

# Bill Barratt BEM

'THIS IS IT'

The wounded soldier who became a 20th Century Apostle



Maurice Barratt

Bill Barratt

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# Preface

Ring! Ring! Ring! At 13 years of age I didn't have much patience!

Pastor Barratt came to his front door.

"Mum & Dad have been fighting and shouting, and I've been battered again. I can't stand it! Why does God allow this to keep happening in a 'Christian' home?" I demanded.

His eyes twinkled back at me as a great big smile spread across his lovely round face.

"Oh Joanie, I'm so glad you've come. I was praying to God this morning to send somebody to help Mrs. Barratt as she's not feeling very well today ... and God has sent YOU! Come on in, my dear."

From that day onwards I was a frequent visitor at the Barratt's household at 69 Upper Chorlton Road, Whalley Range in Manchester. Not only on the days when WWII had broken out at my home, but whenever an excuse presented itself.

Pastor Barratt had endless patience with me. After allowing me to vent about the trauma I was experiencing at home for a while he always managed to turn the conversation around so that we ended up talking about God, the Bible, the vision for 'Sharon' (the church he had pioneered on Chorlton Road), and the plans and purposes God had for me if I were to be conformed to his beautiful image. I don't know how he did it, but every time I travelled back home on the bus after my visits to him I was renewed, invigorated, had a goal and passion to serve God, and above all else an earnest desire to end up with the same relationship with God that he had.

Why this man opened up his heart to me I will never know, he seemed to see the 'me' nobody else saw. After promising me that he would make me the church secretary if I learned how to type I enrolled into night school for a typing course. Sure enough he kept his promise and at the age of 15 I had my name on the church letterhead saying that I was the church secretary. This, of course, meant that I now had to go regularly to his house on church business.

As he had an office in his cellar I would go every Saturday to type his letters and attend to anything else he wanted me to do, but he bent over backwards to include me in his family. I would arrive at 12:00 noon for lunch, go down into the cellar to do the office work, then join the family again for their evening meal at 4:00pm. After tea I would enjoy the company of his two daughters, Lis and Chris, as we had all become good friends, then share in the

'Saturday night supper' when his married son would bring his family round for fish & chips from the local 'chippy'. I do remember once thinking to myself, "If I sit here quietly enough he may even forget I'm in the room and will act his 'normal' self." But this was normal. He wasn't putting on a show for me as my own parents had done when visitors had arrived. He was the same at home as he was in the pulpit – godly!

When I was 16 years old my parents wanted to emigrate with their three remaining daughters who were still living at home to Australia, as I have an older sister living there. I adamantly refused to go with them. The family was terribly dysfunctional and at 16 I'd run away from home, or been thrown out and then brought back by the police, on several occasions so I was not going to leave England with them. I wanted to stay where I felt safe – in Sharon Church. Unfortunately this caused problems for my parents as I was considered a minor and under the age limit to leave home. They were told they would either have to find somebody who would become a guardian for me, or else forget the idea of emigrating until a later date.

My Mum and Dad shared their dilemma with Pastor Barratt and were delighted when he told them he would take complete responsibility for me! This left them free to leave the Country without having to worry about me. And I was free at last! I got a job and was able to rent my own bedsit apartment, and continue working for Pastor Barratt in his home and at the church.

## Preface

I spent hours, and I really mean hours, with this man on a personal and private level, which I know for sure was not duplicated with anyone else other than his wife. He provoked me to jealousy with the love he had for the Lord. When out on mission trips abroad with him I would often hear him through the door of his room as he prayed to God. He would still spend long hours in prayer and pray over every member of his church by name no matter where he was.

My desire was to one day have that same relationship with God that he had. I watched his every move, was educated by him in godliness, copied him whenever I could, and would have followed him anywhere. He was my role model. Christ with flesh on. I feel so privileged to have had such a unique relationship with him, and then for him eventually to become my father-in-law many years later so that I was no longer just his ward, but truly part of his family.

I will be eternally grateful to God for having known and loved this dear man and, after reading this book for yourself, I hope you will understand why I feel this way.

Joanna Barratt

# Fact or Fiction?

Jesus was the word not the image. God create the whole heavens and earth by his word and he instructed us not to make images of anything created. Whether photographs or paintings would come into this category is debatable, but certainly the thousands of statues of our famous statesmen, royalty, and 'saints' prove that Christianity – that most pagan of religions – has not adhered to God's word. (By 'Christianity' I am referring to the religion and not the people who are following Christ.)

It is difficult to put a price on the value of the printed word. God told Moses to write down his laws, and all the kings of Israel were instructed to

write the law down for themselves. The oral tradition is dangerous because, "Send reinforcements we are going to advance" after many oral transmutations becomes, "Send three and four pence we are going to a dance!" (Three Shilling and four pence being old money.)

## Truth is Accessible

We are most fortunate in that the whole of the world now have access to God's word, and therefore, will have no excuse when we come face to face with him after death. It is there for anyone to accept as 'God's word' or reject as just another book of fables.

Most of the bible was not written as a book – it is a series of letters, prophecies, songs, and the history of God's people. Some of it was written knowing it would be read by later generations such as the early books of the Old Testament, but after that I don't think Isaiah, David, or Paul ever thought that we, thousands of years later, would be reading their material. Such is the power of the printed word.

Of course it can be used to spread propaganda and lies, as the modern media has demonstrated only too well, but the last will and testament of a person is always written down because it is the strongest form of contract.

God's calling on a man, and his dealings with him, are a source of amazement to me. Who can estimate the influence one man can have on his society by his writings? Men like John Wesley,

Leonard Ravenhill, or A. W. Tozer. Or on a secular level Socrates, Aristotle, Francis Bacon, or Anton LaVey.

## Feeling Inadequate

I had intended to write this biography long before my father died because I wanted the world to know how God can take a man, change his whole character, and use him in a miraculous way. I had great apprehension in writing this biography for although I have written over twenty books to date they were all concerning my teachings based on the Bible and its contents. This is a departure from that style of writing for I am telling a story which I realise is a very different discipline. However, the need has overcome my fears.

Because I have only observed my father after he received the new nature (DNA) of God his heavenly father, I do not know my father 'after the flesh' so I can only understand his character before God invaded his life from the stories he told me, and of my older sister's reminiscences. Perhaps looking at my own 'old nature' helps because sin is passed down through the seed and I see many good as well as bad traits that were in my father in my own character.

Therefore, this story is one of my truth, how I saw and observed my father and his ministry. People who knew my father, and members of his church, may see things differently but they are not telling the story.

Folk 100 years ago didn't talk openly about their past, especially the 'bad bits', and before the information age it was not possible to do your own research. Sexual indiscretions were covered up as were bad seeds in the family.

## My Perspective Entirely

This is my story and not a detailed historical account. My siblings may have seen things differently, or interpreted stories and incidents in a different way, therefore I ask for understanding in this matter and allow that this is entirely my perspective of my father's life and how I saw and understood his history, life, and ministry.

My father died in his 90th year due to cancer of the tongue and I have no answers as to why a man who spoke and amazing miracles happened, or uttered wonderful words of revelation on the word of God, or prophesied detailed events that have come to pass, should have cancer of the tongue. There is however, one thing I am convinced about. Having served the same God as my dad for 69 years I am convinced beyond any shadow of doubt that God is sovereign and does not make mistakes. His ways are perfect, and there is always a logical reason for everything that happens on this earth.

I will have all the answers soon.

I have interchanged between 'Bill and Arthur' and 'Dad and Uncle' frequently in the book as I felt

## Fact or Fiction?

appropriate to the story. I trust it will not distract the reader but will make it more personal at the times I use Dad and Uncle.



## Chapter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

# He Never Saw His Dad

It was a dark time in the history of England. The third year of the world's first global war, which was one of the deadliest conflicts in the history of the human race. This war took the lives of almost seven million civilians, and ten million military personnel. It is estimated that casualties were 37 million people (WWI 28 July 1914 – 11 November 1918).

Billy Barratt, a foot soldier from Manchester, England, had just been home on leave to witness the birth of his first child, a son, whom he also named Bill. He had survived the first 'Battle of the Somme' and after signing the birth certificate he returned

late in 1917 to France to fight in the second Battle of the Somme (also called 'Battle of Saint-Quentin', March 21–April 5, 1918). He died in action and his body was never recovered – presumed dead in battle.

## Where Did the Twinkle Come From?

Dad was born 19th August 1917 in Lincroft Street, Moss Side, Manchester. He was a twin but the other baby died at birth. He came from a long line of trombone players all named William Barratt. There are now five generations, that I know of with this name (although everyone knows me as Maurice my first name is actually William, and my eldest son Nathan also has the name of William).

Bill's mother, Annie O'Keefe, was a feisty little woman of Irish stock. She was only small in stature, but Dad told me she was no pushover and had a strong character. I am convinced Dad inherited the twinkle in his eye from this little lady.

Bill's grandfather owned 'Barratt's of Manchester', a music shop famous for their brass instruments. The whole family were of that trade – my grandfather and Dad were musical instrument makers, engravers, and repairers.

After the war Bill's widowed mother married Maurice O'Connor and together produced two daughters, Murial was born in 1921 and Margaret in 1940, so there was an age gap between them of 19 years. Murial was three years younger than Billy and Margaret 22 years younger. They lived in Chorlton

on Medlock, Manchester, not far from the first workshop of Mr. Rolls and Mr. Royce just off what is now named Royce Road. <sup>Footnote 1</sup>

Maurice O'Connor was not a musician, he was a motor mechanic who had a small local garage where he did repairs and servicing. Very few people owned a car in those days but he was the proud owner of a Riley 1.5 that the family called 'Old Mother Riley.'

## Keep Moving

Annie O'Keefe (now O'Connor) loved to move house regularly. On a Wednesday afternoon she would call at an estate agent to see what was on the market. When she saw a property that caught her eye she would wait until her husband came home and say, "Oh Maurice, I've found a lovely property, can we go and see it?" Maurice obliged, so Dad moved many times in his youth – from Moss Side to Northenden, Withington, Whalley Range, Seymour Grove, Old Trafford, Levenshulme (all districts of Manchester). Dad told me he couldn't remember all the addresses he had stayed at. His stepfather and mother ended up buying, and running, a Café called 'The Periwinkle' in Trearddur Bay on Anglesey, North Wales.

Dad had a good step-father and I could see he had the greatest respect for him. He recalled how every Christmas he would buy Dad a new football, football boots, and Dubbin (Dubbin was a special polish for footwear). He told me many times that he couldn't have wished for a better father, but he knew

he wasn't his real father. I think he regretted that he had never seen his biological father and that his father had never seen him. I think it had an effect on him, especially the sad fact that his father had been killed before he could see his first child.

## Just Like My Dad

As a young boy, he would stand in front of a mirror in the hall which was next to a photo of his real dad dressed in his WWI army uniform. He would stand gazing longingly for ages. Then, with his comb, he would part his hair in exactly the same way as his own dad in the photo.

Dad died at the age of 89 not knowing that his father had indeed seen him and had come home on leave after the first 'Battle of the Somme' and was home for the birth of his son and so able to sign the birth certificate. I only found this out after the death of my aunty Muriel. She had my dad's birth certificate in her collection of memorabilia left from my grandmother. When I was celebrating my 70th birthday with my three sisters, Norma, my eldest sister by four years, showed me two photographs. One was of my dad in his army uniform and the other was a man also in uniform and it was signed, "Sincerely Yours, Billy". I could not recognise this man as my dad.... and then it dawned on me. This was my grandfather whom I had never seen. It was the first time I had seen a photo of him and I was celebrating my 70th

year on this earth. Norma also showed me Dad's birth certificate with his father's signature on it. So, although my dad went to the grave in his 90th year thinking his dad had never seen him, he was wrong. How moving.

## Playground on the Roof

Young Billy went to Webster Street School which had a playground on the roof. Webster Street was in Moss side, then an area of large Georgian and Victorian houses built by the businessmen from the Industrial Revolution (which incidentally started in Manchester). There were also large Georgian and Victorian houses from the wealthy people who ran the cotton industry. It became a red light district in the late 50s and 60s after the wealthier people moved out to Hale Barns, Wilmslow, Alderly Edge, and other villages on the outskirts of Manchester and Cheshire. It was at this school he first met Arthur Williams, a lad his own age and both had a common interest in football.

## Fancy Meeting You!

Bill, now twelve years of age, had moved to Withington which was only a distance of two and a half miles from his birthplace. After passing his 11+ exams he was now attending North Manchester Grammar School. One day, whilst walking down Whitchurch Road, he saw his old schoolmate Arthur

Williams walking towards him. Little did either of them realise the tremendous outcome of this apparently chance encounter. Even at this early stage God was directing their lives. One day they would look back and see how his hand of providence had guided even their earliest steps.

"What are you doing in these parts?" Young Bill said to Arthur.

"Just come to live here," Arthur replied.

"Great," said Bill, "You can join our football team".

From that time the two youthful soccer enthusiasts became firm friends. Dad was always a motivator, encourager, and leader, which Arthur was only too happy to follow his bosom buddy.

## Chalk & Cheese

These two boys, born within five hundred yards of each other, with only six months difference in age, were totally different in background and temperament. But, sparked off by their mutual passion for football, their friendship grew until they became almost inseparable.

They talked, played, dreamt about, and lived for football. Every spare minute was spent with a football. Bill had trials for Manchester United, but I think his size went against him. Bill and Arthur were both small in stature – Dad being not much more than a few inches over five feet. Arthur was a little taller but had very small hands and feet – his shoe

size was five. Anyway, whatever the reason, Dad was not given a contract. God had other plans for this young ambitious lad.

Although Dad was a serious person he had a happy and mischievous disposition with a constant twinkle in his eye. His sister Margaret told me how he was always round at the 'joke shop' buying something to surprise everyone with. She remembers how he put a plastic spider in his mum's teacup whilst she was in the kitchen. He used to have a magic lantern show to amuse everyone, making rabbits and birds with his hands behind an old bed sheet.

Bill had a very happy and secure home life, in spite of having lost his father in WWI. His stepfather proved to be a kindly and understanding man, doing his best to fill the gap left in young Billy's life. Although they were not wealthy, they were certainly never short of money, and Bill generously shared any money he had with Arthur, whose family were in poorer circumstances. He always gave his pal exactly half of all he had. Dad kept this generous spirit and sense of justice until the day he died and set me a wonderful example, which I found impossible to follow in my youth, but that is for my autobiography.

## Dreadful Fear of Death

Arthur was a sensitive boy, and suffered a rather disturbing childhood. His mother was a chronic invalid, and his father, although physically very strong, was an old man when Arthur was

quite a young boy. Perhaps this had some bearing on the morbid fear of death which haunted him from as long as he could remember. A fear that was not to be dispelled until he found Christ as his Saviour many years later. Added to this, another dark shadow followed young Arthur where ever he went – the heavy consciousness of sin. Try as he would to put it off, it always returned to weigh him down sooner or later. He seemed to live his life in the shadow of the grave. His poor mother had frequent haemorrhages, which didn't help with his peace of mind and must have been very frightening for the young lad.

## Football & Romance

As the years passed, so the young men's friendship grew. Football was still the love of their lives, but like most young men they began to go to the local dance-halls and take the occasional drink. It was at a local dance-hall that they met the two young sisters who were to become their wives. This was to bring them, if possible, even closer together.

From the Grammar School, Dad went straight into the family business run by his grandfather, and learned the family trade of making, engraving and repairing brass musical instruments. The shop in Manchester was famous throughout the country for their brass band instruments and was an agent for the famous 'Conn' range of brass instruments from America. With his happy disposition, Bill soon

settled down to learn the trade. Meanwhile, Arthur had tried various jobs, always seeking to better himself, finally ending up as a baker's assistant.

Dad didn't follow the generations of William Barratts who had all been trombone players, instead preferring to learn the trumpet. As Bill had taken up a musical instrument Arthur decided to follow suit, and obtained a drum kit practising assiduously so that he could join his pal at music making.

## Out of His Depth

One touching (if somewhat amusing) incident, serves to illustrate the firm bond of loyalty which bound the two together. Bill, making progress with his trumpet, decided to enter for a talent contest at a big theatre. Accompanied as usual by Arthur, the young aspirant for fame and fortune made his way to the stage-door. After wishing his pal good luck, Arthur went and sat up in the balcony, eagerly awaiting Bill's turn to perform. Meanwhile, to his dismay, poor Bill found backstage many other artists who were professionals and spent all their time travelling from one place to another, performing at such contests (these were lean days for Variety Artists, many of whom were out of work).

The Fifteen-year-old boy's knees began to knock. After watching the first three turns, he decided that even the third prize was beyond him, but when his turn came he went bravely on stage determined to see it through. In the middle of his

piece he was overcome with nerves and ran off stage, leaving behind half the mutes he had been going to use. At the end of the show, all the artists who had competed stood on the stage to be judged by the audience's response. Whoever received the greatest applause was the winner. Many of the artists were thunderously applauded, but when Bill stepped forward there was silence except for one solitary little figure up in the balcony, clapping and shouting, "Encore! Encore," for all he was worth – but to no avail; no-one else would join in!

After this experience, they decided that talent competitions were definitely not their forte but they still kept their interest in music. God had plans that included music for Bill Barratt. Dad told me when he was in his 50's that all he had ever been taught, and all the experiences he had ever been through, were only God's way of training him to be used some time later in his life.

### **Footnote 1**

Mr Rolls and Mr. Royce were the originators of the world famous Rolls Royce motor car.

## Chapter 2 \_\_\_\_\_

# Disinherited

I am not sure of the exact date, but when Dad was between 18-19 years of age (this would be 1935-6) he had an argument with his grandfather. Dad never told me what it was about but in the heat of it his grandfather said, "You're only working for me so that you can inherit the business when I die." This angered Dad so much that to prove this was not the case he left working for his grandfather and the rift was never healed. Dad was removed from his grandfather's will and he lost his inheritance.

Looking back on his life he told me that he realised this must all have been a part of God's plan, but at the time it seemed like a stupid and irresponsible thing to do. I think Dad did it on principle and I never once heard him say he regretted this move.

There were many musical instrument shops in Manchester in the 1930-40s, such as Stock & Chapmans, Mamelocks, Johnny Roadhouse, all on Oxford Road. There was also Mayers & Harrisons on Great Jackson Street, Manchester 15, which was near to the old BBC Studios. With his skills and background Dad had no problem in finding employment with Mr. Mayers at his shop Mayers & Harrisons. I am sure Mr. Mayers must have been really pleased that one of the competition was now in his employ.

## Billy Conn & His Band

Dad continued to improve on his trumpet playing and formed a dance-band. The two pals were now travelling about together playing at dances and local public houses. Dad named the band 'Billy Conn and his band'. The name came about for two reasons. The first was that he played a 'Conn' trumpet which was very popular in the 1940-50s. They were American made in Elkhart, Indiana (vintage Conn trumpets are still available on Ebay and sell for £2-3000). The second reason was that his step-father was surnamed O'Connor so it was not difficult to dream up the name of 'Billy Conn and his band'.

As Bill grew out of his teenage years his love of music and football grew, but of course, the fairer sex also began to interest Bill and Arthur and they would go each week to Finnigans, which was a famous dance hall in Cheetham Hill. Finnigans was

established in 1877 by James Finnigan, and was one of the Country's oldest dance schools when it closed in November 1965. Sadly, it burned down a year later in 1966. The inseparable friends also frequented the Ritz on Whitworth Street, in the city, and a dance hall off Princess Road, Moss Side called Cowans. It was at one of these dance halls that Bill met and dated a young lady called Edna Mary Clare who was 19 years of age. Arthur dated her younger sister, Irene Inez Clare. These two sisters were both really into the big bands of the 1930's and 40s, Bert Ambrose and Nat Gonella being Edna's favourites. They made a happy foursome as the girls accompanied Bill and Arthur on their dance-band engagements.

The passing years had only served to strengthen Bill and Arthur's lifelong friendship – they still shared everything, money included. Now they were courting sisters. Sadly these two inseparable friends were soon to be parted, as the ugly shadow of WWII loomed closer. On September 3rd, 1939, at 11:15am, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, declared war on Germany on behalf of Britain and France following the invasion of Poland two days before.

## National Service

Things would dramatically change for these young men and their sister girlfriends whose lives God, unknown to them, had woven together. The football and dance band both came to an end when they were called up to do their national service. Bill

and Arthur were 22 years of age when they were called up for duty.

God was working out his mysterious plan for these two ordinary men, the consequences of which would influence the lives of 100,000s of people all over the world years later.

## Chapter 3 \_\_\_\_\_

# The War Years

*You wicked piece of vicious tin!  
Call you a gun?  
Don't make me grin.  
You're just a bloated piece of pipe.  
You couldn't hit a hunk of tripe.  
But when you're with me in the night,  
I'll tell you, pal, you're just alright!*

Ode to a Sten Gun, by S.N. Teed

Bill's call up papers came at Christmas time and he joined the army as a regular soldier. Arthur became an infantryman with the Durham Light Infantry and became a cook. He went to

Yugoslavia for most of the war and came through the war unscathed. Bill was not so fortunate and ended the war as a wounded soldier.

## Bill & Edna Marry

Despite the fact that the two men were fighting in a war they were committed enough to marry these two sisters. Arthur, and Irene the younger of the two sisters, became engaged early in 1940 and planned to be married on Christmas Eve 1940 when Arthur came home on leave. However, Bill and Edna stole 'a march' on them.

<sup>Footnote 1</sup> Bill had gone nine months without leave and when he was sent home for a two week break he obtained a 'Special Licence' within 4 days and, without being engaged, Bill and Edna were married, and even managed a taxi and flowers – luxuries even for a wedding in those austere days.

The North of England had escaped the German bombings at the beginning of the war. This was not to last and at Christmas time of 1940 the factories of Manchester, especially in Trafford Park where factories for major war industries were located, became the targets of the bombers. The night of 22nd-23rd December and again the following night, 23rd-24th December became a dark time for Manchester. The pattern of hitting cities on consecutive nights was a tactic increasingly used by the Luftwaffe to inflict maximum disruption

and destruction on its targets. On the first night of raids, 272 tons of high explosive bombs were dropped. The following night another 195 tons hit the city. Almost 2,000 incendiaries were also dropped on Manchester. As a result of these raids, an estimated 684 people died and more than 2,000 were injured. (Maybe of interest to Manchester United fans was the fact that the Old Trafford ground was hit by a bomb and put out of action until 1949.)

## Arthur & Irene Wed

The famous Christmas Blitz in Manchester put a stop to the planned wedding of Irene and Arthur. In spite of all their preparations, they were denied the date of Christmas Eve for their wedding and were married a few months later.

Bill, Arthur, and their wives had rented a house in Darnley Street, Old Trafford, paid for by Edna's mother. Bill and Edna had the ground floor and Arthur and Irene the upper floor. It was in this house that Norma, Bill's first child, was conceived and born on 6th September 1941. Bill Barratt was 24 years old.

Dad continued as a regular soldier and was sent to guard the coast. England were not prepared for war and the men conscripted were not trained. He was sent to guard the coast with only one WWI Lee Enfield rifle shared between a few men. He told me it was a good job Germany did not invade

on the coast he was guarding because the men were not capable of resisting any offensive. One night whilst they were on look out, one of the men saw movement in the field a few hundred yards away. All the men stared and sure enough there was movement. The men were sure the Germans had landed and so they opened fire. Everything went quiet and there were no more incidents that night. In the morning they discovered a few dead cows in the field – so much for their war effort.

## 13th Battalion

Impressed by the success of German airborne operations during the 'Battle of France', the current prime minister, Winston Churchill, directed the War Office to investigate the possibility of creating a corps of 5,000 parachute troops. The British army formed the 13th battalion parachute regiment in May 1943. Officers came to Bill's camp to ask for volunteers to join the commandos as parachutists and be part of this directive. They told the men "You'll get the best food and the best training and you won't be 'cannon fodder' but go on special assignments with better weapons".

Dad was newly married and now had a baby daughter and thought he would be more likely to survive the war in this way, so he volunteered and became a parachutist and commando. His number was 3656701. He was never to forget it and even at 89 years of age he could rattle it off

like a machine-gun whenever I asked him for it. "3656701, sir."

The minimum height requirement for the British Army was 5ft 3ins, I think my dad just about qualified. The training was brutal and out of the first group of 3,500 volunteers only 500 were accepted to go forward for parachute training. Airborne soldiers were expected to fight against superior numbers of the enemy, armed with heavy weapons, including artillery and tanks. As a result, training was designed to encourage a spirit of self-discipline, self-reliance, and aggressiveness. Emphasis was given to physical fitness, marksmanship, and field craft.

## Rigorous Training

A large part of the training regime consisted of assault courses and route marching. Military exercises included capturing and holding airborne bridgeheads, road or rail bridges, and coastal fortifications. At the end of most exercises, the battalion would march back to their barracks. An ability to cover long distances at speed was expected: airborne platoons were required to cover a distance of 50 miles (80km) in 24 hours, and battalions 32 miles (51km). Dad told me of a man who collapsed and died on a 50 mile forced route march with full battle dress and of fatal accidents in training which were often carried out using live ammunition.

All members of the battalion had to undergo a 12-day parachute training course which was carried out at No. 1 Parachute Training School, R.A.F. Ringway. A small airport outside Manchester (now Manchester International Airport).

## Beret & Wings

Training consisted of an initial parachute jump from a converted barrage balloon and finished with 5 jumps from an aircraft. Anyone failing to complete a descent was returned to his old unit, while those men who successfully completed the parachute course were presented with their maroon beret and parachute wings. Dad did his jumps and was assigned to the 13th battalion of the 13th regiment. The 13th (Lancashire) Parachute Battalion was formed in May 1943, by the conversion of the 2nd and 4th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment to parachute duties. This was the last British parachute battalion formed before the invasion of France, and was assigned to the 5th Parachute Brigade, part of the 6th Airborne Division. Dad was assigned to "C" Company under major "Nobby" Clark M.C.

