes: 'we are unwilling to concede the name of Church to the Papists'<sup>69</sup>. Those who regard all separation from any body or institution which calls itself a 'church' as being, at best, 'separatist' and, at worst, schismatic would do well to remember that this is essentially a Roman Catholic argument and one which would brand those who remain within a Protestant church, of whatever stripe, to be in a schismatic position or, at very best (since the Second Vatican Council), as belonging to 'separated brethren'. Those who, on the other hand, think it utterly impossible for one to be consistently evangelical but to stay in a church which is part of a group or denomination in which serious error is tolerated would do well to hear the whole of the sentence from Calvin quoted a few sentences back. It is this: 'Therefore, while we are unwilling simply to concede the name of Church to the Papists, *we do not deny that there are churches among them*'<sup>70</sup> (emphasis mine). The great reformer was capable of making very fine distinctions and careful nuances. I shall seek to argue later on that the observation which Calvin makes here that a corrupt church, which is no true church, may nevertheless contain true churches within it is an extraordinarily penetrating insight which has much to teach us in our contemporary scene. I shall also seek to demonstrate that Dr Lloyd-Jones also made very fine distinctions and that his position with respect to unity and separation was far more nuanced than many of his admirers or detractors would have us believe.

If theology lay at the heart of the Reformation, it was no less the case that the Reformers recognised the importance of the context and the pastoral needs of the people to which and to whom that theology had to be applied. Dr Lloyd-Jones drew attention to this in the following words: 'They' [that is, the Puritans in England] 'asked his' (that is, Calvin's) 'advice as to whether they should stand out on the question of episcopacy and of ceremonies in England; and though it may surprise you, Calvin told them not to stand out on that. He did not believe in episcopacy, but he was so concerned about Protestant unity that he could just see that perhaps in the peculiar circumstances of England... they should not stand out on these particular things'<sup>71</sup>. Was Calvin being inconsistent here with his theological principles? Certainly not! He was demonstrating that he was a true pastor, and while true shepherds of the flock must always apply God's unchanging truth, they have to apply it to real people in real circumstances. Change cannot always be effected by a quantum leap but, rather, since there is a 'hierarchy of truth'<sup>72</sup>, some things may have to be borne in order to ensure that the most important matters are dealt with.

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guilt is only remitted when God makes the sinner 'submissive to his' (that is, God's) 'vicar, the priest'. Purgatory is accepted as a fact in theses 14-19. It was only in 1530 that Luther abandoned his belief in purgatory. For the ninety five theses, see Noll, pp. 25-36.

<sup>69</sup> Calvin *Institutes* IV. II. 12 (Beveridge translation).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Lloyd-Jones, 1987, p. 228

<sup>72</sup> See notes 58 - 61 above, as well as the references to the significance of Leviticus 10 and 2 Chronicles 30 in the body of the text.

This last observation explains the behaviour of many Christians during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially in England. With the break of the church in England from Rome which came about as a result of Henry VIII divorcing his wife Catherine of Aragon, the question of how the church and church life should be ordered had then to be addressed. Given the political situation where, instead of a pope in Rome there was a pope in London as supreme governor of the church, men like Cranmer had to tread carefully or the gains could so easily have been lost. It is clear, however, from a comparison of the Prayer Book of 1549 (which was the first Prayer Book to be produced during the reign of Edward VI, who became king in 1547) with that which he produced three years later in 1552, that Cranmer definitely wanted to press ahead in a Reformed direction. The early death, however, of England's 'Josiah' and his succession by 'bloody' Mary Tudor put a stop to all that, and it was only on her death and the accession to the throne of Elizabeth I that Protestants began to hope again that significant change could be brought about.

It was during the reign of Elizabeth that the term 'puritan' was first used. Although there has been much debate about the usage of that term, some have argued that the true Puritans were those who sought purity and conformity to God's will in *every* area of life, and this included how the church should be ordered. Differences existed amongst those who believed that in the life of the church only those things sanctioned by Scripture, either expressly or by implication, should be allowed into the order of church life (the so called 'regulative principle') and those who argued that all things other than those which Scripture expressly or implicitly forbade could be allowed (the so called 'normative principle'). But there were even differences *within* these two groups in their belief as to how the church should be ordered. Moreover, there was always the pastoral, not to say, the political element that came to the fore: although the 'Elizabethan settlement' was something of a *via media* or middle road position (anti Catholic but certainly not going down the road which Calvin took and which the puritans wanted), many believed that if they were patient and waited long enough, change would come. The principle that 'half a loaf is better than none' was one which they adopted.

Looking at that period very generally, one can identify the following groups from about 1562. First there were those who believed in staying in the Church of England to seek to reform it from within. A second group consisted of those who also did not believe in separating from the Church of England but who differed from the first group in their belief that a different form of government should be introduced, namely, that of Presbyterianism. A third group also agreed with not separating from the Church of England but in forming Congregational churches within it. The fourth group, who became known as Separatists (or Brownists, after Robert Browne, who called for 'reformation without tarrying for any') believed that it was wrong or futile to stay within the Church of England but that they should leave and form Congregational churches. This last group was to form the core of the Pilgrim Fathers who sailed for the New World on the Mayflower in 1620. The Separatists were undoubtedly a mixed group. Some, such as John Robinson, the chaplain to the Pilgrim Fathers, were balanced and godly. In the case of others, however, it cannot be denied that they sometimes gave way to eccentricity and to a loss of a sense of proportion. Owen Chadwick observes: 'The nature of moral discipline exercised by the congregation was still half formed and required much experience before it ceased to waste away in criticising the whalebones in the petticoats of a pastor's wife. One of the oddest aberrations was the act of at least two English Anabaptists... in baptising themselves, on the ground that there was no pure church to receive them'<sup>73</sup>. It is also a sad reflection upon human nature, even regenerate human nature, that having sought refuge from tyranny in the New World, toleration was not always granted

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<sup>73</sup> Chadwick, p. 207

to others whose conscientious convictions with respect to worship caused them to differ from the majority position<sup>74</sup>.

There were, of course, many who stayed on in the 'Old World', and in the 1640s the Westminster Assembly met in London, producing its great Confession of Faith, its Shorter Catechism, its Larger Catechism, and the Directory for Public Worship. In 1646 (the same year in which the Westminster Confession of Faith was published), the First London Baptist Confession of Faith was produced<sup>75</sup>. In 1658 the Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order was published: largely following the Westminster Confession, it differed at numerous points, the most significant for present purposes being that, whereas the Westminster Confession espoused Presbyterianism, the Savoy advocated Congregationalism. The 1650s were a period of marked toleration of worship but this was to end in 1662 with the passing of the Act of Uniformity. This led to 'the Great Ejection', when many puritan pastors refused to comply with the requirements of that infamous Act. Although the earlier Separatists could be called nonconformists, 1662 is usually regarded as the watershed year of nonconformity. In 1689 toleration was granted to nonconformists, although certain political or civic and educational privileges were denied them until the nineteenth century.

The point of this history is to demonstrate that amongst evangelical Protestants there were those who held to the Anglican Church and there were those who were nonconformists. These were all agreed on the nature of Scripture as God's Word, by which all the opinions and traditions of men are to be tested, and on the nature and way of salvation, and on the great things of the gospel. The differences were ecclesiological. This having been said, the puritans who refused to comply with the requirements of the Act of Uniformity believed that the Church of England was not thoroughly reformed: they claimed that there were 'nests' of Roman Catholicism left in her and that one day 'the rooks' would return<sup>76</sup>. They also believed, contrary to many Anglicans, that Scripture laid down a definite pattern for the government of the life of the church. By contrast they held that the Anglicans either believed that Scripture did not address these issues as clearly as the nonconformists maintained or they were failing to apply the clear teaching of Scripture. Although this were so, in the following century the Great Evangelical Awakening which swept through large parts of England, Wales, and Scotland owed much to the ministries of men within the Anglican fold. Under the blessing of God men such as John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, John Berridge, William Grimshaw, William Romaine, and Augustus Toplady in England, and the remarkable triumvirate of Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland, and William Williams in Wales brought about great spiritual transformation in the land. These men were thoroughly committed to the gospel and to the Church of England<sup>77</sup>. There is abundant evidence that many of them (especially those who were Calvinistic, which was the majority of them) fed and nourished their souls on the writings of puritan authors. At a time when *many* (though this would not be true of all) of the nonconformist churches were orthodox but dry and somewhat dead in the areas of Christian experience, holy living, and evangelism, it was to these men in the Anglican fold that the reviving touch of God's Spirit came.

It is not, of course, that the Church of England was altogether revived: much of the bitterest opposition to these 'Methodist' leaders came from fellow clergy or from bishops. The point is surely this: the

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<sup>74</sup> On the differences between Massachusetts and the Plymouth Colony and their different approaches to toleration, see Rees. But, as Rees himself notes, even Plymouth Colony became intolerant of Baptists, such as Obadiah Holmes, in 1650.

<sup>75</sup> In 1689 the Baptists published another Confession of Faith. This was very similar to the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration.

<sup>76</sup> See, Murray 1973, p. 122

<sup>77</sup> On Whitefield's commitment to the Church of England, see Dallimore 1980, pp. 305-322, especially p. 305; also Dallimore 1970, pp. 383-384.

evangelical leaders within the Church of England believed that the gospel which they preached was enshrined and expressed within the 39 Articles. Those parts of the Prayer Book to which those who had been ejected in 1662 had taken exception were, they believed, to be understood in the light of the Homilies of the sixteenth century<sup>78</sup>. Therefore, those parts of the Prayer Book which those of a Catholic persuasion took to be supportive of the fact that the Church of England was not truly Protestant and Reformed were, according to the evangelical leaders, to be understood against the background of the 39 Articles and the Homilies and were thus to be understood in an evangelical sense. It is beyond my purpose to comment on the soundness or otherwise of this argument<sup>79</sup>; I simply wish to draw attention to the fact that evangelical life in the eighteenth century was powerfully revived through men who were committed to the Church of England *even though they may have found fault with many of the clergy within that church*.

Men such as Whitefield made common cause with nonconformists in the cause of the gospel<sup>80</sup>. The London Missionary Society and The British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in 1795 and 1804 respectively, were the result of the great awakening in the eighteenth century. Although union between denominations was not effected, gospel unity amongst men in churches in different denominations was certainly practised. The essence of a denomination is that churches band together on the basis of a theological distinctive, be that one which relates to the sacraments (thus Baptists differ from Paedobaptists), church government (thus Presbyterians differ from Congregationalists), or other matters. These distinctives do not call into question the good spiritual standing before God of those who do not accept these distinctives, nor does a group which espouses one distinctive necessarily deny the name 'church' to another group which does not share that distinctive.

While Whitefield was greatly used throughout the British Isles, as was John Wesley, there were, as noted a little earlier, many others in the Church of England who were also greatly used and who displayed great catholicity of spirit. It is worth pausing, at this point, simply to point out that many evangelicals who were associated with the British Evangelical Council (BEC), the late Dr Lloyd-Jones himself being a notable example, held these eighteenth century evangelical leaders of the 18th century in very high esteem indeed. It would certainly not be an over statement to say that, along with Jonathan Edwards, men such as Whitefield, Rowland, Harris, and Williams, were his great spiritual heroes.<sup>81</sup> While reference has already been made to Whitefield's catholicity of spirit<sup>82</sup>, we have also seen that he was committed to the Church of England<sup>83</sup>. Indeed, as Dallimore observes, 'In England the idea of separating from the Established Church had been suggested by certain of the men around himself and the Wesleys, *and he had opposed it*'<sup>84</sup>. Sadly, the catholicity of men such as Whitefield was not always displayed by those outside the Anglican fold: there were those who would have nothing to do with Whitefield when he visited Scotland because of his ecclesiology<sup>85</sup>. Those who were unhappy with Whitefield because of his view of church government were correct to point out that '“every pin in the tabernacle” was important'; where they surely erred was in giving to the 'pins in the tabernacle' a disproportionate measure of importance. Thus Whitefield was happy to have fellowship not only with those of the Secession Church, to which the Erskines belonged, but also with those in the Church of

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<sup>78</sup> Dallimore, 1980, p. 305

<sup>79</sup> Murray 1973 has a very helpful discussion of these issues: pp. 117-136.

<sup>80</sup> On Whitefield's catholicity of spirit, see Dallimore, 1970, pp. 384-385; 1980, pp. 334-335.

<sup>81</sup> For the evidence in support of this see the following: his Foreword to Dallimore, 1970; his lectures on Whitefield (bracketed with a lecture on Calvin!), on William Williams and Calvinistic Methodism, and on Howell Harris and the Crucial Importance of Revival in Lloyd-Jones, 1987

<sup>82</sup> See note 79, above

<sup>83</sup> See note 76 above

<sup>84</sup> Dallimore, 1980, p. 91 (emphasis mine)

<sup>85</sup> See the Biographical Introduction by Joel Beeke in Erskine, pp. xiii-xiv.

Scotland who truly loved the Lord. Dallimore quotes from Whitefield's letters thus: 'I believe the Church of Scotland to be the best constituted National Church in the world; but, then, I would bear and converse with all others, who do not err in fundamentals, and who give evidence that they are true lovers of the Lord Jesus. This is what I mean by a *catholic spirit*'.<sup>86</sup> The facts were that Whitefield was a gospel man, who not only positively proclaimed the gospel but also contended against and raised a standard against those in the Church of England who were not committed to the gospel<sup>87</sup>; however, simply because he was in the Church of England or because he would have links with gospel men in the Church of Scotland, there were those who would have nothing to do with him. This contrasted sharply with other nonconformists who were evidently delighted at the work which was being done by Whitefield and other men like him.

