

MARTYN LLOYD-JONES: A GOD-GLORIFYING MINISTRY¹

Vaughan Roberts

Much contemporary discussion of the ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones focuses on his ecclesiology, after his call in 1966 for evangelicals to leave doctrinally mixed denominations. This article argues that the driving passion of his life and ministry was a concern for God's glory, which contains an inspiring challenge for all Christians today, regardless of churchmanship.

Introduction

Along with John Stott, Martyn Lloyd-Jones did more to shape British Evangelicalism in the twentieth century than anyone else. His influence was at first largely limited to Wales, where he was minister of Sandfields Chapel at Aberavon from 1927–1939. From then, until he retired in 1968, he served at Westminster Chapel in London, which was the base from which he established a global influence. His theological knowledge and conviction, acute mind, dazzling brilliance as a preacher, pastoral warmth, powerful personality and deep spirituality were greatly used by God.

Sadly, considerations of Lloyd-Jones' legacy have often been dominated by discussion of the clash between him and John Stott at the National Assembly of Evangelicals in 1966. The Doctor called on evangelicals to leave doctrinally mixed denominations and join together 'as a fellowship, or an association, of evangelical churches.'² John Stott used or, as some believe, abused his position as chairman to disagree and, ever since, evangelicals have debated who was right. These issues are significant, but I do not propose to discuss them further in this paper. Although ecclesiology was of crucial importance for Lloyd-Jones, especially in later years, we will miss the dominant theme of his ministry if we focus there. What united Lloyd-Jones and Stott was far greater than what divided them. As Stott himself said in his remarks at the meeting in 1966, 'We are all concerned with the same ultimate issues and with

¹ The substance of this paper was originally given at the Proclamation Trust's Evangelical Ministry Assembly in July 2014.

² D.M. Lloyd-Jones, 'Evangelical Unity: An Appeal,' in *Knowing the Times* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), p. 257.

the glory of God.³ For Lloyd-Jones that concern for God's glory was the driving passion of his life and ministry. His daughter, Elizabeth Catherwood, has said that this was at the heart of all her father said and did.⁴ His grandson, Christopher Catherwood, has made a similar observation: 'love and concern for the glory of God...was at the centre of everything he preached.'⁵ In a world that is prone to place pragmatism above principle, style above substance and results above integrity, Lloyd-Jones' example of a God-glorifying ministry is an inspiring challenge for us today.

The Man of God

Martyn Lloyd-Jones was born in Cardiff in 1899, but spent most of his childhood in Llangeitho in rural west Wales, where his father ran the general store. Financial difficulties forced a move to London and a new start for the family in the dairy business. Young Martyn, now in his mid-teens, was an able student and entered the medical school at St Bartholomew's Hospital when still only sixteen. On qualifying as a doctor he worked as assistant to the Royal Physician, Sir Thomas Horder, and a brilliant medical career lay ahead of him. It was during this time that God took hold of his life.

Martyn had always attended church with his family in Welsh speaking chapels in Wales and London and would have called himself a Christian, but he had never really understood the gospel or its application to him. This gradually changed in his early twenties as he came to recognise himself as a sinner who deserved God's judgement and the death of Jesus as his only hope. The effect was profound. He was overwhelmed by the love of God in Christ and filled with a sense of awe and wonder at the grace of God in the gospel, which never left him. He wrote that 'the preacher...must be a man who is characterised by spirituality in an unusual degree,...who has arrived at a settled, assured knowledge and understanding of the truth.'⁶ This was surely true of him and was reflected in his life and preaching. He knew God and walked closely with him. He

³ Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith 1939-1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), p. 525.

⁴ Ian M. Randall, 'Lloyd-Jones and Revival' in A. Atherstone & D.C. Jones, eds., *Engaging with Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Nottingham: IVP, 2011), p. 104.

⁵ Christopher Catherwood, *Five Evangelical Leaders* (Kent: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984), p. 86.