## Ready for Action

The training was intensive but those who survived it were graded A1 fit and the men felt they were ready for action. Dad was now a highly trained commando, but the waiting for action seemed

forever. Day after day they would wait for the news that they would at last join the war. The battalion were moved about without warning as migration of troops was part of the plan to deceive Hitler as to where the invasion would come from. They moved from the south coast to Scotland frequently.

Code named 'Operation Overlord', the battle to take back Europe began on June 6, 1944. It was also known as D-Day, when some 156,000 American, British, and Canadian forces landed on 5 beaches along a 50-mile stretch of the heavily fortified coast of Normandy, France. D-Day was the day set to invade Europe but was not a fixed date. For example, the men were told they would fly to France D-Day -2 hours or D-Day +2 hours. The higher powers were waiting for the right conditions before they fixed the date, and eventually June 6th was chosen.

## This is It

At 00:50 on 6th June 1944, as part of 'Operation Tonga', the 13th Parachute Battalion landed in Normandy. The battalion's drop was scattered over a large area and only around sixty percent of the battalion's men were at the forming up point when they headed off towards their objectives. The battalion also had to secure a village named Ranville.

Dad's personal directive as a sergeant was to parachute near a village called Ranville. <sup>Footnote 2</sup>  
His platoon of 18 men were to do a specific job

of capturing Château de Guernon which housed officers of the Todt Organisation. They were to land and meet up in a woods nearby and when the dawn came they were to attack and capture the château.

They took off at midnight and in what seemed no time at all (actually about an hour) they were preparing to make their jump – each man with his own private thoughts. This was what they had been preparing for during the many months and years of training – making countless practice jumps. First, the officer leading their platoon jumped, followed one at a time by the men. Bill being the sergeant was last of all.

The men had a phrase just before each jump, 'This is it,' and Bill said this phrase aloud just before the first man jumped. They knew it was a death or glory situation. The first man jumped and then, as they had been trained, the next man would almost jump on his head so that they would all land in close proximity to each other and could regroup quickly. "Go, go, go, go."

## Not the Way to Go

All the men had jumped but just as Bill was about to jump he was thrown backwards as the plane lurched to miss some fire from the ground. This delayed his jump by a few seconds, but he recovered his balance and threw himself out of the plane as quickly as he could. This is not the way to jump with a parachute but he did not want to return to England as he would get the 'white feather'. The thought of

cowardice in battle made him throw himself out of the plane. He knew he would be a few hundred yards from his men but he hoped for the best. I'll let Dad tell you in his own words what happened next:

*I felt a tug on my leg and the kit bag with my ammunition, 4 days rations in a tin, 2 grenades, and my Sten gun which had been strapped to my leg gun and ammunition went sailing to the ground. (The Sten gun gained a deadly reputation. Lightweight, compact, and even concealable, it was a favourite of British airborne and glider-borne forces.) I came down with only a fighting knife and one hand grenade.*

*We were told the Germans were not expecting us and we would surprise them. I hit the cool night air and an inferno of noise surrounded and embraced me. It seemed as if everything was going off. The sky lit up with a weird red glow from the tracer bullets which were zipping through the air from all directions – so thick I could not understand how it was they missed me. Great balls of flame seemed to come from the ground straight towards me and then veered off. The noise was deafening!*

*My parachute opened and amazingly I was coming through it all unscathed. Then I saw some trees and I lifted my feet to miss getting caught up in the branches. Before I*

## The War Years

*knew it I had landed in the middle of a large lawn. The moon was shining brightly, and I saw on each corner of the large garden German machine-gunners, so busily firing at the aircraft zooming overhead that they never saw me!*

*I was fully exposed on the lawn so quickly I released my parachute harness and ran for the wall. My face and hands had been blackened ready for a night attack. Standing there in the shadow of the wall I waited. There was a grass verge and a path between me and the lawn and I saw people coming out of the house – cars starting and people were running away. They were officers who realised the invasion had started and they were going to retire to a safer place ...and then it dawned on me where I was.*

*For weeks before D-Day we had studied photos and plans of the building we were to capture. We even had close ups of all the windows and had to remember every curtain and plant pot on each window sill. As I looked at the building I came to the realisation that I was standing in the garden of the very Château which my platoon had been given orders to capture ..... and then fear struck me as I saw German soldiers coming towards me on the pathway. I realised they were making their getaway and they had to cross the lawn to escape. They were frightened*

## The War Years

that they would be exposed in the light of the moon and were very cautiously checking all was clear. I could see them clearly in the moon light but thank God they could not see me, blackened and against the tall wall.

I held my breath. I had formed a quick plan when I had first seen them. I took my one hand grenade out of my pocket, removed the pin and held it ready to throw. I put my fighting knife in the ground next to my right foot and the grenade pin next to it so I could find it again if needed. I decided that if they saw me I would take the initiative and shout "Nicht schiessen!" ("Don't shoot!") and whilst they were taken momentarily off guard, throw the grenade into them and throw myself beside the wall at the same time and hope for the best.

I saw that there were two full sections – about twenty men in all. As they crouched down beside the grass verge only two yards away from me, two of them turned and looked into the darkness. They seemed to look right at me – their guns were pointing straight at my stomach and I felt sure that they had seen me. Holding my breath I could almost feel the impact of the bullets. I was just about to shout, "Nicht schiessen!" – how the words were held back God himself only knows – when slowly they turned away again. Walking slowly

## The War Years

*across the lawn in the moonlight, they passed out of my sight never to be seen again. The Village clock struck two – Dong! Dong! All the noise seemed to have subsided. I wondered how my comrades had fared. I didn't know if the battle had been won or lost. I thought I would wait but nothing happened.*

*My thoughts flashed back to my childhood.... I saw myself as a boy, and then my pal Arthur, dribbling with a ball on the flat roof of the school where we used to play, with his shock of fair hair that no comb could tame. Then my thoughts moved on towards my wife and young daughter at home. Who would ever realise that I was here in a garden in Normandy at 2 o'clock in the morning, surrounded by enemy troops? My thoughts brought me back with a shock to the present!*

*Dawn was approaching, and if I did not move from my position I would be seen by the Germans when daylight came. Slowly, in the quietness, I began to move from the shadow of the wall. I wondered if any of my friends in the Parachute Regiment were still alive. Cautiously, I crossed the garden without mishap and then a strange thought came to me. The officers had left the château empty and I was in the very grounds. I could make my way into the village and meet my men who would be coming*

*to capture the château and say, "Well lads, you're too late, I've taken it all on my own". I was soon making my way through the village of Ranville, but was not expecting what awaited me. I saw something I will never forget – well maybe in eternity. I saw an horrific and sickening sight. Many of my friends in the battalion were lying on the ground in pools of blood with German machine gun crew, all dead. I saw British parachutists hanging from the sides of houses – dead. Their rigging lines had caught around the chimney pots. Some had great furrows up their backs where the Spandau <sup>Footnote 3</sup> machine guns bullets had ripped them as they were coming down. I recognised some of my pals, now dead men, that I had played football with just a few hours before we had stood on the aerodrome waiting to enter the war.*

Taken from a recording  
of Bill Barratt's testimony

This sight was one he would never forget. Many times since he thought back to that dreadful night and of how God preserved his life.

## Liberated

The village of Ranville was liberated at around 04:00 on 6th June against heavy resistance from the Germans and was the first village to be liberated in the invasion. The fighting that followed was quite

fierce. When you think that out of 10,000 men there were 4,000 casualties, 2,000 of them buried in Normandy and 2,000 injured, then this gives you an idea of what it was like.

## Moaning Minnies

The Germans constantly attacked, until practically all the unit to which Dad belonged had been either killed or wounded. The Germans used noise as a weapon to great effect and Dad said the 'Nebelwerfer' (smoke mortar) know as 'Moaning Minnies' <sup>Footnote 4</sup> brought fear in the men when they heard the loud and high-pitched screeching whistle which accompanied them.

*From the 4th day the Panza divisions formed in a wood. Our commander told us exactly how they would come and he was right. "Hold your fire till they were 100-200 yards from you", he said. We had the machine guns on the left and the mortars behind. They were almost on top of us when we opened fire and they went down like ears of corn. I heard some of the young German soldiers crying for their mothers. They were all wiped out except for a few. I saw conscientious objectors who went on the battle field before the cease fire. I wondered what those men had - God was speaking to me. This was real and the stupidity of life, the pomp and pride*

*of the world and its tinsel, faded away. One day on a patrol of 30 men we were caught in cross fire and I gave the order, "Every man for himself!" I crawled along a hedgerow and got back to my position safely in the slit trench, but only 10 men got back. I looked at a man who was next to me and he had furrows up his back and this boy used to sing hymns in the trenches. When I saw him dead I felt so lonely. I didn't realise it but God was speaking to me. Many other times, patrols went out and only a few men came back.*

From Bill Barratt's recorded testimony

Bills unit secured and held all their positions but they were bedraggled and shattered so were taken back for 4 days rest behind the front line. This was at the time of the 4,000 Bomber Raid on Caen.

On 9th July 1944, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery demanded a massive air assault against Caen in hopes of clearing the way for an attack the following morning. 450 heavy aircraft participated, dropping 2,500 tons of bombs.

Out of nearly 12,000 allied aircraft available to support the Normandy Landings, 14,674 sorties were flown on D-Day and 127 aircraft were lost. For the airborne landings during that first night 2,395 R.A.F. & U.S.A.A.F aircraft were in action

Dad was a few miles behind the front line resting when they saw in the sky a great armada of planes approaching. There were so many they seemed to

blacken the sky. When they recognised them as British aircraft they began to cheer, and as they passed slowly overhead, the watching troops saw a great curtain of fire rise from the German lines. Then the first wave of bombers went over, dropping their bombs, followed by wave after wave, until there was no German resistance left. They heard later that they had been bombed almost out of existence – some of the pitiful remnant had gone quite insane, others, shell-shocked, were walking round in circles not knowing what was happening.

## God was Speaking

As Bill joined in the exultant cheers that were ringing out, he happened to look at one soldier apart from the rest – a Christian, and a 'conscientious objector', who had decided to come and help the wounded although he refused to carry a weapon or kill. Tears were streaming from his eyes as he prayed for his enemies. God spoke to Bill through that man! He possessed something that Bill did not have. He remembered other times when the lives of Christian boys had spoken to him in the thick of the battle. These boys had been mocked and ridiculed in the Barrack Room as they read their Bibles and knelt to pray. His fellow soldiers called them effeminate, and cowards, but later they were to see them go out under tremendous fire to bring in the wounded, with a strange courage that only God could give them.

## War is Not Glamorous

Dad would often tell me the stories of the war, his adventures, and escapes but he would never glamorise it and he let me know that the reality was far different than watching war movies. He told me how he would be sitting in slit trenches for days at a time in a foot of water and having to crawl over his dead mates he had played football with – rats running over them. They had to use the trench as a toilet and the sights and smells of rotting bodies, urine, and faeces made most men physically sick for the first few days on the battlefield. He told me how he was shocked to find how men changed when they were in action and often bore no resemblance to how they thought and acted when in their own environment safe in England.

## Truth Comes Out Under Pressure

He remembered some who were brave in the barracks, wanting to get at the enemy to kill them, now crying and calling for their mothers on the battlefield. Others who were scared stiff before the battle become heroes.

My father and his battalion moved back to the front lines and held all their positions despite heavy attacks. Many of his men were killed in this period when on patrols. This happened on many occasions but, amazingly, each time Bill's life was saved. God had a special plan for Bill Barratt that only he could fulfil.

Eventually, after six weeks he was seriously wounded. A brigadier came to encourage the troops – my father's platoon were held back in slit trenches. This officer who was trying to encourage them did not black out his identifying markings as was the usual and sensible thing to do, and he stood up to see what was happening. Dad said that he thought that, although a foolish thing to do, was nevertheless commendable as an act of bravery and morale building.

The officer had only shown himself above the trench for a second when, 'ping' a bullet went through his temple and he dropped down dead. A sniper had been waiting for days to target an officer. My father went with some men to flush out this sniper and that is when he was seriously wounded. A shell hit a tree above him and shrapnel entered his left shoulder and went into his lungs. Thank God he was a little man – if he had been three inches taller the shrapnel would have gone straight into his heart and that would have been the end of his life.

## Safe at Home

Amazingly he was spotted lying in his own blood by a medic and, after pushing gauze into the gaping hole to stop the bleeding and protect from infection in his shoulder, he received six pints of blood on the battlefield. He was back in Withington hospital, three miles from his home in Manchester, in only three days. There, in Withington Hospital,

his wife Edna was able to visit him. His fighting days were over.

I have in my possession the letter my mother received dated 10th August 1944 stating that William Barratt had been wounded in battle on 23rd July 1944.

When he finally came out of hospital and recovered somewhat he was assigned to do weapon training on the Isle of Wight for the battalion who were reforming. They eventually went to Belgium in December 1944, to help counter the German advance in the Ardennes, known as the 'Battle of the Bulge'.

Dad did not boast about his wound and very rarely took his shirt off in our presence but when he did he had a deep cavity in his left shoulder that I could have put my fist into.

After the war Bill received the following medals:

1939-1945 Star Battle of Britain  
France and Germany Star – Atlantic  
Defence Medal Silver Laurel Leaves  
Kings Commendation for Brave Conduct  
War Medal 39045 Oak Leaf  
British Empire Medal

### Footnote 1

This phrase derives from the military manoeuvre of moving troops secretly, in order to gain an advantage. It has been used since at least the early 18th century, when

it was cited in the London Gazette, 1716: "We saw him... steal a March for our Preservation."

### **Footnote 2**

The village of Ranville features heavily in the book "13 - Lucky For Some" which is about the history of the 13th (Lancashire) Parachute Battalion. There are many then and now photographs as well as maps and diagrams of battles that took place in the region.

### **Footnote 3**

3. The Maschinengewehr 42 machine guns, or MG42 for short, were developed by the German firm Metall und Lackierwarenfabrik Johannes Großfuß AG after seeing a need for machine guns with a greater rate of fire than the MG34 machine guns. In 1941, a limited production for MG39/41 machine guns provided 1,500 guns for combat trials; they were accepted for service in 1942 under the designation of MG42. Großfuß, Mauser-Werke, Gustloff-Werke, and several other armament manufacturers were given contracts. The design of the MG42 machine guns were purposely similar to that of MG34 so that soldiers assigned these new machine guns would require minimum amount of training before taking the new weapons to battle.

The rate of fire of 1,200 rounds-per-minute was unmatched by any contemporary machine gun of the period. Taking the British Vickers and American Browning M2 machine guns as examples, MG42 machine guns enjoyed twice the rate of fire. The high rate of fire gave MG42 machine guns a very distinct and nearly continuous noise, caused by humans' inability to distinguish the sound of each individual bullet; this led to the nick names of "Hitler's buzz saw" or "Hitler's zipper" for MG42 machine guns. Similar nick names existed on

the German side as well, such as Hitlersäge ("Hitler's saw" or "Bonesaw")

There were also other nick names for the MG42 machine gun. British soldiers often referred to them as **Spandau** as they found plates with that name mounted on captured MG42 machine guns; the word Spandau actually referred to the place of production, which was a district of Berlin, Germany.

### Footnote 4

4. The Nebelwerfer (smoke mortar) was a World War II German series of weapons- a six-barrelled projector firing six-inch rockets... The rockets, not very accurate, are variously called 'Screaming Meemies' and 'Moaning Minnies', but, like most Army slang terms, these names are also applied to other enemy explosives."



## Chapter 4 \_\_\_\_\_

# Disillusioned

I was born on 6th August 1945, the day the H-bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Dad was still in the Isle of Wight and was not discharged from the army until 1946. He was 29 years old. After his discharge he returned to his trade of musical instrument maker, but not to his grandfather's firm. He never did resolve the quarrel he had with his grandfather. However, with his skill as a musical instrument maker, he found no difficulty in obtaining a job, and soon became a foreman at Mayers & Harrisons on Great Jackson Street, Manchester 15.

When Arthur returned and was demobbed he managed to join Bill at the same firm, although the trade was new to him. As well as working together they still lived in the same house in Darnley Street,

the Barratts were on the ground floor and Williams on the top floor. Once again their lives had linked up. The war had not separated them and their marriages to two sisters had only brought them closer together.

Although Dad was still fit, the shrapnel in his lungs often gave him problems – when it moved he would often double up in pain and go ashen. He would be off work for weeks until the shrapnel moved again, and he was given a pension because of his injury.

## Disillusioned

Despite this health problem the hope of a new life after the war was an exciting prospect. Bill had a young family and his whole life in front of him, but as war faded into memories he became disillusioned with life as he felt nothing had changed and wondered what the deaths of millions of innocent men, women, and children had achieved. Men would still lie to take your job from you and human nature was just as perverse as it always was. Bill slowly realised that wars are not to protect people, they were deliberately instigated to preserve the status quo of the rich or to maintain or usurp power from other countries to protect their imports, and the common people were always the losers. He was later to learn that what the Bible says is true, 'There is no good thing in the flesh' and 'The rich rule over the poor'.<sup>Footnote 1</sup>

Bill was looking for answers to life, but didn't realise it at this stage of his journey. He looked into Communism for a while and joined the trade union and, being the foreman, actually took all the men out on strike for better pay and conditions. Mr. Mayers was like a man from one of Charles Dickens' novels. Every workman had a Bunsen Burner on his bench for re soldering instrument parts and shaping metal. As Mr. Mayers walked down the factory floor he would turn everyone's gas light down to a minimum saying they were wasting money. He recycled string and brown paper and had a single bar electric fire to heat the whole workshop.

## Moving Home Again

By this time Bill's mother-in-law realised how difficult it was for two families living together in the same small '2 up 2 down' terraced house. Bill and Enda had a small daughter, Norma, who was now three, and Edna was pregnant with yours truly. Arthur and Irene also wanted to start a family so Edna and Irene's mother gave them one of her houses on Upper Chorlton Road. Although it was just five hundred yards away it was in Whalley Range as the Upper Chorlton Road was actually the boundary between Old Trafford and Whalley Range. This was a large three storey Victorian semi-detached house with a full basement and very large garden. She let them have it at a low rent and they moved in. The Barratts on the ground floor and the Williams

on the second floor. The third floor was let off to an elderly spinster.

## Bosom Buddies

The two couples spent all their spare time together, sharing their troubles and their good times. Bill, always ambitious, had great plans for becoming rich. Both of them gambled on the Football Pools, and Arthur also gambled heavily on horses (a passion inherited from his father whose only outside interest had been in horse racing). However, riches did not seem to come their way, and after much discussion, they pooled gratuities, investing them in a joint business venture – making and repairing musical instruments.

They set up their workshop in the basement of this new house. It was decided that Bill should be the one to work full time in the basement workshop whilst Arthur would still carry on earning a wage outside until such time as their business could employ them both full-time.

It is a sad fact, but true, that to start this business they stole goods from the firm where they had been working. Just after the war many materials needed for silver plating instruments, and engraving tools were hard to come by so they stooped to stealing to obtain the various things they needed for their new business venture. They did this for a period of time and then started the business. Bill, fortunately, had all the contacts from his grandfather's business and

other music shops in Manchester which used to send repairs to his grandfather's shop.

## Arthur Moves On

Soon after they started the business Arthur changed his job for a more remunerative one, and began work for a nationwide stationers, W. H. Smith, posting advertisements on public transport vehicles. This was the best job he had ever had in his life, with easy hours, good pay and good working conditions, and if anyone had told him he would ever leave it of his own free will to work as a £4 per week Minister of the Gospel he would have thought they were quite mad.

Dad and Uncle were men of the world. They would enjoy a drink and, although I do not remember it, my sister Norma tells how he sometimes came home from the pub on a Saturday night a little the worse for drink having played blow football on the pub floor with a table tennis ball.

Dad was a regular smoker, but one day my mum challenged him to give up smoking. He said he didn't want to, but she said, "That's because you can't!" That was it. He stopped immediately and never smoked again – just like his quick decision to leave the family business on principle. Dad was a thinker and in no way impulsive and he would meditate before he made decisions. However in emergencies, and for a principle, he could act quickly and decisively.

I remember when I was around 16-17 years of age I was standing with Dad at the front door of our house. Suddenly the front door of the house next door burst open and a young woman in her twenties ran out screaming with her flimsy night dress in flames. Whilst I was wondering what was the best thing to do in the circumstances Dad had already taken off his jacket, dived on the girl pulling her to the ground, and rolling her in the snow, covered with his jacket, to cut off all oxygen from the flames. The fire was put out and the girl was saved from severe burns. I just watched it all as if it was all in slow motion.

## Still Searching

The business was beginning to do quite well, but Bill was still searching for answers to life. Two Jehovah's Witnesses came to his door and he began to study what they presented to him for a while but it did not appear to be what he was looking for. He looked at other cults and philosophies but nothing gave him the answers his heart was craving for. Of course, his head didn't know the answer but his spirit did and was waiting for the time when God would call him in a dramatic way. He told me many years later that he realised God had been speaking to him all his life, and related some of his experiences. Here are his reminiscences in his own words.

*At the age of six, I was lying on the large piece of ground near my house in Moss Side. On my*

*back I looked up into the clear blue sky and God seemed so real for a few minutes ...and then it passed. God came into focus that day but I had a busy, happy life and happy home and didn't have time to think of God.*

*The next time I remember when God spoke vividly – the night before D-Day, June 5th 1944. I was a sergeant in the 13th battalion. We were all lined up on the tarmac, about 800 men. We would be dropping by parachute at 1:00am. We were all standing in our stick (10 men or so). The padre called us to prayer about 11:30pm. We would leave at midnight. It was a moonlit night. It was a crisis time – we were going to jump in action and we didn't know if we were to come back home or what would happen. I was afraid every time I jumped but you do it anyway. There are times when time stands still – I was facing a life and death adventure. As the Padre led us in prayer, just before the planes took off for France, I lifted my heart to God for one brief moment. I felt I wanted to know God.*

*I had scarcely thought of God since my childhood days when I had gone to Sunday School – sent there by my parents. As I had grown older I begun to play truant, sneaking my football boots out, and going off to play football instead. Now, I suddenly felt strangely moved as the Spirit of God spoke to my*

## Disillusioned

*heart. But the moment passed, and soon was boarding the plane for Normandy with my comrades, excited and fearful at the same time.*

*I was also moved to think of God when Lord Montgomery came to speak to us before D-Day and he gave all the men Bibles and suggested they read them every day.*

*It's strange, but I always seemed to think of God when there was a Crisis. God preserved my life on many occasions but I didn't realise it, yet these were the real times of my life.*

Transcribed from Bill's audio testimony

I think all those who are truly born of God can see how God has been in their life from birth and Bill was no exception. Looking back he realised that God had spoken to him many times and deposited that living seed in him just waiting for it to germinate and manifest in due time.

## Chapter 5 \_\_\_\_\_

# Damascus Road

*The voice I heard in Bridgewater Hall spoke the same words we used before going to battle, "This is it!" – God used my language.*

Everything seemed to be going smoothly and to plan. Life was looking good for Bill Barratt. Now a family man he was content with life and its hopes for the future. He had left the employ of Mayers & Harrisons and was doing well in his own business. His daughter, Norma, was attending a private school called Saxonhome not far away on Whalley Road, Manchester 16. Bill's half sister, Margaret, attended also, so she was at the same school as her aunt who was only a few years older than Norma. Bill's mother-in-law paid for this. Then began a series of events that would turn the lives of

Bill, Arthur, and their families upside down and they would never live normal lives again.

## The Process Starts

Miss France, a spinster in her 60's, who lived nearby called at the house in Darnley Street to ask if she could take Norma to Sunday School each week. The Sunday School was at a Methodist church. Norma was now four years of age and Dad and Mum were pleased for her to go each Sunday afternoon ...so off she went each week with Miss France.

Later that year Miss France called and told Dad and Mum that Norma was to sing in the choir at a special service at the Church the next Sunday. It was the Sunday School Anniversary and Norma would be taking part. She asked Bill and Edna if they would like to go and watch her. They were very reluctant to relinquish their Sunday night to go to Church – it was their 'Whist night!' However, they finally went leaving a rather disgruntled Irene and Arthur, who had been looking forward to their usual Sunday evening playing Whist, accompanied with a few drinks of alcoholic beverage. Bill was a good father and so paid the price by extracting himself from his weekly pleasure that evening and took his wife to the church for the first time.

Bridgewater Hall Methodist Church opened on the 11th June 1898, and was situated on the corner of Queen Street and York Street, Hulme, Manchester 15. Reverend Lincoln Minshull, the minister at that

time, was a Modernist and did not believe that the miracles in the Bible were literal or supernatural. He believed on the one hand they were all explainable by science or on the other hand were just illustrations and allegories.

## The Seed Was Sown

That night Bill and his wife heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time. He heard how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took our sins and our punishment, bearing them on the Cross. They had never heard such a message, and Bill said to his wife, "We must go again!" And so for five consecutive Sunday nights they went to this church. Arthur, although he dearly loved his friend, began to think something had gone wrong with him. He told Irene, "I think they've gone religious and Bill has even stopped gambling!" So ended their cosy Sunday evening Whist parties.

Things were coming to a head for Bill Barratt, God was orchestrating events to bring about his salvation. It was the sixth Sunday he had attended the church when the Minister challenged anyone in the congregation who was willing to accept Christ as their Saviour, to come out during the singing of the last hymn, and quietly, and reverently, kneel down at the Communion Rail in front of all the people in the Church. Dad said he found out later that he rarely made an appeal for people to follow Christ but after six weeks of my father attending the church he did

so and my father said that he felt that if what the minister said was true then Jesus was a 'man's man' and was worth following. Dad did not see himself as a sinner who needed to repent but he did want to follow Jesus.

## This Is It!

Deep in his own spirit Bill once again heard the voice of God. Although the voice was not audible he knew who it was that spoke to him, and it was loud and deep in his spirit. The voice said simply, "This is it!" It was a strange thing for God to say, but it was Bill's language and the phrase he used when going to jump by parachute into the unknown. He understood it and decided right there and then he would accept the minister's challenge. He would surrender himself completely to God, accept Christ as his Saviour, and live for Him.