I shall seek to demonstrate in due course, notwithstanding the contrary claims of some of those who have claimed to have followed and agreed with Lloyd-Jones's position and notwithstanding the arguments of those who have been critical of his doctrine of the church, that, though a convinced nonconformist, Lloyd-Jones's position was essentially the same as that of Whitefield. Furthermore, I shall adduce the evidence that Lloyd-Jones was very happy to have fellowship with gospel people within the Church of England.

## **2. The influence of false teaching in the denominations**

In the nineteenth century two movements threatened the spiritual life of the main Protestant denominations. One was a threat to the church worldwide; the other was a threat to the Anglican Church, though its effects would ripple outwards to those outside the Anglican fold. The first was liberalism; the second was the Anglo-Catholicism associated with what became known as 'the Oxford Movement'.

### **(i) Liberalism**

There were various aspects to liberalism. What chiefly concerns us is the new attitude to Scripture which was espoused by many. This often went hand-in-hand with degraded views of the Person of Christ, the nature of sin and salvation, and the biblical teaching concerning hell, but the root error was a changed attitude towards the nature of Scripture. By the end of the nineteenth century many of the historic Protestant denominations had been affected by liberalism. It was a cancer which directly wrought havoc in the churches and would continue to do so throughout the twentieth century and would indirectly wreak havoc in the world, since it left many of the 'churches' with no real gospel to hold forth.

### **(ii) Anglo Catholicism and the 'Oxford Movement'**

Triggered by a sermon preached at the University Church in Oxford in 1833 by John Keble on the subject of National Apostasy, the Oxford Movement was concerned to restore authority to 'the Church'

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<sup>86</sup> Dallimore, 1980, p. 92 (emphasis original)

<sup>87</sup> See Dallimore, 1970, p. 384: 'Hand in hand with his denunciations of an unconverted ministry there went his constant encouragement of those who were sound in the evangelical faith, and, as the narrative of his career progresses, we shall see these efforts gradually resulting in the formation of a strong evangelical party within the Church of England.' See also Dallimore, 1980, p. 91: 'He is hated and spoken against by all the episcopal party, and even the most of our clergy do labour to diminish and expose him; and this is not to be wondered at, seeing his incessant labour for Christ and souls is such a strong reproof to them; besides what he says publicly, against the sending out of unconverted ministers and the preaching of an unknown Christ.' It was this 'negative' aspect to Whitefield's ministry, which went hand-in-hand with his fellowship and co-operation with fellow evangelicals of a different ecclesiological outlook, which gives the lie to the claim by Alister McGrath that Whitefield's approach and example was essentially the same as that adopted by evangelical Anglicans at the Keele Congress of 1967: see McGrath 1997, pp. 121-122. Indeed, McGrath quotes Whitefield's words, 'God knows that I have been faithful in bearing a testimony against what I think is corrupt in the [Anglican] church'" (Ibid., p.121). For my review of this book by McGrath and of McGrath 1993, and of the false view which they give of Lloyd-Jones's position, see Foundations 1998.

(by which was meant the Anglican Church) and to its ministers. Together with men such as E.B. Pusey and John Henry Newman (both Oxford men: hence the title 'the Oxford Movement'), a series of 'Tracts for the Times' (hence the title, 'the Tractarian Movement') were produced which sought to put a Catholic interpretation on the teaching of the Church of England. Of course, this was exactly the argument of many of those who were ejected in 1662: that the Church of England was not truly Reformed and Protestant but something of a mongrel breed. Be that as it may, the reaction of evangelicals within the Church of England was to argue for the Protestant interpretation of that church's teaching along the lines which the eighteenth century evangelicals argued, and the Evangelical Alliance was formed in 1846 as an alliance of evangelicals across the denominations who were concerned at the catholicising tendencies which had been unleashed.

### **(iii) Response of the churches**

Although there were 'heresy trials' in the nineteenth century, by the beginning of the twentieth century it was clear that the mainline historic denominations were unable to deal adequately with liberalism in their ranks<sup>88</sup> nor was the Anglican Church able to discipline those who espoused Anglo-Catholicism<sup>89</sup>. It is important to bear this in mind: the parlous state of many of the Christian denominations in this country did not begin in the 1960s and, as we shall see, evangelicals such as Dr Lloyd-Jones belonged to and functioned within these denominations for many years, even though false teaching was tolerated within them.

One way in which some evangelicals responded to the inroads of liberalism was to make common cause with other evangelicals through what are sometimes called 'para-church bodies'. Thus, a missionary society such as the China Inland Mission was not a missionary society of one specific denomination; rather it brought together evangelicals from churches in different denominations. While a church in one denomination might be evangelical and a church in another be evangelical, Christians in these churches would be more likely to come together in a para-church event (such as the Keswick Convention or at meetings of an evangelical missionary society or meetings of a Protestant society) than they would by the two churches working together at church level. The rise of the Ecumenical Movement would cause some to question this whole approach, and this brings us very close to the matter which lies behind the writing of this paper. Before doing so, however, it will be necessary to say something about the Ecumenical Movement, the rise of Fundamentalism, and responses to false teaching in the USA.

### **3. The rise of the Ecumenical Movement**

Although the roots of the modern ecumenical movement go back to the Edinburgh Conference of 1910, it was in 1948 that the World Council of Churches was formed<sup>90</sup>. The goal of that Council was the visible unity of the churches<sup>91</sup>. Within the UK the British Council of Churches (BCC) was the expression of the WCC. Of course by that time liberalism had bitten deeply into the life of many of the mainline

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<sup>88</sup> For example, in 1881 Dr Robertson Smith was removed - after considerable hesitation, let it be said - from his position as a Free Church of Scotland Professor in Aberdeen, for holding Higher Critical views of the inspiration of the Old Testament. But by the 1890s the same General Assembly of that same church set aside charges against two other professors for holding similar views with respect to the New Testament: Murray 1980, p.16. It should be added, however, that after 'the remnant' of Free Church leaders and congregations refused to join with the many who entered the United Free Church in 1900, and after the decision of the House of Lords in 1904 that this remnant constituted the true Free Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland took a very clear stand on doctrinal matters: see Murray, 1980, pp. 16-22

<sup>89</sup> On the issue of Anglo-Catholicism, see the treatment of the Bell Cox case in Loane, pp. 92-95

<sup>90</sup> For a good overview of the background to the WCC in the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 and the formation of the WCC in 1948, see Webber.

<sup>91</sup> For a fair presentation of the theology and goals of the WCC in the 1960s and a thorough analysis of this from a biblical and evangelical perspective, see Runia pp. 65-76



denominations: it was in the late nineteenth century, for example, that Spurgeon had seen the writing on the wall in the 'Down Grade' controversy and had severed his links with the Baptist Union. Things were much worse by the 1940s. The goal was, therefore, the visible unity of many ecclesiastical bodies which, by New Testament standards, could hardly be called 'churches': they had lost the gospel. Of course there were evangelicals in the denominations: some churches were not evangelical but had ministers who were. In some cases these ministers saw significant blessing on their ministries and their churches became evangelical. There were other churches which were thoroughly evangelical and their ministers were as well. Those in authority in these denominations were, generally speaking, not evangelical and, especially in the 1960s, were pushing for some kind of visible unity amongst all the churches of the different denominations. This inevitably thrust upon evangelical people the question as to what their response should be. A division arose amongst evangelicals over this very matter and it brings us to the real heart and core of the issues with which Ms Palgrave's booklet deals. To understand the nature of that division we need to know something about the rise of what is sometimes called 'the new evangelicalism' or 'neo evangelicalism'. It is something which Ms Palgrave's booklet touches upon, but more needs to be said about it.

#### **4. Fundamentalism and the rise of 'the new evangelicalism' or 'neo evangelicalism'**

In the 1950s the New Evangelicalism or 'neo evangelicalism' came into its own<sup>92</sup>. To understand the birth of this child, one must know something of the parent from which it came. The parent was the American fundamentalism of the early twentieth century. Fundamentalism, as a movement, grew out of a concern to stress the great fundamentals of the Christian faith against the inroads of liberalism. However, it lost contact somewhat with the great emphases of historic Christianity and became a rather distorted and shrunken version of historic Christianity. Although on many cardinal doctrines it was at one with historic Christianity, this often went hand in hand with certain theological eccentricities and peculiarities and a mindset that was excessively negative towards culture and learning. There was a separatist mentality about many things. In this sense there was almost a separatist psychology about it which put it outside the mainstream of cultural life<sup>93</sup>.

The hard, negative attitude which lay behind the separatism which came to characterise American fundamentalism was also to be found amongst some evangelicals in the USA who were not fundamentalists but who stood within the Reformed tradition. There was a tendency on the part of some to become belligerent, almost bellicose, in the way they spoke of non evangelicals, while others became increasingly critical of fellow evangelicals and adopted something of an isolationist stance. Division from liberals was followed by division from fellow evangelicals and a splintering of the evangelical cause<sup>94</sup>. We shall need to return to this phenomenon because it is essential to a proper understanding of Lloyd-Jones's position; it also provides a salutary warning as to what can happen when evangelicals *over-emphasise* the negatives.

Billy Graham, who was converted in a fundamentalist context, eventually turned his back upon fundamentalism's separatist mentality<sup>95</sup>. The concern to distance oneself from a harsh, unloving, and negative *spirit* is something which the Scriptures surely require: the truth is to be spoken in love and, sadly, *some* fundamentalists were lacking in love and became self-righteous and hyper critical of

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<sup>92</sup> The background to the new evangelicalism is helpfully set out in Murray 2000, pp. 1-78

<sup>93</sup> On fundamentalism, see Packer, pp. 24-40. On Lloyd-Jones's view of fundamentalism, see Murray 1982, pp. 192-193, 273-274.

<sup>94</sup> On men such as T.T. Shields (who, though within the Reformed tradition rather than being fundamentalist, adopted something of a bitter, separatist stand, and on the tendency for 'separatists' to split from each other, see Murray (1982), pp. 271-274; Murray (1994), p. 228.

<sup>95</sup> Murray (2000), pp. 27-30

others. It was also right to realise that the gospel does not require that the people of God retreat into some kind of cultural ghetto, which was where fundamentalism had gone. To that extent the new evangelicalism was right to want to distance itself from these unbiblical and spiritually crippling attitudes. However, in extricating itself from one spiritually and God dishonouring form of life, the new evangelicalism fell into an equally dangerous trap of a different kind. This was to be seen in the kind of 'rapprochement' which the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) fostered with liberals and Roman Catholics. It was one thing to want to win such people for the Lord: that surely was right. It was a very different thing to involve them in Graham's evangelistic campaigns, sitting on the platform alongside evangelical leaders.

A new 'face' was being given to American evangelicalism. Although there were severe criticisms of the Graham campaigns by some in the liberal ecclesiastical establishments of the day – he was still regarded as a fundamentalist by some, and evangelicalism in the UK was also regarded as being fundamentalist<sup>96</sup> – a general endorsement of his campaigns, evidenced by prominent leaders in the denominations being willing to be part of 'the platform party', was all part of a policy of gaining a kind of respectability, credibility, and approval from the wider culture.

It was this new kind of attitude which came to characterise many evangelicals in the UK, especially in the 1960s. The influence of the policy adopted by Graham was like yeast working in the dough. This gave to evangelicals a new sense of confidence within their denominations because of the acceptance which they hoped to gain. There was, moreover, a belief that they might be able to win their denominations back to the truth. Whether or not this was a realistic assessment of the situation, it was surely a laudable aim: evangelicals in the denominations had a praiseworthy strategy in view. Tragically, however, the tactics which were adopted by many such evangelicals would work against achieving the goal in view and, in turn, would lead to divisions within the evangelical fold. In essence the tactics amounted to acknowledging that non-evangelicals had as much right to be in the denominations as did evangelicals. This approach was particularly noticeable within the Anglican Church in England and was to be seen by inviting the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey (an Anglo-Catholic of a kind, with a liberal view of Scripture) to address the Keele Congress of Evangelicals in 1967. Although evangelicals such as John Stott were as faithful as they had ever been in preaching God's Word, in this ecclesiastical context their *actions* belied their beliefs and *in this kind of context* gave the impression that the gospel was just one view of the truth. In other words, while Stott and others like him were still wholeheartedly committed to the evangelical faith, this kind of accommodation of non-evangelicals amounted, at one level, to a kind of pluralism. Speaking very generally and painting with a broad brush, one may say that there were two opposite views, both of which were wrong: on the one hand there was the negative, harsh attitude which characterised the separatism of some of the fundamentalists as well as of some Reformed folk in the USA and, on the other hand, the more inclusive approach which came to expression at Keele.

## II THE BEC

### 1. Origins<sup>97</sup>

The origins of the British Evangelical Council (BEC) go back to 1952. In that year G.N.M. Collins and Murdoch Macrae, of the Free Church of Scotland, together with T.H. Bendor-Samuel and E.J. Poole-

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<sup>96</sup> See Packer, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-23

<sup>97</sup> I am heavily indebted in this section to Hywel R. Jones's introductory chapter in Jones. Hywel Jones edited the messages for this volume which Dr Lloyd-Jones preached at the BEC. Dr Jones was himself for many years a member of the BEC Executive Committee, preached at the BEC annual conferences, and was for many years the chairman of the BEC Study Conference.