⁶ D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, (first published 1971) 1985), p. 109.

combined a profound reverence for God with a deep personal knowledge of him. Jim Packer spoke for many when he said he had never known a preacher ‘with so much of God about him.’⁷

Lloyd-Jones’ conversion made him rethink how he should spend the rest of his life. For over a year, he was in turmoil as he struggled to decide between medicine and pastoral ministry. In his anxiety he lost twenty pounds in weight,⁸ a considerable amount for a small, lean man, before the matter was settled by a sense of divine constraint. To those who questioned why he should give up such a useful profession as medicine, he replied: ‘If you knew more about the work of a doctor you would understand. We but spend most of our time rendering people fit to go back to their own sin!...I want to heal souls. If a man has a diseased body and his soul is all right he is all right to the end; but a man with a healthy body and a diseased soul is all right for 60 years or so and then he has to face an eternity of hell.’⁹

Once the decision had been made to leave medicine, Lloyd-Jones moved quickly. He resolved not to take a course of formal theological study, but rather to accept a call to be pastor of a church in the Sandfields area of Aberavon in South Wales, right next to the industrial town of Port Talbot. His ministry coincided with the great depression, which affected this working class area deeply. Lloyd-Jones had a deep sense of social justice, which led him to choose to serve in such an area¹⁰ and he frequently offered his medical services to those in need free of charge. He was determined, however, that the church should focus on its chief task of proclaiming the gospel. Terrible damage had been done, he felt, by the social gospel, which had led to Christians simply echoing the world and its concerns and having nothing distinctive to say. Church programmes had been cluttered by all kinds of political, welfare and cultural activities, which distracted from the central task.¹¹ He insisted that ‘Christian people – but not the church – should get involved in politics and social affairs. The kingdom task of the church is to save men from the wrath to come by bringing them to Christ.’¹² That conviction led him to close down most of

⁷ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 325.

⁸ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 93.

⁹ Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years 1899–1939* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), p. 80.

¹⁰ Christopher Catherwood, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: A Family Portrait* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1996), p. 48.

¹¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 35.

¹² From an interview with Carl Henry found in Christopher Catherwood, ed., *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Chosen by God* (Sussex: Highland Books, 1986), p. 106.

the church activities within months of his arrival at Sandfields, including the Dramatic Society. When the committee asked him what they should do with the wooden stage in the church hall, he replied, 'You can heat the church with it.'¹³ He was later to take a similar approach when he arrived at Westminster Chapel, although the task of dealing with what he felt was an excessive range of activities was helped by the fact that they were all forced to close by the outbreak of war.¹⁴ Lloyd-Jones simply did nothing to revive them when conditions changed. His focus, and the focus of both churches, was to be the proclamation of the gospel, Bible classes and prayer.

The doubters at Sandfields feared that the reduction in church activities would lead to a decline in church membership, but the opposite was the case. There were fewer than 150 members on Lloyd-Jones' arrival, but this grew to 500 by the time he left.¹⁵ In 1930, 84 new members arrived, of which 70 were recorded as 'from the world,' rather than transferring from other churches.¹⁶ The next year the growth was 135, 128 of whom were 'from the world.' One of the early converts was Bethan Lloyd-Jones who, like her husband a few years earlier, came to see her own sin and need of personal salvation. She later told the story of some of the other conversions in *Memories of Sandfields*.¹⁷

One of these converts was a man called Edgar, who had been gripped by alcohol. After a long talk with the Doctor at the beach, he was converted and his life had been transformed. Afterwards he put three photographs on his wall to illustrate the change, with captions underneath. The first showed him drunk and dishevelled and was entitled 'Lost.' The next was of the conversation on the beach with Lloyd-Jones: 'Found.' In the third he was dressed in a smart suit with a look of beaming contentment on his face: 'Saved.'¹⁸ Another convert was Mark McCann, a well-known local prize fighter. He had once been so angry with his dog for eating his dinner that he had cut off its head with a bread knife. He himself acknowledged that it was a miracle that he had never killed anyone, such

¹³ Murray, *The First Forty Years*, p. 135.

¹⁴ John Brencher, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1988–1981) and Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2002), p. 63.