Then began the biggest battle he had ever known. As the congregation began to sing he wanted to move out towards the front, but his legs seemed rooted to the spot, and his will paralysed, so strange and powerful was this spiritual experience. It was so vivid, that he actually looked down at his feet expecting to see them literally chained! He could not move and yet inside he longed with all his heart to go out to the front and give his life to Christ. Verse after verse was sung whilst he remained rooted to the ground, held there irresistibly by some mysterious power, unable to even speak.

When the last verse came he was still standing there fighting this terrible and awful battle; then he heard God's voice again saying the same words, "This is it!". He knew that if he did not accept Christ as his Saviour that very night he would never go back to this church. He couldn't possibly go through an experience like this again. Without understanding why or how, he just moved his fingers as they were at his side, and touched his wife who was standing next to him, and then his voice was released and he said in a quiet but determined voice, "I'm going". He never did remember walking down to the front of the church, or of kneeling at the altar rail, but the next moment he was looking up into the Minister's face – and Edna was at his side.

## Like Saul of Tarsus

The year was 1948 and the date 30th September. From that very moment he was a changed man, it was just like Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. He never, till the day he died, used foul language again, and the hands that stole have been laid upon thousands of sick people, as he witnessed them being miraculously healed in the Name of Jesus. His life was changed completely and irreversibly by the wonderful grace and power of Almighty God.

Although my dad did not think he was a bad person his life changed dramatically and over the years he certainly repented of many things that

seemed quite normal and innocent before his conversion. It was all new. He lost the desire to go to the dance halls and the cinema, and other habits and thought patterns slowly left him, but it was a process and took time (he was acting in drag as the dame in the Christmas Church pantomime a few months after his conversion).

Reverend Lincoln Minshull, the Minister, told him, "You are now a child of God, Christ has come into your heart. You are very inexperienced, so you'll have to be careful how you speak to people or they will not understand you". I think he realised something more than the normal conversion had happened to this young, spirited and recently demobbed, soldier.

Bill was at every Church meeting after that; the Bible study, prayer meeting, and all the activities of the church. He threw himself into everything with abandonment. He was radically changed from that brief encounter with the Creator of the Universe – God.

## Pray & Keep Quiet

Lincoln Minshull then asked Bill if there was anyone he would like to experience this wonderful, life changing encounter with God and immediately Bill said, "Yes, I'd like my friend Arthur to have it, but he's a hard case." The Minister then wisely replied, "You and I will pray every day for him but don't mention it to your friend." And so they did just

that. Bill saw Arthur every day, but he never said a word of what had happened to him. He just kept on praying for him. He did not have to wait long, for about six weeks later in November he was working in the basement of the house in Upper Chorlton Road, when Arthur rushed down the stairs in great excitement and agitation. As soon as Bill saw his face he knew that he too had been reconciled to his Creator.

Here is the account from a small booklet Arthur wrote called, 'God's Miraculous Ministry Today':

*During the last World War, I served my country as an infantryman. After my 'demob', like so many other war-time soldiers, I tried to settle down to civilian life after witnessing the shattering horrors of the battle-field, and to earn a livelihood once more.*

*Prior to my conversion, I was a man of the world. I enjoyed gambling, and I suppose that I had tasted most of the sinful pleasures of the world. One day, I was riding home from work on a number 81 bus, checking my Racing Gazette, as was my habit when I realised that I had lost my last five shillings again! Now I had no lunch money! As I sat there on top of the bus, a sudden strange feeling came over me. I began to feel that I was dying. There was no physical pain, just a conviction that I was near to death. Try as I would, I could not analyse*

why I, a young man of thirty, should be dying! Panic stricken, I felt inside my coat to see if my heart was beating properly. It felt alright but the awful feeling of being mortally stricken persisted and intensified. I wondered if I could manage to touch the man sitting opposite to me and ask him if he would stop the bus and help me downstairs and to a doctor.

Just as I had almost made a move in the stranger's direction, I heard a voice speaking to me. Although not audible, it was quite clear, it said, "Why not try God?" It was so clear and distinct, that I answered within myself, "No, not really!" The voice came again, this time, clearly and distinctly, saying, "Why not try God now?" For the first time in my life, I prayed a real prayer, saying, "If there is a God, save me now!" Why I used these words, I did not know, because I meant to say, "Remove this terrible fear of death from me!"

What happened to me was remarkable. At the close of that short prayer, a great sensation of peace and feeling of power swept over me, and I realised that something tremendous had happened, although I was not at all sure exactly what it was all about at that moment. Alighting from the bus, I found that my whole being was inspired, my steps were lighter, and my heart was

*relieved from a burden that I later discovered was the weight of the consciousness of sin which I had carried about with me since early childhood. Now I no longer feared the grave. At last I was free! I experienced a strange and yet wonderful sensation of a wind blowing somewhere inside me, cleansing and exhilarating. All the fears that had haunted me for as long as I could remember had gone.*

*I was so excited and exhilarated that I came off the bus the stop before I should have done and ran all the way home. I went home to my wife like a man walking on air. As I went in, my face radiant, she said, "You've won!" I said, "No, I've lost!" but found it hard to convince her. I tried to sit down and eat my tea, but unable to contain myself, I got up again, and went off in search of my friend Bill.*

Arthur found Bill in the cellar working, but the work was soon forgotten as Arthur blurted out the whole story. The strange, wonderful wind was still blowing inside him, and he wondered if he were dreaming or perhaps going out of his mind. After Bill had listened in silence, Arthur ended in desperation, "Now look, Bill, you'll have to get me the best minister you know, or else a psychiatrist – I think I must be going mad!" Bill's heart was singing inside him; he felt like dancing for joy. God had gloriously answered his prayers. "No, you're not mad

Arthur," he said, "I know what has happened to you. You've been born again."

## Born Again

"That's it! That's it!" Arthur said in a frenzied voice. "Where did you get that from?" said Arthur bewildered.

"It's in the Bible, haven't you ever read about it?" Bill replied. At Arthur's urgent request he hastened to go and fetch a Bible, and then turning to the Gospel of St. John, chapter 3, he read out to him the conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus. "You must be born again". Bill repeated the verse from John's Gospel chapter 3 verse 7. As Arthur heard the inspired words of Scripture, everything suddenly came into focus and he knew without a shadow of a doubt that he was born again of the Spirit of God. Jesus was his Saviour! Simultaneously the two men fell down on their knees on the cellar floor and wept, thanking and praising God.

At a later date Bill took Arthur to see the Minister at the Methodist Church and they related Arthur's story to him. When they had finished he said, "If I have ever seen the Acts of the Apostles in evidence in this day and age I have seen it in your two lives". He spent much time with these two eager young converts, counselling them and helping them to understand the scriptures.

Every Sunday night from then on both families were found in Church. Irene went along with the

others although she did not yet understand what had happened to them. However, each week as she accompanied them to Church, she heard the word of God that does not return void. Finally, after about a year, the spirit of God had his way with her and she surrendered her heart and life to Him. What a wonderful joy and satisfaction the four of them now found in Christian fellowship together, praying and reading the Bible. God was working out his plans in their lives and had far greater thrills in store for them, as they began to learn of him and of his ways.



## Chapter 6 \_\_\_\_\_

# Entering the Supernatural

*The conversion of Bill and Arthur was like  
a page out of the Acts of the Apostles*

Reverend Lincoln Minshull, November 1948

Bill was excited about his new found faith, and hungry for the things of God and he wanted the world to know of the saving power of the gospel.

Just a few weeks after his dramatic conversion Bill started taking his trumpet into the streets of Hulme and Moss Side accompanied by Arthur. They were typical Lancashire town streets

with long lines of back to back, '2 up, 2 down', red bricked, terraced houses built at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Manchester attracted many Irish immigrants and other working people because of the great expanding industrial revolution which started in the city. Trafford Park became the largest industrial estate in Europe and Wythenshawe built immediately after the war would become the largest housing estate in Europe.

## Creating an Audience

This was before the days of television, and mobile phones, and apart from singing around the piano on a Saturday evening there was not much entertainment at home. Anything that happened in a street would bring everyone out of their houses to listen or participate. When the Salvation Army bands used to come down a street on a Sunday morning everyone came to the door to see them – not because they were Christian, but because it was often the only free entertainment available to them.

Dad played the 'Post Horn Gallop' most times as it was the most effective at getting people to their doors. (If you are not familiar with this piece I suggest you listen to it and you will quickly understand why he chose it.) The people rushed out from their houses, wondering what on earth was happening. As soon as they had a good crowd

gathered they stopped the music, jumped upon an old box, and began to tell the people about Jesus and his power to cleanse and save.

## Street Evangelism

Bill involved himself in the Methodist Church and became good friends with a couple called Nellie and Brian Curtis who had been Christians for many years, and they even went together on holiday to Pwllheli in Wales. Bill gave his testimony in many of the churches in his area and as far away as Stoke-on-Trent. Dad always gave his testimony in shops, and on the street, wherever he went. He had a passion for the souls of men. It didn't matter where or when if he saw a need he would just pray for people to be healed. He went on the doors witnessing with Arthur. He was very bold.

My mum did not like the limelight and always stayed in the background supporting Bill when ever she could and I never heard her once complain at his frequent trips away from home whilst she faithfully looked after the four children. My aunt was also in the background. Before she accepted Christ as her saviour she was claustrophobic and frightened to go outside the house – she was healed of this but did not become bold, although over the years her confidence grew and she would sing solos in church and even speak at old people's meetings in Southport Elim church.

It seemed after the supernatural conversion of these two men that they were plunged into the realm of the spirit before they even understood what it was all about. God was preparing Bill and Arthur for a life in the realm of the supernatural. Dad attended every meeting at Bridgewater Hall, and after a few weeks realised he needed to participate in the public prayer meeting.

The next meeting he decided to pray out loud, but just as he started to pray he saw, in a vision, a cloud of evil spirits circling over his head and he couldn't open his mouth. He was bound and knew these spirits had something to do with it. He became angry in his spirit and, not knowing why, said, "Get out!" Suddenly, the spirits dissipated and a lady in the circle, who was there to pray, got up, gave a blood curdling scream, and ran out of the meeting. He later discovered that she was a spiritualist. Nobody taught Dad about the supernatural realm, God himself prepared and taught him for his future apostolic ministry.

## Filled with the Holy Ghost

God wanted Bill and Arthur to receive the Holy Ghost just as the apostles did on the day of Pentecost and he sent a man to them who would introduce them to this experience.

Eighteen months after their conversion Arthur was riding home on a bus reading the Nazarene Holiness magazine entitled "The Flame". The headline for the article was, 'Science or the Bible,

which do you believe?' It soon became apparent to Arthur that a man sitting behind him was also reading his magazine, so he made it a little easier for him by pushing the magazine higher.

## The Bible or Science

At his bus stop Arthur stepped off the bus and headed for home, but he had only gone a few yards when he heard footsteps coming up behind him, and he was tapped on the shoulder. He turned to find himself confronted by a tall, good looking gentleman, from the bus, who said, "Excuse me, sir, but I have been reading your article. What do you believe?" Arthur thought that he would be ultra-cautious, and replied, "Both the Bible and science." Then he was asked forthrightly, "Do you believe in two births?" Arthur replied confidently, "I do indeed!" Extending his hand, this man said, "Well, praise the Lord, brother, we'll have the Bible, and leave the science."

Arthur took him home and introduced him to Bill. His name was Gustav Huber, a Hungarian Jew who had fled to England to escape the holocaust. He would request free tracts from the U.S.A., which he distributed from door to door in houses all over England. He lived by faith and had no income or support other than the free tracts sent to him in the thousands from America.

Many times he would just turn up at our house on Upper Chorlton Road, with his shoes worn

through and his feet bleeding. Mum would put a hot bowl of water for him to bath his feet in and make some stew on the stove for him to have a good meal. But he would never eat until he had persuaded Mum to bring out his accordion, which he left with us in our house, and would start to sing rousing choruses. Bill and Arthur only knew hymns from the Methodist hymn book so this was a new and exciting experience singing happy choruses and sometimes making them up as they went along led by the spirit of God.

## What is the Holy Ghost?

Gustav proved to be an able expositor of the Word and, being a Christian Jew, it was breathtaking to hear his inspired thoughts and wisdom from the word of God (the letter to the Hebrews was his favourite book in the Bible). Bill and Arthur were so grateful to God that he had led this brother to them at this time. One day he opened up the teachings of the Pentecostal experience to them. They had not even heard about this experience, let alone received it, but when he pointed out the Scriptures concerning it (Acts 2:4) they became fully convinced it was for them and started to seek it with great earnestness. They realised within an hour that although well and truly born again, they had not received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit since they had believed (Acts 1:8 & 2:4).

Bill and Arthur and their two wives had been attending Bridgewater Hall Methodist Church for

four years by this time, but hearing about the Holy Ghost was the beginning of a new era for them, and they made every effort to seek this glorious experience. Night after night for about three months Dad, with his brother-in-law, prayed for the mighty baptism in the Holy Spirit. Their new Jewish friend, Gustav Huber, had advised them to go to a church called Bethshan Tabernacle in Longsight, Manchester, to be filled with the Holy Ghost. They began to make occasional visits to Bethshan, a Church mightily used of God, well known outside as well as inside the Pentecostal Movement. It was here that hands were laid on them (Acts 19:5) by John Nelson Parr, one of the grand old Pioneers of Pentecost, and initiator of the 'Assemblies of God' movement.<sup>Footnote 1</sup>

One Friday evening, when only the wives of Bill and Arthur attended Bethshan, there was an opportunity for receiving this baptism. Pastor John Nelson Parr laid hands on the seekers. Many received this baptism, and their wives returned telling their husbands that next Friday there would be another receiving meeting for those seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They could hardly wait, and when the call was made, the two of them went out with one other person. After what seemed an hour and a half, but was only twenty five minutes in reality, heaven opened and down came the Holy Spirit. They felt a wind blow round their head, and burning fire through their body, and to their astonishment they began to speak in an unknown tongue, and it kept

on flowing for hours. In fact, the next day they both found it difficult to speak in English.

## Into the Spiritual Realm

That experience brought Bill into a new dimension, alive with spiritual power and activity, and there followed an amazing phenomena of seeing visions. The unseen things of the spiritual realm like angels, demons, and heaven's Glory all became real. They could see not only with their physical eyes but now their spiritual eyes had been opened and they could see into the unseen spiritual realm.

Once again their lives were inextricably linked, as simultaneously they received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking and glorifying God in strange new languages as the Spirit gave them utterance. Bill and Arthur, and their two wives were also baptised in water at Bethshan

Bill and Arthur were keen to share this experience of the Holy Ghost with the man who had led them to Christ, the Reverend Lincoln Minshull, but sadly he rejected this experience and so the two families started to attend Bethshan regularly. Norma went to the Sunday school at Bethshan and I can just vaguely remember attending also.

## Too Much Cheese

My father and uncle did not really know what was happening because they were pioneers of these

gifts, not the speaking in tongues but the revelation, gifts and visions, so they sought help from older and more mature men in the ministry. The first one they went to was John Nelson Parr – the founder of A.O.G. and pastor of probably the largest of their churches. They told him of their visions of angels and devils and other spiritual experiences. He did not understand these gifts and told them maybe they were eating too much cheese. He asked if they had been to America and were trying to copy those crazy evangelists who were picking up serpents.

Bewildered and with no answers to their questions they shared their dilemma with a local minister, the Rev. P.H.P. Gutteridge. He was a gifted Bible teacher and had a church in Gorton, Manchester. He had left the International Holiness Mission to start an independent evangelical church. It was he who suggested they should visit George Jeffreys and gave them a letter of introduction.

## Meeting George Jeffreys

Bill and Arthur took this letter to one of George Jeffreys' meetings. I have no idea what part of the county it was as Dad never told me. They gave the letter of introduction to one of the ushers at the door and sat down hoping that this great man of God would condescend to see them after the meeting for a few minutes. To their great surprise the usher came to them to say Mr. Jeffreys would

see them before the meeting and they were led to the front of the Church and into the vestry.

George was seated opposite them and said, "What can I do for you, boys?" He was old enough to be their father, and they were just two inexperienced young men entering the ministry. They told him they had been seeing visions that had come to pass and were seeing angels and devils. He looked at them and said, "I have never had a vision in my life, but I will pray for you". They both knelt down on the floor in front of him and he prayed for them. Their life was never the same after that prayer. Dad said he was walking on a cloud for three days, and there was a dimension that came into their ministry that had not been there before.

I can remember going with my father when I was around nine or ten years old to hear George Jeffreys speak in Blackpool, this would be around the middle of the 1950's.

## Out of Sight - Out of Mind

George Jeffreys' health began to fail, shortly after this and his public ministry started to decline in effect, never achieving the success of the former years. He became increasingly isolated and eventually died in January 1962 at the age of 72. Before he died Arthur visited him in his home in London. He was ushered into the room where George was sitting and he welcomed Arthur who had come to pay his respects. He said something that I have

never forgotten, "Nobody comes to see me these days." How sad that a great man of God should be forgotten when he starts to decrease after he has done what he was ordained to do. It seems we only pay homage to people when they are successful. I understand this happens in sport, and show business, but when Christians have this same fickleness it is so sad and disappointing to me.

This is what the great 'Apostle of Balance', as he was called, said about this man.

*George Jeffreys remains a stirring memory as the greatest British evangelist since George Whitefield and John Wesley. For a time his brilliant gifts helped the whole Pentecostal testimony in the British Isles, and we salute him as one of our great pioneers and a notable gift of Christ to His Church.*

Donald Gee

### Footnotes

1. John Nelson Parr. The instigator of A.O.G. in the late 1800s and early 1900s. There was a revival characterized by manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and it was out of this that the Assemblies of God was formed. In February 1924, Nelson Parr, the pastor of a congregation in Manchester, called a meeting of fourteen people in Aston, Birmingham, in which they decided to form the Assemblies of God in the U.K. with their 26 congregations. Others were invited, but train strikes meant that many people couldn't get there.



## Chapter 7 \_\_\_\_\_

# Church in the Front Room

Bill was on a war pension because of his serious wounds. His life was not easy because the shrapnel in his lungs would move at times causing him excruciating pain. <sup>Footnote 1</sup> He would have to stand perfectly still, his face ashen, and he would not be able to work for weeks at a time until the shrapnel moved again. Periodically he would have to go for a 'medical' and if anyone knows about army medical doctors you had to be half dead before they would treat you. Before his encounter with God, whenever he went before the doctors he would exaggerate his pain and problems so as to keep his pension. Just before he gave his

life to Christ the doctor said he was well enough and did not now need a pension so he was taken off the register and denied his pension.

## New Lungs

A couple of years after his conversion Bill was miraculously healed. He was prayed for and felt the shrapnel in his lungs slowly move to the back of his body and was leaving through his back. Just as it was leaving his body he began to feel it slowly coming back and, without realising what he was saying, he said under his breath, "Get out". Immediately it vanished and never returned. He remained fit until his 90th year.

There is a twist to this story. He was called back to the army doctor for his periodic examination and was asked how he felt. Dad said he had never felt better and proceeded to tell the doctor how God had healed him. The doctor looked at his war record and said, "I am putting you back on your war pension and you will receive all your back pay" ... and true to his word that is exactly what happened. God is so good. He lost his pension when he told lies and when he told the truth he received it again with all the back-pay. Mrs Barratt also had a miraculous healing from duodenal ulcers.

After his conversion Bill's conscience began to trouble him that he had stolen from Mayers & Harrisons to start his business. He had forgotten all about it until God began to remind him. He

debated and deliberated for many weeks whether he should go and confess his sin and offer to reimburse his old boss. He put it off many times before he counted the cost and after frequent internal struggles he decided he would go and see Mr. Mayers to face whatever consequence his confession entailed. He realised he could end up in court with maybe even a prison sentence for his theft but knew he could go no further in his Christian walk until he made his peace with Mr. Mayers and with God.

## Confession Time

Bill rang Mr. Mayers and asked for an appointment. He was given a date and time when he could see him in his office. Mr. Mayers was a hard nosed businessman and 'man of the world' – Dad said that often local prostitutes would go through the workshop to Mr. Mayers upstairs office. Bill reasoned in his mind that he could not expect him to understand either his conversion or confession so expected the worst.

The day came for his appointment so Bill took the bus to the shop and went up the stairs to Mr. Mayers office. "What can I do for you, Billy?" said, Mr. Mayers. Dad told him that he had systematically robbed him whilst working for him to start his own business but had now accepted Christ as his Saviour and wanted to confess his crime and make retribution.

He never expected what followed and was shocked when Mr. Mayers said, "I understand what has happened to you Billy. My wife is a Christian in the Salvation Army so I know what has happened to you. I do not want any retribution and you can have a job with me any time you need one". Wow! Dad went away praising and thanking God that he had obeyed his conscience, and did go back to work for Mr. Mayers for a period of time when he was running the house church.

## Hearing From God

Since the divine healing of Christ had been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt in their own lives, Bill and Arthur felt compelled to spread the Good News. The two of them often prayed together in the ground floor front room of their house. As they continued to pray they both felt an impelling urge to start preaching and praying for the sick in their own locality, and one day, after they had been in prayer together for about three or four hours, they received a definite word from God to open up this front room as a Church.

No time was wasted! They moved all the furniture out of the room and rolled up the carpet. Then they brought in all the chairs they could find, and a motley collection it was! Some even had springs sticking out! After searching the scriptures and praying, they decided to call the house Church 'SHARON' (referred to in the Bible as 'a fold of flocks' – Isaiah 65:10).

Dad was a natural leader and loved to plan and organise. He was a great motivator of people and led by example. Bill and Arthur distributed leaflets around the entire district and stuck a notice board by the front gate stating 'Sharon Full Gospel Church'. The Ministry of Barratt and Williams had begun. They knocked on all the house doors in the road they lived on and told everyone they were starting a church in their house. We lived next door to a middle class bank manager who said he would attend, but he never did, and neither did any of the others in close proximity. The year was 1950-51.

## Learning to Preach

For about six months they totalled a congregation of five, including the preachers. This was made up of their two faithful wives, themselves, and one other man, Jack Smallshaw, who was already a Christian. Dad made a wooden pulpit and Bill and Arthur would take it in turns to 'Preach'. They would bang the pulpit and give their testimonies but they had no training for public speaking and I am sure it was terrible at first. But they had obeyed God and that was the important thing and it was valuable training for the future when they would speak to crowds of thousands.

Then after six months a lady who was suffering with cancer attended the meeting in the front room. She was doubled up with pain, and had a walking stick about eighteen inches long because she stooped so much. After prayer with the laying on of hands,

according to the Scripture in Mark 16:18, she stood up quite straight – instantly healed.

After this miracle, other people began to trickle steadily in and God did not fail to answer their need. Many were converted and healed. About eighty people alone were baptized with the Holy Spirit during that first year of these two young men's ministry. This miracle really encouraged them to 'launch out into the deep' and they had a 'Divine Healing Crusade' on a bomb site in Old Trafford. There were hundreds of these bomb sites in and around Manchester. They were gaps in rows of terraced houses where a bomb had dropped and destroyed one of them. Many had not been completely cleared of rubble and it was not until the middle 1950s that they were all cleared properly.

## Bomb-site Crusade

The site they chose was owned by a builders merchant, Thomas Griffith & Sons, on Chorlton Road, Old Trafford, which remains today, and still owned by the same family. One of the young girls, Mary Haythorne, was dating a gypsy traveller called Joe Plant. He had a boxing booth where he challenged the public to a few rounds in the ring with one of his boxers for a reward of money if they won. He allowed Bill and Arthur to use this as a crusade tent.

It was a strange sight to behold. The tent had life-sized pictures of boxers all over the front,

but now had a massive banner with two foot high letters announcing 'God heals the sick today' right across the front. This alone caused interest in the local community and the tent was full every night to see what it was all about. Amazing miracles happened during the two weeks of the crusade. People jumped up out of wheel chairs and walked them home empty. People threw their walking sticks away. The deaf heard and the blind saw. It was like the Acts of the Apostles in the 20th Century.

## Getting Noticed

God's ways are amazing and detailed in a most intricate way. During this crusade a B.B.C. producer named Denis Mitchell, who would later become quite famous for his distinctive documentaries, was coming home on a bus when he saw the strange site of a Boxing tent with a banner saying 'God heals the sick today'. He was intrigued and, always looking for a good story, he got off the bus at the next stop and came to see what it was all about. It was no coincidence (or maybe it was a God-incidence) that he was just planning a radio documentary entitled, 'A night in the city' in which he interviewed people from all walks of life. <sup>Footnote 2</sup> He interviewed a prostitute, a housewife from a slum district, and others but he also included an interview recorded with Bill and Arthur. It was a divine connection that would have world-wide significance many years later for these two young evangelists.

Bill and Arthur used the same source in America that Gus Huber used to obtain free tracts (this was the Hungarian Jew who introduced them to the baptism of the Holy Ghost). Bill and Arthur distributed tens of thousands of gospel tracts in the houses around the church. They purchased a rubber stamp with the name and address of the house church and spent many hours each night stamping these tracts ready for distribution whenever they had the spare time.

## Abundant Life

Life was vibrant and exciting for this evangelistic duo. They were still working in full time jobs and both had young families. Bill and Edna now had two children and Arthur and Irene had two girls, Hazel and Pamela. Distributing tracts, as well as preaching, and praying for the sick in the house church, filled up all their spare time but they were enthusiastic and alive with this new found life in Christ.

People joined this small group and many notable miracles took place. It was an exciting time. My sister Norma was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied when she was ten years of age. She wanted to be baptised in water and my dad asked Pastor Glass,<sup>Footnote 3</sup> a minister in the Elim Pentecostal Denomination, if she could be baptised in his church in Salford. He refused because they had a policy not to baptise anyone under 13 years of age. He later relented when he realised she had already

been filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke in tongues, and prophesied, and she was baptised at his church in Salford.

## Musicians Wanted

My dad, being a musician, wanted to accompany the singing in this house church with a pianist and as no one in the small group could play the piano he asked Norma, my older sister, if she would change her dancing lessons for piano lessons. Norma told me that she loved to dance and wanted to continue, but sacrificed them for God and took piano lessons from that time. The little house Church was established, but it was just the beginning.