Connor, of the FIEC, formed the British Committee for Common Evangelical Action<sup>98</sup>. Later joined by W.J. Grier of the Irish Evangelical Church, afterwards to become the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the name of the Committee was changed the following year to the British Evangelical Council. The founding fathers of the BEC were opposed to the ecumenism which had been expressed only four years earlier with the coming into being of the World Council of Churches (WCC)<sup>99</sup>. At the time of the meeting in 1952 Dr Carl McIntyre of the USA was attempting to begin a branch of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) and had hoped that the 1952 meeting would lead to this. The founders of the BEC, however, were not happy with the spirit and stance of the ICCC. This was an anti-ecumenical body but it is clear that the Free Church of Scotland and FIEC brothers were not happy with it.

## 2. Development

It would not be unfair to say that the BEC did not have a very high 'profile' in the evangelical world until 15 years later. What particularly brought it into prominence was the fact that Dr Lloyd-Jones, such a well known evangelical preacher and leader, publicly identified with it that year and spoke at a huge meeting organised under its auspices on the subject of *Luther and his message for today*. I shall say more about Dr Lloyd-Jones and of his relationship to the BEC in **III** below.

Although the BEC was an anti-ecumenical body, the following facts need to be borne in mind. First, many of those in churches or church bodies which were part of BEC were happy to be publicly involved with those who remained in what have sometimes been called – and which Ms Palgrave calls – mixed denominations. No better example can be given than that of leaders and churches within the BEC being willing to be identified publicly with Dr Lloyd-Jones, even though he was the minister of a church in a 'mixed denomination', a denomination which was part of the WCC. The facts are quite clear and they are as follows. In 1939 Lloyd-Jones became associate minister of Westminster Chapel, a chapel which belonged to the Congregational Union. This denomination, while not 'connexional' in the way in which the Presbyterian Church of Wales was, was still a denomination which would have included not a few who did not preach the gospel of the Bible. Yet Lloyd-Jones was prepared to become its minister.

Yet it was not until 1947 (eight years after becoming associate minister with Dr Campbell Morgan, four years after becoming sole minister in 1943, and two years after World War II had ended) that Lloyd-Jones proposed withdrawal from the denomination, a proposal which he did not press because of a vocal protest from some within the church. Instead, at a further meeting the same year it was agreed to stay in the Union but to withdraw delegates from its annual Assembly and to allocate money to be given within the denomination to individual evangelical congregations<sup>100</sup>. It would be nearly another twenty years before a decision would become imminent to withdraw and thus not enter what would be the newly formed Congregational Church in England and Wales<sup>101</sup>. I shall have more to say about this in **III** below. The point to note at this stage, however, is that denominations which were not 'mixed' were happy to invite Dr Lloyd-Jones to preach for them, even though he was minister of a church in a 'mixed denomination'. Thus, in March 1941 he gave a series of addresses at the Free

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<sup>98</sup> The Free Church of Scotland was a thoroughly evangelical presbyterian denomination. The Fellowship of Un denominational and Unattached Churches and Missions was formed in 1925, and this subsequently became the FIEC. On the Free Church of Scotland, see Murray, 1980, pp. 15-22. On the FIEC, see Fountain, pp. 124-127.

<sup>99</sup> 'In 1952 Poole-Connor joined with others in the formation of the British Evangelical Council. It linked churches that stood against a false ecumenism' Fountain, p. 184

<sup>100</sup> Murray 1990 p. 164 and note 1 on that page.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 513

Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh<sup>102</sup>. Of course at this stage neither the WCC nor the BEC had been formed. The important thing to observe, however, is that a denomination which was not 'mixed' was happy to have the minister of a denomination which was 'mixed' to preach for them. In any event, after the WCC had come into being and after BEC had been formed, Dr Lloyd-Jones preached in 1964 in what was possibly the largest congregation of the Free Church of Scotland, in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis<sup>103</sup>. Four years earlier he had preached at special services in the Free Church of Scotland congregation in Dingwall<sup>104</sup>.

Here were church congregations which belonged to a denomination which was a member of the BEC which were quite happy to have preaching for them a minister of a church in a 'mixed denomination'. While Ms Palgrave's booklet gives the appearance of being well researched, it does not at all consider facts such as these. Moreover, Ms Palgrave refers to the position of the late T. Omri Jenkins as being the same as that of BEC and goes on to refer to his 'principles of secondary separation', which were illustrated 'when he was compelled to write to the FIEC Assembly in 1984 in order to "express [his] grave disquiet" that they had invited an Anglican to speak at the Assembly'<sup>105</sup>. The Anglican was Dick Lucas. Although Ms Palgrave notes that Mr Jenkins "acknowledged Dick Lucas' reputation of 'thorough evangelical faith'", he warned, 'He is a continuing member of an organised religion which is compromised to the utmost and is avowedly heading for unity with Rome'<sup>106</sup>. But what Ms Palgrave has all but failed to see is that Westminster Chapel was also part of a denomination where the rot had well and truly set in but no letter, it seems, was ever sent to the BEC about the inconsistency of denominations failing to deal with congregations which invited Dr Lloyd-Jones to preach for them while he was still minister of a church in a 'mixed denomination', a denomination which was part of the WCC! Nor will it do for those who espouse Ms Palgrave's position to say that Dr Lloyd-Jones was a champion for the faith, who had declared his position in *Maintaining The Evangelical Faith Today*. The fact remains that he was still in a mixed denomination but BEC churches were happy to have him preach for them.

Indeed, it becomes even clearer that Ms Palgrave has seriously misrepresented the position when one considers the fact that BEC constituent bodies had preaching for them men who stayed in their denominations and who, it appears, were not committed to the same principles as the BEC. Thus in 1980 Sinclair Ferguson, a minister of the Church of Scotland, was the main preacher at the Evangelical Movement of Wales' Annual English Conference in Aberystwyth. The Evangelical Movement of Wales (EMW) was a constituent member of BEC and, as Ms Palgrave notes, J. Elwyn Davies (who, at the time of the 1980 conference, was the General Secretary of EMW) had been chairman of the BEC from 1969 to 1972. Yet, as far as I am aware, nobody from within any of the BEC constituent bodies or groupings of churches raised any objections to this. Furthermore, two years earlier, Dr Ferguson had been the main speaker at the EMW Ministers' Conference at Bala, a conference at which Dr Lloyd-Jones chaired the discussion sessions and gave the closing address, things which he did each year at this conference. Evidently not only did the BEC Council not object to this (nor did any of the churches of which BEC was comprised), but Dr Lloyd-Jones – 'who put the BEC on the evangelical map; he proclaimed its charter and ran up its flag'<sup>107</sup> – was quite happy to be involved in a conference at which the main speaker was a man from a 'mixed denomination'. It was not only ministers of the Church of Scotland who addressed gatherings of the EMW. In 1983 Gareth Davies, a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Wales

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<sup>102</sup> Murray, 1990, pp. 63-64. They were subsequently published under the title, *The Plight of Man and the Power of God*.

<sup>103</sup> Stornoway Gazette, 5 September 1964. See inside cover of Murray 1994.

<sup>104</sup> Murray 1990, p. 436, note 2.

<sup>105</sup> Palgrave, p.30

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Jones, p.9

(another 'mixed denomination') preached at one of the meetings at what was then called the EMW Annual Rally. Interestingly the chairman of the meeting was Graham Harrison, one of the men who chaired the Westminster Fellowship after the death of Dr Lloyd-Jones. Mr Davies, a man highly esteemed in Wales for his integrity and godliness, and for his fearless commitment to the gospel, has since gone to be with the Lord. During his active years as a minister before retirement Mr Davies remained within the Presbyterian Church of Wales, a 'mixed denomination'. The writer recalls Mr Davies leading the devotions at the evening meeting of the EMW Annual Rally at Swansea in the late 1970s, before Lloyd-Jones had died, and at which Dr R.T. Kendall preached<sup>108</sup>. Clearly Mr Harrison saw no incongruity in chairing the Westminster Fellowship, being involved with BEC, *and* in chairing a meeting at which a minister from a 'mixed denomination' preached. Since Ms Palgrave is based in Cardiff it is extraordinary that she makes no mention of these matters.

The simple fact is, of course, that a range of positions was held *within* BEC. This became evident at a BEC Study Conference held at Cloverly Hall, Shropshire, in 1985, on the subject 'Union and Separation'. The former General Secretary of BEC, the late Hon. Roland Lamb, was at this conference as was the then General Secretary, Alan Gibson. It seemed that the subject of the conference owed something to the fact that meetings had been held at Hinckley in Leicestershire at which concern was being expressed at the *rapprochement* which had been taking place in the 1980s between some in the BEC and some evangelicals in the Anglican Church. It is astonishing that Ms Palgrave's booklet makes no reference whatsoever to this conference where a definite cleavage was seen to exist between those who were committed to principles of 'secondary separation' and those who were not. Hywel Jones's paper on *Separation* advocated such secondary separation. The response to that paper given by Brian Edwards, of FIEC, clearly differed from the position adopted by Mr Jones<sup>109</sup>. In discussion Mr Jones was pressed by Roy Clements, pastor of a Strict Baptist church (or one of the Grace Baptist Churches, as they are now known), as to his exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15, Dr Clements arguing that the issue was all to do with the acknowledgement of apostolic authority rather than secondary separation<sup>110</sup>. The final paper was given by Peter Seccombe, then minister of Spicer Street Independent Chapel, St Albans, a church which was part of an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches (EFCC, a constituent member of BEC) and the church to which the then General Secretary, Alan Gibson, belonged, the BEC having its office, in those days, at St Albans. It was quite clear that Mr Seccombe was unhappy with the principles of secondary separation being espoused by some.

The point which needs to be grasped, of course, is that the 1980s did not witness a departure from earlier BEC principles on 'secondary separation' for the simple reason, as we have already noted, that at a time when Dr Lloyd-Jones was minister of a church which was still part of a 'mixed denomination' and which was part of WCC, BEC churches were happy to have him preach and no objections were made to this. Furthermore, Dr Lloyd-Jones worked happily alongside E.J. Poole-Connor, the founder of FIEC and one of the founders of BEC, *while Westminster Chapel was part of the Congregational Union of England and Wales and was still part of WCC*<sup>111</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> I was present at the meeting. I am going on memory and think that the year was 1978, but it is possible that it was 1979.

<sup>109</sup> Mr Edwards was unable to be present at the conference due to the fact that his wife was seriously unwell at the time. His response was, therefore, read. (I believe that the person who read it was Alan Gibson but I am not entirely sure since, although I still have all the papers from this conference, I am going on memory as to who responded to the papers which were given.)

<sup>110</sup> The fact that Dr Clements has subsequently gone into a spiritual wilderness, having left his wife and family in order to identify himself with 'gay Christianity', while cause for sadness and prayer (1 Jn. 5:16), does not negate the force of the arguments advanced by him at the time of the conference against the position espoused by Dr Jones.

<sup>111</sup> There are numerous references in Murray 1990 to the very close association between Lloyd-Jones and Poole-Connor.

Enough has been said at this stage about the BEC. I shall return to it later, when dealing with the position of Affinity. Suffice it to say at this point that Ms Palgrave's quoting at numerous points in her booklet from the BEC's *Official Statement: Attitude to Ecumenicity*, which was published in the BEC Newsletter of June 1968<sup>112</sup> does not establish that the BEC position was always that of secondary separation, if that phrase be understood to mean that those committed to the BEC could never have addressing one of their churches or constituent bodies an evangelical who was a minister of a church in a mixed denomination. It does not and cannot establish that for two simple reasons. First, the statement is dated June 1968; but BEC had already been in existence, by that date, for sixteen years. Secondly, throughout fifteen of those sixteen years – that is to say, until 1967 when Lloyd-Jones became publicly identified with BEC – congregations within the BEC (and, be it noted, prominent ones such as the Free Church of Scotland congregation in Stornoway, Lewis) had been happy for Lloyd-Jones to preach for them, while he was still the minister of a church which belonged to a denomination which was part of the WCC. What this means, of course, is that Ms Palgrave has given us a 'snapshot' of a certain period in the history and life of the BEC and wishes to set this in stone, as if it ever was and ever should be the position of men who wish to remain faithful to what BEC stood for. I have shown, however, that, as a matter of fact, it was not ever thus, and I shall seek to prove in due course that it does not always have to be thus for those who are faithful to the principles which lay behind the formation of the BEC.

It is time now to consider the position of the late Dr Lloyd-Jones, a position which, I shall endeavour to prove, was far more nuanced than as presented by Ms Palgrave and far more subtle (in a good, not pejorative, sense of that word) than is realised by many of those who claim to have followed Lloyd-Jones as well as by many of those who have been critical of him.