¹⁵ David Ceri Jones, 'Lloyd-Jones and Wales,' in Atherstone & Jones, *Engaging with Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, p. 64.

¹⁶ Murray, *The First Forty Years*, p. 210.

¹⁷ Bethan Lloyd-Jones, *Memories of Sandfields* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983).

¹⁸ B. Lloyd-Jones, *Memories of Sandfields*, pp. 40–41.

was his temper. He came to Christ the first time he attended the chapel and was a transformed man.¹⁹

Those early days at Sandfields were the nearest that Lloyd-Jones knew to revival in his ministry. His daughter Elizabeth, who was a child at the time later recalled, ‘When I look back on it, my awareness is of the presence of God...a sense of glory.’²⁰ Although he did not see such a concentrated period of fruit again, Lloyd-Jones never lost his evangelistic focus and many were converted through his ministry. As his wife once said, ‘no-one will understand my husband until they realise that he is first a man of prayer and then an evangelist.’²¹

The Word of God

In the first half of the twentieth Century it was widely assumed that higher criticism made it impossible for anyone with a brain to believe in the verbal inspiration of scripture and submit to its authority in any traditional sense. Many evangelicals were intimidated by the confident liberalism of the main denominations and theological institutions and withdrew into an anti-intellectual pietism, which was devotionally warm but doctrinally shallow. That gradually changed in the post-war years, significantly because of the work of the Inter Varsity Fellowship, for whom Lloyd-Jones became a regular speaker and a key influence, through his friendship with Douglas Johnson, its founding secretary. He became known, as he himself put it, as ‘the theologian of the IVF.’²² In the words of Fred Catherwood, Lloyd-Jones’ son-in-law, who was a student in the mid-1940s,

He showed our generation clearly that the strand of pietistic evangelicalism, the muscular Christianity of the varsity and public school camps, the devotional piety of the Brethren, the emotional dedication of the great conventions, the revivalism of the big interdenominational missions, was not enough. He, almost alone, stopped the retreat in face of the liberal humanism which the church had not dared to meet head on.²³

¹⁹ B. Lloyd-Jones, *Memories of Sandfields*, pp. 66–69.

²⁰ Catherwood, *A Family Portrait*, pp. 47–48.

²¹ Iain H. Murray, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones 1899–1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2013), p. 321.

²² Catherwood, *Chosen by God*, p. 185.

²³ Frederick Catherwood, ‘A Family Portrait (1),’ in Catherwood, *Chosen by God*, p. 128.

At the heart of Lloyd-Jones' ministry was a deep confidence in the absolute truth of scripture. He said, 'I believe the word of God and I rest myself and my whole position entirely upon it.'²⁴ In his teaching he pointed people, not simply to isolated Bible texts, but to great Bible themes,²⁵ above all the 'great central and all-important truth of the sovereignty of God and God's glory.'²⁶ Commenting on three of the best known London preachers of the day, an observer said, 'Soper preaches love, Weatherhead preaches Jesus, and Lloyd-Jones preaches God.'²⁷ This is sometimes called a Calvinistic emphasis, but that was a term he rarely used.²⁸ As his grandson has written, he was 'a Bible Calvinist, not a system one,'²⁹ who began his exposition of the gospel with God because that is where the Bible begins. The Doctor felt that the fact that 'a sense of divine sovereignty had been lost' had led to a 'flabby generation of Christians' and a form of Christianity that was 'superficial and glib, defective in feeling and thought, lacking in virility and stability... Instead of aiming to be godly and God-fearing, evangelicals were now so keen to have peace and joy. They had forgotten that the purpose of salvation is not, in the first place, to give men certain things or certain experiences, but to put them in a right relationship to God himself.'³⁰ He determined to direct people's hearts and minds away from a man-centred focus and to put a vision of God and his glory back in the centre. He did this not, above all,

²⁴ D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Assurance of our Salvation: Exploring the Depth of Jesus' Prayer for His Own* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2000), pp. 180–81, in Robert Pope, 'Lloyd-Jones and Fundamentalism,' in Atherstone & Jones, *Engaging with Martyn Lloyd-Jones*, p. 203.

