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DR. D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES (1899-1981) — A DOXOLOGICAL MINISTRY: “AND IT LIFTS ME UP TO GLORY, FOR IT LIFTS ME UP TO THEE”¹

LEIGH B. POWELL

These lines, “And it lifts me up to glory, For it lifts me up to Thee,” from Samuel Francis’ hymn “O the deep, deep love of Jesus!” can be appropriated to express most aptly the distinguishing character of the ministry of Dr. Lloyd-Jones. In one word, the whole of his ministry was *doxological*; lifting one’s soul to praise the Lord. Originally, as I was thinking of what constituted the quintessence of Dr. Lloyd-Jones’ life I concentrated on his doxological preaching, and this will be the primary focus here. However, on reflection I concluded that the *whole* of his ministry was doxological. By doxological in this broadened sense, I mean that filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, he moved both individuals and congregations, in such a manner that they were lifted up to glory, into the very presence of the holy and majestic God. My concern here is to draw attention to some of the elements which were present in his doxological ministry, in order that others may benefit from his example.

THE FUNCTION OF PREACHING

The primary influence on Dr. Lloyd-Jones' concept of preaching was Jonathan Edwards. Edwards believed that preaching should always be "warm and earnest."² Lloyd-Jones cites Edwards' view that "the main benefit obtained by preaching is by impression made upon the mind at the time, and not by an effect that arises afterwards by a remembrance of what was delivered."³ Lloyd-Jones, like Jonathan Edwards, was deeply concerned that his preaching produce an immediate impact upon the listener that would transfer him from darkness into His glorious light. The Doctor rejected anything artificial, anything that would allow the listener to detach himself from the preached Word and thereby evade God's required response of faith. In his 1976 paper on Jonathan Edwards, commenting on Thomas Cartwright the Puritan Presbyterian, Lloyd-Jones said:

The real function of preaching is not to give information, it is to do what Cartwright says; it is to give it more heat, to give life to it, to give power to it, to bring it home to the hearers. The preacher is not in the pulpit merely to give knowledge and information to people. He is to inspire them, he is to enthuse them, he is to enliven them, and send them out glorying in the Spirit.⁴

IMMEDIATE GENRE IDENTIFICATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Recent biblical studies have undergone quite a profitable transformation. Now the focus is on discovering the genre to which texts belong. Sidney Greidanus cites as genres: narrative, wisdom, gospel, apocalypse, prophecy, psalm and epistle. These types of literature all exhibit repeated elements that result in distinctive structures. He refers to smaller genres or literary units as "forms" or "subtypes" such as laws, dreams, laments, parables, etc.⁵ What is remarkable about Dr. Lloyd-Jones' preaching is that it reveals that he had an instinctive grasp of the genres or forms in passages that he was preaching. He displays great skill in using their distinctives to convey the rich variety of the biblical genres. He thereby avoids distilling all this variety into a uniform series of abstract propositions. My wife and I shall never forget his brilliant recognition of genre in the sermon he preached at Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto on September 8, 1963, the day after he assisted Dr. William Fitch in our marriage service. Let me attempt to convey something of

the dynamic joy that was aroused by his preaching. This is how the Doctor began his sermon from Psalm 107:

Now some of you may be surprised that I should propose to deal with 31 verses. Let me tell you why I am doing so. We must never forget that a psalm is after all a psalm. And it seems to me very often to be as pointless to deal with only one verse in a psalm as it would be to repeat but one note in a song. A song is a whole, and a psalm in the same way is a whole, and the psalmist in his psalm is anxious always to convey some one complete whole.... Though it is a long psalm, going on to 43 verses there is a unity about it. There is one great message, and the man of course, announces it in these early verses. He starts by saying, "Oh give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever. ...Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy" (verses 1-2). That's what he wants to do, to sing this great hymn of praise unto God. And the method he adopts is this. He seems to be gathering together a great choir to sing the praises of God.⁶