### **III The position of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

Many who have written on Dr Lloyd-Jones's teaching concerning the issue of the gospel and separation have concentrated attention particularly upon his celebrated address in October 1966 to the National Assembly of Evangelicals and to his subsequent messages at BEC Conferences. This is certainly the case with Ms Palgrave's booklet. However, if one is able properly to appreciate what Lloyd-Jones was saying in those years it is essential to place his teaching within the context, not only of the spiritual and ecclesiastical scene of that time, but also within the context of his total ministry. Otherwise one will inevitably be left with a distorted picture of things. Furthermore one will be left with something of a 'snapshot', albeit a snapshot which covers some fifteen years. The problem with this is that those who concentrate on this fifteen-year period to the exclusion of what had gone before tend to 'freeze' the spiritual and ecclesiastical scene of that period and fail to see that things are very different today. The upshot of this is that one is locked into a time warp, into the scene of the 60s and 70s, with the inevitable consequence that one becomes quite irrelevant. Biblical principles, as we have said, never change; but the circumstances to which they have to be applied do change, and if we do not realise this, then we shall be unable to speak to the issues of our day. Regrettably, this is what Ms Palgrave's booklet does. It is not without significance that most of those who write commendations on the inside and outside covers of her booklet were ministering in that period. They are men who were involved in yesterday's battles; but the world of 2013 is, *in certain respects*, very different from that of the 60s and 70s<sup>113</sup>. If there was one thing which remained true of Lloyd-Jones throughout his long and remarkable

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<sup>112</sup> References are made to this document on pp. 14, 19,20, 28 in Palgrave.

<sup>113</sup> I say 'in certain respects' because, of course, in one sense nothing ever changes: 'There is nothing new under the sun.' But, like David of old, we are to 'serve God in our generation' (Acts 13:36).

ministry it is the fact that he stayed abreast of all that was happening and of the changes that were taking place. He was never 'yesterday's man'.

### **1 Lloyd-Jones's passion for the gospel and his own denominational involvement**

In 1927 Dr Lloyd-Jones became minister of the Bethlehem Forward Movement Church in Aberavon, South Wales<sup>114</sup>. This belonged to the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist denomination, the denomination in which Lloyd-Jones had been raised. By that time liberalism had bitten deeply into the denomination. This was to be seen in the fact that in 1927 the denomination adopted a Shorter Confession of Faith and changed its name to the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Speaking of those days, Elwyn Davies commented: 'These were years when he' (that is, Dr Lloyd-Jones) 'was possessed with one consuming passion – to tell men that in and through the Lord Jesus Christ they could know God'<sup>115</sup>. Mr Davies went on to say: 'To us today it seems so regrettable that Dr Lloyd-Jones was ordained a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Wales when it was too late even for a person of his gifts and convictions to influence the issue of whether the denomination should adopt a Shorter Confession, and thus, to all intents and purposes, relegate the old Confession of Faith to the status of a historical document. Such was the case, however, and even though at one time Dr Lloyd-Jones had reason to hope that the common people, in response to his preaching, would reject the arrogant views of the vast majority of liberal and modernist preachers who by then were occupying the pulpits of our land, this was not to be'<sup>116</sup>.

In other words, although there were mission halls which had come into existence after the 1904 Revival because of the state of the denominational churches<sup>117</sup> and, as we have seen, the FIEC, under a different name, had been formed in 1922, five years before Lloyd-Jones entered the Christian ministry, Lloyd-Jones, at this stage, 'stayed in'. This did not reveal any weakening of his commitment to the gospel: unlike those who had come out, he believed that there was a great opportunity for him by staying in, even an opportunity of him influencing the denomination. Indeed, as Iain Murray makes clear, after he had announced that he would leave Aberavon, he was open to serve in the denomination's theological college at Bala<sup>118</sup>. It would, surely, have been perverse for any evangelical outside the main denominations in Wales in those days to have refused church fellowship with Lloyd-Jones and the church at Sandfields because it was part of a denomination that was turning its back upon the gospel: for the simple fact was that he was a Mr Valiant-for-the-Truth within that denomination and, by his preaching and whole demeanour, was most definitely not 'fellowshipping' with the apostates within the denomination. Indeed, while one might compare him at this stage of his ministry with someone like Whitefield, there was, of course, a significant difference: the Anglican Church to which Whitefield belonged still subscribed to the Thirty Nine Articles, whereas the Presbyterian Church of Wales in which Lloyd-Jones ministered had effectively relegated its wonderful Confession of Faith to the museum.

The word which was used some sentences back which is all important is the word 'opportunity'. As Mrs Lloyd-Jones once remarked, 'Nobody will ever understand my husband until they realise that he is first a man of prayer and then an evangelist'<sup>119</sup>. Everything was seen by Lloyd-Jones through the lens

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<sup>114</sup> Much of what follows is 'common knowledge' but for documentary evidence and proof of the statements, reference should be made to Murray 1982. References to page numbers will be given.

<sup>115</sup> Catherwood, p. 180

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181

<sup>117</sup> The church of which I am pastor separated itself from the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist denomination (later to become the Presbyterian Church of Wales) in the first decade of the twentieth century.

<sup>118</sup> Murray 1982, p. 335, 346-351

<sup>119</sup> Quoted on dust jacket of Murray 1990

of 'opportunity' for the gospel. He was aware that, in some situations, there was a greater opportunity for a gospel man if he became a minister in the Church of England than in the nonconformist churches and, in such a situation, would counsel a man to enter the Church of England. This comes as so much of a shock to many that I shall quote his words in the body of the text rather than relegate them to the footnotes. His counsel comes in a letter written in 1940 to the late Leslie Land, later to become minister of Melbourne Hall in Leicester<sup>120</sup>. He wrote:

*Your letter is most interesting. As regards the Church of England I think I mentioned the possibility to you in one of our chats. As far as I am concerned there is nothing whatsoever against it. Indeed, I am not at all sure but that in many ways it would be the right thing for you. I am persuaded that Nonconformity is going to have a real fight for existence after this war. It seems to be the case, in England especially, that the Church has a **better opportunity** (emphasis mine).*

A number of things stand out in these words. First, it seems from the words, 'I mentioned the possibility to you in one of our chats,' that it was Lloyd-Jones who had probably put this idea first into Land's mind. Secondly, Lloyd-Jones, though a thoroughly convinced nonconformist, had 'nothing whatsoever against it'. Thirdly, what seems to have been uppermost in Lloyd-Jones's thinking was the 'better opportunity' in the Church of England than in nonconformity. This inevitably raises the question as to what it was a better opportunity for. The answer must surely be that it was a better opportunity for gospel ministry. This, as we shall see in due course, is what Lloyd-Jones's celebrated (or infamous, depending on the view you take) 1966 address was all about: namely, that the conditions which were then obtaining presented for evangelicals a unique 'opportunity', an opportunity which might not be given again. In other words, he was still concerned in 1966 with what had led him into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Wales in 1927; with what had led him to consider a position in that denomination's training college in the late 1930s; and with what was influencing his advice to Leslie Land in 1940. Furthermore, the fact that he regarded it as a *unique* opportunity indicates that his 1966 message was very much conditioned by the situation which then existed, a condition which is very different from what obtains today. If Lloyd-Jones was ever a 'single issue' man, then that issue was most emphatically **not** that of secession but, rather, the very different issue of gospel proclamation.

There is further evidence to support this last observation. As we have seen, Lloyd-Jones became associate minister of Westminster Chapel in 1939 and sole minister in 1943. As already noted, Lloyd-Jones' gospel commitment led him in 1947 to propose that the chapel leave the Congregational Union but he did not press this because of a vocal protest from some within the church. But – and this is a very big but indeed – because the gospel was primary for him, this did not lead him automatically to withdraw as minister of Westminster even though the denomination was not thoroughly evangelical. Surely he was applying here pastoral wisdom and not sacrificing the great gospel opportunity which he had by splitting the church over the issue. He was not the 'single issue' secessionist which Ms Palgrave suggests that he was.

Of course, the reply that might be made to what has been said thus far is that Ms Palgrave herself acknowledges the fact that Lloyd-Jones himself counselled caution and that men had to teach and instruct their churches so that the churches could see the issues, and Ms Palgrave gives numerous

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<sup>120</sup> Murray 1994, p.59



quotations to support this<sup>121</sup>. Indeed that is certainly the case, and the idea that he urged men simply to withdraw in cold blood from their churches, with little regard for the people whom they would thereby be abandoning, is a preposterous misrepresentation of fact, and one is grateful to Ms Palgrave for putting the record straight on this. **But** this cannot account for all the nuances we have noted in Lloyd-Jones's position. Two things give the lie to such a view of things. First, there is no hint that Lloyd-Jones was encouraging Leslie Land to enter the Anglican ministry in order to lead the people he would serve out of their church. Secondly, in 1969 (and the date is surely important: this was three years after the 1966 address, and the year before the publication of *Growing into Union*) Lloyd-Jones wrote to Eric Alexander, who emphatically did not share Lloyd-Jones's view of the denominations, urging Alexander to accept the invitation to become pastor of Westminster Chapel, and even writing these words: 'For myself I would be prepared to sacrifice almost everything for that'<sup>122</sup> [that is, for the maintenance of a biblical ministry at Westminster Chapel]. The fact that Alexander could not accept the basis of membership of the Westminster Fellowship and was a committed Church of Scotland minister did not count with Lloyd-Jones when set against the need to maintain a biblical ministry at the Chapel.

It is this gospel emphasis which animated Lloyd-Jones, rather than finer points about secondary separation. And it was this gospel emphasis which lay at the heart of his response to the Ecumenical Movement, of his 1966 address, and of his involvement with BEC from 1967 until his death. It is to these matters that we must now turn.

## **2. The response of Dr Lloyd-Jones to the Ecumenical Movement**

Early in his ministry Lloyd-Jones was grieved at what he saw to be the essentially negative approach of T.T. Shields of Canada<sup>123</sup>. He urged upon Shields the need to preach the gospel positively and to win the people. It was not that Shields no longer believed the gospel; nor was it the case that Lloyd-Jones did not believe that there was a place for being negative: it was Shields' *emphasis* which was wrong. Shields did not heed Lloyd-Jones's exhortation and the result was that he ended in something of a spiritual cul-de-sac<sup>124</sup>. This is important background to understanding Lloyd-Jones's behaviour in the 1950s.

The BEC was formed in 1952 yet it was not until 1967 that Lloyd-Jones became identified with it<sup>125</sup>. Given that it was set up specifically to provide an evangelical response to false ecumenism, the question must be asked as to why Lloyd-Jones did not identify with it in 1952. Hywel Jones, in his introduction to Lloyd-Jones's published addresses to the BEC, gives what is undoubtedly the most likely explanation<sup>126</sup>. It is clear that Lloyd-Jones was concerned that BEC might be too negative. Certainly at the end of his life he was still troubled by the excessively negative attitude of some evangelicals<sup>127</sup>: he never forgot what had happened to Shields. Furthermore, as Jones points out, where the BEC saw a battle (when others were asleep), Lloyd-Jones saw the war<sup>128</sup>. This almost certainly explains his behaviour in the 1950s, when he took the battle into the ecumenical camp by meeting with a group convened by the British Council of Churches (BCC, which was part of the WCC)

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<sup>121</sup> Op cit. pp. 31-32

<sup>122</sup> Murray 1994, p. 217

<sup>123</sup> Murray 1982, pp. 271-274; Murray 1994, p. 228

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 228

<sup>125</sup> See Jones, pp. 7,9

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. pp. 9-13

<sup>127</sup> Murray 1994, p. 228

<sup>128</sup> Op. cit. p. 12

to discuss various doctrines<sup>129</sup>. This was, one might say, a form of dialogue: but it was not, for Lloyd-Jones, the sort of dialogue where every view is of equal validity (which is really the essence of pluralism); rather, as is very clear from the accounts of the discussions, he asserted again and again the biblical position as over against liberal or 'Catholic' views. This was, therefore, very different from the fundamentalist approach and also demonstrated a very different spirit from that which had been exhibited by Shields and Carl McIntyre and men like them. Lloyd-Jones was not adopting an obscurantist approach to false teaching, nor was he harsh in his dealings with false teachers. The truth was evidently being spoken in love; but this experience confirmed him in the view that the chasm between those who believed the true gospel and those who were in the vanguard for the ecumenical movement was unbridgeable unless such ecumenists abandoned their position and embraced the gospel.

The perceived threat posed by the ecumenical movement in the 1960s was very real indeed. As we have seen, many churches no longer stood by their historic confessions, truth was at a premium, and there was a big push to merge the churches into a great union. Whereas historically evangelicals such as Whitefield had contended for the gospel and against false teachings, by the 1960s a new attitude had come into being, one which we have seen was influenced by the new evangelicalism. However, while many evangelical men were now seeking to play a more whole-hearted part in their denominations, some did not see the ecumenical threat, while others, while remaining committed to their denominations, saw the threat and employed what can only be called 'wrecking tactics' with respect to uniting with other denominations. This accounted for the strange alliance between Jim Packer and Colin Buchanan with two Anglo Catholics, Eric Mascall and Graham Leonard, in their joint authorship in 1970 of *Growing into Union*. This led to the following strange phenomenon: while those who did not believe the gospel were pushing for greater unity amongst the denominations, some evangelicals were simply fighting to retain their denominational identity for fear that they would be submerged into an amorphous theological mass, not to say mess, while others simply were content to go along with this.

