

How It All Began

Chapter One

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How It All Began

Chapter 2

After the course at R.A.F. Bircham Newton, which dealt with the theoretical aspects of the Lancaster to York 'conversion', I was posted to R.A.F. Dishforth in Yorkshire in the November of 1947, for flying experience in the new type of aircraft. I subsequently endured some weeks, night and day, of 'circuits and bumps', the R.A.F. slang for take-off and landing procedures, endlessly circling the aerodrome to perform the same. Although I simply attended the station church services and shared in the mid-week fellowship at R.A.F. Dishforth, two events occurred which were to have an important influence on my spiritual experience. One was to meet the Padre at R.A.F. Dishforth, a Methodist Minister who later became the Chaplain General in Germany, just at the time that the Wunsdorf Christian Fellowship led by myself really began to move! The other was to point a certain Flight Lieutenant to Christ. On one of the rare occasions when I was asked to preach there, 'Chalky' White (as all men with the surname White were dubbed) entered upon a personal experience of God. Later 'Chalky' became the Squadron Leader of a York Squadron, and played an important part in my subsequent ministry on the Berlin Airlift.

When as a qualified York Flight Engineer, I was posted to operational service, I went firstly to R.A.F. Abingdon in Berkshire, early in 1948. There I became the 'Recruiting Sergeant' for the local Salvation Army canteen meetings on that Unit, an unofficial appointment given to me by Captain and Mrs Warner, who were in charge of the 'Army' canteen. Our joint co-operation led the way to twenty conversions before I left for Wunsdorf (near Hanover) in the late June of 1948. Capt. Warner said to me (after hearing me preach!) 'You will empty more Churches than you fill!' - a prophecy that has, in measure, proved to be right! It has not been so much the emptying of them, as missioning in them whilst empty! The emphases of the Dennis Paterson ministry have not been those that make for popularity! However, I was somewhat comforted by Mrs Capt. Warner who replied: 'You may be right, Bill, but there has to be a going out sometimes before there can be a coming in!' In my case it seems to have been more a 'keeping out' than a 'going out' but the point is gratefully taken!

After some months of flying the R.A.F. supply routes to various parts of the world, such as the Mediterranean; Middle East; Persia (now Iraq); India; Malaya and Singapore; I found myself trundling down the runway at R.A.F. Wunsdorf in the late June of 1948, looking out of the Flight Engineer's window, and asking the Lord a loving question, 'What do you have for me to do here, Lord?' It wasn't easy to leave an R.A.F. unit where so many (relatively speaking) had found Christ as Saviour; not only in the Salvation Army canteen, actually; rather more in the Kingsway Club, aided and abetted by the local Methodist Minister, at whose lovely Church I worshipped when home at base. However, we thought that the Berlin Blockade would only last six weeks (!) and I was not over-disturbed. Little did I know that the Berlin

Airlift would last for fifteen months, and include a Christian event not far removed from a 'Pocket Revival', even if those involved never saw it as such. To them it was 'Christianity' at work! (we were too naive to realise the difference!) but the details of those incredible days must wait until later. Certainly, there were more events that helped to determine all that was to come into being in the years ahead.

The first few weeks of 'Plain Fare', the R.A.F.'s pun code name for what was going to become the "Berlin Airlift", were fairly confusing for those of us hurriedly dispatched to Germany to take part in it. I had been on one of Transport Command's routine flights to the Far East ferrying spare parts or personnel to the various Air Force Units en-route. During one such trip in the June of 1948, on one of the homeward 'legs', we received a message from our Unit to be prepared for a hurried departure to Germany almost as soon as we had touched down again on British soil. So it proved to be. A few hours after that particular journey to the East had ended, we were back in the air heading for R.A.F. Wunsdorf for an emergency posting of six weeks duration, which was all the time that "Plain Fare" was to last, as the R.A.F. then thought.

So our arrival and the trips to ferry food into Berlin and, in consequence, to ferry very troubled German folk out of that city, left us unsettled for several weeks. Nevertheless, when the fifteen hour stint of flying came to an end during each twenty four hours, after some sleep and a Quiet Time, I usually went to the Malcolm Club which was open for the 'Lift' twenty four hours a day. The 'Malcolm Club', which was an 'up market' NAAFI (a Serviceman's cafe with leisure games, etc.) had a piano in the main room and my way of making contact with others, for the Saviour's sake, was to play the latest secular songs from home gaining the interest of those present as I did so. Those interested would often buy me a cup of tea whilst I was playing for them, and this usually led to conversation around a table when the tea was drunk. At the beginning of 'Plain Fare' I could only tell them of Someone who had helped me in my loneliness, and whose songs were more precious to me than any secular song I might have played, lovely as some of those songs undoubtedly were. There was no 'Kingsway Club' to invite them to, such as we had on R.A.F Abingdon under the leadership of the local Methodist Minister, and no Salvation Army Canteen with its weekly meetings either. Testimony was the only opportunity and since it was only for six weeks...?!