It is precisely at this point that his brilliant employment of the genre of psalms is displayed. Lloyd-Jones uses a series of questions to elicit an interested desire for answers, and he does so by inviting everyone to sing in a great choir:

Do you belong to this Choir? Don't you think that you had better come into training? Don't you think that you had better join the Great Rehearsal on earth? ... Are you offering your praise and your thanksgiving to Him? Are you studying the notes, are you perfect in your rendering, in your part? O my dear friends, give the whole of your time because that great day is coming and we shall be in that heavenly Choir and we shall sing forever and forever the praise of the Lamb that once was slain and has redeemed us. Make certain that you belong to the Choir. Amen.⁷

INVITATION

Doxological preaching inevitably invites the listener to break out of

individual isolation. Despite his presence in any gathering of people, an individual can still be very detached and coolly objective about what he is hearing. Lloyd-Jones in his preaching draws you into an immediate and active interplay with the scriptures. This message *must* be heard by everyone and so you are all encouraged to join a great choir to sing the praises of God. There can be no soloists or spectators for all are members of this choir. Throughout his sermon on Psalm 107 he shows an acute awareness that this musical genre lends itself to invitations to everyone to sing in this great choir. Rhetorically, he swept his hand across the congregation like a conductor and pointed at one section of the congregation after another. “There are the sopranos! There are the altos! There are the tenors! There are the bass! ... Are you all ready?” As he describes the conductor raising his hands he does so himself and quotes the conductor “You sopranos come along!” He describes their response: “And led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation” (verse 7).

EXPOSITION OF THE WHOLE

In 1969, I was a student at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Since I was a former member of Westminster Chapel London, I was asked to drive Dr. Lloyd-Jones to and from his lectures at Westminster Theological Seminary.⁸ Sometimes I drove him to other churches. One Sunday I drove him to a well-known church in Philadelphia. Afterwards, when I asked him for his comment on the sermon the preacher gave, Lloyd-Jones replied that it was a “glorified word study!” He was not decrying the necessity for preachers to do the required word studies for a pericope, but he was criticizing the practice of deriving a sermon and basing it on one word while ignoring the total context of the passage. The glib saying that “one picture is worth a thousand words” has often been used to denigrate the value of preaching, and especially sermons of any length like those of Dr. Lloyd-Jones. However, words can do far more than pictures, for pictures cannot bring out the sheer complexity and depth of the meaning of life. Words can explain ambiguities; they can, as Dr. Lloyd-Jones frequently showed, conclusively connect Old Testament promises to New Testament fulfillment. Words are powerful tools, not merely because they convey information, but also because God by His Spirit uses words to move us to the joyful and obedient action that He desires (Romans 6:17).

EXPECTATION

This note of warm invitation noted above, contributed to the sense of great expectation that was apparent in both the preacher and the congregation. When we took friends to Westminster Chapel we *expected* things would happen, that souls would definitely be saved and believers would be thrilled, re-invigorated and restored to a joyful life of service and ceaseless praise of the Lord. When Lloyd-Jones stepped into his pulpit you were aware that he had come from the Throne-Room of the universe, and that there he had sought that God would fill him with his Holy Spirit. It was apparent that he had an urgent and important message to bring to us. In his final lecture on preaching at Westminster Theological Seminary he spoke pointedly to the widespread problem of too many ministers: a mechanical performance of duties including prayer and preaching:

... What can we do without Him? Seek Him! Seek Him always. But go beyond seeking Him; expect Him. Do you expect anything to happen when you get up to preach in a pulpit? Or do you just say to yourself, "Well. I have prepared my address, I am going to give them this address; some of them will appreciate it and some of them will not?" Are you *expecting* it to be the turning point in someone's life? Are you *expecting* anyone to have a climactic experience? That is what preaching is meant to do. That is what you find in the Bible and in the subsequent history of the Church. Seek this power, *expect* this power, yearn for this power; and when the power comes, yield to Him. Do not resist. Forget all about your sermon if necessary. Let Him loose you, let Him manifest His power to you and through you. I am certain, as I have said several times before, that nothing but a return of the Spirit on our preaching is going to avail us anything. This makes true preaching, and it is the greatest need of all today — never more so. Nothing can substitute for this. But, given this, you will have a people who will be anxious and ready to be taught and instructed, and led ever further and more deeply into the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus. This "unction," this "anointing" is the supreme thing. Seek it until you have it; be content with nothing less. Go on until you can say, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing

words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He is still able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think."⁹