²⁵ He wrote that 'Great preaching always depends on great themes.' Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 13.

²⁶ D.M. Lloyd-Jones, 'John Calvin,' in *Knowing the Times*, p. 35.

²⁷ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 324.

²⁸ His attitude was the same as his wife's who said, 'Why do people have to use all these words like "Reformed"? Why don't they just say "biblical"?' Catherwood, *A Family Portrait*, p. 111.

²⁹ Catherwood, *A Family Portrait*, p. 116.

He also warned of the danger of allowing our systems to control our theology rather than the Bible: '[S]ome of us, sometimes, tend to read the Scriptures, not so much to be enlightened and to be taught, as to confirm our own theologies, our own ideas, and our own prejudices... In the name of God, I say, let us be careful that we do not go to the Scriptures with such a prejudice that we pick out only what agrees with our theory and ignore and forget the rest!' In Tony Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1994), p. 252 quoting D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Righteous Judgement of God* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), p. 9.

³⁰ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 241.

by teaching doctrine, but by expounding the scriptures. This was the heart of his ministry and the chief means by which God used him so mightily.

After praying, Lloyd-Jones would almost always begin his sermons by referring to a Bible text, saying ‘the words to which I would like to draw your attention are to be found in...’³¹ In this way he left his hearers in no doubt that his message was not his own, but came from the word of God. He taught that preaching should therefore be expository,³² not just starting with a Bible passage and then moving beyond it to other themes, but governed by it: ‘we must be honest with our texts,’ taking them always in context and seeking to ensure that our sermon is driven by ‘the main message, the main thrust.’³³

The Power of God

The chapter on which Lloyd-Jones preached his first sermon also provided the text that was inscribed on his gravestone: ‘For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified’ (1 Corinthians 2:2). He described it as ‘the most important chapter of the Bible today from the standpoint of modern preaching.’³⁴ This is because it not only pointed to the heart of the gospel we are called to preach, but also described how it should be preached: ‘with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power’ (1 Corinthians 2:4). Commenting on these words in a sermon he said,

My dear friends, our methods are as important as our message and we must not use the methods of the world. We must not be so concerned about results that we resort to devious, doubtful methods. We must not play with men and try to entice them and try to ingratiate ourselves. No, no! The proclamation of this blessed word is to be in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.³⁵

This conviction led Lloyd-Jones to resist anything he felt relied on human ability or technique rather than on God’s power. He shunned the ‘*hwyl*,’ a ‘combination of ecstatic emotion and of musical intonation,’³⁶ which

³¹ Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing*, p. 176.

³² Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 75

³³ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*. p. 201.

³⁴ Catherwood, *Chosen by God*, p. 102.

³⁵ Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing*, p. 289.

³⁶ J. Hugh Edwards quoted in Murray, *The First Forty Years*, p. 146.

was a typical feature of Welsh preaching. He thought this was a form of manipulation which depended on technique for its effect rather than the Spirit. He was equally contemptuous of preachers whom he called ‘essayists’,³⁷ who seemed to be more concerned with writing fine sounding phrases than with the message they proclaimed and its effect. As an example he referred to Hensley Henson, the Bishop of Durham, who had once spent three weeks ‘producing and polishing,’ a perfect sermon. Lloyd-Jones commented: ‘there must be form, but we must never give inordinate attention to it.’³⁸ He was scathing about any kind of ‘professionalism’ of this sort, calling it ‘an abomination’³⁹ and ‘prostitution.’⁴⁰ He warned that we are most vulnerable to this danger at our strongest point: ‘it is your strength you have to watch, the thing at which you excel, your natural gifts and aptitudes. They are the ones that are most likely to trip you because they are the ones that will tempt you to make a display and to pander to self.’⁴¹

The same concern for a dependence on God’s Spirit rather than human technique led Lloyd-Jones to oppose any kind of evangelistic campaign. He spoke warmly about Billy Graham as ‘an utterly honest, sincere and genuine man,’ who ‘certainly preaches the gospel,’⁴² but would never actively support his missions. He said,

I am convinced that nothing can avail but churches and ministers on their knees in total dependence on God. As long as you go on organising, people will not fall on their knees and implore God to come and heal them. It seems to me that the campaign approach trusts ultimately in technique rather than in the power of the Spirit.⁴³

Having read the Church of England’s report ‘Towards the conversion of England,’ which was published in 1945, he wrote, ‘it is the old story and they still believe that they can organise these things.’⁴⁴ As Iain Murray

³⁷ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 15.

³⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 219.

³⁹ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 231.

⁴⁰ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 232.

⁴¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 255.

⁴² Catherwood, *Chosen by God*, p. 101.

⁴³ Catherwood, *Chosen by God*, p. 101.

⁴⁴ Martyn Lloyd-Jones in letter to Rev. Philip E. Hughes in D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Letters 1919–1981*, selected with notes by Iain Murray (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), p. 70. A recent report of a debate at the General Synod of the Church of England would have confirmed him in his view: ‘Dr. Sentamu,’ wrote the

has observed, Lloyd-Jones' 'basic unease with English evangelicalism was its failure to see its need of true spiritual power.'⁴⁵ He himself was convinced that 'nothing but an unusual and signal manifestation of God's power through the Holy Spirit can possibly meet the present need.' For that reason, he prayed daily for revival and urged his congregation to do the same.⁴⁶ 'When God acts, he can do more in a minute than man with his organising can do in 50 years.'⁴⁷

The dependence on the Spirit which, Lloyd-Jones felt, should lead believers to pray earnestly for revival, should also mark ministers in their regular preaching. It was not enough simply to work hard to understand a text of Scripture and preach it faithfully, all of which can be done mechanically. What is needed is not just truth, but also power. True preaching is 'logic on fire!'⁴⁸ Men can deliver the logic of faithful biblical teaching fused into a coherent message, but only the Holy Spirit can produce the fire.

For Lloyd-Jones, therefore, it followed that no qualification was more important for a preacher than the possession of spiritual authority. 'Knowledge and culture are invaluable but only on the condition that they are used as servants and hand maidens; in and of themselves they do not give authority. That only comes through being filled with the Spirit.'⁴⁹ Preachers did not decide to preach: the Spirit laid hold of them and called them to the task, so that they felt unable to resist. Like Jeremiah, the word of God burned within them and they could not hold it in (Jeremiah 20:9).⁵⁰

Lloyd-Jones noticed that those preachers in history that he had most admired, and who had been greatly used in times of revival, had had similar experiences of being filled with a deep assurance and sense of the

report, 'called for a campaign aimed at the "re-evangelisation of England" on a par with the ministry of saints such as Cuthbert, Hilda and Aidan...Synod responded by voting to set up a committee.' (*Church Times*, 22nd November 2013.) In fairness, it should be added that at the launch of an initiative introduced by the Committee that was established after the debate, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in calling for prayer, said, 'We cannot do it alone...we are not thrown back on ourselves, but in, by and through the power of the Holy Spirit.' (*Church Times*, 6th June 2014.)

⁴⁵ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 163.

⁴⁶ Martyn Lloyd-Jones in letter to Rev. Philip E. Hughes in Lloyd-Jones, *Letters*, pp. 70–1.

⁴⁷ D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Revival* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1987), pp. 121–122.

⁴⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 97.

⁴⁹ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, pp. 159–60.