By the mid 1960s, therefore, a number of things had come together. First, the Ecumenical Movement was making a great push for the denominations to join, but these denominations were, *in practice*, hardly evangelical: no doubt there were evangelical congregations within them and, in the case of the Church of England, its Thirty Nine Articles were evangelical. The reality, however, was that through large swathes of these denominations the gospel had been lost and those in authority within them were often hostile to the gospel. In this situation Lloyd-Jones saw *a great opportunity* for the gospel: it was that those evangelical congregations within the mixed denominations should separate from those denominations (and thereby sever links with those who denied the gospel) and come together, in some loose fellowship of churches with one another, even though on secondary matters they might still maintain their own distinctives. Simply to go with the ecumenical agenda would inevitably mean that one would either, at worst, be overwhelmed by the false teachings and the authority structure of a new denomination or, at best, simply be tolerated as holding one version of Christianity, the other versions, whether liberal or Catholic, being equally valid. What Lloyd-Jones called for would be true, evangelical ecumenicity. *The vital point to grasp is this: it was the primacy of the gospel which was the issue.* The presenting symptoms of the problem with which Lloyd-Jones was concerned were: first, an accommodation by evangelicals within the mixed denominations of others within those same denominations whose views were inimical to true evangelicalism; secondly, the marginalisation of gospel truth which would inevitably result from these denominations merging; in the third place, the

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<sup>129</sup> Murray 1990, pp. 313-320

failure of evangelicals to see the glorious opportunity which the ecumenical 'push' presented to evangelicals in that they could dissociate themselves from their denominations and come together *not* in a new denomination (the essence of denominationalism being that a group of churches identifies themselves with respect to some ecclesiological distinctive [such as the form of church government], some sacramental distinctive [such as the mode of baptism], or pneumatological distinctive [such as a particular view of tongues speaking]) but in a fellowship of churches. But if these were the presenting symptoms or 'formal' issues with which he was concerned, the heart of the matter, the material or substantive point at issue was that with which he had always been concerned: the uniqueness and primacy of the gospel. In the 1960s *one* of the *forms* in which this concern was expressed related to the doctrine of the church: the reason for this was because of the rise of the Ecumenical Movement and the way in which some evangelicals were accommodating themselves to non evangelicals.

It is vital to understand that the rise of the ecumenical movement and the confused response of many evangelicals to it was what constituted the new element and which, in Lloyd-Jones's view, presented evangelicals with a unique opportunity to come together on the basis of the gospel and to separate from those denominations where heresy was tolerated and where heretics were not disciplined. If one can, for the moment, forget all that preceded his address of October 1966 and all that has succeeded it, it will be seen by any impartial reader that the burden of that message and its emphasis lay upon the positive duty to come together. It was not an 'anti-Anglican' or 'anti-Baptist' message: it was a message which raised the question as to what really is a Christian, what is an evangelical, and what, therefore, is the church? It was the parlous state of the denominations and the push to bring them together which became the launch pad for 'the Doctor's' call to separate in order to come together<sup>130</sup>.

To chart the aftermath of Lloyd-Jones's historic call in 1966 would require a book in its own right. What I have sought to demonstrate is that the 'tone' of 'the Doctor's' teaching was very different from 'the tone' of Ms Palgrave's booklet. What Lloyd-Jones was campaigning – if that is not too strong a word – *against* was the mindset which, in practice, relegated evangelical truth to being merely an opinion amongst others, an approach which, in practice, encouraged a pluralist view of truth and of the truth of the gospel. By contrast, what he was calling *for* was for Christian people, who were agreed on the great truths of the gospel, to join together on the basis of those truths and make them *in practice* non-negotiable. Although *in the context of the 60s and 70s this inevitably involved a call for separation from mixed denominations and secession from them*, this was a particular manifestation of his convictions *in that context*. In a different context those same principles might well work out in a different way.

### 3. Lloyd-Jones and 'secondary separation'

Before turning to the contemporary situation and then drawing some conclusions, it is necessary to say something about Lloyd-Jones's behaviour with respect to what is sometimes called secondary separation. His position here was far more nuanced than Ms Palgrave's booklet suggests. She is indeed right to draw attention to the distinction which he drew between church level fellowship with those who were determined never to leave their denominations and private fellowship with such men<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> Sentences such as the following from Lloyd-Jones 1989 demonstrate this beyond all shadow of doubt. 'I am here to suggest that we find ourselves in a new situation, which has very largely been caused by the arising and arrival among us of what is known as the ecumenical movement... I want to put it to you that we are confronted by a situation today such as has not been the case since the Protestant Reformation' (p. 248). 'We are always negative; we are always on the defensive; we are always bringing up objections and difficulties... The impression is given that evangelicals are more concerned to maintain the integrity of their different denominations than anybody else in those denominations' (pp. 249-250). 'I believe that evangelical people have got *an opportunity today such as they have never had and, I fear that we may never have it again*' (p.250, emphasis mine: note that he believed that they were living at a time of unique opportunity). 'Let me put it to you positively. Do we not feel the call to come together, not occasionally, but *always*?' (p. 255, emphasis original).

<sup>131</sup> Op cit. p. 32

But that is not the entire story for it is quite clear that he was prepared to have *public* fellowship with men who stayed in and to have *public* fellowship with men who continued to have public fellowship with those who not only stayed in but who were fully committed to their denominations. Since this has been such a misunderstood area, I shall adduce the clear evidence for this.

First, I have already referred to Dr Lloyd-Jones's involvement with the EMW Ministers' Conference at Bala each year. That conference was not only attended, but was also addressed, by ministers who lived and died within their denominations. I have already referred to Sinclair Ferguson, a minister of the Church of Scotland. Since Dr Ferguson succeeded Eric Alexander to the pulpit of the Tron church in Glasgow many years after Dr Lloyd-Jones died, one could hardly put him into the category of one of those for whom secession was only a matter of time. As to those who died in their denominations I have already referred to the late Gareth Davies, who continued until retirement as a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Mr Davies was a member of the EMW's General Committee, as it was then called, and was regularly involved in EMW events. Another regular at the EMW Ministers' Conference at Bala was the late Eurfyl Jones, a man who lived and died in the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Lest it be said that this conference is a private conference, the point is that in those days – as is still the case – it was a conference only for ministers: that is to say, it was in their capacity as ministers that they attended<sup>132</sup>. The point to grasp, therefore, is a very simple one, and it is this: Lloyd-Jones's position was remarkably nuanced in that he recognised the different circumstances and context of the EMW Ministers' Conference from those of the Westminster Fellowship.

The question may be asked as to how Dr Lloyd-Jones could attend and take part in such events, given the 'secessionist' stance which he adopted. Part of the answer is supplied by his letter of 10 December 1966 to David Samuel<sup>133</sup> and by Iain Murray's editorial comments on this letter<sup>134</sup> and on another letter by Lloyd-Jones to Dr Samuel on 17 September 1970<sup>135</sup>. Lloyd-Jones drew a distinction between those in denominations who not only proclaimed the gospel and who contended for it within the denomination from those who had, in Dr Samuel's words, to which Iain Murray refers, 'succumbed to the popular clamour for pluralism in belief and practice'<sup>136</sup>.

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<sup>132</sup> Retired ministers, missionaries, and theological students in their last year of study are also allowed to attend. Furthermore, Ms Palgrave, in drawing attention to Lloyd-Jones's principles of 'secondary separation' refers to the Westminster Fellowship, a fellowship of ministers. The annual EMW Bala Ministers' Conference was the climax of the monthly meetings of ministers' fellowships across Wales. The point is that men were in those fellowships and men attended *and preached* at Bala who could not have become members of the Westminster Fellowship. Yet Lloyd-Jones still heavily identified with the EMW Conference, as he did with the Westminster Fellowship. The basis of the monthly ministers' fellowships or fraternals within the EMW was also significantly different from that of the Westminster Fellowship. It stated: '**a) Basis** These shall consist of ministers: i) who subscribe to the Doctrinal Belief of the Movement. ii) who are concerned to exercise a God-centred evangelistic and pastoral ministry and to be involved in the reformation of the church according to biblical principles. iii) who are dissatisfied with the doctrinally mixed denominational position and opposed to the Ecumenical Movement because of its comprehensivist ecclesiology, but who nevertheless avow an intention, in principle and practice, to seek a scriptural expression of church unity... *Ministers who subscribe to the Doctrinal Belief of the Movement, but who cannot subscribe wholeheartedly to any other part of the above basis, may attend, provided that by such attendance the basis of the Fellowships is in no way called into question*' Davies, p. 55 (emphasis mine). It is important to emphasise that the context of the Westminster Fellowship was different from that of the EMW Ministers' Conference. It is clear from Murray's account of meetings of the Westminster Fellowship in the the mid sixties and leading up to Lloyd-Jones's October 1966 address at Westminster Central Hall that there had been considerable 'wrangling' over the issue of denominational affiliation and one's view of the ecumenical movement. As Lloyd-Jones himself observed: 'There has been strife already in these discussions; some of us have been given grace and restrained ourselves with difficulty' (Murray, 1990, p. 529). It is clear that this was *one* factor which led to the disbanding of the Fellowship, before it was reconstituted on a different basis.

<sup>133</sup> Murray 1994, pp. 170-171

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, note 1

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180, note 1

<sup>136</sup> See note 129

Lloyd-Jones drew other distinctions which shows how remarkably nuanced he was in his thinking. His involvement with IFES, an organisation which, though not a 'church body', certainly entailed far more than 'private fellowship', inevitably involved him in working alongside people who were not in secessionist churches. His last addresses to an IFES conference were in 1971, on the subject, 'What Is An Evangelical?' It is not without significance that his friend John Bolten was involved in this work and Bolten was a supporter of the Billy Graham campaigns and of the 'new evangelicalism'<sup>137</sup>. Yet although Lloyd-Jones did not accede to Bolten's request in 1963 that he reconsider his decision not to chair the Congress on Evangelism which was held in Berlin (not in Rome, as had originally been planned) in 1966, Lloyd-Jones continued his involvement with IFES, speaking at Schloss Mittersill in Austria in 1971, when Bolten was present.

Ms Palgrave quotes Harry Waite, a member of the Westminster Fellowship, who claimed that while 'the Doctor' 'remained in private fellowship with his friends in the doctrinally mixed denominations... his policy was no church level fellowship. Whilst the Doctor would preach for sinners anywhere, he would never invite men from the mixed denominations into *his* pulpit'<sup>138</sup>. The problem with this is that the evidence does not support what Mr Waite claims. What does he mean by 'his pulpit'? Since Lloyd-Jones retired in 1968 (two years after his 1966 address), is Mr Waite referring to the pre-1966 situation or the post-1966? If the former, then, of course, we have to take account of the fact, as we have already seen, that it was only in 1967 that Westminster Chapel itself ceased to be part of the Congregational Union: so 'his pulpit' was in a church which belonged to a 'mixed denomination' for all but one to two years of his ministry there! Add to that the fact that Dr Lloyd-Jones never removed his name from the list of ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Wales and Mr Waite's claim is seen to be not entirely in accord with the facts. Although Lloyd-Jones ceased to be minister of Westminster Chapel in 1968, it is clear from his letter to Eric Alexander that he would have been happy for Alexander to become minister of the chapel<sup>139</sup>. John Thomas, one of the ministers in Wales to whom Lloyd-Jones was closest and who preached at the chapel after Lloyd-Jones's retirement, remained a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Wales<sup>140</sup>.

Lloyd-Jones continued to preach at Christian Unions and not only at evangelistic events<sup>141</sup>. In the late 1970s he preached at one of the meetings for Operation Mobilisation's 'ships'<sup>142</sup>. On the other hand it simply is not true that he would preach anywhere. For example his letter of 22 October 1973 to Alan Francis indicates that he could not promise to preach at the 150th anniversary service of a church in Swansea because of its continued membership of the Baptist Union<sup>143</sup>. The letter shows how nuanced Lloyd-Jones could be. He had prayed and thought much about the issue and was reluctant in being unable to promise to accept the invitation. But the reason given was that he was pledged to support those who had left the Baptist Union and he felt it 'would be unfair to them to give the impression that

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<sup>137</sup> Murray 1990, pp. 441-442

<sup>138</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 29

<sup>139</sup> Murray 1994, pp. 216-217. Further on this, see Brencher pp. 190-192. Brencher accuses Lloyd-Jones of having a 'double standard'. Yet the references I have already given to Lloyd-Jones's involvement with EMW demonstrates that Brencher has failed to take account of all the evidence. On Brencher, see my review in Foundations 2003.

<sup>140</sup> Mr Thomas was minister of Sandfields, Aberavon, Lloyd-Jones's first pastorate.

<sup>141</sup> He preached at the Oxford University Christian Union (OICCU) in the summer of 1975. Although the Sunday evening message was evangelistic, the Saturday evening was not, so this was not simply preaching 'for sinners', if this phrase be understood to refer to evangelistic preaching. Personal information, since I was a student there at the time and present at these meetings.

<sup>142</sup> I cannot recall whether the ship was the Logos or the Doulos. STL used to make available the recording of this message, which was on Acts 5:32.

<sup>143</sup> Murray 1994, p. 183. Murray is mistaken in saying that Mr Francis was the pastor of the church. The pastor was Glyn Morris, who is also referred to in the letter.

this is an indifferent matter'<sup>144</sup>. The point here is that a man as prominent as he was had to consider all kinds of pastoral implications of his decisions. He was not a single-issue man.