### Footnote 1

Shrapnel was sometimes not removed if it didn't seem to bother the wounded, or if it was too tricky to operate because of the location. This is still the case today. Many soldiers are living with retained metal of various kinds, including a contingent of US forces from the Gulf War with Depleted Uranium fragments in their bodies (so far, after long follow-up, no significant adverse health effects from the DU). In WWI, most fragments in the brain, heart muscle, or very near the spinal cord would have been left in situ if possible (if the risk from the metal was less than the risk of the surgery). Small fragments in muscles, chest, etc., could have been left even though they could have been removed, simply because such fragments usually don't cause significant health effects.

**Footnote 2**

Denis Mitchell also made a film called 'A Night in the City' in June 1957 for the B.B.C., but it did not include the church

**Footnote 3**

His Son, John Glass, later became superintendent of Scotland and I have preached in many of their churches. He then became superintendent of the whole Elim denomination and has just recently retired.

## Chapter 8 \_\_\_\_\_

# Church in the Garden

Bill and Edna had their third child, Elisabeth on 1st March 1952. Bill was now 34 years of age.

Numbers were increasing in the house church and it became impossible to fit them all into the front room. It was evident that they needed bigger premises to hold meetings, but there was no money available to purchase land or erect a building. In the early days no one ever thought to take a collection and it was only when a lady suggested they do this 'for the work of God' that they started to pass a bag round each time they met. The people were quite poor and the weekly collection rarely totalled more

than ten shillings (50p in today's decimal currency). To put this in perspective, years later in 1961 I started work as a draughtsman and my weekly wage was 2 pounds, 17 shillings and 6 pence (the equivalent of £2.75 today).

## Church in the Garden

A whole chapter could be devoted to the miraculous way in which they obtained a sectional building suitable for their purpose and at a price they could pay. Suffice to say, God led them every step of the way. As they could not afford to buy any land for a site, God showed them the obvious place to build their new Church was at the back of their house at 69 Upper Chorlton Road which had a very large garden.

Once again God spoke to them as they prayed. He directed them to visit a Christian man they knew. He was not a member of their own congregation, but someone they had known at the Methodist Church in Hulme. They could not understand why God wanted them to see this particular person. They believed him to be a pauper. He always dressed in tatters and never seemed to have any money. Nevertheless, they followed the Lord's leading and paid the man a visit. After they had told him about their need of money to obtain a Church building, to their amazement the man produced £180 in notes (£3,240 current value) and offered to lend it to them free of interest and without any security at all! It was agreed that they should pay him back out of their own pockets at the

rate of £1 per week (£17 at current value). They were still working for their living at this time so, as if in a dream, they made their way home, walking on air, praising and thanking God for directing them to this humble man who was sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

## Sectional Building

Dad looked around and God led him to find an old wooden sectional building which the army were disposing of in the South of England. The cost of the building plus delivery to Manchester was £120, so they had enough from the loan to put electricity and heating into the structure. Bill and Arthur both went to look at it, and they quickly realised it was just what they needed and would fit into the garden with room to spare. It was delivered to the house in Whalley Range and I can remember all the wooden panels and roof sections piled high in full view of our back kitchen window. This was an exciting, and adventurous time for me and an adventure, as I saw it slowly being erected week by week. I was only 11 years of age but I helped each Saturday when a team of men came to help Dad and Uncle. I learned so much about building structures and assembly at this young age and looking back I can see it was all part of God's plan for my future – but that is for the sequel to this book, my autobiography.

One Sunday morning I remember three men walking into the church building. After the service they

introduced themselves as Leonard and Wesley Harvey, and George Montgomery. They had come from Northern Ireland to find work in Manchester. They had been wonderfully saved in the Faith Mission in Balamena and were looking for somewhere to worship. They settled into the church and the two brothers later became deacons in the church, and Wesley actually became minister many years after my dad retired. These three men found work in Manchester and threw themselves into both evangelism and the physical labour, and were there every Saturday to help Dad and Uncle erect the building.

The building came without a floor but nothing daunted Bill and Arthur and their little flock. They mixed the concrete by hand and laid the floor all on their own. The building measured approximately 80 feet by 20 feet (25M x 6M). The little team of volunteer inexperienced builders erected the structure over many weekends. The helpers sang praises to God as they worked and some gave up their holidays to help with the labouring. Young boys, elderly men, even women and girls all worked together enthusiastically. They were working with a purpose – that the gospel might be preached to others, to liberate them from their pain, loneliness, and misery just as they had been.

## Mishaps

The work did not go without mishaps and I remember a roof truss falling and hitting Arthur

on the head. It knocked him to the floor but had only dazed him and he suffered no ill effects. We all laughed about it when it was realised he was not damaged in any way.

At last the day came when the work was finished. Thank God Bill and Arthur had good neighbours and they did not complain about this large building in the garden. Not one of them ever ventured into it but they did not complain to the council at the noise which often came from it. This in itself was a great blessing from God as the meetings could easily have been shut down if there had been enough complaints.

It was during this time that Bill's mother died in 1953 followed by his stepfather a couple of years later in 1955. Bill and Edna's fourth and last child, Christine, was born in 1956. Bill was now 39.

## The Church in the Garden

The meetings started in the new building and the miracles continued. Slowly the numbers increased and so did the miraculous happenings. It was known locally as 'The Church in the Garden' and when people asked where Sharon was the locals would say, "Oh, you mean the Church in the Garden?"

Norma, Bill's eldest daughter, was now having piano lessons in preparation for accompanying the singing in the little church, but in the mean time John, the son of Rev. P. H. P. Gutteridge, the man who had introduced them to George Jeffreys, played

the piano each Sunday for the meeting. When he was not available his brother Peter stood in for him.

Dad was now the manager of the musical instrument workshop at Mayers & Harrisons. Of course the shop contained all brass instruments as electrical instruments such as guitars and electronic keyboards had not entered the mainstream music scene yet. Bill began to feel the call of God to be full time in ministry, and indeed God had shown him that it was what his future entailed, but he needed more training before it was God's timing, and patience is one of the most necessary requisites for fruitful and lasting ministry. The wheels of God's machinery grind very slowly as all true men of God painfully discover.

## Living by Faith?

Bill had not yet learned this lesson so he decided to leave work and go full time in ministry. He told Mr. Mayers he was going to live by faith in God and handed in his notice. It was God's calling but not God's timing. However, God uses our mistakes, as well as our successes, to weave his intricate plan into the tapestry of our lives, and mistakes are a wonderful way of learning hard lessons. He had acted in presumption and not faith because God had not told him to leave work. He did not know that with 'faith and patience' we inherit the promises of God. Well, after a few months he could not sustain his faith. He had no money to pay for the household

bills and no food to feed his family. He knew that to beg from God's people would be wrong. So, greatly embarrassed, he went 'cap in hand' and asked for his old job back. Mr. Mayers graciously granted his request and my father waited patiently until God told him clearly that it was the right time.

## W H Smith

Eventually the time did come when God told Dad to leave the firm to go full time in the ministry and he never looked back. It was like many others, myself included, who had to live by faith in stages. My father left full time employment but worked in the evenings to support the family for a period of time. He took a job at night putting posters on the buses for W H Smith. He started at 11:00pm when most of the buses were in the depot, and finished at 4:00am. He would rush home, grab a few hours sleep, and then start to work for God in the daytime giving out tracts, visiting the sick, and doing the work of a pastor.

Eventually both Bill and Arthur did give up their secular jobs to work full time for God. The church paid them a wage of £9 per week. (£150 at current value 2019). He had a wife and four growing children, and Arthur had his wife and two children so it was a struggle but they were learning this life of faith and obedience and they loved it.

After working at night and then all day for many years Dad told me that when he finally went full time

as a minister he was so worn out physically that it took him years before he recovered. There is often a price to pay to be in the employment of God and, like a soldier, it is necessary to endure hardship so as to become tough and resilient. Dad knew from his commando training that this was 'par for the course' for a soldier and he embraced it willingly. He was always a good example to me as I was growing up and I learned so many wonderful and lasting principles from him.

## Chalk & Cheese

I liken Bill and Arthur to Paul and Silas, because they were so different in both personality and character. Bill was calculating and slow to make decisions because he would stick to them so he deliberated before he made commitments. Arthur was impetuous and emotional and made quick decisions, but God called them together and they complemented each other. In fact it is my conviction that they needed each other and would have been deficient in some way if they were on their own – this proved to be true many years later.

An example of Arthur's character was the way he prayed for the sick. He acted as he was prompted by the Holy Ghost. I well remember a man hobbling down the isle aided by two sticks to be prayed for in one of the Divine Healing Crusades we had at the Church in the Garden. When the man reached him Arthur grabbed his two sticks, broke them over his

knee, and threw them into the congregation saying, "You don't need these with the power of God present. You are healed, run round the Church!" The man, now filled with the power of God, did just that and ran around the church with his arms in the air in bewilderment and awe that he was completely healed. The congregation were all laughing, or crying, depending on how this miracle had affected them.

## Healthy Fear of God

These kind of events were common place each week and thousands of people over the years have been miraculously healed and transformed through the ministry of these two ordinary men called of God for their generation. Devils often cried out as they left people and the fear and awe of God was so frequently experienced as God moved in a mighty way. I was only a young boy, not even a teenager, but I knew the fear of God when my Dad told us he had seen an angel in the building. Sadly I have seen the decline of this spontaneous kind of miraculous ministry and today's 'Superstar Evangelists' seem to hype up the miracles when there are large crowds.

Bill and Arthur felt they should belong to some organisation and so they looked at the Pentecostal denominations that had formed since the beginning of the century. The main ones were Elim, and Assemblies of God (A.O.G.). They also looked at a smaller one known as the Apostolic Church. I do not think they saw much difference in the doctrines of

these movements as the fundamentals were similar. What caused them to choose A.O.G. was that these churches were run autonomously, whereas Elim was centrally governed. Because they had pioneered the church themselves they did not want to be moved around to other churches, as could happen if they became Elim ministers, so they asked to join A.O.G. around 1958 and were on probation until fully accepted in 1961. <sup>Footnote 1</sup>

## Joining A.O.G.

I suppose another factor in choosing A.O.G. was the fact that they had been filled with the Holy Ghost and baptised in water at Bethshan Tabernacle, the church of the instigator of the A.O.G. movement, John Nelson Parr, and they liked his strong evangelical ministry. He sent many missionaries all over the world from his church Bethshan in Longsight, Manchester. I believe it was the largest Church in the denomination at its peak and had a building specially designed and erected that would hold 800 people, and often it was full.

It would seem strange today that Nelson Parr was criticised by many other Pentecostal ministers for the design of the building. It was like a cinema with a sloping floor towards the platform. Most Pentecostal churches were old scout huts or other frugal structures as in the early days of this movement, they were outcasts from traditional denominations such as Methodist, Anglican, Brethren, or Baptist,

and so met in any small building they could find. When people were saved they stopped going to the dance hall and 'the pictures' so to build a church like a cinema was too worldly a building for them.

## Great Falling Way

Sadly, to me, Pentecostal churches have gone the opposite way and many are now like entertainment centres competing with the world and using gimmicks to draw the people instead of the miraculous power of God.

Because of the unusual ministry and gifts of Bill and Arthur many of the leading men in A.O.G. kept at a distance in the early days of them joining the movement, not wanting to be associated with the strange happenings at the 'Church in the Garden'. In the early days of this Pentecost revival speaking in tongues was what it was all about and the other eight gifts were not really manifested very often. My father and Uncle had supernatural words of knowledge and wisdom and had spiritual sight to see angels and devils. Often, they would see inside people's bodies when they came before them for prayer. Many times they saw the root of the problem rather than the symptoms the person described. I will give you an example:

A man came for prayer in one of the crusades at the church. He had terrible pain in his head which the doctors could not diagnose or help him with. Medication had no effect and he had been suffering

for many years. After he told my father the symptoms. Dad said, "I am going to pray for your back. You fell from the bus you were running after to board many years ago and you damaged your back when you hit the curb". (In the 1950s all the buses were open for boarding, even when moving, as they had no doors, so people ran after the bus and boarded whilst in motion if they were late arriving at the bus stop). The man was amazed, but knowing that the incident was described accurately it must have given him faith. When Dad prayed for his back the pain in his head completely disappeared and he was miraculously healed.

## Strange Happenings

For a period of many months when we worshipped God in that little 'Church in the Garden' a beautifully perfumed oil appeared on the hands of those in the congregation. It was not sweat as was first thought, but oil, and it had a wonderful fragrance. The headquarters of the Assemblies of God heard of this strange phenomenon and the executive council sent a delegation to investigate this manifestation of oil that was appearing. They reported back that it was genuine and attributed it to God, but there was still scepticism among some of the brethren.

Years later when Bill and Arthur started to attend the general conference of Assemblies of God some of the ministers kept their distance from them not wanting to be associated with this 'extreme behaviour'

they had heard about, but some came privately saying, "I admire the work you are doing, keep it up."

## Shadows on the Wall

Although Dad was a serious man and never joked in the pulpit, or about ministry and the Bible, He never lost his sense of mischief and it remained with him all his life. Even in his eighties I can remember there were times when if asked a serious question by his family he would slowly say, "Well, it is like this", and then say something preposterous and amusing, and always with a twinkle in his eye.

He loved young people and there was a lively group of teenagers and singles below 20 years of age in the church for whom he would arrange special times at Christmas or in the summer holidays where we would all gather in his house and he would arrange to play games and have special food. Dad would entertain us all with his stories or his shadows behind a white sheet depicting animals or birds. He took young people to preach in the open air, their testimonies brought other young people into the knowledge of Christ. Many of them married and became families in the Church.

### Footnote 1

I have in my possession a book hand written by Mrs Barratt with the minutes of the first business meeting of Sharon dated January 11th 1956, where three elders were voted in from a list of seven men.



## Chapter 9 \_\_\_\_\_

# Miracles Home & Abroad

The 'Church in the Garden' grew steadily and, because of the miraculous ministry, requests were received for miracle and healing crusades in churches around the country. I have in my possession a large file with testimonies of 100s of people who have written about their experiences over the many years of my father's ministry. I have included three here that happened in the little wooden 'Church in the Garden'.

This first amazing miracle astounded the members of the church and all the large Donegani family and one by one they came to the church and gave their lives to Christ. The church increased by

eight members almost overnight. Here is the story in Agnes Donegani's own words:

## Stricture of the brain

*At the age of five my boy, Peter, was taken ill on his way home from school. After tests it was found that he had gone blind and was rushed to Manchester Royal Infirmary where he was operated on to remove a tumour on the brain. This was not a success, and a second operation became necessary in order to remove the pressure from behind the eyes. This second operation proved partially successful and after six months he was discharged in the following condition. He was unable to walk straight as his balance had been affected, he was blind in one eye, and he was not able to attend school. After a while we managed to take him to a school for backward children. When he was eleven he had to be taken once more to the Infirmary for special X-Rays. He was maturing too quickly due to the operations he had undergone. Whilst these operations were being taken, his brain flooded, and for a week he was unconscious. We then found out that the trouble was not due to a tumour of the brain, but a stricture. He needed another operation, but this was impossible as there was fluid on his brain, and a danger of meningitis being*

*caused, so he was sent home. I had resigned myself to having him as an invalid all my life. In 1955 my life was changed by Christ, and I heard that Jesus could still heal as in Bible days. I took my son to the front of the church to be prayed for. He immediately received the sight in his blind eye. I was amazed, and took him to a specialist. He told me that the fluid had completely gone from his brain, and that he did not need another operation. From that day he has steadily improved, and has never needed to go to the hospital since. I thank and praise God for meeting my every need, and for giving me a peace and joy that never leaves me.*

*Mrs. Agnes Donegani*

## Healed after serious accident

*In 1956 I had a serious accident at work. The tibia and fibula bones in my leg were broken and my toes were fractured. My head was also damaged. As I was claiming compensation for neglect I had to see several specialists who all said that I would have to live with the pain all my life. My toes overlapped one another and I walked with a limp. I had to wear open toed sandals or plimsolls. In 1958 I attended a campaign at Sharon (I had been attending the meetings regularly*

*for a few months prior to this) and I went out for prayer. My toes immediately straightened out and my limp vanished. After two years absence I was able to start work again, and I praise and thank the Lord Jesus for healing me.*

Mr. J. Green

## Registered blind

*In 1960 I had to have operations for Glaucoma and I had to wear a frosted lens over my right eye. I was also put on the partially sighted register. I took tablets continually for the pain and I was always depressed. In June 1964 I gave my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I was prayed for that God would heal my eyes. My vision came back in my right eye and all the pain went and I am now wearing clear glasses. When I went back to the Optician he tested my eyes and everyone was amazed at the improvement. I have not been back to the Doctor for tablets, and I want the world to know what Jesus has done for me. He has healed me physically and also spiritually and given me a wonderful peace.*

## Revival in Fife

I think the longest crusade Bill and Arthur conducted was in Fife, Scotland. It was scheduled

for two weeks but lasted six weeks. I have interviewed people who were saved and healed in this remarkable revival in Scotland in 1957. I have also spoken to the son of Pastor Hunter, Tom, who is in his 70th year to piece the story together. It is an interesting story and shows how God used many circumstances and incidents to bring about his purposes.

## Window Shopping

A lady named Joyce Greenhalgh who lived in Manchester, went for a holiday to Leven, Fife, in Scotland. As she was window shopping she saw a poster with a scriptural text on it in a decorator's shop. This shop belonged to a couple named Jim and Ada Hunter who had a small group of Believers who met in the workshop at the back of his shop. He had been asked to leave the Methil Town Mission because they had been filled with the Holy Ghost and spoken in tongues. Joyce entered the shop and started to talk to Jim and found they were both Believers and had been baptised in the Holy Ghost. After much animated conversation she invited Jim, Ada, and their son Tom to visit them at their home in Sale, Manchester.

Jim had a van which he had converted to a camper. He had been on holiday, with his wife and son, Tom, to Loch Earn in Perthshire for the first week of their summer holidays. They then drove down to England to visit the famous

Keswick Convention in the Lake District, and finally continued south to Manchester where they visited their new friend in Sale, a district of Manchester, before returning to their home in Scotland.

## Request from Scotland

While the Hunter family were with Joyce Greenhalgh in Manchester she took them to the 'Church in the Garden' where they saw the miracles and the power of God clearly manifested. They were captivated with it all.

Jim Hunter was desperate for this ministry to come to his small seaside town in the East Neuk of Scotland called Leven and rang Bill to ask if he and Arthur would hold a healing crusade in his town. They were not keen at first, but when he kept ringing them from Scotland and persisting with his invitation Bill and Arthur began to pray seriously for God to show them if they should indeed hold a crusade there.

Arthur saw two visions. He saw large ships by the water and then he saw a crooked wall. They had no idea what these visions meant, but they asked Jim if there was any water or ships in the area. Of course they did not know that Leven was a sea-side town right next to Methil which, at that time, was full of large ships as it was a busy seaport. When they realised this was confirmation of the vision they decided they would go for a two week campaign in August 1957.

This was not an unusual occurrence as Bill and Arthur were often led by visions concerning where to hold crusades. I remember one incident in particular very vividly even after all these years. They were wondering where to hold the next crusade as they had received many requests from all over the country. As they were praying one of them had a vision of a statue of a lion in front of a large building. They had no idea where this was and to them it could have been in any country of the world.

## A Lion in Huddersfield

The next day they were in for a shock when, on the front page of the 'Daily Express' newspaper, there was the very lion they had seen in the vision. It was the one in front of the Town Hall in Huddersfield and is still there today. They were being directed to accept the invitation to hold a crusade in Huddersfield and so they obeyed the guidance of the Holy Ghost and agreed a date when they would hold the campaign.

One of the conditions for accepting a crusade in another church was that the church would agree to print and distribute leaflets advertising the meetings along with testimonies of healing that had happened in previous crusades, stating that all the sick would be prayed for in the meetings. In those days it was a very effective means of bringing people to the meetings. Jim and his small group printed and distributed 70,000 handbills in Methil, Leven,

Whemes, Buckhaven, and Kennoway (all districts in Fife).

The first night was packed and it was obvious the building was too small. The workshop of Jim Hunter, who was a cabinet maker and furniture upholsterer, was full of different chairs that were in for repair. Some of them had springs poking through or were in bad shape but people sat on them anyway when the normal chairs were all occupied. After a couple of nights they hired, and moved into, the larger Aikin Hall which held 150. Again this building was packed to the doors. Tremendous miracles were taking place and as people began to talk about it in their communities the word began to spread throughout all Fife.

They always had one day off each week from the nightly meetings and Jim took them to look at the wonderful and picturesque Fife coast with all its little fishing ports such as Elie and Pittenweem. They also called to see Dysart Dykes on the Fife coast. As soon as Arthur saw the dykes he danced and shouted for joy for on the top of a hill was the crooked wall he had seen in his vision.

## Amazing Miracles

A man well known in the community who had a very large hump on his back was healed in an amazing way. The hump just disappeared and he testified to all and held the loose clothing where the lump had previously been. When the power of God

was present to heal no one knew what would happen. A woman with a large goitre was instantly healed and the goitre disappeared. Her knickers started to fall down and she had to clutch at her clothes to stop them falling round her ankles.

Such was the effect of these miracles that again they could not contain the crowds and after four weeks, they moved into the Beach Pavilion on the sea front at Leven. The crusade which had been scheduled for two weeks carried on week after week and it was six weeks before Bill and Arthur felt it was time to return to England. The power of God, and the undeniable miracles, had affected all Scotland. Sick and needy people came from all counties of Scotland and as far as the Orkney Islands.

The newspapers reported the healings and miracles daily and the local television station came and interviewed Jim Hunter, so far reaching was the effect. Two churches were established as a result of the crusade. I visit the church of Tom, the son of Pastor Hunter, regularly and some of the older members still remember the miraculous happenings. I continually meet people from all over Scotland who tell me their dad or their uncle were wonderfully healed all those years ago.

## The Continent

Bill and Arthur had a strict routine when they were on crusades. They would get up early but would

not surface until 12:00 noon if they were staying with members of the church holding the crusade. They fasted and spent the morning in prayer and meditation. Then they would go for a walk and rest for the remainder of the afternoon.

It seems strange in this age but they were often hosted by a widow in a church and would be expected to sleep in the same bed. This was normal and would not arouse any suspicion of impropriety. How things have changed!

Bill and Arthur carried on with their ministry at Sharon and it was growing numerically but the Campaigns were gradually taking them farther and farther afield. As the demand for their Ministry grew, they found themselves conducting campaigns not only in Great Britain but on the Continent (as it was called in the days before we joined the European Union). I have included reports, made at the time of the crusades in the late 1950's, of some of the crusades outside the U.K.

## France

*During the past few years it has been the privilege of Evangelists Barratt and Williams to visit several French towns to hold Campaigns. God has blessed these visits to the French Churches in a wonderful way. Mr. Woerner, a Baptist Minister, was the main sponsor and organiser for these Campaigns and the*

*Evangelists have always appreciated his co-operation. The most recent visits were to Douai, Cambrai, Anzin, and Denain. Many people made a decision to follow Christ and wonderful healings took place. A totally deaf man was instantly healed and went through the waters of Baptism shortly afterwards. Many deaf people heard again. Many others with all kinds of sicknesses and infirmities were healed miraculously. The power of God was very evident especially in the large Hippodrome at Douai. Some nights the people who were prayed for fell to the ground under the power of God. Brother Nixon was a valued help as interpreter as were the many helpers.*

## Holland

After T.L.Osborn the famous American evangelist had an amazing revival in Den Haag, where thousands of people gathered in the Malieveld  
Footnote 1. Thousands gave their lives to Christ and many were healed of incurable sicknesses, his interpreter Johan Maasbach asked Bill and Arthur to carry on the momentum when he left for the U.S.A.

*Over a period of three weeks in 1960, Barratt and Williams Campaigns were held in different cities in Holland, namely Amsterdam, Gouda, Leiden, and the Hague. Each of these*

*Campaigns reported wonderful results. At the end of the series of meetings in these places approximately 300 decisions had been recorded for Christ. In the Hague the Evangelist was not able to leave the Hall until 2:00am one night as there were almost 500 people waiting to be prayed for. Many wonderful miracles took place, including a woman who was bound in a Bath Chair. There was no hope for her from the Medical Profession. After prayer she stepped out of the Bath Chair, free, and able to walk. Her husband was not able to contain himself and wept openly. The deaf were healed and one man who was totally paralysed down one side received a miracle. Space will not permit to tell more of the wonderful blessing and work of God that took place in Holland.*

## Belgium

The Crusade in La Bouverie (now part of Frameries) a little village near the French border was particularly blessed under the leadership of Pastor Grouselle. This Pastor organised the meetings and erected a portable building for his mission, and how wonderfully God blessed the efforts of the Church. This is a mainly Roman Catholic Area. The outpouring of the Spirit was tremendous. Night after night these Roman Catholic people came until the building was almost too small. The end doors

of the building were left open to allow others to see inside. Large numbers waited outside every night taking a deep interest in what was happening inside the building. Four meetings were held and at the conclusion of the Campaign 40 decisions had been made for Christ. As the sick were prayed for God once again proved His word with signs and wonders as the power of God healed all manner of sickness.

## Paris

I think the largest crusade they held on the continent was in Paris, France. Over two thousand people were gathered in a central hall and the power of God was very present. After the preaching of the word they made an appeal for the sick to come to the front. An amazing thing happened. So many people streamed to the front of the building for prayer that the front was completely full and still they kept coming until both the wide isles were completely blocked tight to the back of the building. Bill and Arthur had a routine when they ministered in crusades. One of them would preach about salvation and the other one would pray for the sick. They did this nights about.

### Another Waterloo

However, when they saw the crowd of those who came out to be prayed for they realised it was too big

a task for one man if they wanted to finish before the early hours of the morning. Bill said to Arthur, "You take one side and I'll take the other", and so they began. They did not have time to ask of the sickness which would take twice as long as usual having to go through an interpreter, so they just put one of their hands on the heads of the people as they walked down the isles saying, "Be healed in the name of Jesus." The people fell down as soon as they were touched and the whole auditorium floor was littered with hundreds of bodies. After returning to the platform the French Pastor who had invited these two men to hold the crusade said to Bill, "Not since Napoleon have so many Frenchmen been slain by an Englishman!" Of course he realised Bill and Arthur had no power at all and it was the gifts of the Holy Ghost that were working, but it was an amusing observation and my dad laughed many times as he retold the story.