The Russians, who had called 'Plain Fare' into being by their closing of the supply roads into Berlin, guessed, perhaps correctly, that the massive Airlift laid on by the West was more of a bluff than a policy, and decided to call that bluff by extending what might have begun as a temporary blockade of Berlin. For the British Aircrew, who had tried to live for six weeks on only limited clothes, etc. and the fairly primitive accommodation suitable for an emergency, orders to return home to make provision for a definite posting were a relief. For me it was also a sense of 'call', something that had happened each time I was 'posted' from one unit to another after I had come to know the Lord Jesus personally. When the news of a more permanent posting reached us, I was more than half prepared for the same and expecting the

Lord to provide an opportunity for witness where we would have a longer time to work at it! The manner in which this came about was unexpected, to say the least, and another example of how God works when we least expect Him to do so, or where we could never expect that He would.

Soon after my return to Wunsdorf for a more permanent stay, where I had renewed my regular Malcolm Club performances, I got to know a young airman, Alan, by that means. We had got to the nodding acquaintance stage rather than the sitting with tea stage, but I was hoping for better things! One night, only a few days after my return to Germany, I was making my way back to my more permanent billet when I heard what seemed to be loud sounds of discord, as if a fight, perhaps, was about to break out. Realising the serious situation for airmen should they be found fighting in what sounded like a drunken brawl, I hurried into the billet block from which the sounds were coming. It turned out to be the M.R.S. Block (Master Radar Unit) and just as I approached the room from which the noise was coming, who should stagger from the same room but Alan, somewhat worse for drink, heading, if I remember correctly, for the toilet. The event turned out to be his, Alan's, birthday party, but seeing the stripes on my arm and not recognising the friendly piano player, Alan thought that he and his mates were for it on account of their drinking more than the possibility of fighting! So Alan whispered somewhat confidentially and unsteadily that it was a 'Birssday parrrty,' burp! etc. and invited me in for a drink!! I very happily went in, not for the drink so willingly offered but for a chance, I thought, to make progress with Alan in order to win him for Christ. I thought that he would be the first convert of whatever group would come into being as a result. But it was not to be, and sadly, although Alan did make a profession at a later stage, he was not able to continue in the same once he returned to 'civvy street'.

In that same room, however, was a young man whom I had not met previously, a Glaswegian, that is, a native of Glasgow. Alan was also Scottish but with a somewhat more cultured brogue. Bill wasn't only from Glasgow - he was also aggressively Glaswegian plus a Communist and an Atheist! Once I explained why I would not drink anything other than a lemonade (or, for preference, a cup of tea!) because I was a Christian, Bill made a dead set at me for all the obvious reasons, and, being somewhat worse for wear himself, drink-wise, was not for giving much respect for rank either. It was about ten p.m. that night when I became an unexpected guest at Alan's party, but it was 3 a.m. when I knelt on the floor of the now deserted room to pray with Bill, and to point him to Christ. As the party had gone on so one by one, including Alan, had left to sleep off their share in the event. Bill in the mean time had been at the centre of a discussion that had gone on around me, somewhat mockingly at first and then an argument, until it became a sharing between Bill and me alone. We shared the Lord's great love, and His dealings in my own needy life, until Bill's false defences broke down and he sought the Lord's forgiveness and love for himself, now stone-cold sober.

What an enthusiast for Jesus he became - almost terrorising the M.R.S. en-route. Early that same morning he awoke one of those who had been drinking with him to confess Christ, so frightening the man concerned that he got in touch with me to

complain about how I had more or less 'brainwashed' his friend! So an amazing series of Christian events began that was to bring some dozens to Christ and to make a way for other thrilling developments also. Unlike Alan, Bill went out of the R.A.F. into the Christian Ministry, and although now nearing retirement, is a Parish Minister not too far from where I am penning these notes today in 1996.