DOXOLOGICAL PREACHING AND JUDGEMENT

Why is so much modern preaching powerless? Where today can one hear the driving urgency and awesome solemnity that characterized Lloyd-Jones' preaching? Many preachers have a conversational style of preaching that suggests we can all relax, and "share" the kind of interesting thoughts one finds in *Reader's Digest*. The preacher is often introduced as the "speaker" because he "speaks." There is little recognition that in his office of preacher he does not merely "speak" but he "proclaims" or "heralds" *the authoritative Word of God as the King's appointed messenger*. Every time he preaches, he conveys the Word of God that has eternal consequences for the destiny of each hearer (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). Lloyd-Jones himself said, "I felt that in preaching the first thing you had to do was to demonstrate to the people that what you were going to do was very relevant and urgently important..."¹⁰ There was an earnest sobriety and evident concern that was instantly communicated to his listeners. I have never forgotten this. He would ask us to evaluate our hearing and reading in the light of this question: "What value will it be to you on your death-bed?" Everything in life had to be evaluated from the eternal perspective. Some contemporary Evangelical preachers have rejected the preaching of hell and they certainly see it as incongruous with any concept of doxological preaching. Undoubtedly, if there is no hell, the urgency and seriousness of preaching is greatly reduced. The listener will pay even less attention to the preached word when death is merely an extinguishing of the light and then — oblivion! However, Scripture, and Jesus in particular, do teach with absolute certainty and indisputable clarity, the reality of the eternal, conscious torment of the unrepentant sinner in hell. This fact often escapes a public's attention that vehemently insists on rejecting any concept of final judgement. When a terrorist's bomb destroys one's own house and all one's family members, there is often a quick switch. Now the sentimentalists demand instant judgement. When God does not immediately unleash a thunderbolt to destroy the terrorists, His very existence and Final Judgement are denied. As 2 Peter 3:3-10 demonstrates, the eternal God is not compelled to act according to man's hasty, unfair judgement, but His "delay" in judgement mercifully and constantly answered

the cries of those unbelievers who had experienced gross injustice. "For God *so* loved the world" (John 3:16). [What kind of world did He love? The important little adverb "so" emphasizes in the context that it was a world that "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19)]. Such was God's great concern that evil should be fully, even exhaustively punished, that He did this through the greatest sacrificial gift that He could possibly give mankind. Only the fully perfect and willing Son of God could propitiate the wrath of God against all evil. Since God's universe is one of perfect justice (Romans 9:17,22-24) it calls for doxological glorying in His "true and righteous ... judgements" (Revelation 19:2). In Revelation 6:9-11 martyred saints seek a public display, not of vindictive or personal revenge, but of *God's* holy justice, for these verses call for doxologies to the Judge who sets all things right forever.