## Switzerland

Bill and Arthur also held week long crusades in Switzerland for a Mr. Wiezen, who owned a crane company, for many years running.

## Ireland

I don't think I will ever know all the places they held meetings – I am still finding out new places even

60 years later. Only this year a man rang me up to ask if I was Bill Barratt's son. After telling him I was, he told me he had been healed and converted under his ministry during a crusade in Dublin, Ireland. I was sure he had made a mistake as I had no recollection of Dad or Uncle ever being in Ireland. Sure enough, when I checked up I found out this man was correct and crusades had been held there. This has happened regularly to me over the last forty years and I am sure they will continue, so far reaching was the ministry of these two ordinary men chosen of God.

Bill and Arthur did not take their wives or children on crusades, they always went together. Edna and Irene stayed at home to look after the children and would pray together for the crusades each night which made them feel part of the ministry.

### **Footnote 1**

Malieveld is a large grass field in the city centre of The Hague, Netherlands, located opposite the central train station. The field is widely known in the Netherlands for being the location of many large-scale demonstrations. It is also used for festivals, funfairs, concerts and other big events



## Chapter 10 \_\_\_\_\_

# A Proper Church!

Sharon Church had been accepted for membership of the Assemblies of God, and Bill and Arthur were now both accredited ministers. This meant that whenever they were away on crusades they could call on various ministers from the A.O.G. denomination all over the country to come and preach for them at their church on Sundays and we were blessed to have some of the finest of their preachers. As well as the A.O.G. ministers we had some of England's finest evangelists and Bible expositors. Men like Willie Hacking who was in the early Pentecostal revival and was in the vestry when Smith Wigglesworth

died at his friend's funeral in Glad Tidings Hall, in Wakefield, Yorkshire in 1947. His teaching was really deep and profound and he carried a wonderful spirit.

## James B. Hosier

The men who came were so varied in their ministry and personalities, very different from the cloned evangelists we seem to have today – all having watched the same superstars of T.V. fame. We often had a visit from a man from America named James B. Hosier, who was used mightily in bringing the experience of the Holy Ghost to the Methodists and Anglicans in the U.S.A. and in England. He would sing before he preached and somewhere in the middle of his song he would burst into rapturous laughter and then continue – this was not entertainment, it was just the joy of his heart overflowing, and because of that the image of him singing songs such as 'He Touched Me' are engraved forever in my memory.

## Alf Harley

Then there was a man named Alf Harley who had come out of a prosperous and famous life in show business. He was born in Edinburgh with a rare musical talent. He could play numerous instruments, but was known for his Hawaiian guitar playing. He moved to London and had his

own radio shows. He lived with a famous actress and life was wonderful. But.... God pulled the plug on this life of extravagance and licentiousness and he lost everything. He had a wonderful conversion and was travelling the world sharing his testimony. I never failed to be excited hearing him, at my young age, hearing a professional musician playing his instruments for the glory of God. He was a wonderful trumpet player and always played it before he testified.

## Tom Wilson

Another very different character was Tom Wilson, who to me seemed to come out of aristocracy with his erudite manner and wonderful articulated vocabulary. I later found out he was from a working class background but had educated himself and was a great evangelist and convention speaker. He was converted in a Stephen Jeffreys meeting in Bishop Auckland when a girl with no eyes saw for the first time. His mother had witnessed it and told her young son Tom about it when she returned home late from this 'religious meeting' in the town. Tom attended the meetings. Here are his own words to describe his commitment to God.

*Stephen Jeffreys came up the platform steps and something seemed to stir the congregation. He was strong and happy; he danced with the joy of the Lord and his*

*pianist (Mr. T. D. Dorling) switched into the chorus: "Give me oil in my lamp." (Before the campaign finished they were singing that chorus on the streets, on the football field, on the buses and in the mines.) Stephen preached – and it was full of both melting tenderness and fiery wrath. Like a hammer came, "Thus says the Lord". Like a sword flashing, the word pierced our hearts. People started to sob. I looked up during that appeal – Stephen's face was filled with unutterable tenderness. I heard the appeal of his Welsh voice saying, "Come, oh come to Jesus." That night I left the hall under conflicting emotions. I have never regretted that some nights later my hand was the first to be raised.'*

Tom Wilson became an evangelist with the Assemblies of God and served with outstanding distinction for some fifty years.

## Jack Rothery

A wonderful man of God named Jack Rothery from Elland, Yorkshire would often speak at our special meetings. He was so different than anyone I had ever heard. He was passionate in his delivery and would often stop in the middle of his sermon and prophesy in his broad Leeds accent. We often visited his church in Elland and I remember the sloping streets and stone built terraced houses that

were so different to the brick built ones I was used to in Manchester.

## Pastor Wright

Bill and Arthur became very friendly with a pastor from Little Lever near Bolton. Pastor Wright was a black man, which was rare in England in those days, and he was very well educated. I remember going on coach trips to his church and for his members to come to Sharon. He had a very distinct way of preaching and always held my attention with his clever use of words and phrases.

As there was no baptistry in our Church in the Garden, and many people were added Bill and Arthur would often hold baptism services in local A.O.G. churches and we would all go in a coach to wherever the service was being held. We often supported the conventions of these local churches and I remember going to Ashton-Under-Lyne to visit Danny Phillips' church or to Hazel Grove to Edgar Davis, whom we nicknamed 'The Lion' because of his looks. I remember going to Denton to pastor Ernie Sherman's and to Pastor Skelton's Church in Droylsden who had two sons, David and Keith who also went into the ministry, and many others.

## Growth was Inevitable

The 'Church in the Garden' would hold a maximum of 80 people, with all the chairs pushed

hard together but with all the miracles and exuberant, abundant life of Christ it was no accident that the numbers in the Church began to swell. The enthusiasm of Bill and Arthur was infectious. I remember on many occasions when a notable miracle happened. Dad would jump on a chair and start to sing a lively chorus. Sometimes it was a chorus we all knew or sometimes a chorus he had just been inspired to compose at that very moment – after a few times through we were all singing it at the top of our voices with great enthusiasm and abandonment.

## Tears and Joy

It would be impossible to recreate these happenings because as with all moves of God 'the wind blew where it wanted' and was not manageable, things were spontaneous and varied. One minute we could be laughing and joyful and five minutes later we could all be crying as we saw the joy and tears of someone who had been relieved of 30 years of pain.

Now, on Sunday evenings the chairs were all cramped together, and when new faces were seen in the congregation, quite a few of the Church members had to stand at the back during the whole of the service. Of course, children were the first to give up their seats and I was one of those who had to sit on the floor at the front.

Once again, larger premises became necessary. Although, by this time, the Church totalled about

100 members, most of whom tithed regularly and faithfully (i.e. gave at least one tenth of their income), they just did not have the kind of money needed to buy a building suited to their purpose. By now both Bill and Arthur were full-time in their Ministry. How they and their families lived on their individual wage of £9 per week, which was all the Church could afford to pay them in those days, is known only to themselves and God. He never failed to supply their needs. The families never went hungry, but there were many times of testing when it was hard for them to carry on. The Barratts had four children and the Williams's two by this time. All the children were at school.

## Congregational Church

Bill and Arthur, along with their wives, prayed about the problem and started to look for premises then brought the situation to the church and everyone began to fast and pray.

They found there was an old Congregational Church on Chorlton Road, Old Trafford, which was empty and available for rent. This building was only a few yards from where they had held the first divine healing crusade in a tent on a bomb site. It had been built for the many Welsh speaking maids and domestic staff who were the backbone of the services for the rich in Whalley Range and Moss Side. Because it was built for the Welsh speaking domestic workers the services were all held in the

Welsh language and remained that way until there were only five old people left out of a congregation of 700 when it was first built in 1861. Bill and Arthur rented it on a weekly basis and used it for the Sunday services.

## The New 'Sharon'

God was guiding these two Apostles and when this Church came up for sale they saw God's hand in it. They realised this was the building that was to become the new 'Sharon' so they made an appeal to the members of the congregation.

All they could muster was a mere £400 (£6225 at today's value) – a ridiculous sum for a building the size of the Welsh Church, but God was with them. In one week, during which they fasted and prayed, £1,000 (£15,563 today's value) was raised by the Church members which was enough for the deposit. The congregation gave sacrificially, some mortgaged their houses, others gave their savings, denied themselves holidays, cashed insurance policies, and some even sold their furniture. It was like the Acts of the Apostles where they had all things in common and no one counted what they owned as their own.

The year was 1961 and with the help of a loan from the Assemblies of God, they were now able to outbid the competition from several secular firms, and soon the old Welsh Church was in full-time business for God again, but now its name had been

changed to "Sharon". Bill and Arthur purchased it in 1961.

## Renovation

I can remember the building was cold, damp, and foreboding. It had not been decorated for decades and the lighting was really dim. The members spent months renovating it. I spent the whole of my summer holidays when I was 16 learning many building skills – one of them I mastered was plastering. God knew what skills I would need for the future. There was much structural work to do as the vestibule was really small and needed to be enlarged. The heating system, with its large-bore cast iron pipes and huge radiators, was not working so a new boiler had to be installed.

The church had a balcony on three sides of the church and the ceiling was really high so scaffolding had to be put up inside the building and a platform erected on it covering the whole of the church to enable us to paint it. Dad decided it should be the colours of the tabernacle that Moses erected in the wilderness. It was a wonderful transformation, everywhere was painted in red, blue, purple, and gold. Many of the pews were taken out from the front of the church and a room built at each side, one for counselling and the other for the treasurer.

The building was transformed from a musty, lifeless dark, gloomy, depressing place into a bright and happy atmosphere and in a few weeks was ready

for the spirit of God to invade the space. Bill and Arthur were not disappointed and the spirit of God did pervade the building.

There are so many testimonies I could give they would fill a book on their own but I will give one to show the many and varied people who came and were changed by the power of God. In the middle of a service one Sunday morning the church was brought to a stand-still as the door burst open and three tough men came swaggering down the aisle to the front and sat down. It was three men but only two were walking. The one in the middle was being carried by the two men on either side making a chair with their arms.

## Three Gangsters from Manchester

We found out their story later. They were three brothers who were all gangsters in Manchester. Stan was the youngest, Eddy was the middle brother (he was the one who had come for prayer) and George was the eldest. Eddy was riddled with cancer. He was a keep fit fanatic and body builder and had taken huge amounts of supplements which had eventually caused cancer, according to the specialist. He had already had a lung taken away and one of his legs had been amputated. His other lung was full of cancer and the two brothers had told the specialist that they would each give a lung so that Eddy could have 2 new lungs. They were told it was no good as his whole body was now riddled with this terrible

cancer and had no hope left. They only gave him a couple of weeks to live.

These young men were desperate and shared their tragic tale with an ex-gangster friend. This ex-gangster, who had a chain of car showrooms, had sold my dad a number of cars over the years. Dad had obviously witnessed to this man of the power of God and how he had been healed of his war wounds. This car dealer saw there was no hope in any natural remedy so told the brothers they needed to go and see Pastor Barratt at Sharon Church. They were Catholics and had never been in an evangelical church and, as this was only a hut, they did not know what to expect or how to behave, so they just blurted out in the middle of the service that they wanted prayer for their brother. He was prayed for and a remarkable thing happened. Strength came into his body and he lived another six months – long enough to hear the gospel, as he saw my dad regularly, and before he died he committed his life to Christ and looked forward to receiving his resurrection body.

## Not the End of the Story

This was not the end of the story for two weeks after he died Stan, the younger brother, came to see Bill and said that he was grateful for all he had done for his brother, so he would come to the church for three weeks and then never again, because as he put it, "It's not for me. I live a different life". He did not want God, but felt he was obliged to show respect.

He kept his promise and came for the three weeks. God became real to him and he gave his life to Christ becoming a committed disciple until the day he died. He was living with a girl wrestler who was quite famous and had appeared on Television many times. She also gave her life to Christ, and the next year they married and consequently had five children. Stan was one of my best friends for a few years and became a singer and drummer in a gospel group I had founded named 'Sharon People'.

## Extension

A few years later the church bought a 'prefab'<sup>Footnote 1</sup> and erected it at the rear of the church. I worked every weekend to erect it and drew the plans as I was now employed as a structural engineering draughtsman. This was used for prayer meetings, the Sunday School, and a crèche for mothers to take their children if they were misbehaving and disturbing the meetings.

### Footnote 1

Prefabs (prefabricated houses) were a major part of the delivery plan to address the United Kingdom's post-Second World War housing shortage. They were envisaged by war-time prime minister Winston Churchill in March 1944, and legally outlined in the Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act 1944 .

Devised as temporary housing after World War II, prefabricated homes fitted with all 'mod cons' represented

## A Proper Church!

the new way of living in post-war Britain. The fact that war-damaged aircraft were melted down to produce them and that P.O.W.s assisted construction, only helped to make the prefab a symbol of Britain rising from the ashes of war. And for the first time many found themselves living in well-designed accommodation with fitted kitchens, hot running water, new electric appliances, and an inside bathroom. Prefabs turned out to be more durable and popular than anyone could have foreseen, and these tiny palaces for the people became icons of post-war regeneration.



## Chapter 11 \_\_\_\_\_

# Using the Media

Dad was a far sighted and creative man and used everything at his disposal to advance the ministry God had given him and to share the gospel to the whole world. He was not afraid to try new methods or unusual ways to reach people. I think Arthur was the more sensitive spiritually of the two and Dad, with a more practical mind, became the organiser.

### God's Choice

They complemented each other perfectly and used each other's personality to advantage. God

does not choose people randomly or by accident and together they were more effective than if they had worked individually.

## Power of The Printed Word

Before the advent of radio and television the printed page was the most powerful means of propaganda available and Dad realised this. He believed in repetitiously placing the message before people. I remember him talking to me when I was a teenager explaining that it was like sowing seeds. He said, "If you keep sowing, even over the same ground, eventually you will get the harvest."

Bill and Arthur following the example of Gustav Huber the Hungarian Jew who had introduced them to the experience of the Holy Spirit. They started to design and print their own tracts. They used John Gledhills printers in Lucy Street, Old Trafford, who owned an old letterpress printing press. His work was not of the finest quality and the tracts often had spelling mistakes and wrong fonts (the typesetting was all by hand and this was in the days before Linotype became the de facto way to typeset.)<sup>Footnote 1</sup> However, he was cheap and Dad was more interested in the message than the presentation. Bill and Arthur, along with willing volunteers, distributed hundreds of thousands of these tracts in letter boxes and to passers by in the streets around the church.

They were using the printed word so much that they decided to purchase their own printing

press. The traditional letterpress machines were massive and expensive. In those days a Guttenburg four colour printing press could cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. Lithographic printers were just becoming available at reasonable prices and so they bought a 'Gestetner' printing machine that could print in colour. <sup>Footnote 3</sup> They wanted people to learn how to use it and I was one of the volunteers who would work at nights and weekends learning to print. I was 19 years of age and serving my apprenticeship as a Structural Engineering Draughtsman. I will save the details for my autobiography but suffice to say in this book that I left my apprenticeship and started to work full time as a printer for the church.

## Tracts for India

The year was 1964 and Bill was now in his 48th year. I printed for other churches around Manchester to obtain money to supplement my income and did not charge the church for printing as they gave me a small wage. I remember Uncle Arthur had a desire to print tracts which we shipped to India and I printed the 1,000,000 tracts which were sent to India.

Bill and Arthur were now regularly doing crusades outside Manchester and I often printed 20,000 leaflets at a time for each of these crusades. I think this was the minimum requirement for Bill and Arthur to hold one, sometime it was 50,000 handbills. Pastors who wanted a crusade were amazed at how many handbills they were asked to

buy and distribute, but when they saw the number of new faces in their churches, and the amazing miracles they realised that advertising was essential in any crusade. I was learning to design leaflets and I can see how God used this training for my own ministry many years later.

## Film Makers

There was a deacon in the church named Alex Falkner. He was retired but had been an engineer all his life at 'Metrovicks' in Trafford Park, Manchester. Footnote 2 He was inventive and had personally built a miniature steam engine, manufacturing all the parts himself, in his home workshop. He used to run it in the park for children to ride on. He was a keen photographer and was interested in film. Dad's fruitful mind saw immediate possibilities when he knew this and so the church bought a 16mm movie camera and appointed Alex as the camera man, and Dad as the producer.

## A New Adventure

He was off on another adventure for God. Dad wrote the script for a film of his and Arthur's testimonies and they started to film. Stan Derbyshire (the ex gangster) and I were cast as German soldiers who were in the garden when Dad landed in the French château, and we filmed the scene in Dunham Park just outside Altrincham in Cheshire. Dad's

imagination knew no bounds and they filmed all over Manchester tracing their remarkable testimony and eventually the film came out entitled 'Changed Lives'. I have a copy on DVD that I took from a VHS tape, and the National Film Archives also have a copy. It was an amateur production, but it shows the desire Bill and Arthur had to use all media possible to get the message of the gospel out to as many as they could.

## Desires of the Heart

God must have seen my dad's vision to use the media for the gospel and helped him. I actually think it was God who put it in his heart in the first place. That is how God works. He gives us desires and thoughts and if we pursue them he then helps us to do what he has already planned for us to do when he called us.

While still in the sectional building at the back of our house on Upper Chorlton Road, Whalley Range, Denis Mitchell, the B.B.C producer who had made the documentary for radio in 1955, which Bill and Arthur featured in, later made it into a film for the I.T.V. of the same name in 1957. It showed many different people from all walks of life in the city of Manchester, but Bill and Arthur were not included in the television version. Denis had now left I.T.V. to form his own film company (Denis Mitchell Films) with his friend and colleague Norman Swallow, and had made films for A.T.V. and Rediffusion. By 1964

Denis and Norman had joined Granada Television. They arranged to come and see Bill and Arthur and disclosed that they would like to make a television documentary on the miraculous happenings at the church and wanted to call it simply 'Sharon'. It was shown on 9th December 1964

## Ready to Broadcast

We were in the new church building on Chorlton Road by this time and they came for one week to film the August Divine Healing Crusade with the miracles and testimonies and all the prayer for the sick. The local neighbourhood was certainly stirred when two large Granada 'Roving Eyes' outside broadcast vans parked themselves on the street outside the Church. They contained £500,000 worth of equipment! (Today's rate would be over £10,000,000 although pro-rata the price of professional equipment has dramatically decreased over the years.) Large television cameras were positioned in the Church, special floodlights and microphones were installed, and great cables and wires were everywhere. Fifteen technicians were employed in producing the film.

## Reaching Millions

Bill and Arthur were excited at the prospect of millions of viewers seeing the ministry, but were faced with a dilemma! How could one possibly have reverence and a suitable atmosphere to pray for the

sick under such conditions? How could men and women accept Christ, or come for prayer – knowing they were being filmed and would be seen by millions? Would God still keep his promise to follow the word with signs and wonders if they preached the gospel faithfully? And would the Holy Ghost still convict people and bring them to repentance and salvation?

The first night came! Prayer was made that the Holy Ghost would not be grieved, and that millions would hear the wonderful Gospel of Jesus maybe for the first time. It was absolutely amazing! Decisions were made every night and God healed the sick. Perhaps the most amazing miracle of the whole five nights was that the Services went on as if there were no cameras, or technicians, or filming at all. Only God could have done this.

## Lasting Results

The results were far above all expectations. Practically all provincial newspapers gave sympathetic reports. Letters poured in from all over the British Isles. Sharon's Sunday services were packed for months afterwards and an average of 50 decisions were recorded every week for a couple of years. The newspapers from 35 countries printed reports of the miracles and the film was selected to be shown at the Edinburgh Festival. Of course the church did not grow at that rate because most of those who came were not local people and they returned to their locality.

The I.T.V. company forwarded 1000s of letters to the church address and every letter was answered, and the seekers were directed to their nearest live Church.

Ministers from various denominations were in touch with Bill and Arthur and some travelled to Manchester to express their appreciation and interest; one minister phoned to say that five people were attending his Church after watching the film. A lecturer of a Theological College and some of his students were greatly impressed. It was both a thrilling and humbling experience.

Reports appeared in the T.V. Times of blessings received, of salvation, and of those who were healed whilst watching the film on television.

One lady phoned through to say that she had suffered very badly with eczema, and after seeing the Television Programme was completely healed. A pastor informed us of a man who was about to commit suicide – but after seeing the programme, gave his heart to Christ, and is now attending his church regularly.

## Amazing Healings

One lady who suffered with Osteoarthritis for twenty years and could not walk or climb stairs, came to a healing meeting at Sharon. When hands were laid upon her in the name of Jesus she heard all her bones cracking, and instantly she was healed and began to walk up and down the pulpit stairs, and

around the church. She came back the next week to say she was perfectly whole after twenty years, enduring all kinds of treatment. One moment in the presence of the divine physician, and she was made perfectly whole.

One very touching incident happened about eleven weeks after the film was shown. Pastor Barratt had just closed the meeting after praying for the sick, when a lady and little girl asked to have a few words with him. Thinking they were mother and child he said "Is this your little girl?" "No," said the lady. Pastor Barratt then asked the little girl who she was and she replied, "Don't you remember me. I was blind from birth, and I was prayed for by Pastor Williams. I fell down to the ground and saw a vision of Jesus. I have been completely healed ever since."

## Front Page of T.V. Times

The front page of the T.V. Times advertised the showing of the film and a large photo of my father's hands praying for a young girl. The girl was Joanna Margerison and she and her mother were filmed in their home for the programme as her mum gave her testimony.

It is a fascinating story but it was briefly this. Her mother and father had a stormy relationship with much violence in the family. One wedding anniversary they decided to go to Gawsworth Hall in Cheshire as one of their ancestors, and the last of the court jesters to the King of England named Maggoty

Johnson, was buried in the woods next to the Church Hall. <sup>Footnote 4</sup> They had travelled from Wythenshawe in Manchester on their motorbike and went into the church. They knelt at the altar rail and renewed their wedding vows. Coming outside into the sunlight they saw a man standing under a tree who asked them if they knew Jesus? They said no, so he suggested they kneel down and invite Jesus into their lives. They knelt on a gravestone and did this and he then invited them to Sharon in Old Trafford. He said he would collect and take them the next Sunday.

## Who Needs a Miracle?

True to his word he took them to Sharon and at the end of the meeting Bill or Arthur, I am not sure which one, asked if anyone would like prayer for either physical, mental, or spiritual healing. Joanna's mother needed all three. Her marriage was on the rocks. She was registered incurable with the medical profession and was pregnant again after many miscarriages, and very frightened to have the baby because of her complaints which included, septic pelvis, fibroids, prolapse to name some of them.

She went to the front for prayer. Hands were laid upon her and she said that it felt like a small electrical current travelling down her body from her head and separating around the baby in her womb. It felt like feathery fingertips at the base of her womb (her description). She was immediately and miraculously healed and never had any of the complaints from

that day till her death over 40 years later. I married her daughter Joanna in 1989.

### **Footnote 1**

Linotype (trademark) typesetting machine by which characters are cast in type metal as a complete line rather than as individual characters as on the Monotype typesetting machine. It was patented in the United States in 1884 by Ottmar Mergenthaler. Linotype, which has now largely been supplanted by photocomposition, was most often used when large amounts of straight text matter were to be set. In the Linotype system, the operator selects a magazine containing brass matrices to mold an entire font of type of the size and face specified in the copy at hand. A keyboard is manipulated (or driven by paper or magnetic computer tape) to select the matrices needed to compose each line of type, including tapered spacebands, which automatically wedge the words apart to fill each line perfectly. Each matrix is transported to an assembling unit at the mold.

### **Footnote 2**

Metropolitan-Vickers, Metrovick, or Metrovicks, was a British heavy electrical engineering company of the early-to-mid 20th century formerly known as British Westinghouse. Highly diversified, they were particularly well known for their industrial electrical equipment such as generators, steam turbines, switchgear, transformers, electronics and railway traction equipment. Metrovick holds a place in history as the builders of the first commercial transistor computer, the Metrovick 950, and the first British axial-flow jet

engine, the Metropolitan-Vickers F.2. Their factory in Trafford Park, Manchester, was for most of the 20th century one of the biggest and most important heavy engineering facilities in Britain and the world.

**Footnote 3**

Gestetner was a printing company that produced stencil and mimeograph machines. These machines played a significant role in fuelling the small press printing movement.

**Footnote 4**

Samuel 'Maggoty' Johnson, alias 'Lord Flame', was a poet and musician of considerable talent. He appears to have been one of England's last professional jesters, employed by the Lord of Gawsworth, but available for hire to the local gentry where, because of his sharp wit and endearing repartee, he was invariably allowed free license.

## Chapter 12 \_\_\_\_\_

# Bill Barratt the Evangelist

Although Dad pioneered a church and started to pastor it with his friend Arthur, they were both evangelists at heart and never lost the desire to go outside of the church to win the lost. Dad was an evangelist from day one. Wherever he went he would tell people his testimony and ask them to accept Jesus as their Saviour. The showing of the I.T.V. film made them known internationally and they were in demand. I can remember a famous cricketer from India coming for prayer. People also came from Germany and other European countries.

I have in my possession reports from all over the world of the wonderful and miraculous

happenings wherever these two ordinary men went. They had certainly been commissioned by God and they preached the gospel with signs and wonders following as the Bible predicted in Mark chapter 16 verses 15-18.

I have chosen some of these reports in this chapter to show the reader the extent of their ministry. All are copied from original testimonies and have not been edited.