Obviously enough, perhaps, I was a little depressed when our Squadron was sent so hurriedly into what was to be the Berlin Airlift. I had left a thriving, soul-saving ministry on R.A.F. Abingdon and had very little Christian usefulness during the initial six weeks at Wunsdorf. On my return, having been home for a few days and bringing back with me my possessions for what had become a permanent posting, I went back to Germany with some initial regret again. The first six weeks showed that service life was no different in Germany as elsewhere, and, extra to that, was the exploitation of the local German people through the black market operating there. It gave me a very deep feeling of emotional sadness, not because I was some sort of prude, but because I was a young Christian who had found a real happiness in Christ. I knew that a similar happiness would never be discovered by my often very lovely contemporaries in the ways and places where they were seeking to find it. Then came Alan's 'birthday' after which all my feelings of depression disappeared! I realised that God was opening another opportunity to share the experience of Christ with my own generation. It was at this point, also, that the Station Padre, who had come to know that I was a Methodist Local Preacher, asked me to preach for a Sunday Morning Service. I had never preached in an Anglican Church before and I realised that Senior Officers often attended the morning, not because they knew the Lord necessarily, but because it was expected of them! So, what with one thing and another, I never felt less like preaching in my life, and I certainly didn't have any idea what I ought to preach on the day. Just a few days before that Sunday my eyes fell on a very familiar piece of R.A.F. literature. Every Aircrew Navigator possessed a Navigator's Almanac helping him to fix his position by the stars should he have any need to do so, something I had often seen in the Navigator's position on our aircraft. Never before, however, had I taken in the impact of the line drawing on the front cover - an old-style Navigator looking through his sextant at the stars and underneath the words 'Man is not lost'. My heart leapt!

'Man is not lost' – 'Man is not lost' - the words poured through my mind in a new way and I went immediately to the Bible finding Luke 19 and verse 10 – 'for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost'! With immense joy I preached it on the Lord's Day morning. My sadness had gone as I said that neither immorality nor the Black Market could defeat the purposes of God. My experience was limited but I was sure that God had used that occasion for His own glory. I learned that Bernard, a young man on the ground staff, had given his heart and life to Christ that morning, and I couldn't help blessing that Name which is above every Name, the precious Name of Jesus. The motto on the Navigator's Almanac was intended to help man find his way on Earth, but it needed the Lord Jesus to show men how that phrase could help men to find the way to Heaven! Bernard and I soon became a duo in the things of God, relishing together the joy that we found

in the Lord and in one another in Him.

The reason why God wanted me to speak against the black market became startlingly clear soon after I had managed to persuade the Station Commander to allow us to use the Education Centre Basement as an O.D. Church. Bless him, the Officer Commanding agreed to my suggestion, and more. If we were to be an 'Official' Church on the Unit - my slight status as a Methodist local preacher seemed to give the idea some standing! - we should then be allowed suitable furnishings. So he duly provided everything I asked him for including a piano and an organ, bless his heart. As I have typed these notes it has come back to my mind that the O.C. was almost certainly present when I preached on that first occasion in the Anglican Church. It could be that God touched his heart that day as well as that of dear Bernard. For the rest of my time on R.A.F. Wunsdorf the O.C. remained a friend and helper whenever there was a need that only he could meet, and he came himself to every special occasion that was held in our basement Church. In that spiritual home, which became a precious place to those of us who worshipped and prayed there, I continued to preach against the black market, etc. as the Lord so led. One day, when I was in my billet prior to joining my crew for the daily three flights into Berlin and back (we were usually on duty for fifteen hours out of every twenty four) when there was a knock on the door of my room. I opened the door and there was one of the young men who had joined our worshipping group because he was already a Christian, or apparently so. He had entered into a real experience of the Lord under that Wunstorf ministry and now he stood at my door in visible and deep distress. When I invited him in he said nothing until he had emptied a valuable leather brief case of several other valuable items including a very high powered camera together with eighty pounds worth of German Marks, all of which he had obtained by fraudulent means on the black market! He begged me through his tears to accept them for some good use since he could find no peace whilst he in anyway remained associated with his spoil. I could do no other although I wondered however such things could be applied to for good. I was soon to find out!