Clearly, one of Dr. Lloyd-Jones' deepest disappointments was "a real change and a definite shift in the whole position of Anglican evangelicalism."¹¹ This change resulted in a *practical* denial of *Sola Scriptura*, the adoption of "higher critical methods in the study of the Scriptures," and the changes respecting "the truth of salvation and the truth concerning the church."¹² What made this theological shift so personally wounding to Dr. Lloyd-Jones was that some of those involved in it were long-time friends whom the Doctor had earlier influenced to adopt a full-orbed commitment to Reformed doctrine. In his 1977 address to the British Evangelical Council entitled *The Sword and the Song*, he focused on Psalm 149:5-6. He pointed out that if your doctrine of the Church was rooted in the concept of a national church which embraces liberals and Evangelicals [the Anglican via *media* = "middle way"], then compromise is inevitable. The motivation for this theological shift by some of the Evangelical Anglicans, the Doctor asserted, was that they "have been anxious to have an intellectual respectability and to be thought well of by the liberal scholars."¹³ Even many Reformed men can genuinely insist on their adherence to the doctrines of grace, while at the same time they are indifferent to liberalism. No positive action of separation was taken by these Reformed men against those who openly denied central Reformation doctrines such as *Sola Scriptura* and the forensic doctrine of justification by faith alone. To cap it all, Lloyd-Jones not only saw friends who co-operated with liberals, but observed others who increasingly made clear their belief in the enervating doctrine of *annihilationism*.¹⁴

In the light of our central proposition that the Doctor's whole ministry was doxological, how could we possibly assert that his "fight of faith"

did raise doxologies in our hearts? We are still surrounded by scornful liberal critics. Men who claim to be Reformed and insist on their orthodoxy, still refuse to sacrifice their respectable reputations. They bow down and worship the god of Intellect. Let us listen to the Doctor's response to our question:

It is essential that we should not only have the sword in our hands, but that we should have the high praises of God in our mouths. We are fighters, yes, but we are not negative; we are not defensive. We are not apologetic. Still less are we frightened. We should not be depressed. We have no business to be mourning in Zion. It is not for us to say, like those poor captives in Babylon who began to hang their harps on the willows, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" ... We are standing ... fighting for the truth. But are we *rejoicing* in it? Are we such Christians as these early Christians were? That is what makes people long for what we have: the high praises of God in our hearts and on our lips, living to His praise and to His glory!¹⁵

Here the Doctor in his exposition of Psalm 149:5-6 ("The Sword and the Song") teaches the Christian the practical and legitimate value of doxological boasting. What a tremendous difference there is between the Christian's doxological boasting in the Lord and humanistic boasting. Lamech typifies the world's brazen, self-confident boasting. He whirls in a wild dance of triumph, brandishing his swords above his head, while he roars out a terrible song of violence (Genesis 4:23-24). Significantly, the pre-Fall Adam sings a song of joy in man's first lyrical rhapsody of thanksgiving to God for Eve. She was a perfect and fitting gift from the Lord (Genesis 2:23).

DOXOLOGICAL HUMOUR IN MINISTRY

Many Christians would largely agree with Dr. Lloyd-Jones' balanced discussion and conclusion on the place of humour in preaching. Dr. Lloyd-Jones abhorred the bumptious joke-cracking preacher who aimed at establishing rapport with his listeners by relating numerous "witty" anecdotes in order to "soften" or "warm" them up. Since the preacher was dealing with the destiny of his hearers, his use of humour would only be allowable if it were natural. On the other hand, care

must be taken not to “overcorrect their abuse to such an extent as to become dull, colourless and lifeless. As long as we forget ourselves, and remember the devil, we shall never go wrong.”¹⁶ The most striking use of his humour that I remember came when I was listening to a sermon tape of Dr. Lloyd-Jones’ on Luke 24. It was titled “The Burning Heart.” It was delivered in the *natural* way of which he approved. He was showing how the Church can become so depressed and fixated upon past failures that it is of little value for present ministry. In mid-preaching, he said:

I am suddenly reminded of an incident and I feel that I must report it to you. It will help you to fix this thing in your mind in order that we may see this condition of melancholy, spiritual melancholy, from which so many of us are suffering. I remember once having to deal with a man, about twenty years ago. The man was a schoolmaster but he is now a Vicar in the Church of England. I was asked if I would see him and I consented, and he was complaining of various physical ailments and various other things. He was unhappy and everyone [was] concerned about him. I said to him, “Well now, tell me your story; how long have you been like this, what has happened to you?” He began and waxed eloquent and he told me that this was really the cause of his trouble — that in the First World War he was in the Navy (I believe he was in a destroyer or something similar) and he was involved in the Dardanelles campaign. He told me all about this. And then he said, “Unfortunately our ship was torpedoed and *d-o-w-n we went*, and since then I have had these headaches and pains and so on.” I stopped him. “Wait a minute,” I said, “You have not told me the whole story of your career in the Navy.” “But I have,” he replied, “I told you we were torpedoed and *d-o-w-n we went*.” I asked him, “Are you still at the *bottom* of the Mediterranean?”¹⁷