⁵⁰ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, pp. 104–5.

wonder and glory of God.⁵¹ He described such experiences in various terms, including, controversially, ‘baptism of the Spirit.’⁵² He believed it was the deeply felt conviction that followed these experiences that had driven his heroes to preach and to do so with such power. However, they did not simply rely on an encounter with God in the past. The Welsh preacher Howell Harris, for example, is commended as one who ‘lived in the realm of the Spirit.’ His diaries contain frequent expressions such as ‘the Lord came down in power.’ Another favourite term of Harris’ was ‘the authority.’ As Lloyd-Jones acknowledged, ‘that was what he longed for and craved for.’⁵³

Lloyd-Jones urged all preachers to have the same longing, praying for the Spirit, not only to take hold of them, but also of their sermons as they preached. They should recognise what Jonathan Edwards taught, that the goal of preaching is not only to teach, but to produce an impression. ‘We are not merely imparters of information... The business of preaching is to make such knowledge live.’⁵⁴ ‘The Chief end of preaching’ was, in Lloyd-Jones’ words, ‘to give men and women a sense of God and his presence...’ He said, ‘I can forgive the preacher almost anything if he gives me a sense of God... if he gives me some dim glimpse of the majesty and glory of God, the love of Christ my Saviour, and the magnificence of the gospel.’⁵⁵ This is not something that can be achieved by human ability or work alone, but depends on the Spirit.

Lloyd-Jones is certainly open to criticism of his teaching at some of these points. His emphasis on revival has the danger of breeding a passivism that focuses on praying for an unusual work of God at the expense of the undramatic faithfulness required in more ordinary times.⁵⁶

⁵¹ For example, George Whitefield (D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), p. 118), Daniel Rowland and Howell Harris (pp. 90–91) and Jonathan Edwards (p. 357). Howell Harris, the eighteenth-century Welsh preacher, for example, described one such moment: ‘suddenly I felt my heart melting within me like wax before a fire, and love to God for my saviour. I felt also not only love and peace, but a longing to die and to be with Christ. Then there came a cry into my soul within – Abba, Father! I could do nothing but call God my Father. I knew that I was His child and that He loved me and was listening to me. My mind was satisfied and I cried out, Now I am satisfied! Give me strength and I will follow Thee through water and fire.’ (p. 290)

⁵² Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 118. and also D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1984) Chapters 1 and 12.

⁵³ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 293.

⁵⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 360.

⁵⁵ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, pp. 97–98.

⁵⁶ He himself warned of this danger. (*Preaching & Preachers*, pp. 15–16).

His teaching about Spirit baptism and of the necessity of preachers having a particular kind of subjective call seemed to owe more to examples from Church history than convincing exegesis. Furthermore, the preacher was so central in his understanding that other gifts were, in effect, minimised. On Sundays he introduced the hymns, prayed, read from the Bible, and preached, leaving only the notices for the church secretary. John Brencher has observed that 'he so distrusted human activity and maximised the need for unction and divine calling in Christian service that evangelism, in effect, was completely tied in to the set piece sermon.'⁵⁷ He believed that 'when there is true preaching, people will come and listen to it.'⁵⁸ But what if they do not come? Should not all God's people be going out to them and seeking opportunities to share the gospel? And why does an organised campaign, designed to help believers in their outreach, necessarily undermine a dependence on God's Spirit? Lloyd-Jones certainly acknowledged the importance of preparing sermons,⁵⁹ so what is wrong with planning an evangelistic programme? Surely the sovereign God uses means, and that includes not just our study, but also our planning?

It may be, however, that the very area in which Lloyd-Jones is most open to criticism is also where he presents his greatest challenge to us. In considering whether it was an accident that most of the great revivals had taken place outside England, he asked whether the temperament of the English made them especially prone to the sin of quenching the Spirit.⁶⁰ The reality is that a tendency to depend too much on human ability and organisation, rather than on the power of the Spirit, is not the preserve of any one national group. We all need the challenge of Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

Is not our greatest need today an outpouring of the Spirit of God individually, as well as upon the churches in a more collective sense? We are again in a condition of darkness and deadness so similar to that of the early years of the 18th century. What produced the change then? The outpouring of the Spirit of God! Is not this our greatest need?⁶¹

⁵⁷ Brencher, *Lloyd-Jones and Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism*, p. 187.

⁵⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 52.

⁵⁹ 'Prepare as thoroughly as you can so that you will know in your mind what you want to say from beginning to end.' *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 226.

⁶⁰ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 11.

⁶¹ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 302.