## Campaigns at Chesterfield & Coventry 1962-3

*The first campaign which Pastors Barratt and Williams conducted for me was at Chesterfield October in 1961. From the very first meeting of the fifteen day crusade the presence of God was mightily manifest. Mrs. Tighe, until that time a stranger to me, brought her year old son for prayer. As hands were laid on this little one, I heard the mother cry out, "He is pushing at me with his feet! He is pushing at me with his feet!" She told us a few days later, that her child was afflicted with water on the brain. He had not been able to sit up or move hand or foot. He lay in his pram all day and she had to turn him at intervals to prevent bed sores. The next day after prayer he was sitting up and playing with his toys. A*

*week later I spent the best part of a day with a reporter and photographer from a National Sunday Newspaper which published a report and photo of this child. Three years later I met the mother and child and he was running along the road, a testimony to the lasting power of God. This was just one miracle of many that took place during that memorable fortnight.*

*Nearly eighteen months later in March 1963, Pastors Barratt and Williams returned for another campaign to the Assembly of God, Chatsworth Road, Chesterfield. This campaign was even more fruitful than the first. An outstanding miracle amongst many was the case of Mr. J. Saunderson from Churston Road. He had been crippled with arthritis for many years. He came to the meeting for prayer and was healed before hands were laid on him. As he struggled to his feet to come into the prayer line, he felt the power of God come upon him and was able to walk quickly to the front of the church.*

*A couple of weeks later neighbours came out to see him effecting a repair job to his garage roof. That this one who had been so grievously crippled was moving around so freely and climbing to the roof of his garage was in itself a testimony to the power of the Risen Christ of God. The most pleasing feature of this crusade was the large number of people*

*which added to our church. Thank God, He added to our number such as were saved.*

## Coventry

*I next had the privilege of working with these brethren in December of 1964. By this time I had moved to take over the pastorate of the Full Gospel Church in Much Park Street, Coventry. I was delighted when we had the opportunity of a four night visit immediately following their remarkable Television Broadcast. These were four Dynamic nights for our church. Ninety Five people passed through the enquiry room. There was case after case when God's healing power was manifest. Again, an outstanding one. Mrs. Kempster, of Dunchurch Highway, had been a chronic heart case for many, many years. She was unable to take many steps without severe pain, discomfort and breathlessness. A friendly neighbour brought her to the meetings in her car. As hands were laid upon her she fell to the floor under the power of God. In a few minutes she got up, to the astonishment of her neighbour who said, you were not able to get up like that before. She then ran to the back of the church and down the aisle again. The neighbour taking her home said, "If he had not seen it with his own eyes, he would never have believed it". Astonished neighbours came out of their houses at half past ten that night*

*to see her running up and down the pavement outside her house. To God be all the Glory.*

*Pastor Williams came back to Coventry for a long week end in March 1965. Praise God for over forty who passed through the enquiry room on this occasion. Many people again testified of physical benefit. Our members will never forget one young lady so grievously afflicted with epilepsy that she could not stand without being supported by her father and mother. This eighteen year old girl was one of the most pathetic cases I have seen. After prayer there seemed to be no visible evidence of anything which had taken place. But a few nights later an over joyed mother was in the meeting thanking God over and over again for His blessing. Miss Jenks, of Astley Avenue, Coventry had been brought from hospital for prayer. She was taken back to hospital after the meeting. The mother told me that the nurses were amazed at her daughter, she was able to dress herself and to walk unaided. It is now just one month since Brother Williams' visit. We are praying that God will continue His healing work upon this young woman to full and complete deliverance.*

*When special Divine Healing meetings of this nature are advertised, one is made acutely conscious of how much suffering and despair there is around us as the sick and their*

*sorrowing friends throng to the church. We are aware also of the more grievous affliction of sin which results in eternal death in hell. Thank God there is remedy in Jesus Christ our Lord. When He died on the cross of Calvary, He died to save our souls and He died to heal our bodies. We are plainly told that He bore our sins in His body when He died on the cross, Isaiah 53:6 and 1 Peter 2:24. We are also told that He bore also our sicknesses on the cross, Isaiah 53:4-5 and Matthew 8:17.*

*I thank God for the gifts which He has given to Pastors Barratt and Williams and for the way in which He has used them. We need to pray that God will raise up many more men who will seek His face, will be humble before Him and will be mightily used to bring this Gospel of Salvation and healing to lost and suffering humanity.*

*Pastor C. Rees.*

*(He later served on the Executive Council of A.O.G.)*

## Revival Scenes at Birmingham

*The Hockley Assembly, Birmingham, have often had the privilege of the blessed, powerful ministry of Pastors Barratt and Williams of the Sharon Church, Manchester. It would*

*be impossible to give an account of the miracles of healing and deliverance, and the blessing received through their ministry. In the following we recall a little of the supernatural moving of God through His servants.*

*Their programme 'Sharon' which appeared on the I.T.V. was a great success and the names of Barratt and Williams have become household words. Even the ungodly have become interested in their miraculous ministry. The arrival of these men for a campaign, or even a few services, is met with great eagerness and enthusiasm by Christians and the unsaved. Before the appointed time one can hear the footsteps of the halt and lame limping toward the church. Others of varying diseases hopefully, timidly, arrive not quite knowing what to expect. Soon the Church is packed with as many non-Churchgoers as Christians, and the atmosphere of expectancy rises with the praises of God's people. Time arrives for prayer for the sick, and as one of the pastors lays hands on them In the Name of Jesus, the power of God is manifested. Many are overcome by the power of God, and they lie on the floor in a state of peaceful bliss for several minutes, then rise, strengthened, healed, delivered! There was great rejoicing in one family of a grandmother, father, mother and son.*

*The grandmother came out of a wheel-chair after five-and-a-half years, never to return to it. The boy had been given up by doctors, and suffered with cancer of the stomach. He was unable to keep anything down, but he was completely healed. He is now back at school, taking part in sports and eating normally. Mrs. Wincott (Handsworth) after twelve operations was unable to move her arm and hand for ten years. After prayer she moved them. Mrs. Hinks, of Smethwick was instantaneously healed of an internal growth. Miss Jennifer Mulloy of Bartley Green, eighteen years old, was unable to go to work or in anywise mix with others, because of epileptic-fits. She too was healed, and because a changed girl was able soon to work and meet people. She has not had another fit. During three Services there were twenty-three decisions for Christ. Thus we prove that Jesus is alive, and still confirming His Word with signs and wonders following the Word to those who believe.*

H. Fisher and O. Reeve (Leaders)

I remember Bill and Arthur also did crusades for Fred Weaver of Calvary Temple, Birmingham that later became King's Christian Centre. His son Paul Weaver became superintendent of A.O.G. Collin Whittaker, who was editor of 'Redemption Tidings' (the official magazine and organ of A.O.G. before it became 'Redemption'), asked Bill and Arthur to do

a crusade in Edinburgh before he moved down to Luton and many decisions were recorded for Christ along with many notable miracles. Colin went on to serve on the executive council of the A.O.G.

## Blind Man. Now Sees!

*I gladly testify to all who may read it, that our Precious Lord Jesus Christ healed me at the age of 78 years. In 1958 my sight was badly impaired and I was certified blind. Surgeons could only advise me to be reconciled to my condition. The retina nerves and muscles were broken. However I kept up my prayers and had some lovely times with the Lord Jesus. An Evangelistic Crusade conducted by Pastors Barratt and Williams came to the Arts Centre, Stafford. I went to the meetings. When I was prayed for in the Name of Jesus, I saw the Pastor's face, then the moulded plaster on the ceiling and the faces of the congregation. I realised that I had found my sight. Whereas I was blind, now I can see. Praise the Lord.*

Mr. P. J. Pashley

## Crippled with Arthritis

*I had been suffering with arthritis for many years. After leaving hospital in 1954 it was thought I*

*would never walk again. For five years I was house bound. Then I was taken by a friend to Hockley Pentecostal Church, during a Campaign of Pastors Barratt and Williams. Since I was prayed for, I have improved so much that everyone is amazed. Only those people who knew my old condition know what a miracle has been performed in my body.*

## Healed Of Epilepsy

*From being 10 years old I had suffered from Epilepsy. I underwent many tests in an effort to find some cure, but after being in Hospital and having these tests I was told that all that could be done was for me to take drugs to control the fits. Then one night my friend and I saw the programme from 'Sharon' on T.V. and this made us think. Finally my two friends and myself set out to find 'Sharon'. After many difficulties had been faced we arrived at Pastor Williams's house. There he prayed for me and God instantly healed me. I was overjoyed. Now my friends and I all live happier lives, thanking God for what He has done for me.*

Chris Woodhead

## Crippled For Forty Years.

*I was sixteen or seventeen when the pain first started, I did not take much notice of*

*it thinking it would go away. It became worse, until I had to use a walking stick, I was then nineteen. I still had not been to a doctor as my father was paralysed and depended on me. In 1923 my sister died very suddenly and I became steadily worse, but I still carried on as usual. In 1927 I married, and my husband called in medical advice. In 1930 I was sent to hospital for two operations. I was told that I had suffered internal shock at my sister's death. The doctor was amazed that I wasn't bedfast. In 1932, and again 1938 I underwent major operations. In 1958 I went steadily down hill and circulatory trouble started. By 1960 I could only walk 200 yards, with a stick. In April 1960, my husband and I went to a Campaign of Barratt and Williams in Edinburgh, and on the first night my husband was healed of deafness. Two nights later I went out for prayer, after the minister had revealed my symptoms, and I was completely healed. The next day I went for a three mile walk, without the aid of my stick or my husband's arm. Since I was nineteen I had used a stick, and at the age of fifty nine I was able to discard it. I give all the glory to God.*

Mrs. S. Scott-Rae.

## 7 Years of Constant Pain

*I was suffering with a fibroid growth, which caused haemorrhages. This caused continual*

*pain, which I had for seven long years. I attended a Divine Healing Campaign Conducted by Pastors Barratt and Williams and went out for prayer. The haemorrhages ceased and my health was fully restored from that time. I give all the glory to God. Praise His wonderful name.*

Mrs. Ruth Reeve.

Of course the ministry was not without opposition and one story I will share is about Warwick Shenton who became superintendent of A.O.G. years after this incident. He was the assistant pastor at a church where Bill and Arthur were holding a crusade. I have not been able to locate the church as this was told first hand by my father and I do not have a written record.

## Warwick Shenton

Before the first service had begun, while Bill and Arthur were in the vestry, waiting for the meeting to start, young Warwick came over to Bill and said, "I don't approve of your ministry and did not want you to come to our church." Dad told me he had to overcome this criticism before he went onto the platform because it could have really dampened his faith. God was gracious and after he had preached, many real miracles were recorded. This changed Warwick's young mind completely and he supported the ministry after that. I think it was just a test for Dad to overcome.

For me, the most amazing miracle that happened in Dad's ministry was in Birmingham. Dad and Uncle had travelled all day in a terrible fog and didn't really expect more than a few people to turn up for the crusade that first night. For younger readers, you will have no idea what a real fog is. When fuel became smokeless in the 1960s the fogs lessened until now we do not have them in the U.K. In those days we called them 'Pea-Soupers' and they were so thick you could not see your hand in front of your face. The official title for them was 'smog'. <sup>Footnote 1.</sup>

When they got to the church the street was lined with cars and there was a queue stretching right down the street. Bill and Arthur imagined there was a picture house on the road, but to their utter amazement they were all waiting to enter the hall for the crusade. The choruses started and the time came for Dad to preach – it was his turn to speak and then Arthur would pray for the sick.

## Strange Happenings

As Dad stood in the pulpit he was transfixed as he saw the glory of God around a man sitting two thirds toward the back of the building. He asked the man to stand up and said, "Sir, I don't know what is happening to you but something certainly is and you will never be the same." He told the man to sit down and proceeded to preach his sermon.

Two weeks later Dad received a letter from the man he had asked to stand and this was his story.

He had been gravely ill and had some body parts removed. Some of his organs had been strapped up because of the missing organs and he was in constant pain, and being declared incurable, was told he would have to live with the pain the rest of his life. He felt different when Dad had prophesied over him and the pain disappeared.

## The Wrong Man?

When he went for his routine check-up at the hospital the specialists were all around him. At first they believed they had the wrong X-rays and went back to check more than once. After a long period of talking amongst themselves they turned and told the man his body inside was perfect and the organs they had removed were back in place. They had no explanation as to how this could have happened and so discharged him, telling him to return in a couple of weeks for another X-ray. He was completely healed and lived a healthy life thereafter.

Dad told me that there were far more and greater miracles on unbelievers than on Christians. He said if he was conducting a crusade and all those who came for prayer were Believers, God did very little in the way of healing them, but if they were all unbelievers he was confident that great miracles would take place. The commission is to go into all the world and signs and wonders would follow. Christians are 'in the light' and often their sickness is because of disobedience, such as unforgiveness or

bitterness, and God expects them to deal with the roots of the sickness and not just expect God to take the symptoms away to 'bless them'.

### **Footnote 1**

Ask any Londoner about smog! It is dirty air containing the fumes and gases from domestic coal burning fires and from the old fashioned factory chimney stack smoke. In London (around 45/50 years ago) this dirt used to hang over the town and when it met up with the evaporation from the Thames it formed a `solid` mass of wet dirty air. It would come down suddenly and all you would see was a yellowish grey thick fog. You could hear sounds around you of people and traffic etc. but you could see nothing. A double-decker bus could be two feet away from you, you would hear it but not see it. You would lose your direction if you had nothing to guide you. People would walk next to a wall or fence and keep touching it so as not to get lost. The smog would last an hour or a day, and would disappear as quickly as it came. It stank of sulphur, so did your hair, your clothes, and the curtains and bedding in the houses. The windows of the shops and houses would be covered in a film of yellow dirt. At the end of the fifties and beginning of the sixties it became less and less frequent, due to the smokeless fuel that was introduced and the introduction of gas and electric heating appliances, both in the homes and in industry. The smog was also responsible for the chronic conditions of many people's chests/lungs. Breathing in smog caused respiratory damage.



## Chapter 13 \_\_\_\_\_

# Bill Barratt the Prophet

In this age of charismatic and Pentecostal experience I suppose millions of Christians prophesy, and of course, this is because they have received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, but to my understanding the 'office' of a prophet is rare even these days. We now have a situation where there are so many man-made and ordained prophets that most Christians do not know the function of God-ordained prophets. The bible says, 'God sets in the church prophets'..., and they are second only to Apostles in the order of authority (1 Corinthians 12:28). I do not want to share teaching on this but I know that God set my father as a prophet.

Dad lived in the spirit, it became natural to him and he did not need a worship service or to be in prayer or meditation to get him in a place to prophesy. He was as likely to see a vision with his eyes open while he was eating fish and chips with the family on a Saturday evening as he would in a prayer meeting. Right from his conversion he was led by visions, not pictures in his mind, and they were more real than the physical realm to him.

## Acting Out the Vision

Like the prophets of old he would often act out visions. Here is an example. Before I married my future wife Joanna, we were in business together and had a Christian recording studio and record label. I had decorated one of the rooms in the large house I lived in with my first wife and two daughters. I made one of the rooms on the ground floor into an office for this business (the recording studio and control room were situated in the basement). The house was nearly 200 years old and I had started to renovate all the rooms.

Whenever I had finished one, on the following Saturday family gathering I would ask Dad to pray and dedicate the room for God's use. This Saturday we all trooped into the newly decorated office. My first wife, our two children, Dad and Mum, two of my sisters, and Joanna, all stood while Dad prayed for this new business that it would be a blessing to the body of Christ. I recall

that my Mum gave a prophesy. Dad then walked briskly out of the room and we all thought he had gone to the toilet.

## He Became Another Man

There was a knock at the door of this new office and when I opened it there stood my Dad with his hat and coat on and he said in a serious tone, "Can I come in please?". I knew from experience that he was in the spirit and not acting as my Dad, so I said, "Of course." He came in the room and sat in front of the desk by the door. Joanna was behind the desk acting as a secretary. I had left the new cheque book on the table. He picked it up and opening it at the first cheque saying in a serious voice to Joanna, "It's a blank cheque".

When he said that my spirit raced as I thought maybe he would ask Joanna to write a cheque for some large amount that we could not cover and we would have to exercise faith we did not really have. I decided that whatever he asked her to do, she could do it without question, as I knew it was God and not my Dad. Then he prophesied and said, "One day a man will do as I have done and come and sit at this desk and write you a cheque for the amount you ask." He immediately rose up and walked out of the room, leaving us all staring at each other not knowing or understanding what he had really said. The door opened again and Dad walked in just as if he had been to the toilet and never spoke about

what he had done and the evening carried on as normal.

## Mr. Goodlad

This could be a long story and I will share more in my autobiography but a few years later God told Joanna and me we had a decision to make. Did we want to be in ministry or business? There really was no option in either of our minds, for we both knew what God wanted – for us to be in ministry. We decided to sell all the studio equipment. The end of the story is that a man came to the house and sat at that same desk and bought the whole of the studio equipment, including jack plugs and all the odds and ends, for the exact amount I asked of him without any bargaining at all. He did not even round it off to the nearest pound as I had listed all the items and they came to an odd number of pounds with a few pence as well.

God did what my father had prophesied by his acting to the letter. I later found out the man had won the football pools a week before he bought the equipment from us and six months later he was broke again. His surname, funnily enough, was 'Goodlad'.

I have dozens of first hand accounts of my father's remarkable prophetic gift. Here is another incident Dad told me about.

When Dad was working putting posters on the buses at night, in the early days of his ministry

he went into the large bus depot on Hyde Road, Manchester to report for work when he fell into a trance. This is how he described it: "I was fully awake and knew everything I was doing but it was not me that was deciding what I was doing". The bus depot was massive and he found himself marching down the long line of buses until he came to one of the lanes at the end of the depot and turned right. There was one of the workers, whom he did not know, standing by a bus and Dad went straight up to him and said, "God knows what you are going through and he wants to help you". He then walked away, and clocked himself on for work, and started his shift.

The man came to see him hours later and broke down in tears. He had lost his wife a few days before and could not face telling anyone at work and was holding all the pent up emotions afraid to tell anyone. Dad said he was in a terrible state. My dad told him that God cared for his grief. He prayed with him and led him to accept Christ as his Saviour.

## God is not Mocked

When holding a crusade in Birmingham on his own, he was asked after the Sunday morning service by the pastor if he would go and speak to the husband of one of the members of this church. The man was not a Believer, he was a drunkard who often abused his wife verbally and sometimes physically. My Dad said he would go and talk to this man about Jesus.

They came to the house and the lady asked if she could go into the house first to see if he had arrived home from the public house where he spent most Sunday mornings. She came out of the house to say he was upstairs in bed after drinking heavily and was sleeping it off. Dad told me he thought he was not going to go all the way to the house only to return home without witnessing to this man so he said he would go and wake him up to tell him about Jesus.

## They Carried Him Out!

Dad went upstairs to the bedroom and tapped this sleeping man on his shoulder. When he awoke, Dad started to speak to him. "Sir, I've come to tell you about Jesus and how he can change your life". He sat up in bed and started to shout and swear at Dad and blaspheme God. God took hold of Dad and was in the spiritual realm. He said, "Sir, if you don't get out of this bed and get on to your knees to ask God to forgive you, you will never leave this bed." My father turned and walked away down the stairs and left the house, returning to the home he was staying in. Two hours later the news came that this man had been carried out dead just an hour later. Fear came on all the church when they found out what had happened.

David in one of his Psalms where he detailed the history of Israel and how God protected them as his anointed. He also says he reprovved kings saying to them. "Do my prophets no harm."

He suffered no man to do them wrong: yes, he reproved kings for their sakes, Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

1 Chronicles 16:21-22

God protected many of the prophets in the Old Testament and God certainly protected Bill Barratt on many occasions. I will only give one extreme example. When Bill and Arthur were in the church in the garden, they had appointed deacons to help them run the church. One was a business man and I suppose he was the main deacon. He was gaining more and more power and was ready to take over the church from them.

## Judgement Belongs to God

Dad told me he left everything to God and did not defend himself in this attempted takeover. One afternoon this man came alone into the church to put the heating on for a midweek evening meeting. When someone else came later they found him dead on the church floor – he had been electrocuted. This was one of many incidences where God protected my Dad although not always in so dramatic a way. Nevertheless they were all divine acts to protect his prophet.

Dad prophesied many things about my own life which certainly came to pass in dramatic and detailed ways. I intend to share some of them in my autobiography which I will commence after I finish

this book. Some of them I am still waiting to see fulfilled but I am convinced beyond all doubt that they will surely come to pass.

He prophesied many things about the city I was brought up in, Manchester. He said it would become a principal city in England, and this is slowly coming to pass. <sup>Footnote 1</sup> He prophesied Manchester United – which is in the same district as the church, Old Trafford, would become world famous. This was in the early 60s when the team were hardly known outside the U.K. I have travelled to 12 African nations and when I say I come from Manchester they always, without fail, ask about Manchester United.

<sup>Footnote 2</sup>

I have recordings of many of the prophecies he gave in the 1970 and 80s and I listen to them from time to time. Many are personal and cannot be shared, but I have yet to find any that have not been fulfilled exactly as he said, or could still be fulfilled sometime in the future.

### **Footnote 1**

The 32 new developments that will change Manchester forever. At least a dozen skyscrapers, more than 10,000 apartments, arts venues, hotels and new parks are all planned in city centre building boom

Headline in the *Manchester Evening News*

8 Apr. 2016

Manchester is ninth most cultural city in the U.K. After analysis by our in-house data team Manchester came ninth

out of 50 cities with populations over 50,000 - beating London by more than 20 places.

*Manchester Evening News 2 October 2014*

Manchester is Britain's new cultural capital. No, really. The city may have been built on the heavy industry of the Industrial Revolution but since the 2002 Commonwealth Games, it has re-invented itself as a world capital of the arts.

Today Manchester dominates the headlines with a slew of galleries, venues and festivals. It's home to some of the U.K.'s most forward-thinking developments, one of the coolest music scenes and a fast-expanding range of great hotels and restaurants. Then there's Russell T. Davies' new Channel Four series, *Cucumber*, set along Canal Street in Manchester's Gay Village, and the Royal Exchange Theatre's *Hamlet*, set to be screened in cinemas across the U.K.

Is there any doubt that Manchester is starting to take centre stage in the U.K.? David Atkinson makes the case for why the city is the U.K.'s cultural hotspot.

*From rough guides by David Atkinson*

*18 March 2015*

The University of Manchester is counted among the top universities of the world, maintaining 55th position and the University is ranked 8th among the top universities of U.K. Thus, numerous foreign students come to Manchester for academic purposes every year, which contributes to the population growth.

The density of population of Manchester is 11,439 people per square mile making it one of the fastest growing cities of U.K.

Manchester was the first city to experience the atom split. Not only that, in 2010, graphene, the world's thinnest material, was created by the scientists at the University of Manchester. The accomplishment was so astonishing that they won the Nobel Prize for Physics.

1. Manchester organized the world's first international art exhibition in 1857, by the name of the Art Treasures of Great Britain.
2. Emmeline Pankhurst established the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903. This union was the key door for the women to participate in social and political businesses.
3. Granada Television launched the world's longest running T.V. soap opera in 1960, in the Coronation Street.
4. Manchester is the home to the world's most prosperous football teams – Manchester City and Manchester United.
5. Manchester is the only city in the world where you may study and earn a degree in Mummy Studies.
6. The first Marks & Spencer shop was established in 1894. In 1901, M&S set up their first store at Derby Street, Manchester.
7. Tom Kilburn and Professor Sir Freddie Williams created the first programmable computer, SSEM or the Baby, at the University of Manchester in 1948.

Located in the Greater Manchester, England, Manchester is ranked as the 5th largest city of United Kingdom with population over 530,000. Known as the highest-ranked

British city after London, Manchester is successfully maintaining the status of a metropolitan borough and a city. Its county, Greater Manchester, is the second largest urban area with a populace of 2.55 million.

## Footnote 2

Forbes magazine ranked United the most valuable franchise in world sports, with an estimated worth of \$1.8 billion – more than that of the New York Yankees or Dallas Cowboys – and that was before it signed a record \$130 million shirt-sponsorship deal with insurance company Aon. United's international fan base, measured in the tens of millions (with much of it in Asia), is greater than that of any other team in any other sport. Sponsors include Nike, a Turkish airline, a Thai beer, the capital of South Korea, a Chilean wine maker and a bevy of telecommunications companies spanning the globe. But the global reach of the brand has not come at the expense of local loyalty. United's stadium at Old Trafford averages attendance of some 75,000 a game, in a season 10 months long.

Michael Elliott, *Time Magazine*

May 28, 2011.



## Chapter 14 \_\_\_\_\_

# Paul & Silas

And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

Acts 15:39

The showing of the I.T.V. film was a turning point for the ministry of Bill and Arthur. Suddenly they were in demand all over the Country from churches who wanted to capitalise on the film. The handbills to advertise their coming all said, 'As seen on the television documentary Sharon'. The church not only became famous in

the U.K., but enquiries for crusades came from all over the world.

## Manipulation

A Christian millionaire contacted them with the view of organising a world tour for them. This seemed a great opportunity for them, and they started the preparation, but things did not seem quite right. In the end they realised this man had an agenda and would have been using Bill and Arthur for his own ends. They backed out after a few months of preparations and it was a bit ugly because the man became aggressive, but they knew they had made the right decision. Fame is very dangerous for a man of God, and Jesus warned his disciples to beware when all men speak well of you because that is what they did to the false prophets. Bill and Arthur were having to learn this lesson fast, and God protected them many times.

How would they handle the demands and the pressure it brought with it? They not only had all these requests to facilitate but they had a thriving church to run, with all the difficulties of keeping elders, deacons, Sunday school teachers, and youth leaders motivated and in line. As well as this they had the bible studies, prayer meetings, and the preaching that was needed twice each Sunday. Bill and Arthur talked and decided they should act while the iron was still hot. They did not want to miss the opportunity they knew would not last forever and were carried

with the momentum that the television programme had generated for their ministry.

## The Best of Days – the Worst of Days

They made a decision to do something they had not done during the fourteen years they entered the ministry together in 1950. After much serious discussion they decided to separate and do crusades on their own in different parts of the Country. I have shared how, up to this point, one night Bill would preach and Arthur would pray for the sick, and the next night they would reverse this order. They were friends from the age of twelve, were saved together, married sisters and ministered as one man for 14 years so this was a massive change for both of them. Whether this was the right decision or not I dare not say but looking back it seems to me to be the thin end of a wedge that would not end until they had parted asunder within three years.