It was obvious during his relation of this event that he thoroughly relished its re-telling. One would have to hear the booming tones he used to underline the phrases “and *d-o-w-n we went*” and “at the bottom of the Mediterranean” in order to appreciate how the whole congregation could not hold in an irrepressible burst of laughter. His story-telling

skill, his timing, and his apt illustration so immersed one in the story and its outcome that laughter provided the only relief! Typically, the Doctor responded: "Ah, you may laugh, my friends, but I would hazard the guess that most of you are laughing at yourselves unconsciously."¹⁸ Humour served the aim of the preacher; he must blast through those automatic relapses into detachment so that no one would miss the gospel call.

Despite Lloyd-Jones' use of humour, the general impression is conveyed that somehow humour is not really holy, nor does it have a large or important place in the holy calling of the preacher. The moment we examine such a view in the light of Jesus' frequent use of humour, and especially in His parable teaching, we must acknowledge that Scripture does not permit the nature/grace dichotomy that influences the Doctor here. That dichotomy suggests that some things (those on the nature plane, i.e. humour) are inferior to those in the realm of grace. When Jesus used humour he was reflecting in Himself, what true human nature is. When we focus on parable texts that the Doctor himself preached, we note that *in practice*, he himself recognized and used the biblical humour that is there. His aim is to wake us up, to sound an urgent alarm: Change! Repent *now*, before it is too late! Good biblical humour snaps us out of our complacent lethargy so that by God's grace we can see the outstanding incongruities and absurdities in our conduct. By God's grace we can then change our behaviour; that is we can repent! Those, on the other hand, who are guilty of bad humour, seek to gain applause by focusing on certain characteristics of people that cannot be changed. We are, for example, born as Canadians, in our country of Canada, and we may well have certain congenital aberrations. Humour directed at these unchangeable characteristics, leaves its target in a hopeless condition. The Doctor necessarily reflected Jesus' *positive*, life-changing humour in his exposition of the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21). In an address given to the Christian Medical Fellowship in Cardiff, Wales on July 15th, 1953, he preached on the parable of the rich fool. No matter where he preached, he never assumed that everyone present was a Christian. He immediately captured this medical gathering's attention by boldly demonstrating that doctors in general have an astonishing characteristic in common with the rich fool! Speaking of the average doctor, Lloyd-Jones said:

He [i.e. the doctor] is face to face with the fact of death more frequently than anybody else. But does he see it? Does he apply

the fact to himself and to his daily life? [The Doctor then went on to make his general application on death.] We never even give it a thought. I am suggesting that a man who fails at this point really does deserve the epithet that our Lord applied to the man in his parable. He is a fool!¹⁹

The rich fool is depicted here (Luke 12) as if he were a little boy who is labouriously trying to prise pennies out of the slot in a piggy bank — one by one, while the Christian, on the other hand, rejoices in God's incredible gift of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (I Peter 1:4)! The Christian's investments are securely locked up in the Royal Bank of God, and he knows that he will be preserved by God to enjoy them for eternity (I Peter 1:5). This tragi-comic picture immediately flashes into one's mind: a pathetically ludicrous pygmy — a workaholic man, scrapes a minute pinhole from the surface of the universe, and in a pinprick of time, he dies. The omnipresent and omnipotent Father's kingdom is "added" to the one who is "rich toward God" (Luke 12:21): "it is our Father's good pleasure to *give* you the kingdom" (Luke 12:31-32)! The generous God presents His magnificent gift to the believer: the kingdom — *and it is for all eternity!*