How It All Began

Chapter 3

When next the Fellowship met, I shared what had occurred, not giving any personal details, and suggested we thought of a good use for the money that would be raised. To my surprise several more of those worshipping with us came with confessions to make and goods to surrender, undergoing also a similar work of God in their hearts as well. A tremendous move of the Spirit was upon us, although we never realised the significance of it. To us this was to be expected in Christianity; didn't similar things happen in the Book of Acts?! I had had no previous experience of what I call conventional 'Churchianity'! Not many of those who made up the Fellowship had experienced the usual run of things in civvy street Churches either. Most were newly saved and had nothing to compare with what was now happening around us. We little knew that a revival had begun on the Isle of Lewis that very same year! There is no doubt whatever that a tiny breath of new things had been given to us in Germany, but we were totally oblivious to how significant it might have been. What to do with all the accumulating goods and amounts of German money; that was the question, with money running into hundreds of pounds plus valuable things to sell?! The Lord in His goodness had already made a way.

In our Fellowship we were blessed by a number of British nurses who served the Lord in as sad a situation as I have ever known. Not many now will recall those who were known as the displaced persons, refugees who had fled their homes either as the Nazis had advanced into their country, or, conversely, as the Russians had crossed their borders when the Nazi cause was collapsing. They lived in all sorts of shacks, or in camps, that were far from suitable. The adults seemed to manage - their children didn't, contracting every sort of disease, the worst being tuberculosis, then more or less incurable. Such children were taken to the Bad Reyburg sanatorium where those nurses cared for them until they died. It suddenly occurred to us what we could do with that money since it was now fairly late on into 1948, just a few weeks before Christmas - we were able to give them an unforgettable Christmas Party!! Never have I felt so glad and sad at one and the same time as when, with as many of the Fellowship as could be spared from a station such as R.A.F. Wunsdorf was in those days, we shared that party with those dear, but so sick children. God's reason for an unpopular sermon subject - through it He turned a social blemish into a token of love - He knows what He's about!

There were other reasons for a feeling of sadness in my life than the local black market activity, however. Things were not easy for me on 57 Squadron, the unit to which I had been posted from R.A.F. Dishforth, a Squadron based at Abingdon in Berkshire. The Squadron Leader in charge of 57 Squadron had not taken kindly to my keen Christianity. He realised I lived to serve the Lord more than I lived to serve the R.A.F. and a short while after joining the Squadron he asked me to see him. He had noticed that I took no part in the Squadron's social activities and that I was always off the Squadron unit when not required. My Flying Boss had discovered

that I was usually taking part in some Christian activity or working as a 'Recruiting Sergeant' somewhere on the station when, he thought, I might more profitably engage in Squadron affairs. He gave me a straight question: what was more important to me, my Service Career or my Faith? I told him that the Lord Jesus came first in my life. The Squadron Leader then asked me that if I had to choose between Christ and the R.A.F. what would my answer be? I replied that I would have to choose Christ. At this he became exceedingly angry and said that I would be posted from the Unit as soon as he could arrange for the same. I saluted him and left the presence of a fine pilot and a good Commanding Officer who lived only for the Air Force - there was no point of meeting for us it seemed. Naturally enough, the first person I told of my pending departure was the local Methodist Minister, who also acted as the Station Padre on R.A.F. Abingdon. He had been thrilled over a keen Methodist arriving on the Unit some months before, and the way in which some men had already come to know Christ through activities in which I had been involved. When I said that my Squadron Leader was having me posted for the reasons given, the Padre suddenly became very angry as well. 'Oh is he!', he said, and then told me to do nothing until I heard from him again. I later learned that he had gone immediately to the Squadron Leader and had warned him that he would be reported for victimisation if he posted me on the grounds that he had been given. One way or another they resolved their differences and I was not posted, but I was less than comfortable Service-wise after that. Nevertheless, I continued to fly with the Crew that I had trained with at Dishforth, mainly flying between the Middle East and Singapore, ferrying troops or taking out supplies as might be needed. It was on a return from a Singapore trip early in the June of 1948 that we had a wireless message from Abingdon telling us of an immediate posting to Wunsdorf for a six-week Berlin Airlift! As I have already related we were on our way to Germany after a very quick turn round and we coped as best we could on limited personal effects. The skipper of my crew was, however, expected elsewhere in the R.A.F. by previous arrangement, and this gave my Squadron Leader a legitimate reason for moving on an unwelcome member in his aircrew team. Since our crew was pilotless at that precise moment, I was placed in the aircrew reserve pool as soon as our Squadron arrived back in Germany after the first six weeks ended. This meant that I was available to make up crews whose flight engineer was unable to fly for some reason, or to be part of a crew cobbled together, as they say, of possibly unwanted members of other squadrons! Certainly the sense of belonging nowhere, team-wise, and some less-than-pleasant experiences in cobbled together crews, increased the sense of personal unrest that I have already mentioned.