The success of the T.V. exposure and the pressure they put themselves under began to tell on Bill and Arthur, and perhaps it was the best of days for them because of the wonderful exposure the ministry received, but it was maybe the worst of days because cracks began to show in the relationship between them. With their vastly differing characters that had at one time complemented each other, now because of the size of the work and the many demands on them both from evangelism and ordinary church life, it worked against them because

they had to do things individually whereas before it was always an agreed agenda.

## Change of Plan

They sensibly agreed that they should try not to be away from the church at the same time so Bill would do a crusade while Arthur looked after the church and then Arthur would go on a crusade and Bill would look after the church. This worked fine for a while but it caused tension between them because they were working separately – something they had never done and it became evident that on their own they did things as individuals very differently. I suppose it was obvious with their characters being so diverse but it had never been put to the test until this point in their ministry.

Arthur would come home tired from a crusade only to find Bill had implemented something in the church that he would not have done and the same thing happened with Bill. He would come home to find that a situation had been handled in quite the wrong way in his thinking. These two lifelong friends tried so hard to overcome these problems but slowly the tension was building. It was a recipe for disaster.

Seeing the plan was not working, yet feeling they should still carry on working on their own for crusades to fulfil the demand, they came to an agreement. Arthur would arrange all the crusades and Bill would not interfere, and Bill would be

responsible for the church and Arthur would not interfere with the decisions Bill made. Bill could do this because he was a very disciplined man but Arthur was emotional and impetuous and when he came home from a crusade could not restrain himself from doing things in the church if he felt the situation demanded it. When Bill challenged him about the arrangement he would say, "I am also a pioneer of this church and I cannot sit back and do nothing if it needs to be done".

## Independence

I personally think that working on their own on crusades gave them both a sense of security in themselves, and maybe even a feeling of independence from each other. Whatever the reason they could not reconcile their differences and after three years Bill put an ultimatum to Arthur. Dad told me it was a very difficult decision and he put it off time and time again to see if things would get better. In the end Bill said that he was not willing to work this way any more because he realised it would damage the church and he had come to a decision. He told Arthur they must go their separate ways. If Arthur wanted to go and do crusades then he must stand down from being a pastor of Sharon or if he wanted to be pastor of Sharon, then Bill would leave Sharon and go on evangelism.

Arthur deliberated for a while and did not want to make a decision but could see that Bill was

adamant and in the end said that he would leave the church and go full time in evangelism.

Bill and Arthur were both men of God and, although like Paul and Silas they could not come to an agreement, they parted in a godly fashion and the church knew nothing of the problems that were boiling away in the background. I was 22 years of age at this time and knew nothing of the problems until I heard of the decision announced one Sunday morning in the church. The reason they gave for the separating of the ways was that the work was so big now with the crusades and the church pastoral work that they needed to specialise, one on the church and the other on evangelism. The church members were shocked, of course, and did not want Arthur to leave, but the majority accepted it as inevitable when they heard the explanation. When he moved away from Manchester it did not come as a great surprise to the congregation at Sharon and the church were not damaged in any way by this break up.

## Out of a Job

This separation had a life changing effect on me because Bill and Arthur decided that the printing press should belong to evangelism. Arthur was now working with a man named Ernie Britain who was organising his crusades. He was an ex-printer and would be able to do all the printing for Arthur. The printing press and an office were situated in the building in the garden that had once been the church.

The printing press was removed and taken to a place for this new man to operate and I was now out of a job. It was too late to pursue my apprenticeship as a draughtsman. Things have changed now, of course, and you can take a university degree even when you are in your eighties if you so desire. I will share the life changing events in my autobiography. The split happened in 1967.

As with any major decision there are consequences and one was that Arthur wanted to buy a house in Lincolnshire, because after holding crusades all over the Country and abroad he felt God telling him to start a church himself in a little village called Bardney. This meant that the house they had both lived in on Upper Chorlton Road since being demobbed from the war now had to be sold and the proceeds shared. Bill bought a house on Hazel Avenue just two miles away, also still in Whalley Range. Arthur later moved to Southport on the Lancashire coast where he ended his days on this earth.

## My Perspective

Looking back I can see that the ministry of both Bill and Arthur lacked the other partner, but God's ways are not our ways and I can see from my own ministry that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose. This means that even the bad things, or our mistakes, will work to God's ultimate carefully

crafted plan and only on retrospect can we see that the weaving of his tapestry on our lives does not form a pattern until finished and we stand well back to see the 'full picture'. I doubt if I would be in the ministry myself if this split had not happened. God's ways are in the sea and it is a brave, or naïve and stupid man who thinks he knows how God works.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Or who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Romans 11:33-36

## Burn Out

Arthur worked tirelessly for God when he went on his own in evangelism but did not know how to pace himself without the wisdom and patience of Bill. He went to Australia on a very intensive ministry tour and became so weakened in his body that he caught pneumonia. He was advised to rest but carried on. He got himself into serious problems and he had a mental breakdown. He returned to Southport but was a broken man and he lived in and out of depression for the rest of his life on earth. There were a few times he somehow managed to

bring himself out of his mental state and would go to minister on a short three day crusade, and God confirmed his preaching with miracles as in the old days, but he would come home and be depressed again. He died on 27th May 1982 at 9:45pm having never recovered. His funeral took place at Sharon on Monday, 7th June at 1:15pm.



## Chapter 15 \_\_\_\_\_

# Change of Direction

For Bill not to go on crusades after all those exciting years must have been a big change of direction but he was a disciplined man and threw himself into pastoral work with great gusto and a sense of adventure. He was now free to implement whatever he felt was right in the running of the Church, and his fruitful mind started to make plans straight away. Of course, he still prayed for the sick and many notable miracles took place. He was now a full time pastor but was running the church as an evangelist as that was all he knew. He preached the gospel at every opportunity and every Sunday evening was a divine healing service. The church

grew and was approaching 400 members by the year 1975. Each year he put a month aside to hold a Divine Healing Crusade in Sharon.

## Still the Printed Word

By this time Dad had become the legal guardian for Joanna Margerison (although I found out from one of my sisters that he had never actually signed the papers but she and I both believed he had for he acted out the role anyway and became responsible for her welfare). She had become his secretary, and the church organist and was working for the church full time.

Dad was still evangelising through literature and Joanna would take a team of housewives, or those out of work, in a van to different areas of Manchester to put handbills through the doors. There was a large street map of the whole of Manchester on the wall of one of the back rooms of the church, and they would systematically highlight the ones they had distributed leaflets to.

At that time we found out there were 275,000 houses in Manchester and, over a period of a few years, every house received a leaflet. The leaflet asked three questions in bold type – 'Are you Lonely? Are you Sick? Are you Needing Help?' Then phone this number and receive a phone message, or come to Sharon.' The phone number and the church address followed.

Bill believed in using 'all means to gain some' and he had a telephone answering system – one of

the first. He was always looking for new ways to advance the gospel. It would be around 1973 when he purchased an answering machine to connect to his phone line. This was new and exciting technology and Bill embraced it as a means to spread the good news that God can change lives. He put a new message on his machine every day – it was his first job each morning after his prayer time. He read a verse of scripture and then gave a 10 minute message of hope and salvation, finishing the recording with a short prayer.

The listener could leave a request for prayer after the message had ended. Bill always knew when Joanna had been on the streets for the phone would be ringing all the time and the messages often brought my father to tears when he heard the heart rending pleas of young and old caught in vices and situations that seemed hopeless to them. Sometimes they would be sobbing over the phone as they left a message. Other people left details so we could send them literature but many were anonymous and we could only pray for them and leave them with God.

## CCTV

I think Sharon was one of the first churches in the country to install closed circuit television so that the ladies on 'crèche duty' could look after their children while watching the service on a television screen. In those days we had a huge 27 inch Sony

tube monitor that required two men to lift it as it was so cumbersome and heavy.

Bill bought two V.H.S. cameras and three V.H.S. recorders so that the Sunday morning services could be filmed. Then, on the following Monday some crude editing was performed and a master V.H.S. was produced which could be played on a normal V.H.S. player. It was amateur and basic but it showed the previous Sunday service, including prayer for the sick. Bill's plan was to put a large monitor in the vestibule of the Church and invite people who were on the street to come in for free coffee and biscuits. The 53 bus stop was right at the church door and it was the longest bus route in Manchester at the time.

## Fresh Coffee

Every Tuesday Joanna and I ran this 'Coffee Morning' as we called it. The church doors were opened and a notice said 'Come in for a free coffee'. The smell of free fresh coffee brought people in from the cold whilst waiting for the bus and, of course, the television monitor was showing the previous Sunday service.

Because of the lively way the services were conducted many traditional church goers were fascinated and made comments like, "I would go to a church like that if we had one nearby", or, "I have a sick friend and I will bring them to be prayed for next Sunday." At the very least, strangers were able to see how our services were conducted and of course

Joanna and I were there to witness to them if they showed interest.

## I Did My Best

Dad wanted me to get involved in the editing of these videos but I had no formal training in video editing and consequently was not very good at it, but it whet my appetite for the media and it was a good beginning for me. I can see God's hand was in it as I have never lost Dad's vision for reaching people through the media.

Bill also had a strong desire at this time to cater for the old people who had served the church for many years. He did not want them to go into a secular old people's home and to be seated in front of a television all day with no fellowship. He did not think it right to neglect them when they had served the church faithfully for decades. He prayed about it and started to plan for a building to be erected next to the Church. He obtained planning permission and soon the building work was under way. His plan was for a two storey building so that he could have accommodation on the second floor and a youth centre on the ground floor. He applied for a loan from Manchester Council and there was awarded a grant of 75% of the total cost so the church had only to find 25% of the overall price quoted.

The church did not have enough money as a percentage for the whole project so they negotiated with the building firm, Neodox, to put foundations

in for a two storey building but only to build the first floor and put a roof on it that could be demolished at a future date for the second storey to be built as an old people's home. This book is about Bill Barratt and not the life of Sharon Church so I will not go into details, but the second storey as an old people's home was never built and the building remains as a youth centre today.

The year was 1975 and Bill was busy planning the yearly August crusade at Sharon. We were all encouraged to tell people at work and in other churches about this yearly event and the church was always packed with strangers and sick people who had come to be prayed for. Often, up to 50,000 fliers would be put through letter boxes in and around houses around the area of the church and an advert was always put in the Manchester Evening News.

## Sermon on the Mount

This year when the crusade time came nearer Bill made an announcement in the Church that shocked everyone. He told them that the crusade would be as usual, six nights a week for four weeks, but we were not going to advertise it, there would be no handbills printed and distributed, and we were not to tell friends or sick people.

Bill told his congregation that God had spoken to him clearly saying miracles and excitement were great, and indeed necessary, for evangelism but he would never build a church of solid disciples

with this type of ministry. He was told to teach the Sermon on the Mount for the believers and not to the non-Christians. Bill reasoned that, just as Jesus had taken his disciples up a mountain from the crowds and the miracles, he was going to take us aside for the month of August. He told the members he would go through the Sermon on the Mount. (This is Jesus' discourse on a mountain with his disciples and recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7.)

I don't think anyone really understood why he did this and when he stopped praying for the sick on a Sunday evening and started to teach instead many people left the church. It was a real turning point in Bill's life and ministry, but he knew God's voice and was willing to obey at any cost. The happy choruses slowly decreased and he introduced Charles Wesley's hymns with their rich doctrinal and sober lyrics.

Well, the crusade started and Dad confided in me afterwards that before the month started he was not sure at all that he could give 24 studies on just three chapters of Matthew's gospel. As it happened, and to his great surprise, he had only just finished going through the beatitudes which is only the first eleven verses of chapter five! God really was with him, and the conviction and awe of God was present at every service.

## Gifted Bible Teacher

It turned out that Bill was a wonderful Bible expositor. He spoke clearly and logically and had

great revelation on the word of God. He decided that he would continue teaching the Sermon on the Mount each Sunday morning before we took communion. It took five years for Dad to complete it. I have most of the studies on cassette tape and at the time of writing this book my wife is transferring them to a digital format and we are putting them on YouTube. <sup>Footnote 1</sup> After building the church on healings and miracles God spoke to him and he became a teacher of the word – it transformed my life and that of Joanna who would become my wife many years later.

## Working Together

Dad trained Joanna and me to follow him very closely and 30 minutes before the service was to start we would meet him in the vestry where we would pray together for the meeting. He would tell us the subject of his teaching and we would go on to the platform 15 minutes before him and start to play choruses that would prepare the people for his message. When Bill came out of the vestry onto the platform God's presence was already in the church and often he would start to teach before any announcements or introduction. He was always led by the spirit and not the 'order of service'. Joanna wrote music to the longest Psalm in the Bible, Psalm 119, and we would often sing a portion of it to prepare the service for Dad. Joanna sat at the organ and was ready at any time to play if Dad should start

an impromptu chorus or even if he composed some lyrics and melody on the spot.

I can remember overhearing Willie Hacking saying one Sunday to Bill, after he had preached for us, that he did not remember God's presence so strong in a building since the days of Smith Wiggleswoth. Willie introduced us to a song that morning which Smith often sang in his meetings.

Filled with God  
Yes filled with God  
Pardoned and cleansed  
And filled with God  
Filled with God  
Yes, filled with God  
Emptied of self  
And filled with God

## Speaking at A.O.G. General Conference

I think the greatest compliment Dad received as a preacher was when he was asked to speak at the General Conference of the Assemblies of God held in Butlins at their Minehead resort in the late 1970's. He told me this story when he returned. He woke up the morning of the day that he was to address the 3,000 who attended the camp. Most of the five hundred ministers of A.O.G. were present with their wives and many other Christians from churches around the Country and abroad who attended each year. He said he felt terrible, not just physically but

spiritually and he saw himself as the most wicked and unclean man at the conference and unworthy to speak. He just wanted to pack his bags and return home to Manchester.

## Deep Conviction

Bill felt no better as the time drew nearer and he sat on the platform waiting for the singing and announcements to finish before he was to address the large crowd as the main speaker for that day. As he stood up to preach the awful feeling disappeared and the peace of God came over him. He started to preach and the conviction and power of God descended on the meeting. No one stirred when he sat down for what seemed like ages. It was probably only a few minutes but because of the silence and conviction of God it was a moment of eternity.

After the meeting had closed a member of the executive council, Alfred F. Missen, came to him and said, "Bill, you did not preach the word this afternoon, you were the word". I could see that my father was not saying this in pride as from his manner of speaking I could see it had greatly humbled him and he never forgot the incident. To be around a man of God, even if it is your earthly father, is a privilege not to be taken lightly and I will be forever grateful for the grace of God to allow me this experience, for it shaped my life.

The Sermon on the Mount had a profound effect on me, and my present ministry is based around it – I

have written six volumes on this discourse of Jesus and I have also seen it change thousands of lives in my own ministry over the last forty years in over 40 countries.

I remember Dad saying when he was in his eighties, that he was sad he could not preach any more, and I was so glad to be able to tell him that he is still preaching through me. The heritage he left me will continue until I die and I am sure that many who have come under my ministry will carry on preaching Bill Barratt's sermons, although unlike me, they will never know it.

#### **Footnote 1**

You can hear some of the teaching of Bill on the Barratt Ministries YouTube channel. Look for Bill Barratt Sermons <https://www.youtube.com/user/BarrattMinistries1/playlists>



## Chapter 16 \_\_\_\_\_

# A Dream Come True

Bill Barratt came from a musical family and he always desired to use every talent he had for the work of God. As previously stated, as soon as his life was transformed, he was on the streets playing his trumpet to attract an audience. Even in the wooden hut in the garden he encouraged members to learn to play instruments and a few of them bought trumpets or euphoniums as Bill was trying to form a brass band. He encouraged me to learn the trumpet and began to give me lessons but somehow I did not take to it and he later bought me a saxophone and sent me for lessons to one of his old contacts in the music business. Nothing really became of this endeavour to

form a band but he never lost his desire to use music for the furtherance of the work of God.

## Bill's Heart's Desire

For many years Joanna, whom he had nurtured as his own daughter, was the organist and as she was a singer she led the worship at the church. I had a group by the time we had moved into the 'Proper Church' and was playing the bass guitar on Sundays and my guitarist Dave Knowles also played for a while until he moved out of the area.

Now settled as a resident pastor God answered his heart's desire and blessed him more than he could have ever imagined. Classical musicians started to come to the church and there was a mini revival at the Royal Northern School of Music in Manchester. I could not remember all their names so I asked one of them that I am still in touch with if she could remember who were the first to come and this was her reply:

*Hi Maurice, I can remember quite a lot. The first musician to come was Kate Evatt (now Kate Slipp). She was my flatmate and was a backslidden Christian and when she moved into the flat at the top of Withington Road with me, she kept going past Sharon on the bus and felt compelled to go in. So, one Sunday, she plucked up the courage to go in and came back to the Lord. Not long after, she took Lis Payne (later Lis Garratt) and she also accepted Christ*

*as her saviour. They both had non-Christian boyfriends, Sid (real name Martin!) Slipp and Fred (real name Alan!) Garratt and eventually they were converted. I can't remember exactly when that happened but it was before they were married in September 1970. About a year after that apparently Lis prayed in a music college Christian Union meeting for revival and loads of people were converted including me. Mark (Bryant – Anne's husband) had just come to college at that time having been converted down in Poole when he was 13. And that was when lots of music students started coming to Sharon, so would have been Autumn 1971.*

Anne Bryant

This was the time of the Catholic renewal when young people were getting saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. They came out of the Catholic church when they realised it was not Biblical and were looking for somewhere to worship and we had a long trail of those who were students at the music college. These young musicians were hungry for God and I remember taking many of them through the converts class which I took each week in the room at the rear of the church

## Our Own Orchestra

Bill now had a church orchestra from a pool of over 30 professional musicians <sup>Footnote 1</sup> and they

would play concerts on Saturday evenings as an outreach to the community. We must have been the only Pentecostal church in the country with this quality of musicians in one church. Remember this was 1971, when most churches only had a pianist or organist. Lis Garratt wrote two musicals 'Lonely Was The man' and 'The Selfish Giant'. 'Lonely Was The Man' was performed in Sharon and I believe in other churches in the Manchester area.

## Moving On

Of course, when some of the students graduated they went back to their home town or took posts in the U.K. or abroad, but many of them stayed in Manchester after graduation. Some became music teachers in the local schools and joined orchestras such as the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Halle Orchestra, Manchester Camerata or B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra. Some freelanced with local and National Orchestras. Alex Robertson who was a founder member of the Brodsky quartet <sup>Footnote 2</sup> before he came to the Church went on to teach at the Royal Northern College of Music and also at the famous Chethams School of Music in Manchester. Lawrence Perkins moved on to become a founder of the Manchester Camerata. Some became music teachers in local schools and many of them married fellow students and bought homes around the church.

When Bill retired from being Pastor of Sharon in 1985 the orchestra was still playing for the

Sunday evening services. God fulfilled Bill's desire to use musical talents for the work of the ministry in a remarkable way and one he would have never dreamed of.

### Footnote 2

Here is a list of the professional musicians who attended the church and played in the orchestra at some stage. Of course they did not all come in the same year as they were students, but each year we had additions and those who moved on, but there were always enough for the orchestra to continue.

Anne Bryant	Piano
Martin Slip	Trombone
Kate Evatt	Violin
Lis Payne	Flute, clarinet, bassoon, trombone, and piano
Mark Bryant	Violin
Chris Thorpe	Trombone
Tim Paton	Trombone
Shirley Richards	Violin
Alex Robertson	Viola
Andrew Bassey	Bassoon
Lawrence Perkins	Bassoon
Ruth Livsey	Singer and piano
Tony Jackman	Singer
Andrew Whettam	Percussion
Rebecca Whettam	Cello
Pete Richards	French Horn
Mansel Morgan	Violin
Francis Cummings	Violin
Val Markham	Violin, piano, sax, and singer

## A Dream Come True

Jane Pearson	Violin and piano
Shirley Rodgers	Violin and viola
Royce Tully	Oboe
Trevor Diaper	Violin
Dave Jackman	Trumpet
Martin Cook	Piano
Chris Hooley	Viola
Jean Worker	Piano
Lesley Goddard	Cello
Mike Whitty	Cello
Cathy Knight	Violin
Sandy Metcalfe	Piano

### **Footnote 2**

<https://www.brodskyquartet.co.uk/group-history>

## Chapter 17\_\_\_\_\_

# Throwing in the Towel

As the son of Bill Barratt I watched and enjoyed all the blessings of his wonderful ministry in public. The supernatural was ever present, and of course to witness so many miracles, healings, and growth of the church from the house to international acclaim was exciting, but I also witnessed the many trials and burdens that all men of God carry in secret.

I witnessed elders and deacons who tried to usurp Dad and take over the church, or to influence him to go in a direction he did not feel God was directing him to go in. I remember when Dad changed the way we did communion. We had always

served it in small glasses and the deacons would walk down the isle and pass the tray along the pews so that everyone could take an individual glass.

## No One Likes Change

Dad had been studying and teaching on the communion from John's gospel chapter six and was coming to the conclusion that there was far more to it than he had first imagined or was being taught in Pentecostal circles. He decided to have only one cup and to have everyone come to the 'altar rail' when they felt ready. As they knelt, the deacons who would be standing on the platform, would give them the bread and pass them the wine cup and they would drink from it and pass it back to the same deacon. You could stay for as long as you needed to and then make your way back to your seat. There were two deacons to distribute the bread and two for the wine and they stood at either side of the platform. It doesn't sound revolutionary, but it nearly caused a church split.

The elder came to my father and said that most of the church were not happy with this new arrangement and wanted him to reverse it and go back to the old traditional way of serving communion. Dad was wise enough to ask who were the ones complaining and after much debating it turned out that it was only the elder and a few other families who were not happy and the majority did not mind the change at all. My father had to be really strong and in the end the

elder backed down but the potential for a split was certainly there. I witnessed this type of pressure many times where members challenged Bill's leadership and authority. I suppose that is one problem with membership – it gives people voting rights.

## Missing His Old Pal

This was, in my opinion, the time of Bill's life where the absence of Arthur's input and personality was missed and I believe Dad struggled on his own in certain areas. Bill was a great motivator of men, not only in speech but by example, but he was not a good manager of men. I have discerned that I have the same traits. He would put someone in a position, but if they were not fulfilling it he would not remove them and it caused problems both in the church and for him personally. For example he appointed the elder's wife as the church treasurer. She had been a professional bookkeeper and was quite capable of doing the job, but she never got around to reconciling the books at the year end as my father asked her to. Each year my father would ask for the accounts only to be told she would do them as soon as she could. He asked time and time again but he was put off with excuses.

## Frustrated

I remember him once deciding to go round to speak with her at her home a few miles away, and he

came back at midnight exhausted and frustrated. He said he could not get away from the house because she would not stop talking, and Dad did not want to appear rude by putting his foot down and saying he had to leave. When he did eventually give an ultimatum about the accounts she would start crying and he would give her more time. This happened on a few occasions and Mrs. Barratt could see he was stressed by it so she told him to take the accounts off her and give them to someone else to do, but he couldn't bring himself to do this and the situation carried on until he retired. Arthur, of course, would have dealt with this situation immediately and just taken the job from her and given it someone else regardless of the tears and protestations.

## Mum's Health Issue

The health of Edna, Bill's wife, was also a burden he had to carry for forty years. Mrs. Barratt had a fall whilst on an outing to a church in Chesterfield around 1960 and while the fall was not serious arthritis set in and although Bill prayed for her she grew steadily worse year by year. By the mid 1980s she could only walk with a stick and eventually was confined to a wheel chair and in constant pain. Mrs. Barratt had a very strong mind and was a fighter. She stuck to her sewing, knitting, and crocheting even when her hands were quite gnarled and painful. She suffered a stroke and was paralysed down her right side and could no longer write her poetry, but she

was determined she would not stop. She slowly and painfully learned to write with her left hand. She also suffered with shingles for a period of time.

## Underlying Problems

There were many other pressures and situations in the church that Dad would or could not deal with – I do not feel it would be right to share these as they are of a sensitive nature, but I saw the pressure he was under and he often confided in me, saying he had no one to share the burden with as Mum was ill and not in a position to take some of the pressure from him. In retrospect, I was too young and inexperienced to help in any positive way other than to be a sounding box for his problems.

I do not want to give the impression that Bill was a weak man in character for he was certainly not and he could be strong when challenged. I remember when one of the deacons came to him and said God has shown him he should be made a pastor along with Dad in the church and be paid a full wage. God had not told Dad so he told him if he wanted that position he should do what he had done and give up his job, live by faith, and help in the church, and then when he had paid 'his dues' he would think about employment.

## Content With His Wages

This contending pastor did not want to pay the price and live by faith so he carried on with his

secular job. The amazing thing about this incident is that he had heard God that he would be the minister of Sharon and many more years later after another minister had been ordained by Bill he did become the minister and received a full wage. He had heard from God but had not learned the lesson which so many need to learn, and that is it takes time for God's promises to be fulfilled and we inherit the promises of God not only by faith but also by exercising patience.

As a matter of interest Bill would not take any wage rise for the last 15 years of his ministry. He said he was content with the wage he had and when the deacons insisted he needed to take an increase he told them to give him the same wage and give the rest to missions.

## Feeling the Pressure

Bill was feeling the pressure of being on his own, the pressures of a church that was becoming established, and himself being recognised in the community. He was made a hospital Chaplain, and asked to be the Mayor of Trafford's Chaplain for one year. He started to wear a 'dog collar' (clerical collar) for this office and, I think, the acceptance of Assemblies of God General Council. The prestige in the community was harder for Dad to come to terms with than the opposition and hostility he was used to in his earlier days. He had been a commando in a world war and then a radical pioneer in many areas as

a man of God and now he had become 'respectable' and had status in the community.

Bill made a young man named Keith Bassham his assistant minister who was around my age. He had come into the church whilst at Manchester University and accepted Christ as his Saviour. He had married one of the students at the university and been a faithful member of the church. Dad then made an Advisory Council of three men. The assistant minister along with the elder, Don Walker, and Wesley Harvey who was a deacon and the man who wanted to be a minister with Dad a few years earlier.