Dr. Lloyd-Jones frequently brings out this note of tragi-comedy in men's lives, and the sudden reversals of all human expectations. The believer is comforted in the whirlpool of violence and brazen ungodliness that constitutes our modern world, for he is reminded that God fulfils all of His promises. Preaching on Psalm 2, Lloyd-Jones cites verse 4: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." The Doctor, in explaining this verse, sounds the imperative and urgent call from the eternal God that pervades his entire ministry:

That's the One you are defying! He that sitteth in the heavens! This isn't man's world! It's God's world! And God is there! GOD IS! The everlasting Jehovah, sitting in the heavens above the flux of time. And He looks down on us in our cleverness and in our arrogance — trying to get rid of Him and trying to make a perfect world.²⁰

The few references to God's laughter in Scripture, occur in contexts in which man has persistently and obdurately rejected Him. God's

laughter then, is scornful and derisive, as from eternity He views these outrageously arrogant Lilliputian men. These earthlings claim that they can successfully defy the Almighty God in His entire sovereign universal rule! (Psalm 2:1-3).

Outside his role of preacher, the Doctor did evince a lively sense of positive humour that certainly increased the joy of being with him! At a conference at which he was to speak on evangelism that I attended, the minister who introduced him spent some time eulogizing the Doctor and his Banner of Truth Books! When the Doctor got up to speak, he began tongue in cheek to say, "I was just wondering how the early apostles were able to evangelize without the printing press!" Another time, I met him in the foyer of Westminster Theological Seminary in order to drive him home. He stood there contemplating the sheets of rain that were falling, and he asked if anyone had heard the BBC radio programme *My Music*. He told us that on it one day, he heard the aria *One Fine Day* from Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* being played. Denis Norden, a guest on the programme, was asked to identify the composer and the title. Denis pretended that he had difficulty with the question, and so playing on English pessimism over the weather, he answered, "Yes, I've got it; the title is *An English Summer!*"

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Doxological preaching constantly reminds man that Christians constitute a redeemed community: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit — and New Creation man! For man, Heaven began in a holy Garden on earth with Adam as the solitary guardian-priest (Genesis 2:15; cf. Genesis 3:24). He sings a doxology of joyful praise to the Lord for the provision of a companion worshipper — Eve (Genesis 2:23). Now *together* they could worship God in community. The very aim of Dr. Lloyd-Jones' ministry was to invite everyone into a corporate assembly of believers. He informed his hearers that no education or psychology could effect real change in man. Only the powerful preached Word of God could reverse the effects of the Fall and bring man out of the horrible pit and set his feet firmly on a rock. Then indeed, He could put a new song into his mouth — even praise to our God (Psalm 40:2-3). History in God's hands is now moving on to a greater, fuller, realization of *communal* perfection (Revelation 21:2-3). Daily God lifts men up to Glory into that fully developed, perfect city civilization.

I have defined doxological preaching as that glorious experience in

which the preacher himself, moved by the Holy Spirit, invites the whole congregation to join with him in the praise of God. This act unites the gathered body and him, and lifts them up into the very presence of the Glory of God. Lloyd-Jones did not consider preaching to be a solo performance, but one that involved the very active participation of all present. In my first article on the Doctor in this journal issue, written as an uncritical tribute to the man whose preaching brought me to know God, I related how I experienced conviction of sin through the Holy Spirit working through both congregation and preacher. My experience was exactly that described of the unbeliever in I Corinthians 14:24-25:

But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced [convicted] of *all*, he is judged of *all*: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in *you* [plural] of a truth.