With respect to Lloyd-Jones's fellowship with those who maintained links with those in denominations, the case of the late John Caiger is highly instructive. For many years after its reconstitution Mr Caiger was the secretary of the Westminster Fellowship. He had first joined it as a member around 1943-1944 and was still the secretary at the time of Lloyd-Jones's death in 1981<sup>145</sup>. He was a man who had had, therefore, a very long association with Lloyd-Jones. Yet in the 1970s Mr Caiger was a speaker at the Keswick Convention. Leaving aside the issue of the Keswick message of sanctification, the simple fact is that this Convention was regularly addressed at that time by people in the mainline denominations (such as Raymond Brown, who was in the Baptist Union, as well as by Anglicans, including John Stott, who publicly disagreed with Lloyd-Jones at the October 1966 meeting)<sup>146</sup>. Now this was not church fellowship (since one of the problems with Keswick was that it by-passed the issue of the church) but neither could it come into the category of the private fellowship which, Ms Palgrave says, Lloyd-Jones continued to encourage between separated evangelicals and those within the mixed denominations. Clearly Stott and Brown could not have been members of the reconstituted Westminster Fellowship, even though this was a private fraternal of ministers; and yet Caiger was willing to be identified with Keswick, whose speakers came from a wide denominational range. Yet the Westminster Fellowship did not remove Mr Caiger: he became its secretary!

#### 4. Conclusions about Lloyd-Jones

His position was remarkably 'nuanced'. The common thread was his great commitment to the gospel. He certainly was *not* a denominational man, in the sense that he put that before or on a par with the gospel<sup>147</sup>. Equally, however, care is needed in calling him 'a separatist'. Whether he was or was not depends on what one means by that term. Certainly he referred to himself as a separatist<sup>148</sup>. On the other hand, in 1968 he wrote a very enthusiastic and commendatory foreword to Klaas Runia's excellent book on these issues entitled *Reformation Today*. In his chapter on separation, Runia states, 'For this reason we must reject all *separatism*'<sup>149</sup>. Lloyd-Jones's very commendatory foreword entitles us to believe that he was in sympathy with what Runia had written. Although Runia was calling for separation from the 'mixed denominations', this was only after strenuous efforts had been used to reform from within and was to be done without rancour. Lloyd-Jones urged the reading of the book by all who were concerned 'about the lamentable state of the church and the urgent need of the presentation of our glorious evangelical message to the masses throughout the world'<sup>150</sup>. In other

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<sup>144</sup> He withdrew, for a similar reason, from preaching at Park Baptist Church, Merthyr Tydfil, in South Wales, a church at which he regularly preached. The reason he gave was that other men in the locality had, at considerable cost and sacrifice, withdrawn from the Baptist Union, and he felt that were he to preach in a large Baptist church in that area, a church which was very committed to being part of the Baptist Union, then it would be giving a very confusing signal to those men and could be seen by them as him 'letting them down'. Although nearly everything else in this paper is referenced from documents which are publicly available, this was something which I heard him say in May or June 1975. (I cannot, at this distance from the events, remember the precise month, but recall that it was in what is called Trinity Term – that is, the summer term – that he came and that it was a gloriously sunny weekend.) He was in Oxford for the weekend to preach at our Christian Union and attended the church which the president of OICCU and I attended. The retired pastor regularly had us for lunch, and Dr Lloyd-Jones joined us. The president of the CU, Lindsay Brown – later to become General Secretary of IFES – was from Park Chapel and some folk from there had come up for the weekend. In conversation before lunch this issue was raised. It is entirely consistent with Lloyd-Jones's letter to Alan Francis.

<sup>145</sup> Murray 1994, pp. 235-236 and note 1 on p.235

<sup>146</sup> See photograph between pp. 192 and 193 in Dudley-Smith. This is a photograph taken at the 1965 Keswick Convention, at which Stott was a speaker. Caiger was also a speaker there in the early 1970s, either 1971 or 1972, when Stott and Brown were also speakers there. I am going on memory for this latter information.

<sup>147</sup> Further on this see Foundations 1998

<sup>148</sup> Jones p. 178, and quoted by Palgrave on p. 23.

<sup>149</sup> Runia, p. 109: emphasis original

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6

words, there is the world of difference between separating, with a sad heart, after great and patient efforts, and to do so to ensure that the gospel is brought to the masses, and having a separatist mentality. As we have seen, there is such a thing as biblical separation, and it is this for which Lloyd-Jones called; there is the separatist mentality which disfigured people like Shields and McIntyre. When Trevor Kirkland says that Lloyd-Jones was a separatist of the biblical kind<sup>151</sup>, he is absolutely right; but we need to realise that that may not be quite the same thing which Ms Palgrave is presenting in her booklet.

In addition to the above, Lloyd-Jones, as Ms Palgrave notes, retained personal fellowship with those with whom he was not publicly identified at church level. His kindness to Billy Graham is a good example of this<sup>152</sup>. Sadly, as we shall see later on, there are those whose 'separatism' leads them to break all links with fellow believers with whom they disagree.

### **C INCONSISTENCIES IN RUTH PALGRAVE'S BOOKLET**

I presume that Ms Palgrave has had commendatory 'blurbs' on her booklet to help give it 'standing'. This is what blurbs and forewords are intended to achieve. Since some of the men who have commended her booklet are well-respected leaders in the evangelical world, this would, one presumes, encourage folk who might not otherwise do so to read her booklet. But it does not follow that everyone who has commended her booklet would agree with everything in it. Take, for example, the commendation from Maurice Roberts, a former editor of *The Banner of Truth* magazine. I esteem Mr Roberts very highly as a man of God and I have greatly benefited from his preaching and writing ministry, and have always enjoyed warm fellowship with him when we have met. He is a champion of warm, doctrinally strong Christianity, with an emphasis on rich spiritual experience. Some years ago he preached at the first church which I pastored, although this was some time after I had moved to another pastorate. The church was in Mid Wales and Mr Roberts was there because he was preaching at the annual Keswick-in-Wales Convention. Now it is a simple fact that over many years the organising committee of that convention has included men who belonged to 'mixed denominations'<sup>153</sup>, including the Anglican Church<sup>154</sup>. Moreover Mr Roberts has been a 'regular' at the Banner of Truth Trust Ministers' Conference in Leicester. Yet I have been present at that conference, and so was Mr Roberts, I believe, when an Anglican addressed one of the sessions<sup>155</sup>. Now, given that neither of these conferences is 'private fellowship', it is clear that Mr Roberts is far more generous in his evangelical sympathies than is Ms Palgrave.

Alec Taylor is a brother whose commendation is written in rather strange terms. He states that his former independent church had its membership of BEC transferred to Affinity without any consultation. He then states, 'We immediately cancelled our membership for the reasons outlined in this booklet.' But I have already drawn attention to the overwhelming evidence that things were not as clear-cut and black and white in the BEC as Ms Palgrave represents them to have been. One can only ask the question: if Mr Taylor is so unhappy with the direction which Affinity has taken, why did he not

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<sup>151</sup> Commendation on back cover of Palgrave

<sup>152</sup> Murray 1990, p. 441

<sup>153</sup> For example, Mr John Mitson is on the organising committee. At the time when Mr Roberts preached at the convention, the church of which Mr Mitson was a member still belonged to the Baptist Union, and was the church from which the church of which I had been pastor and at which Mr Roberts preached on the Sunday had seceded in the early 1980s.

<sup>154</sup> I am thinking of the late John Goss, a godly Anglican vicar from Herefordshire

<sup>155</sup> The Anglican was Arthur Bennett. I believe – but cannot recall with certainty – that he was speaking on Charles Simeon of Cambridge.

leave the BEC years earlier when some of the things which I have detailed were taking place? I shall return to this point in a later section of this paper.

But it is not only the case that those who wrote commendations for the booklet may be more generous in their spirit than is Ms Palgrave: some of those who are quoted favourably in the booklet certainly belied in their practice those very principles which, Ms Palgrave claims, they upheld. Take, for example, the late Omri Jenkins, to whom Ms Palgrave refers. I had great respect for Mr Jenkins and he regularly preached at the first church I pastored in Mid Wales. On numerous occasions this would be immediately before the EMW Ministers' Conference in Bala, and we would then travel together to Bala. We had a number of conversations about the issues raised in Ms Palgrave's booklet and in this paper. Mr Jenkins was also, as Ms Palgrave notes, very close to Dr Lloyd-Jones. But here is the remarkable thing. Mr Jenkins wrote to the FIEC to express his grave concern at them inviting Dick Lucas to preach at the FIEC Assembly in 1984<sup>156</sup>. Ms Palgrave states that Mr Jenkins was 'known to be of the same opinion as the Doctor regarding secondary separation for the sake of the Gospel'<sup>157</sup>. Ms Palgrave adopts Ernest Pickering's definition of secondary separation: 'A secondary separatist would be one who will not co-operate with (1) apostates; or (2) evangelical believers who aid and abet the apostates by their continued organisational or cooperative alignment with them'<sup>158</sup>. This definition requires further definition: suffice it to say, however, that a secondary separatist will not co-operate not only with evangelical ministers but evangelical *believers* who are organisationally aligned with apostates. This, presumably, is why Mr Jenkins expressed concern at FIEC inviting Dick Lucas to preach at its annual assembly. But this raises the inevitable question: what on earth was Mr Jenkins doing in attending the EMW Ministers' Conference at Bala, when men such as the late Eurfyl Jones (a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, another of those denominations with 'apostates' in it) addressed the conference the first year I attended it? Why did he not write to the EMW to protest at this? Why did he continue to attend it each year? Why did he not warn me, a young minister starting out in the Christian ministry, of the dangers of this conference which had such men speaking? Why did he not say that the EMW, the BEC, and Dr Lloyd-Jones were compromisers and temporisers for being involved in a conference which numbered amongst its speakers men who belonged to 'mixed denominations' or men who were aligned with 'apostates'?

Well, the answer is not that difficult to discover. I have already supplied the evidence that Lloyd-Jones was remarkably nuanced in his teaching with respect to these things. I fear the same cannot be said about Mr Jenkins. His dismay at the FIEC inviting Dick Lucas to preach should have meant that he would have been equally dismayed at the EMW having Eurfyl Jones or Gareth Davies to preach. But this was not the case. When I raised this very issue on one occasion at an EMW Management Committee meeting, the reply was made by one of the brothers that Mr Jones was clearly an evangelical first and foremost and stood full square for the gospel<sup>159</sup>. To this reply I made the observation that this was surely the case with Mr Lucas also. Mr Jones was a member of a mixed denomination but we were happy for him to speak because he was clearly a gospel man. Why, then, were some unhappy for men like Mr Lucas to preach at our gatherings? Was the difference simply that we 'knew' the one man but had built such walls that we did not 'know' the same sort of men in the

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<sup>156</sup> Palgrave, p. 30.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 29. Ms Palgrave bases her belief that Mr Jenkins believed in secondary separation on the fact that he was one of a group of men who, in 1983, called for a return to the stand made by Dr Lloyd-Jones against ecumenism. (See note 129 on p. 39 of op. cit.) She cites Sheehan p. 115 and note 45 on p. 124 as her source. This was part of what became known as 'the Hinckley meetings', though Ms Palgrave nowhere refers to this by name in her booklet.

<sup>158</sup> Palgrave, p. 39, note 130.

<sup>159</sup> It was made by Graham Harrison, whom Ms Palgrave quotes approvingly on pp. 31-32. Mr Harrison is a man whom I greatly esteem and who has been of enormous help and encouragement to me throughout my ministry.



Anglican Church? One of the brothers present at this meeting agreed this was possibly the case<sup>160</sup>. Just for the record it may be worth pointing out that Mr Jenkins had a small speaking role one year at the Banner of Truth Ministers' Conference when an Anglican, Arthur Bennett, was also speaking. Curiouser and curiouser!

Ms Palgrave clearly regards Affinity has having 'drifted' from the BEC position<sup>161</sup>; yet the section of her booklet where she makes this charge is shot through with all kinds of oddities. Earlier she acknowledges that in 1987 the BEC welcomed an Anglican Church into membership and she justifies this on the basis of the view of its vicar that they could not remain in the Anglican Church at all costs<sup>162</sup>. She goes on to note that that church severed its links with the Anglican Church in 1994, seven years later. Yet on the previous page she criticises Affinity for welcoming into membership, in 2006, a church which was part of the United Reformed Church and a church belonging to the Baptist Union and goes on to say, 'Neither of these churches were [sic] intending to leave their doctrinally-mixed denominations.' How does she know? She produces no evidence to support this statement.

Ms Palgrave quotes Vernon Higham, who told her in a personal conversation in 2007 (and permission to quote from which he gave to her in January 2012<sup>163</sup>), 'Unity with Anglicans is in the end unity with Rome. They are avowedly heading that way'<sup>164</sup>. Although I highly esteem Mr Higham for his godliness and for his powerful evangelistic ministry over many years, I have to say that this is an extraordinary statement. If he had said, 'They *were* avowedly heading that way,' it would make sense. But since they had accepted the ordination of women quite a number of years before Mr Higham made that statement, it makes absolutely no sense to say that the Church of England is heading for reunion with Rome. Rome will not have them! Has Mr Higham not heard of the numerous Anglo-Catholics who have left the Church of England to join Rome because of the ordination of women? By pushing that agenda the Church of England was clearly indicating that practically reunion with Rome is dead in the water.