## Still Under Pressure

Bill was now approaching the retiring age of sixty-five and although he was very healthy physically I saw the pressures build up over the years and he was getting weary in his mind. I believe subconsciously he was preparing for his retirement. I don't think he would have admitted it at the time but I could see it was a fact and the proof was he had a breakdown a few years later as I will reveal in the next chapter.

He was now desperate to hand the church over to someone and he told the Advisory Council that God had told him to retire and go back into evangelism. He then asked the Advisory Council if he could hand over the church to them but they would not agree to work together and I am sure their decision was the right one because I do not believe it could have worked.

Bill then asked them individually and again Wesley and Don declined but Keith said he was willing but he needed a minimum wage and stated what it was. He would be giving up a good job with a high wage and thought it was only right that he should be paid what he considered a reasonable sum. Wesley and Don did not want Keith to be minister and so the reason they gave to Keith was that the church could not afford to pay him. The members of the church had no idea what was happening in the background, but Dad confided in me at every stage of the process. I was married but I was meeting with him daily at this time in our lives.

## New Minister at Sharon

Keith Bassham then dropped a bombshell and said that he had discussed it with his wife, Sally, and he was willing to leave his job to be pastor and his wife would support him financially. He had called their bluff and they could no longer resist him becoming minister so they agreed and a date was set to tell the church. Keith had to give six months notice at his employment so he gave it straight away but no one knew till after three months when Bill announced in the church that in three month's time he would be the new pastor of Sharon. It was announced on December 31st 1984. Bill was sixty-seven years of age and the new pastor of Sharon was Pastor Keith Bassham. He was around my age, and I was forty years of age, when he was inducted at Sharon.

The church were really sad at this announcement and many of the members and some of the deacons begged Bill to change his mind but it was to no avail, his mind was made up. He was desperate to escape all the pressures and he did not attend the church after the inauguration of Keith Bassham. I think he was asked by Keith to preach on two occasions which he did, but it was a far different Church by this time.

## A Leaving Present

The Church wanted to show their appreciation and a collection was made. At the annual Love Feast held at Sharon on the last day of the year, when the announcement was made, they presented him with a brand new car – a Ford Fiesta.

March 1985 Bill Barratt was no longer the pastor of the church he had pioneered thirty-five years previously.



## Chapter 18 \_\_\_\_\_

# Back on the Road Again

There were some interesting twists and turns in the life of Sharon but I must concentrate and continue with the life of Bill Barratt.

I think because the members of Sharon were really sad and disappointed at Bill handing over the Church to a new pastor he did not want to upset them. He announced that he was still a part of Sharon but was the evangelistic branch. Keith would have no part in the evangelism and he would have no part in the running of the Church. It did not work out when Bill and Arthur made this arrangement and I personally do not think it could have worked for Bill and Keith either. From talking to Dad during

and after his handing the pastorate over I don't really think he believed this in his heart and I am sure that Keith did not envisage this working out for very long, but it did calm the members and it was a smooth transition.

## Simplicity & Humility

When he retired from the church Bill organised crusades in the open air. God had told him the two words he should base his new ministry on were simplicity and humility. He decided to organise less than he had ever done and just preach in the open air and pray for the sick. Dad told me that he expected greater miracles than in the former days before his split from Arthur, and this would be the evidence that he had been called to evangelism again. He said that if only the same degree of healing and miracles happened then he would consider it a failure because there were now many young men in this divine healing ministry.

Bill was never able to revive the heady days of revival that accompanied his early ministry with Arthur and I don't think he was ever meant to. There is a time to wax and a time to wane in all our lives and it is no different in ministry. When we have fulfilled what God destined for us it is time to decrease and let God have the glory.

Greater miracles did not happen and slowly over the next decade his ministry began to slowly fade. The Charismatic movement was gathering

momentum with the likes of John Wimber (1934-1997) and his signs and wonders seminars in 1982.

Mark Bryant, who did all the recording of Bill's sermons in the church and duplicated cassettes of them, did a great job of helping Dad and he and his wife, Anne, organised venues and set up the open-air PA system for Bill to preach. They also filmed many of the crusades and made short documentaries from the filming.

## Open Air Crusades

Bill decided to have a crusade in Alexandra Park in Moss Side, Manchester, but he found it hard to be as simple as he would have liked and ended up asking all the churches he had contact with in Manchester to support. Of course this did provide a crowd of Believers and God was gracious as people were healed in the open air, but it was far different than the original plan of simplicity.

He organised another open air meeting in Heaton Park in North Manchester and again God healed people and there were many testimonies from these two open air meetings.

Mark then organised a crusade at a church in Plumstead in South London for a Rector who had been a curate at the Anglican Church only 500 yards away from Sharon, but was now a vicar of his own parish.

Because Joanna and I had worked closely with Dad in Sharon, he kept asking if we would join him

in evangelism, but I did not feel comfortable in this role. I always felt awkward when asked to speak in the open air and realised it was not my calling to be an evangelist. I was happy to speak in front of people for I had taken a converts class for years in the church, but to speak to non-believers with the gospel was not my calling and is still not to this day. I teach discipleship all over the world but refuse requests to hold gospel meetings. I think Joanna was in the middle and leaned towards the ministry Dad had but, because I was so strong, did not join him.

Eventually, I realised that Dad needed someone to minister with him and we all decided to work together so formed Barratt Ministries in 1985. We decided that we would teach and preach in churches mainly but also do 'hit and run' open air meetings. I suppose it was a compromise on all our parts for us to work together, but I can see God's hand in all these decisions and God was directing us through our weaknesses as well as our obedience.

## Hit and Run

Our 'hit and runs' involved us going in a van to some busy place in some town where I would quickly erect a platform that I had designed and made, and with open air speakers Joanna would sing to attract an audience. Dad would preach a short message and pray for the sick and we would pack up quickly and go to another venue before we were moved on by the police if anyone happened to complain. I was happy

with this as I did not have to speak in the open air and could support Dad and Joanna in a practical way.

When the time came for the crusade in Plumbstead to commence, which Mark Bryant had organised, Joanna and I had started to work with Dad and, of course, this caused underlying tension between Mark and myself and looking back I am quite embarrassed at my attitude although everything was kept civil. Thank God for the way God humbles and teaches us over the years by our trials and experiences. Mark did not go to Plumbstead and I looked after the PA.

We also did a crusade for pastor Don Nash in Newton-le-Willows, Lancashire, and people were healed and many gave their lives to Christ. I remember one incident very well. I was sitting in the van after having put up the small platform and PA system in an open field in the middle of the village and Joanna was singing to attract a crowd as usual. Dad was waiting to preach as soon as she had finished. People heard her over a mile away and we saw windows in the houses, round the open field, being opened as people listened to her.

## Music & Conviction

As I was waiting to cue the backing track for the next song, a young man in his early twenties came up to me and said. "She has a good voice, doesn't she?" I agreed with him and I don't know why but I said, "Would you like an album of her singing." (In those

days before the advent of C.D's, albums were on compact cassettes.) I gave him one entitled 'Burning our Bridges' and he walked away. The crusade lasted a week, but before it had ended the man, Alan Kelly, came to tell us this story. He had listened to the cassette of Joanna singing that night and when he came to one of the songs he felt a strange conviction that he should give his life to Christ, but he had not spoken to his brother for years. They had had a terrible disagreement and fallen out with each other. He knew that if he gave his life to Christ he would have to start by forgiving his brother and so he immediately went to him and they were reconciled. He became active for God and served him faithfully here in the U.K. and abroad until his death in 2019.

## Next to Edinburgh Castle

I think the last open air meetings Bill held were in 1984 when Bill was in his 68th year. The Edinburgh 'Tattoo' <sup>Footnote 1</sup> had just finished and the large stage with a huge canopy that had been set up in Princess Street just yards from the castle had not yet been taken down. The pastor of the Elim Church on George 4th Bridge, Mike Epton, who was superintendent of Elim churches in Scotland at that time, had obtained permission to use it for preaching in the open air and to announce meetings in his church at the weekend. Joanna sang and Bill preached to the thousands of tourists who were still in Edinburgh.

**Footnote 1**

The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo is an annual series of military tattoos performed by British Armed Forces, Commonwealth and international military bands, and artistic performance teams on the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle in the capital of Scotland. The event is held each August as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.



## Chapter 19 \_\_\_\_\_

# Breakdown

Although Bill now had Joanna and myself to support him in his ministry we were no substitute for Arthur Williams. We were not called to work with him – we were just a support to him and I don't believe we were meant to be a replacement for Arthur. I believe the evangelistic part of his ministry had finished and he should have stayed on his stepping stone of teaching and not gone back to evangelism. Of course, that is only my opinion and not a criticism of Dad because God's ways are not ours and our wisdom is foolish to God. Even though I have good and sensible reasons for my opinion I always have in my mind the fact that, although King David sinned he fulfilled all God's will according to the New Testament. That is what we will have to answer for on the day of Christ's judgement for

only those who do God's will, and not his work, will enter the kingdom – that is the 1,000 years reign of Christ. <sup>Footnote 1</sup> I could also argue that Dad fulfilled all God's will because his demise put me and Joanna into the ministry and we have continued to teach the Sermon on the Mount that he deposited into us for the last 40 years.

## A Heavy Schedule

I was now the one to organise teaching tours and meetings for Barratt Ministries and I was enthusiastic and full of energy. It never even entered my head that Dad was 25 years older than I was as he always talked so positive and with encouragement. I set off to arrange teaching tours wherever I could.

One of the deacons of Sharon who had retired from work had gone back to his place of Birth, Barbados, a few years before Dad retired from Sharon. He had come from a Holiness denomination and he went back to it. He longed to introduce the Holy Ghost to them and in 1983 I arranged with him for us to be guests and the only speakers at their annual convention in the capital Bridgetown. We were to be in Barbados for a month and after the week long convention he arranged for us to speak in many of this denomination's churches around the island.

They were celebrating 80 years of ministry. And all the churches around the island came for one week to celebrate and hear the convention speakers. We

arranged the tour to commence in December and were glad to get away from our English winter. None of us realised how warm it would be. We stayed in St Phillips and were housed with one of the natives and the house had no air conditioning.

## Oppressive Heat

The building in Bridgetown was in the centre and despite the windows all being open the heat was oppressive with almost 1000 people tightly packed into the building. There were only two Europeans in the congregation, a man and his son from Germany. The father fainted halfway through the service due to the heat and they carried him out. Thank God we were all on the platform and had a little space around us. Despite our difficulties God really moved in this convention. It was a very legalistic denomination with a form of holiness but it was all the outward form of not wearing earrings or trousers for the women and the men wore three piece suits to church despite the temperature being in the 90s. No-one had ever been filled with the Holy Ghost and spoken in tongues in the 80 years of its existence, but the wind blew and the cobwebs were blown away and before we left many of the young people and some of the elders of the denomination were filled with the Holy Ghost.

We all returned to England tired and weary, glad to be in a cooler climate and grateful for what God had done. We had a two weeks rest and then were off to the U.S.A. for another month's teaching

tour arranged with a man named Larry Shaw from Rumford, Maine. This was far north in the lumber regions and you could smell the pungent fumes of the paper factories miles before you entered the town. From the almost unbearable heat of Barbados to the January cold of Maine with temperatures as low as minus 20 degrees was a shock to our bodies but Joanna and I were enjoying the contrasts and did not realise the price Dad was paying in his mind and body.

For those who have not been in full time ministry it is difficult to understand the pressures not only from spiritual battles and trials, but the drain on the body when virtue leaves. Coupled to this the long-haul flights, waiting in airports, after missed flights and the hours of travelling to destinations in foreign countries on terrible roads in old cars all take a toll on a person. Joanna and I were middle aged but Bill was now approaching 70 and it took much more out of him than we realised. After the tour of New England covering Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and Maine, we flew home from Logan airport in Boston.

## Snow Storm in Boston

There had been a snow storm all day and the plane had to be de-iced twice before we were allowed to taxi ready for take off. We had been waiting four hours in the plane but at last we were on our way home – or so we thought. As the plane was waiting

in the queue for take off the captain announced that the plane in front of us had skidded off the runway and the airport would be closed down immediately until the storm had passed. We were all ferried back to the terminal and given vouchers for a taxi, meals, and overnight stay at the Swan Hotel in the centre of Boston.

We did not arrive at the hotel until 4am. It was still snowing heavily and the roads were full of slush outside the hotel where the roads had been salted. In our efforts to quickly get the cases out of the trunk of the taxi, Joanna left her handbag with all the money in dollars we had accrued from the sale of the music cassettes. It had slipped to the back of the trunk and the taxi driver never came to return it. All this was more stressful for Dad than either Joanna or I realised. He was usually in bed by ten o'clock. We all had to wait until the following evening for the flight back to Manchester.

## Firemen's Strike

The overnight flight was eight hours and we hardly slept at all. Just as the plane was approaching the west coast of England the captain announced that there was currently a firemen's strike at Manchester Airport. We could not land at Manchester because of this so we were directed to land at Liverpool airport some 40 miles from Manchester. An old rickety coach took us to Manchester and we arrived at Manchester airport shattered.

Mrs Barratt had gone to Southport to stay with her sister for the duration of the tour but had come home the day before we were due to arrive back in the U.K., so as to be there when Dad returned. Their daughter, Elisabeth, had called round to check the house before Mum returned from Southport. She was in for a shock as the front door was open and the house had been ransacked. They had been robbed, so she let Mum know.

When Dad arrived home tired in mind and body he found Mum in a fearful state after finding the house in Hazel Avenue had been violated. He had to contact the police straight away and deal with all the stress that it involves. It was a traumatic time for Dad, but we did not know at the time as he always kept things to himself and soldiered on. He kept talking in a positive way about everything for he was a fighter and did not want to burden us with his feelings. Looking back I can see that the travelling and mishaps were taking a toll on his mind and body.

## Welsh Valleys

After a few weeks rest we were on the road again. This was early March and a two week teaching tour had been arranged in the Welsh valleys for us. We started in Pontipridd, and then spoke in the churches along the Rhondda Valley in such villages as Ton Pertre, Treorchy, and we were to finish the tour in Ammonford. We were half way through the tour when one morning Dad drew me aside and said

to me in private, "Mo, can I have a word with you?" He told me he had been having pain around his heart and was worried. This really shocked me for I had never known Dad to be ill and he had not been near a doctor for as long as I can remember. I knew that if he was talking about his health and was worried it must be serious. I suggested that he go home and rest and Joanna and I would continue with the tour. I was sharing some of the teaching at that time and Joanna was singing so we felt confident we could finish the obligations of the tour on our own. I said, in as strong a tone as I could, "Dad, it will not please us, and I'm sure it will not please God if you collapse and die on this tour. You need to rest." It worried me to see him in this state, but I fully expected him to protest and want to carry on as usual. He greatly surprised me by meekly saying that he thought it right to go home and rest and he would leave in a couple of hours.

## Going Home

As soon as he acquiesced it seemed as though his whole mind and body relaxed, but because he was so stretched mentally and physically his reaction was to say, "I don't think I could make it today". It took him two days before he could finally make the drive home.

Joanna and I finished the tour and as soon as we were back in Manchester went to see Dad and suggested he take six months off from teaching and

get himself fit. He agreed to do this, but it was two years before he could speak again in public.

In 1987 my first wife left me and this was a great embarrassment to Dad. He was now in good standing with the Assemblies of God and was worried at what they would say if he continued working with Joanna and me. He said he thought I should not minister for a couple of years until people had forgotten and then maybe start to go out again. God had not told me to stop and so I carried on with Joanna as Barratt Ministries. Dad felt he could no longer work with us and he retired from Barratt Ministries, and we never worked together again as a team.

## Southport

Mrs. Barratt was unhappy living in the house in Hazel Avenue after the robbery, and in this period they sold the house and moved to Southport on the coast, so that Edna could be near her sister, Irene, who was now a widow living with her eldest daughter Hazel and her husband John. They found a house, only two mile away from Irene, in Cypress Road, in a district called Sefton.

Joanna and I had now become independent from Dad in the two years he had not ministered and the doors opened for us with contacts that were not Dad's. When he was ready to preach again he put the word out that he was available but there was very little response from his old contacts in the

Assemblies of God because his contemporaries were now old like he was and the younger ministers knew nothing of the revivals that accompanied his ministry 30 years before.

## Crocodile Hunter

He did minister a few times in Birkenhead for an old contact, Bob Smith, and he was always hoping that the evangelistic ministry would be resurrected in the power of the old days, but it was not to be. Bob Smith was quite a character. He had been a crocodile hunter in South Africa in the days before his conversion and was still a rough and ready unpolished stone. He was always looking back to the 'glory days' and trying to create them again and hoped that Bill would bring revival to his church. God did heal in a small way and people did give their lives to Christ but it was a far cry from the early days. Revivals are sovereign moves of God from my observation of history and you cannot just recreate them by meeting certain conditions.

After a few years without preaching he resigned himself to looking after Mrs Barratt and told us that this was his ministry along with prayer. He kept up his prayer life right up until the time when he was dying.

In 1994 I received a phone call from Dad. He asked if I would come and see him urgently. I knew if Dad asked me to come the 40 miles to Southport it was indeed urgent and I went that afternoon to find out what the problem was.

Unknown to the family, Dad had not had a good sleep for five long years. Mum was now so crippled with her arthritis that she was in a wheel chair and Dad had to lift her into bed each night. During the night when she needed to use the toilet he had to lift her out of bed and on to the toilet. This happened at least two times each night. She was of course a 'dead weight' as she could not help him in any way because of her arthritis. If he did not handle her with the utmost care she would cry out in pain. Dad was really straining himself and in the end his body and mind said, "That's enough" and his brain shut down somewhat where he could no longer carry on without assistance.

## He Couldn't Think

Dad told me he could not make decisions any longer and presented me with a box full of documents that included his bank statements and cheque books, his insurance policies, and his utility bill details. He said in a pathetic voice, "Mo, can you help me and handle all my affairs as I can't do it any longer?" I said, "Of course Dad." I didn't realise how this breakdown had affected him until I asked him if he would like me to make him a cup of tea and he said, "Wait a minute," and I could see he was straining to bring his mind to bear on the question. He could see me looking at him and he raised his hands and said, "Don't say anything just wait." I did and after a few minutes he then said, "Yes, I would like a cup of tea." He could not even sign a cheque

and so I took all these papers home in the cardboard box and started to handle all his affairs.

In the meanwhile I called my three sisters and told them what had happened and we decided that Dad could no longer support Mum in the way he had been doing.

I always had it in my mind that I would ask Mum and Dad to live with me and my family in Manchester when they became old and at one time I suggested it but both Mum and Dad did not want to leave Southport.

We told Mum that the family had agreed the best thing was for her to go into an old people's home, because she needed 24/7 care and we could not provide it. This was painful for us because she was crying and said she did not want to go into a home. In the end we said that if she didn't then she would lose Dad anyway because it would kill him if he tried to carry on looking after her. In the end, with tears in her eyes, she bravely said she would do this for Dad, and Norma began to look for care homes close to them so that Dad would be able visit her each day.

Norma looked at a few care homes but in the end we all agreed on a very pleasant place just behind the promenade and Mum moved into it. It was the best thing that happened to her for now she was being looked after far better than Dad could have ever done. Her hair was washed and permed more regularly and she was able to look forward to Bill coming each day to visit her. She brightened up within a few weeks.

Norma, who at this time had been through a divorce, unselfishly said she would come and live with Dad to look after him and straight away he began to improve. At a later date I returned all Dad's accounts and utility details and Norma took care of them. Later Norma bought an apartment only two miles away from Dad and so he sold the house and moved in with her and she looked after him until his death.

Dad continued his prayer life and I suppose it would be true to say he became rather reclusive. He did not really like to receive visitors and although he went to the Elim Church in Southport with Norma he did not socialise with any of the members and kept to himself. After Edna died in August 2002 he had no reason to go out of the house during week days. Norma would take him out for a run in her car to the beach, other places of recreation, or for a meal but I think if he had been on his own he would have become a complete recluse.

## Cancer

Early In 2006 Dad was diagnosed with cancer of the tongue. The specialist gave him three alternatives.

1. He could have a ten hour operation to remove part of his tongue that would require a long time of rehabilitation – they told Norma, who accompanied him for the consultation, that he may not survive the anaesthetic because of his age – 89.

2. He could go to Liverpool three times a week for radium treatment.

3. He could do nothing and be treated with pain killers.

Dad said he did not want to go through an operation and he could not travel to Liverpool three times a week – In fact, Norma said that even she would find it difficult to take three days out of the week to run Dad and so Dad said he would leave himself in the hands of God as he was not afraid to die for he knew his salvation was sure and his reward awaiting him.

As he became weaker and the cancer spread he was admitted to a hospice in Southport and in the December he went peacefully to his reward. All four children were with him during his final three days.

The night he died my three sisters went to freshen up at my eldest sister's apartment, and I decided to keep my appointment to teach at a house group. The hospice rang Norma and said Dad was failing so they immediately went back to the hospice, and rang me. I had just arrived at the venue and sat down ready to teach when I received their call so, after apologising to the host, I returned to the car and drove straight back to Southport. We were all round his bed and felt at peace as he passed into the presence of his Lord and Saviour. The date was 8th December 2006.

### Footnote 1

And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony,

## Breakdown

and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

*Acts 13:22*

Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven

*Matthew 7:21*

Postscript \_\_\_\_\_

# The Last Post

As Dad had attended the Elim church in Southport, Norma arranged for his funeral to be held there and the resident minister took the service. I arranged a memorial service to celebrate his life at Sharon where I convened the meeting and many gave testimonies of Bill Barratt's influence on their lives.

Joanna gave testimony to the way he had mentored her and then sang the very appropriate song by Janet Paschal.

*His back is bent and weary  
his voice is tired and low*

## The Last Post

his sword is worn from battle  
and his steps have gotten slow  
but he used to walk on water  
or it seemed that way to me  
I know he moved some mountains  
and never left his knees  
strike up the band assemble the choir  
another soldier's coming home  
another warrior hears the call  
he's waited for so long  
he'll battle no more  
cause he won his wars  
make sure heaven's table  
has room for at least one more  
sing a welcome song  
another soldier's coming home  
he faced the winds of sorrow  
but his heart knew no retreat  
he walked in narrow places  
knowing Christ knew no defeat  
but now his steps turn homeward  
so much closer to the prize  
he's sounding kind of homesick  
there's a longing in his eyes  
strike up the band assemble the choir  
another soldier's coming home  
another warrior hears the call  
he's waited for so long  
he'll battle no more  
cause he won his wars  
make sure heaven's table

## The Last Post

*has room for at least one more  
sing a welcome song  
another soldier's coming home*

Janet Pascal

The fact that Bill Barratt, servant of Christ and apostle, died in such sad circumstances may seem negative to many readers, especially if you look through human eyes, but I have learned that God does not see things the way we do and if you look through God's eyes you will often see a very different and exciting story.

## Decrease or Increase?

The split of Paul and Barnabas did not end the ministry of Paul... or Barnabas. In fact their ministry increased because Paul worked with Silas, and Barnabas befriended John Mark, so the work expanded not contracted. God must have always known what would happen because he understands sinful human nature. God always has a carefully crafted plan and it is never unfolded the way men would have suggested or even imagined so be careful when you judge people that God used. Remember that Cyrus was 'God's anointed' and Pharaoh was only raised to the most powerful empire on earth in his time so that God could smash him down to show his own power.

I believe that in God's plan, for those he has called, there is a time for their ministry to wax and

a time for it to wane. After Abraham offered his son as a sacrifice we hear no more of him except that he married again, had children, lived happily ever after, and lived to the grand old age of 175 years old. Moses, after he had trained Joshua to lead Israel into the promised land, had to fade away on the wilderness side of Jordan. He had done his job. George Jeffreys, after pioneering so many churches, died in obscurity and I could go on with many more examples.

At the time of writing, all four of Bill's children are serving God in some capacity, and before Bill died he saw his 21 grandchildren and even his great grandchildren. Many are serving God and some are in full time ministry.

Dad's slow demise from ministry brought, and allowed my wife and I, into full time ministry. At first we relied on his famous name but slowly we were established in our own right with a different ministry and calling than Dad.

## Bill Still Preaching

We were called into a teaching ministry and not evangelism and I have taught the message of discipleship, based on the Sermon on the Mount, in 42 countries, and through the media reached far more people in 84 countries with the message Dad instilled in me. I have learned as much through my father's failures (in my eyes of course) as I have from his success, just as I have from those in the

Bible that shows people's humanity as well as their spirituality.

For the last few years of his life Dad would spend the last hour before he went to bed in the presence of God. He would go to his room with a hymn book and just sing to God. He told me that whenever he went to his closet to pray he would see the cloud of God surround him and feel his awesome presence. He loved Charles Wesley's hymns. When he could no longer sing because of his condition he told his family that the angels would come each night for an hour and sing in harmony for him outside his window. This was not his imagination for he had seen angels all his life with his spiritual eyes. God was so good to him.

## The Seed Grows

I was one of the four members of his family that lowered his coffin into the earth at the cemetery in Southport. I remembered that after he was miraculously healed of his war wounds his body had stayed healthy for almost 60 years, and I thought, "Good riddance to that old body Dad. It has served you well but you no longer need it, and one day you will rise with a new spiritual one."

When a child of God is buried it is a seed planted in the ground that one day will spring forth into its glorified body. What a blessed hope.

Bill Barratt was a great example of a man who lived and died for God and showed me that his God

is worth serving. He ran the race and did not let go of the baton until I was able to handle it and by his grace I will be carrying it until I finish my race or hand it to the next runner ... for we are all in a race.

Well done Bill Barratt.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:1

Maurice and his wife, Joanna, are available to teach discipleship based on the Sermon on the Mount and can be contacted by email:  
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or via Barratt Ministries website:  
[www.barrattministries.org.uk](http://www.barrattministries.org.uk).

The teachings are all on the Barratt Ministries channels of YouTube and Vimeo

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