In one of those experiences I learned why a certain pilot was obviously available to anybody, and not really a team man to say the least. We were on a night duty in which I had already grounded two aircraft because they were unfit to fly. It was the Flight Engineer's main responsibility to inspect aircraft prior to flight and accept them as fit to fly, a duty I was particularly sensitive about since some pilots tried to ignore the flight engineer's rights in the matter. It was true that because the need in Berlin was so great we flew aircraft that we would have normally hesitated over, but there were limits that I knew I had to respect. I was certainly cobbled together with

a Crew that night - none of us had ever flown together before. I grounded the first aircraft because I found the inside port engine had had its fire extinguishers removed for checking, but they had not been replaced! A fire in an engine is always a possibility and should we have had one in that engine I almost certainly would not be typing this account today! The pilot of my cobbled Crew, a youngish Flight Lieutenant of about thirty (I was twenty-three at the time) huffed and puffed as if I was to blame, a very impatient type of bloke to say the least. We were allocated another aircraft, loaded with urgent supplies for Berlin, and as the other Crew members climbed aboard I began my inspection despite a yell from the impatient one to make it quick! I found a serious split in one of the huge undercarriage tyres. When I told the pilot that the aircraft was unfit he refused to take my word for it, and a Flight Sergeant Airframe Fitter was called to the parking pad. He confirmed that if the tyre did not burst on take-off (horrid thought - certain death for all of us!) then it certainly would do so on landing! (result just as deadly!). I had grounded my second aircraft of the night. The anger of the impatient pilot was plain to see but the rest of the crew muttered complimentary words on my behalf.

Usually two unfit aircraft meant a stand down for the Crew concerned, but possibly because of the urgency of the matter, or because we were a crew of possible misfits, some L.M.F. (Lack of Moral Fibre - or put crudely, afraid to fly!) might have been suspected. So we were instructed to proceed to yet another York aeroplane. As soon as we arrived the pilot leapt into the aircraft shouting that there was no need for me to bother with checks - this one must be okay. I pointedly ignored him with much encouragement from the others to do so. However, I had just commenced my checks which started on the port (left) side of the aircraft when, fortunately for us as it turned out, the inner port engine began to turn. The impatient pilot was starting up without my assistance or my clearance to fly. There are times when my own patience can be on a short fuse and this was certainly one of them. I never entered a York more quickly than was true then, and pulling back the throttle lever which the pilot had moved forward for starting, I yelled into his red face - 'You'll start that engine when I say so - get it!!' He got it - and sat quietly as, hopping mad, I returned to the outside of the aircraft. When I moved round to the right of the plane I found the tarmac awash with petrol. The starboard fuel tank had somehow lost its drain plug - or, as was possible in those days, someone had loosened it - but whatever, had that inner port engine fired, or if the impatient pilot had had his way and no checks had been carried out, we would all have been burned to death within seconds. I grounded my third aircraft that day. The cobbled Crew wanted me to ask for the Pilot's court-martial, but his future was not for me to decide. I could only praise God for seeing that mine was safe in such circumstances. It was God also who took me out of them soon afterwards, but that part of the story comes later.

I was only asked to preach once more in the Station Church. After the first occasion the Padre had chided me (kindly, it seemed, at the time) on my comments re the corruption that stemmed from participation in the black market, a form of 'being lost' it seemed to me. He tried to convince me that it was so small a matter as not

to warrant condemnatory remarks. I did not take his words as very serious - just more or less as words that preachers share after a Service. A few weeks later I was asked to preach again, but in the meantime I had learned how much exploitation was going on through black marketeering, and how that for ten cigarettes British Servicemen could obtain almost anything - and usually obtained things impure as well. For a packet of real coffee, almost unobtainable in Germany at that time, almost anything could be obtained. Most of them were now available in post war Britain, and servicemen and women would bring back case-loads of such goods after a spell of leave back home. I felt that the Lord wished me to speak out against such things and so I did. I had some strong words to say about any professing Christian who set a bad example in the course of the Word that day. It was apparent afterwards that the Padre was exceedingly angry and that I was the cause of his feelings. I was never asked to preach again and when I discovered some time afterwards that the Padre was a leading figure in the local black market I understood why! So it was that the then little but growing number of converts, plus other Christians who felt unable to attend the Station Church, went looking with me for somewhere to worship and discovered the unused basement in what was the Education Section on that R.A.F. Station. With permission to use it given, the O.D. Church on R.A.F. Wunsdorf was born.