The Knowledge of God

Lloyd-Jones lived in England for most of his life but he always looked at England and the English from the perspective of an outsider. He did so, not just as a Welshman, but as one deeply steeped in the Calvinistic Methodist tradition of his forebears, which emphasised both doctrine and experience. From his perspective, English evangelicalism was lacking in both. He noticed, ‘an innate dislike of over-precision and too much definition,’⁶² which led to doctrinal shallowness and compromise. He was also struck by a suspicion of emotions in the English character and an inability to express them. As his grandson has commented, he thought that ‘too much IVF faith was dominated by the “stiff upper lip” caricature of the English public school ethos.’⁶³ He had been appalled when an evangelical leader had reported enthusiastically about an evangelistic campaign that there had been ‘no emotion, no emotion’ and later wrote, ‘is it conceivable that a soul may realise the danger of spending eternity in hell, know something about the holiness of God, and believe that the Son of God came into the world and even died on a cruel cross and rose again from the dead that he might be saved, and yet feel no emotion?’⁶⁴

Lloyd-Jones greatly admired the Reformers and the Puritans but he was above all, in his own words, ‘an Eighteenth Century man.’⁶⁵ His heroes were great preachers of the Eighteenth Century revival: George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards and the Calvinistic Methodist fathers: Howell Harris, William Williams and Daniel Rowland, who had been a minister in Llangeitho, Lloyd-Jones’ home village. What they stood for was not simply doctrine or emotion, but an experiential knowledge of God. In Lloyd-Jones’ view, Calvinism without Methodism results in an ‘intellectualism’ marked by ‘a coldness, and a harshness.’⁶⁶ Methodism without Calvinism, by contrast, quickly degenerates into ‘mysticism.’ The two need each other. ‘Doctrine after all is a foundation, and no more. It is not an end, it is only a beginning. It is the means. We must never stop at it. It is always designed to bring us, by faith, into that knowledge, that intimacy, that deep experience of the living God, in which we really meet with him.’⁶⁷ That was the longing of William Williams: ‘He wanted to

⁶² Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 221.

⁶³ Catherwood, *A Family Portrait*, p. 58.

⁶⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 368.

⁶⁵ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, p. 120, and Fred Catherwood and C. Catherwood in the introduction to Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, p. 12.

⁶⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 210.

⁶⁷ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 51.

“feel” these things. He believed, but he was not satisfied with that: he wanted to know.⁶⁸

Jonathan Edwards was the theologian who best encapsulated these convictions for Lloyd-Jones. He found a two volume edition of Edwards’ works in a second-hand bookshop in Cardiff in 1929 and later wrote: ‘I devoured these volumes and literally just read and read them. It is certainly true that they helped me more than anything else.’⁶⁹ For Edwards, the heart of true religion was, in Lloyd-Jones’ summary, ‘an existential meeting with God.’ ‘You must have the theology; but it must be theology on fire. There must be warmth and heat as well as light.’⁷⁰

In stressing the importance of an experiential knowledge of the glory of God, Lloyd-Jones was speaking from the heart. In his own view he had ‘been becoming too intellectual, too doctrinal and theological’ in his preaching until some events in 1949 marked a ‘turning point.’⁷¹ Overwork had resulted in a physical collapse, which had left him in very low spirits and led in turn to a period of intense temptation.⁷² On one occasion he was very conscious of the devil’s presence in the room when he noticed the word ‘glory’ in a book which lay open beside him. ‘Instantly, “like a blaze of light,” he felt the very glory of God surround him. Every doubt and fear was silenced. The love of God was shed abroad in his heart... [and] he was brought into a state of ecstasy and joy which remained with him for several days.’⁷³ Something similar happened a few days later as he was reading some hymns of William Williams.⁷⁴ These experiences did not immediately lift his depression, which remained with him into the autumn, but they did have a lasting effect. As the year ended he wrote,

I remember when I was a child that I had great difficulty in deciding what to wish for or what to choose when someone asked me to do so. But I

⁶⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 197.