Mr Higham's remarks are typical of the approach of Ms Palgrave's booklet: it is still locked into the situation which obtained in the 60s and 70s; neither Ms Palgrave nor many of those whom she approvingly quotes seem to be aware of the fact that the world is very different today from what it was then, just as it was different then from what it had been in the forties and fifties. The stand Lloyd-Jones made in the 60s did not indicate any change in his principles but, rather, was evidence of the fact that he was aware that the situation to which those principles had to be applied was very different from what it had been before. And the situation today is very different from what it was in the 60s and 70s. And that is why Affinity has done some things which the BEC did not do. This is not evidence of the phenomenon observed by Dean Inge (and frequently quoted by Lloyd-Jones) that institutions become in time the exact opposite of what they were set up to be; rather, it is evidence of the great changes in the evangelical world, some of which have been for the better. It is to these matters that we must now turn.

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<sup>160</sup> The brother was Dr Eryl Davies

<sup>161</sup> Op. cit. pp. 21-24

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. p. 23

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 38, note 98

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

## **D THE DIFFERENCES IN THE EVANGELICAL WORLD IN ENGLAND TODAY<sup>165</sup> FROM THE 1960S AND 1970S**

As we have seen, the BEC acquired far greater prominence after Dr Lloyd-Jones became publicly identified with it in 1967 than it had had in the previous fifteen years since its inception. Furthermore, as we have already noted, for the forty one years of which he was the pastor of a church (eleven years in South Wales and thirty years in London), Lloyd-Jones was minister of a church in a mixed denomination for *forty* of those years: for eleven years he was minister of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, and for twenty nine years he was minister of a church in the Congregational Union<sup>166</sup>. These are *facts*. And they are facts which are often overlooked both by Lloyd-Jones's acolytes and by his detractors. And they are facts the significance of which is not at all considered by Ms Palgrave. I have drawn attention to the fact that throughout his long ministry Dr Lloyd-Jones held unwaveringly to the same gospel principles and was certainly not a man committed at all costs to the institution of any denomination. Yet it was only in 1967 that he ceased to be minister of a church in a mixed denomination. It is not that he suddenly acquired new light on these things in that year; rather, the situation had been deteriorating throughout the years and, after the formation of the WCC in 1948, the situation to which gospel principles had to be applied changed significantly. The man who had told Leslie Land in the 1940s that he could see nothing against him entering the Church of England ministry would not have been thus counselling men in the 1960s or 1970s. Situations change.

But the question now needs to be posed: may not the situation have changed since the 60s and 70s? And the answer is that it definitely has. For example, in 1967 the Keele Congress of Anglicans clearly indicated that many evangelical Anglicans were heading in a very different direction from that which had been taken by an older generation of such men, and were following the very kind of agenda which so concerned and troubled the BEC and Lloyd-Jones. But things have changed beyond all recognition since then. Some evangelical Anglicans have gone further down an ecumenical road. But there are others who are definitely going in a very different direction. The Proclamation Trust (in the formation of which Dick Lucas was heavily involved) has an Evangelical Ministry Assembly each year. This Assembly attracts a large number of evangelical Anglican ministers and ministers of independent evangelical churches. (Sinclair Ferguson and Eric Alexander have addressed the Assembly.) A regular preacher there has been Philip Jensen, an Anglican minister from Sydney in Australia. I was present in the 1990s when he asserted that Keele had been a huge mistake, that Anglo-Catholicism was pagan, and that the gospel was to be proclaimed not mimed or enacted in drama. This was clearly very different from much that was going on in the 1960s and 70s.

Richard Coekin is an Anglican vicar who has also spoken at that conference. His strenuous advocacy of evangelical principles led to the Bishop of Southwark withdrawing his licence to preach<sup>167</sup>. This is surely the same sort of thing which was happening to the evangelical Anglicans in the eighteenth century. (Did not something similar happen to the great Daniel Rowland?) It is no good building the tombs of the eighteenth century evangelical Anglican preachers and then abusing their twenty first century descendants. Following our Lord's type of reasoning concerning those who built the tombs of

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<sup>165</sup> The emphasis on England is intentional. I am not sufficiently informed of the ecclesiastical scene in Ireland and Scotland to be qualified to comment. While I am Welsh and have always ministered in Wales, since it is in England that significant changes have occurred amongst evangelical Anglicans, I shall concentrate upon England.

<sup>166</sup> To be precise, he was pastor at Aberavon for eleven years (1927 - 1938), and co-pastor of Westminster Chapel from 1939 - 1943, and then the sole minister (though he did have assistants) from 1943 - 1968. When he first went to Westminster in 1938, it was initially to share the ministry with Dr Campbell Morgan; he was not formally called to become associate pastor until 1939. See Murray (1982) pp. 337-349.

<sup>167</sup> It was later re-instated, I believe, after intervention from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

the prophets but who abused the people of their own day, one has to conclude that Ms Palgrave and those who commend her booklet would not, whatever they say today, have been amongst those enthusiastic supporters of Whitefield, Harris and Rowland but, rather, have been amongst those 'dry' dissenters who would have nothing to do with them.

In September 2012 the Rector of St Helen's Bishopsgate addressed the Executive Committee of Affinity on the state of evangelical Anglicanism today. It was clear that his affinities were with those great leaders of the eighteenth century. Heresy and heretics are opposed by him and men like him. He spoke of younger men who cannot get a church and who are, therefore, prepared to plant churches in parishes where the vicar is not evangelical. This is light years removed from the kind of 'denominational men' who were so prominent in the 1960s and 70s. Indeed it is more theologically 'right wing' than the position of those older evangelical Anglicans before the newer approach of the 60s took hold of some.

Ms Palgrave quotes from the BEC's 1968 *Official Statement: Attitude to Ecumenicity*, where it cites 2 Cor. 6:14-17, Rev. 18:4, Gal. 1:6-9, 2 Jn. 9-11, Rom. 16:17, and 1 Tim. 6:3-5<sup>168</sup>. These passages are quoted but they are not exegeted. While some of these passages may well have *applications* to the denominational scene, that is *not* their original context, since there were no denominations in those days. The point which the Rector of St Helen's clearly made when he addressed the Executive Committee of Affinity in September 2012 was that he and men like him take passages such as these, which call for separation from those who teach fundamental error, very seriously indeed. Within their churches they seek to implement this teaching. At this point Calvin's observation that the Roman Catholic Church was not a true church but that there were true churches within it is of huge importance. I may personally believe that a fair application of some of the passages quoted by Ms Palgrave require me not to be part of a denomination which intentionally and consciously allows heretics within its ranks. Indeed, that is my position. *But* this is how I *apply* what I understand to be the teaching of those verses. Is it not to be spiritually and theologically myopic to fail to see that another brother may take those verses with the same seriousness with which I take them but, *in his situation, applies* them somewhat differently from the way I do?

To see the ecumenical movement as still the great enemy in the UK today is to display a measure of ignorance as to where things are really at. While false unity is a danger against which one must ever guard, there are so many other threats to the evangelical world today, such as secularism, materialism, militant atheism, Islam, 'spiritualities' which own no institutional allegiance: surely these and utter ignorance of or indifference to the gospel are pressing enemies and threats. So many churches in the denominations have closed. Churches and ministers do not have the 'standing' in society or the wider culture which they once had, so the power politics of the ecumenicalists – which was seen to be so threatening in the 1960s – is, today, just something rather childish, silly, and utterly irrelevant in the eyes of many. Of course, gospel principles must still be applied. But in the 1960s churches that were not in the main denominations were in very real danger of being discriminated against by public bodies. While it is still the case that the media look to what the BBC once called 'the mainstream', which refers to the denominational churches, it is hardly the case that churches outside of those bodies are marginalised as they were in the 60s. That is hardly the case today, especially when so many of the thriving churches in the land are new, independent causes.

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<sup>168</sup> Op. cit., pp. 19-20

Now I cannot envisage how I could ever be a minister of a church in one of the 'mixed denominations'. And I would also find it difficult to square a fair application of certain Bible passages with remaining in such a denomination. But that is not the issue as to whether I could co-operate with a church which does stay in but which also opposes error and will not have anyone other than an evangelical to preach in its pulpit. Just as I in all conscience could not baptise the child of a believer but respect brothers whose convictions on this differ from mine, so I could not imagine how I could function as an Anglican vicar but can respect those whose conscience interprets how certain passages are to be applied in a different way from the way in which I would apply them. This was surely how a man like Poole-Connor could fellowship and co-operate with Lloyd-Jones when Lloyd-Jones was still in a 'mixed denomination', just as Lloyd-Jones could have encouraged Leslie Land to consider entering the Anglican ministry. In other words, we must distinguish between those who really are involved in massive compromise from those who are like Whitefield.

It was these changed circumstances which gave rise to the Director of Affinity seeking to 'develop the Anglican agenda'<sup>169</sup>, something to which Ms Palgrave takes exception. A number of those who were on the BEC Executive Council (such as the writer) were aware that the situation had changed and that the BEC was in danger simply of identifying itself as a body which was still locked into the battles of the 60s and 70s. This is why Oak Hill College has been accepted as an Associate Partner of Affinity, something else to which Ms Palgrave objects<sup>170</sup>. But, as Maurice Roberts says in his commendatory blurb on the back of Ms Palgrave's booklet, 'Truth in our times is not so much being openly attacked by visible enemies as smothered by its professed friends.' Thus some so-called evangelicals have, just like liberals of fifty years ago, been denigrating the doctrine of the penal substitutionary atonement of our blessed Lord and Saviour and have been trying to rid the Christian world of the idea of propitiation. Yet the fullest re-statements and defences of this doctrine in recent years have come from Oak Hill College<sup>171</sup>. Whereas the Evangelical Alliance held a debate on the subject (which immediately implies that something is negotiable), the men at Oak Hill published a wonderful book on the glory of penal substitution<sup>172</sup>.

Consider another change which has occurred. In the early 1990s I was on holiday with my family and some friends in a part of England and obtained from the BEC details of the nearest BEC church in the area. It was Easter Sunday. At the Sunday morning meeting the preacher indulged in certain forms of spiritual exhibitionism after two ladies had danced in the church and presented us with daffodils! In the evening we felt that we could not face more of the same and visited the Anglican church near to where we were staying. Reverence and seriousness marked much of that evening meeting and I came away with a sense of the greatness of God. If I lived in that area, which church would I have regularly attended? There was not another gospel church for many, many miles, and I do not want to spend hours in a car on the Lord's Day. This type of situation could be multiplied. In the past it was not unknown for students to attend a BEC church where the minister did not treat the text of Scripture as carefully as did the vicar in a nearby Anglican church. This was a situation where biblical principles were coming into collision with each other and one could not simply decide the matter by a 'single issue' approach.

Of course, I am not denying that what I am saying worked the other way, and the BEC type church was, in some cases, far more biblically attuned than the Anglican church and where BEC churches, or

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<sup>169</sup> Quoted by Palgrave, p. 21 and noted on endnote 84 on p. 37

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p.22

<sup>171</sup> Peterson; Jeffery

<sup>172</sup> Jeffery

independent churches which were not part of BEC, were very welcoming to students<sup>173</sup>. I am simply making the point that denominational allegiance cannot be the one and only issue. A man once preached in a church which I pastored and a member, who had once belonged to an Anglican church, lamented to me that although what the man had preached had been true, it had absolutely nothing to do with the text from which he had preached. She complained that there were liberals in the Anglican church who treated the sacred text with scant regard for its meaning, but she had expected better from a BEC church. She was right, and the preacher had been quite wrong. What do you do if you live or study in an area where the non-denominational church engages in theatricals and superficial nonsense, when down the road in a church still in a denomination the Word is truly preached and applied thoughtfully, helpfully, and powerfully? Life is a lot more complicated than Ms Palgrave's booklet would suggest.

In an earlier section of this paper, when dealing with biblical principles, I referred to the phenomenon that sometimes one biblical command can come into conflict with another biblical command. At that point I emphasised that one must then 'grade' the principles which lie behind the commandments to ascertain which command must prevail. This is something to which Lloyd-Jones himself referred<sup>174</sup> and it was from reading a paper presented at a BEC Study Conference over thirty years ago that I was first made aware of this phenomenon and how to address it<sup>175</sup>.

In this connection what I said earlier in the paper about 'culture' becomes hugely important. The subject of culture is very complex indeed and to explore it would make this paper a full-length book. But suffice it to say that it is possible for a church, in a right concern to distance itself from 'the world', to confuse aspects of culture which are 'neutral' and not at all 'worldly' in the biblical sense with what the Bible means when it refers to the evil of the world. The upshot of this is that the church then isolates itself in an unbiblical way and unbelievers are presented with a 'Christ plus' message, a 'faith plus' message, which is, of course, as much a denial of the gospel as the Roman Catholic 'Christ plus' and 'faith plus' message. One has to embrace certain cultural distinctives, which have no biblical warrant, if one is to become a Christian or a zealous Christian. This is a denial of the gospel. Yet I have

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<sup>173</sup> I referred in note 143 to the fact that the retired minister of the church I attended as a student used to invited us back for lunch. The church was not a member of BEC but was an independent, Calvinistic chapel, St John's, Squitchey Lane, in North Oxford. The retired minister was Sidney Norton, from whose home The Banner of Truth Magazine had been launched in the 1950s. Although aspects of the church may have appeared quaint to many, and although only a small number of students attended, the fact remains that unbelieving students, some from a Christian background and some from very different backgrounds, came to faith there. Mr Norton was extraordinarily kind in inviting to his home for lunch each Sunday not only students but older people who had travelled some distance to be at the church. It helped make Sunday a real day of fellowship for us. It also means that, although cultural sensitivity is, as I have argued earlier in this paper, very important, some today are making rather too much of it. Kindness, Christian hospitality and friendship, and faithful biblical preaching, closely applied to the conscience and empowered by the Holy Spirit, were what we found in that church, and are still vital elements of any healthy church life. If these are absent, no amount of cultural sensitivity and relevance can make good the deficiency.

<sup>174</sup> In the paper entitled *John Bunyan: Church Union - Light From John Bunyan and other Puritans* in Lloyd-Jones 1987. The paper was delivered in 1978 and was the last paper Lloyd-Jones gave at The Westminster Conference.

<sup>175</sup> The paper was *What Constitutes a New Testament Church* by Graham Harrison. His concern was to demonstrate that Calvinistic Baptists who would not have church union with Arminian churches or paedobaptist churches were, in seeking to uphold what they considered to be one strand of biblical teaching, inevitably failing to uphold another strand of equally biblical teaching. He examined the resolution of the issue biblically and historically, invoking what has come to be called the Jessey-Bunyan-Hall argument, after Henry Jessey, John Bunyan, and Robert Hall. I believe that the same kind of argument can apply today where a believer, who would be unhappy at being in a church which is in a mixed denomination, is faced with the problem that a church which is not in a mixed denomination is failing to uphold other biblical principles. Whatever the believer does is less than the ideal, since deciding not to go to either church will mean that the believer is failing to attend the public means of grace. This, of course, is a different situation from that which obtains where the available churches are so corrupt that they have forfeited any claim to be called churches.

had enough experience of ‘separatist’ churches where such has been the case<sup>176</sup>. Of course the reverse is true: some in a concern to be ‘culturally relevant’ may well accept things which Scripture *does* condemn. Both approaches are wrong.

The saintly Robert Murray M’Cheyne – whose name is still held in high honour by all who value experiential Christianity and vital godliness – was once publicly criticised in the press for having men from outside his own denomination to supply his pulpit when he was laid aside by illness. He replied in a letter dated 6 July 1842 to the Dundee Warder<sup>177</sup>. The letter is not a defence of himself but a statement of scriptural principles and also of certain parts of the Westminster Confession. It is a wonderful letter which, as with so much of M’Cheyne’s life and ministry, breathes something of the very atmosphere of heaven itself. He refers to the fact that if a man were sound in doctrine and blameless in life, then even though a minister of the Church of England, holding beliefs which M’Cheyne did not hold, he not only felt duty bound to have fellowship with such a man but would also delight in it. Furthermore he would be only too glad to have such a man to preach. He amasses scriptural arguments to support this and also argues it from the presbyterian Westminster Confession. He notes that the saintly – and *very* Presbyterian – Samuel Rutherford had Archbishop Ussher to preach in his pulpit. But perhaps the most telling part of the letter is the following:

*Had I admitted to my pulpit some frigid Evangelical of our own Church... one whose head is sound in all the stirring questions of the day, but whose heart is cold in seeking the salvation of sinners, would any watchful brother of sinners have sounded an alarm in the next day’s gazette to warn me and my flock of the sin and the danger? I fear not. And yet Baxter says of such a man, “Nothing can be more indecent than to hear a dead preacher speaking to dead sinners the living truth of the living God.”*

I am not, of course, suggesting, still less claiming, that all who agree with Ms Palgrave are ‘frigid evangelicals’. I have valued very highly the ministry of some of the men whom she quotes and who have commended her booklet. What is indisputable, however, is that there *are* churches which are out of the mixed denominations but where there may be lovelessness, failure to exercise proper discipline *within* the congregation, and there are such churches whose ministers are cold in seeking the salvation of sinners. There are also numerous churches outside the ‘mixed denominations’ who do not fellowship even with other ‘separated’ churches on the basis of the gospel but draw the basis of fellowship on a much tighter basis<sup>178</sup>. While this is so, there *are* evangelical churches within the Church of England, which are spiritually vibrant, demonstrating practical godliness, and whose ministers are earnest in reaching the lost and faithful in building up the saints. Since Dick Lucas has been mentioned in Ms Palgrave’s booklet and I have referred to him earlier in this paper, it may be worth pointing out that many who worked in the City, some of whom had had no contact with Christianity at all, came to faith by being taken by a work colleague to the lunchtime evangelistic meetings at St Helen’s Bishopsgate. When the world around us is perishing, surely churches which are

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<sup>176</sup> I think of a man who fulminated against women coming to the Lord’s Table wearing red stockings! It was not that these stockings were sexually provocative – which would have breached a biblical principle – nor that that they had associations *at that time and place* with sexually provocative behaviour; rather, since the preacher was elderly and remembered a time when such attire would have given out such a message, he assumed it still to be the case, and castigated women present for wearing such. One might laugh, were it not so tragic. What were unbelievers present hearing? Not the gospel but a ‘Christ plus certain cultural norms’ message. This can be as soul destroying, as ruinous, and as diabolical in its effects as the Roman Catholic teaching. Another elder in such a church once lacerated women for wearing earrings. Had he pondered the significance of Song of Solomon 1:10-11, and the fact that the Lord attired Israel with earrings (Ezek. 16:12) [something which, if it were inherently evil, the Lord could not have used in a figurative sense], he might have realised that he was twisting Scripture, albeit from ignorance, as much as many a heretic has.

<sup>177</sup> The letter is reproduced in Bonar, pp. 605-612

<sup>178</sup> One may add to this the problem which exists when independent evangelical churches, which are very clear in not being part of a mixed denomination, fail to have fellowship with each other or where sad ‘splits’ occur. See also note 179 below.

making real contact with real people and seeing many of them being saved are displaying a spirit and sense of proportion which is all but lacking in some of those who have commended Ms Palgrave's booklet, who, it would appear, identify themselves *not* with respect to the great truths of the gospel and the life which must flow out of gospel obedience but, tragically, in terms of whether one uses the New Christian Hymns hymn book or not and whether one believes that the Received Text or Textus Receptus is the divinely approved Greek text of the New Testament<sup>179</sup>.

Hywel Jones has commented on Lloyd-Jones's call for secession as follows: 'After the Westminster Fellowship was re-formed, we were often required by the Doctor to do two things. The first was to look at the situation to see if there was any material change in it. Nothing was further removed from the truth than the claim that having seceded we retreated into an isolationist ghetto, continuing to persuade ourselves that we needed to stay there to give credibility, in one's own eyes at least, to the step already taken'<sup>180</sup>.

These are important words. *Why* did they need to look at the situation to see if there was any material change to it? The obvious answer is that Lloyd-Jones did not regard the situation as 'static' but as one which could change. This would then inevitably mean, as has repeatedly been urged in this paper, that, while biblical principles do not change, their *application* does, depending upon the circumstances to which they are to be applied. Dr Jones goes on to observe that when they did look around they saw no reason to change their minds or to repent of the step they had taken but were confirmed in it. The natural question to raise, at this point, therefore is: Is the situation different today and has it changed from what it was then? The answer which I have sought to supply is that it *has* changed and has changed significantly. Affinity has, while still holding to the principles which the BEC stood for, acknowledged this changed situation to which those principles are to be applied. It is not at all because 'they have forgotten', as Ms Palgrave claims. Quite the contrary! They have remembered: in particular, they have remembered that the New Testament Church has existed for over two thousand years, and they have remembered that it really is impossibly foolish to try to freeze the church of Jesus Christ into an era of no more than fourteen years – 1967 to 1981 – in one very small part of the world where the church can hardly have been called spiritually vibrant. But they have also remembered something else, something which, alas, Ms Palgrave and those who commend her writing seem to have all but forgotten. It is the second thing which, according to Dr Jones, Lloyd-Jones urged those in the re-formed Westminster Fellowship to do:

"The second requirement presented to us was to look at ourselves and to face the question, "*Were we closer – and closer to each other as churches?*" *Was there a church fellowship in existence outside the*

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<sup>179</sup> This is true of a number of the men who have written commendations of Ms Palgrave's booklet. Furthermore a number of them have signed their agreement to a website called Affirmation2010.org. While there is much that is good and commendable on that site, much with which one agrees, when it states that the Textus Receptus is *the* divinely preserved text (thereby suggesting that readings which differ from Textus Receptus should be rejected), it is saying something with which Lloyd-Jones would not have agreed and to which he would not, therefore, have been able to subscribe. There are enough published sermons of Lloyd-Jones which make it clear that he did *not* accept that the so called Textus Receptus was superior to other New Testament readings, and that entails the further proposition that he did *not* regard it as the *uniquely* preserved text. I shall limit the evidence for saying this to the opening words of his sermon on Romans 8:1 in his great Romans series: "Those who use modern translations of the New Testament will notice that the last statement in this verse as it is found in the Authorized Version (K.J.V.) of 1611 is omitted, namely, the phrase "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". The same phrase is found in the 4th verse, *and the older and best manuscripts do not have it at this point in the 1st verse. Therefore, on grounds of textual criticism – not higher criticism but textual criticism – it is probably wise to omit this phrase at this particular point*, and to read this verse thus, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Lloyd-Jones, 1973, p. 258) (emphasis mine). The words which I have italicised make it abundantly clear that Lloyd-Jones regarded the manuscript tradition found in many so-called 'eclectic texts' as older and better than Textus Receptus and that he was quite happy with the practice of a textual criticism which preferred alternative readings to those found in Textus Receptus.

<sup>180</sup> Catherwood, p. 225

*church groupings to which we belonged? Were we committed to the British Evangelical Council? Secession was the road to unity, the Doctor taught us, and not the path to isolationism and exclusivism. We saw that we could not go back without denying principles of truth which could not be more closely bound up with the Gospel, but I wonder whether we saw as clearly that we must go on. The Doctor impressed on us that we had been brought out in order to be brought in. Unless we went on to show the glory of the Gospel in the churches, how could we expect any to join us?’<sup>181</sup> (emphasis mine).*

Well, the sad reality is, as many know only too well – and it is only a concern for good taste and decency, and a disinclination to bring dirty linen into the open that prevents me from giving the detailed evidence in support of this – that *some*<sup>182</sup> of those who have commended Ms Palgrave’s booklet and Ms Palgrave herself belong to, may one say, a ‘circle’ where things have become extraordinarily exclusive and where co-operation depends upon whether one *does* use the Authorised Version of the Bible and *does not* use *New Christian Hymns or Praise!* I do not mean, of course, that one should not be able to make informed criticisms of Bible versions and argue in favour of one as over against another; nor am I saying that informed criticisms of modern hymnbooks may not be made and that one may prefer one hymnbook to another. I *do* mean that when churches will have little or nothing to do with other churches unless they tow the same line on these kinds of issues, ‘they have forgotten’ what Lloyd-Jones was all about and what he sought to ensure the BEC became.

### **Epilogue: an admonitory story**

I began with a true, cautionary tale to illustrate the dangers in *over*-emphasising the negatives of the Christian life. I end with a true, admonitory story as to how one young man was damaged by such behaviour. I have changed names and a number of details in order to preserve the anonymity of the people and churches involved because no good or useful purpose will be served by disclosing these details.

William was a young man in a strong and large independent evangelical church. He was to go to university. He was advised by those in spiritual authority to go to a particular independent, evangelical church in a town some miles from his university town. The first week he made a train journey there, which took about 20 to 30 minutes. Although everyone in the church had a Bible and appeared to be avidly committed to following the preaching from the Bible, the bulk of the sermon consisted of a tirade against the errors of Roman Catholicism, though this had little to do with the text. Nobody engaged him in conversation at the end of the meeting, nor was he invited to lunch. He took the train back to his campus, repeated the journey in the evening, when the sermon again consisted of a tirade against something else, the congregation vigorously and audibly expressing their approval. Nobody engaged him in conversation in the evening. This pattern was repeated for three weeks, and the young student was puzzled: since everyone so vigorously agreed with these negative tirades, it seemed to him that the people did not need such an emphasis upon these things but, rather, needed more positive exposition that stuck to what God was saying in his Word with relevant application to their lives. After three weeks the young student had had enough. The following Sunday he attended a large, evangelical Anglican church in the city, which a lot of students attended. He was welcomed; he heard faithful exposition of God’s Word; afterwards people spoke to him and he was invited to lunch. He had been taught in his home church that every Anglican congregation was apostate or hopelessly compromised. But his own experience told him that it was the independent evangelical church which was not taking God’s Word seriously in the following areas: in ‘rightly dividing the Word of truth’; in

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> I do not mean all



welcoming and receiving those whom Christ has received; in offering hospitality; in being just courteous and kind to God's people.

I know of other young men who have had similar experiences. Ms Palgrave's booklet will not help any young person in such a position because it simply repeats the mantra of 'taking a faithful stand' against error and standing apart from mixed denominations, though it says nothing about being faithful in showing hospitality, welcoming the stranger, etc. While I am not a member or minister of a church which is part of a mixed denomination, I must distinguish between those in such denominations who are wholeheartedly gospel men and those evangelicals who 'fudge'. And if I could not do what such faithful gospel men are doing by staying in their denomination, I must surely acknowledge the many pastoral considerations which weigh with them and, most importantly of all, if I still think them to be mistaken, I must surely show them a more excellent way. In the second decade of the twenty first century that more excellent way is not to retreat into the seventh and eighth decades of the twentieth century. This is where Ms Palgrave would have us go. Thankfully, Affinity is of a different mind.

### **Abbreviations and bibliography**

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