⁶⁹ Murray, *The First Forty Years*, p. 254. He expressed the extent of his admiration of Edwards when he wrote, ‘I am tempted, perhaps foolishly, to compare the Puritans to the Alps, Luther and Calvin to the Himalayas and Jonathan Edwards to Mount Everest! He has always seemed to me to be the man most like the apostle Paul.’ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 355.

⁷⁰ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, p. 368.

⁷¹ Iain Murray has commented: ‘We would be wrong to make too much of the words “turning point”...No one observed any major change in his preaching after that date.’ However, there was clearly a shift in Lloyd-Jones’ own mind. Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 219.

⁷² Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 207.

⁷³ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 209.

⁷⁴ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 210.

do not have any difficulty with this request to state my desire for 1950. Before everything else, my chief desire is 'so that I should know him.'⁷⁵

The passionate desire to know God through Christ and make him known drove Martyn Lloyd-Jones right up to the end of his life. As his cancer became more advanced he was forced to give up most of his active ministry. This led him to quote Luke 10:20: 'Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.' 'Bear that in mind,' he said solemnly. 'Our greatest danger is to live upon our activity. The ultimate test of a preacher is what he feels like when he cannot preach.'⁷⁶ He later added, 'When you come to where I am, there is only one thing that matters, that is your relationship to Him and your knowledge of Him. Nothing else matters.'⁷⁷ Even so, he was still hoping to be useful, writing in his last letter to his old friend Philip Hughes: 'My supreme desire now is to testify more than ever to the glory and wonder of his grace.'⁷⁸ A month later, as the end drew near, he wrote on a scrap of paper for Bethan and the family: 'Do not pray for healing. Do not hold me back from the glory.'⁷⁹ He died shortly afterwards on St. David's Day, March 1st, 1981.

Conclusion

In the decade after his death, Iain Murray wrote an excellent two volume biography of Lloyd-Jones, for whom he had once worked. This remains essential reading for anyone wanting to understand the man and his ministry. It was inevitable and right that these books have been supplemented as the years have passed by more objective treatments.⁸⁰ Alongside much appreciation, these have also raised criticisms of Lloyd-Jones' ministry. Did he so emphasise the primacy of preaching that he left little room for other ministries? Did his emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the necessity of depending on the Spirit's power lead him to understate the importance of human organisation and planning? Should

⁷⁵ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 220. Lloyd-Jones is referring to Philippians 3:10.

⁷⁶ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 738.

⁷⁷ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 744.

⁷⁸ Martyn Lloyd-Jones in letter to Rev. Philip E. Hughes in Lloyd-Jones, *Letters*, p. 232.

⁷⁹ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 747.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Brencher, *Lloyd-Jones and Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism*, and Atherstone & Jones, *Engaging with Martyn Lloyd-Jones*.

he have done more to share leadership and to prepare for the succession at Westminster Chapel?

It is right to ask such questions, but we should also make sure we allow his example and teaching to ask questions of us. Do we share his focus and passion? Is our message the gospel of God from the word of God? Does our method depend on the power of God above all else, rather than on human technique and ability? Is our goal to lead people to a knowledge of God which dwells, not just in the head, but in the heart and profoundly impacts every aspect of life? And is our motive in all we do the glory of God alone?

In a tribute to Lloyd-Jones, Jim Packer has referred to his dying request to his family, ‘Do not hold me back from the glory’;⁸¹ ‘for me, those last words, “the glory,” point with precision to the significance that under God he had in my life. He embodied and expressed “the glory” – the glory of God, of Christ, of grace, of the gospel, of the Christian ministry, of humanness according to the new creation – more richly than any man I have ever known. No man can give another a greater gift than a vision of such glory as this. I am forever in his debt.’⁸² Many thousands could say the same.

VAUGHAN ROBERTS is the Rector of St Ebbe’s Church, Oxford and Director of the Proclamation Trust.

⁸¹ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 747.

⁸² Quoted in Catherwood, *A Family Portrait*, pp. 154–55, from Charles Turner, *Chosen Vessels: Portraits of Ten outstanding Christian Men* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Publications, 1985), p. 123.