Lloyd-Jones was acutely aware of the essentially corporate character of preaching. He desired a preaching context in which believers gathered in the keen expectancy that the Holy Spirit would work through all the Christians present, including the preacher. This meant that not only must the preacher seek the power of the Holy Spirit in his preparation and then his preaching, but that all Christians in the congregation would come prepared to worship in a quiet and reverent manner, with prayerful hearts and open Bibles:

The very presence of a body of people in itself is a part of the preaching, and these influences begin to act immediately upon anyone who comes into a service. These influences, I suggest, are very often more potent in a spiritual sense than pure intellectual argumentation. ... But let me put it in this form; the man, who thinks all of this can be done by reading, or by just looking at a television set, is missing the mysterious element in the life of the Church. What is this? It is what our Lord was suggesting, I think, when He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst." It is not a mere gathering of people; Christ is present. This is the great mystery of the Church. There is something in

the very atmosphere of Christian people meeting together to worship God and to listen to the preaching of the Gospel.²¹

In my first article on the Doctor, I tried to demonstrate how anything which allowed the listener to detach himself from the preaching had to go. This was due to the Doctor's "belief that nothing must come between the hearer and the kindling lightning flashes from the Holy Spirit. This quicksilver exchange, Holy Spirit — Preacher — listener, meant that you could never replace the immediacy of preaching with the detached act of reading sermons in cold print."²²

Perhaps the greatest contrast with the essentially communicative and communal act of preaching can be found in another communicative medium: the work of a pianist. Before his death in 1982, the extraordinary Canadian pianist Glenn Gould had not played a single note in public for the preceding eighteen years. He shut himself up like a hermit to make music in a recording studio. Glenn Gould's withdrawal from the concert halls created a great stir in musical circles. Gould, said the music critic William Littler, "Like Swift ... hated society, although he loved Tom, Dick and Harry." He regarded concert audiences as "people sitting there with the perspiration of 2,999 others penetrating their nostrils."²³ Gould felt that isolation from people actually removed him from any other influences on his playing or composing. When we apply what we learn from Gould's aims to the preacher's, we obtain some practical points with respect to doxological preaching. Gould's obsession with the production of "perfect" recordings cut him off from that live interplay in the concert hall between the pianist and his audience. In listening to Gould's recording one somehow finds oneself being absorbed by the pianist's technique. William Littler perceptively says "The playing sounds not so much natural as inevitable, and there is a difference. Natural playing suggests an absence of effort [and I would add unselfconsciousness]."²⁴ Lloyd-Jones strongly warns preaching students of the dangers of becoming too self-conscious. He was vociferous about sermon classes in which one student would preach to other students and they in turn would critique what the student had preached and the manner in which he did it. "The message of the Bible should never be listened to in that way. It is always the Word of God, and no one should ever listen to it except in a spirit of reverence and godly expectation of receiving a message."²⁵ I believe that he was quite right about this. When students critique fellow-students it breeds a spirit in

which men sit in judgement on the Word of God and prepares them to encourage a similar critical approach to listening to sermons. The practice in some churches of meeting after a sermon is preached to discuss and analyze it is counterproductive. From experience, one learns that there are certain professional nit-pickers who like to show their superior knowledge by correcting the preacher for his errors and omissions. Lloyd-Jones' doxological preaching was aimed at lifting souls to Heaven in celebration of the Good News. All that the listener blessed with such preaching wants to do after the sermon is to leave rejoicing in Jesus Christ. Many times when leaving Westminster Chapel after hearing Lloyd-Jones preach, I would feel that I had experienced a taste of Heaven. I felt like Gipsy Smith's father Cornelius after his conversion. "His burden was gone," Cornelius later told the people, and further that "he felt so light that if the room had been full of eggs he could have walked through and not have broken one of them."²⁶

PERVASIVE DEPRAVITY: "SIN" AND "SINS"

As Dr. Lloyd-Jones analyzes the state of evangelism, he cites a religious leader who was glorying in an evangelistic campaign: "This is marvellous ... marvellous ... People are going forward by the hundred. No emotion you know — marvellous." He quotes him as repeating the phrase "no emotion." This cold response roused the Doctor to ask, "Can a man see himself as a damned sinner without emotion? Can a man look into hell without emotion? Can a man listen to the thunderings of the Law and feel nothing? Or conversely, can a man really contemplate the love of God in Christ Jesus and feel no emotion?"²⁷ Under his preaching the sinner soon came to realize his main problem was the depth and all-pervasiveness of his sin. How often today can an unbeliever sit under evangelical ministers and leave quite undisturbed or unmoved by the message? Here the Doctor brings great clarity to the situation. He constantly points out the crucial distinction between "sin" and "sins." He traces the failure to make this distinction back to the Victorian evangelicals:

Whilst they believed what the Bible taught and desired to take proper action to overcome evil in all its forms, they made the mistake of taxing each evil separately. So, in the event, they organized Temperance Societies and then a separate society for every imaginable evil or need! But you cannot efficiently isolate each sin for national correction. Also, the strategy was

ineffective because it tended to move them away from the all-essential inward motivation and spiritual dynamic with which the pioneers started. In contrast, the 18th and 19th century revivals went to the doctrinal heart of the matter. John Wesley told his followers to *aim at the head of the serpent and the coils would look after themselves*. When people and committees were deeply affected by a truly Christian conversion and inward renewal, both individual and public sins began to decline in power and extent. The central doctrine is the indispensable source of the dynamic of the ethics.²⁸

The recognition of the difference between preaching against individual sins and sin is most crucial. Preaching against individual sins can easily slide into moral lectures that carry no more weight than the ethics of Plato or Kant, and can leave the sinner in a state of righteous pride. However, when King David had broken virtually all of God's commandments in his lust for Bathsheba, we hear a remarkable confession. David is not preoccupied in the first instance with the *particular* sins he had committed: his greatest concern goes to the heart of the matter. He has broken his relationship with the holy God! "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalm 51:4). Once, when I was evangelizing on the University of Toronto campus, a student interrupted me: "You keep on using this word 'sin'. I don't accept that word for it presupposes the existence of God." That student recognized what the core of human rebellion is: there is always this element of "against" for sin does not operate in a vacuum, but is a direct assault on the majesty and holiness of God (Genesis 4:10; 39:9; 2 Samuel 12:9; 12:13). The all-too common view that sin is just a matter of selfishness reveals the superficiality of man's understanding. John Murray, the noted Systematic Theology Professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, put it this way:

When the scripture says that "sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4) it is to this same concept that our attention is drawn. Law is the transcript of God's perfection: it is His holiness coming to expression for the regulation of thought and action consonant with that perfection. Transgression is violation of that which God's glory demands of us and is, therefore, in its essence, the contradiction of God.²⁹

David's confession in Psalm 51:4, as verse 5 further explains, is this significant realization that it is not just a question of one or two particular sins, but the basic tendency of all human wills. The Christian should not become obsessed with particular sins. His chief concern should always be with his relationship to God. James 2:10 rejects the Roman Catholic confession of greater and lesser sins, mortal and venial sins: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The great reformer Martin Luther said that "the physician does not need to probe each postule to know that the patient has smallpox, nor is the disease to be cured scab by scab. To focus on particular offenses is a counsel of despair."³⁰

THE RETURN TO ROYAL SONSHIP

How does man get out of the black hole of sin and depression that governs his whole earthly existence? In his exposition of Psalm 107 especially, and in other Scriptures too, the Doctor would emphasize the need for repentance. Psalm 107 has several key words that are repeated in the text and to which he draws our attention: v.6 "cried," "delivered;" v.13 "cried," "saved;" v.19 "cry," "saveth", "distresses;" v.20 "delivered;" v.28 "cry," "distresses." These key words are a reflection of Israel's sad history in Egypt. The psalm opens with a grand invitation to thank and praise the Lord. Four vivid pictures of people in deep troubles are presented. The Doctor notes that though these four groups of people appear to be so different they are all in trouble. He says "all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Dramatically, he pointed to each group in the "choir" before him — "You are a failure! You are a sinner!" Today's "lost generation" was like the ancient Israelites, slaves in a foreign land — Egypt. Today's pharaohs of this world emulate the Egyptian pharaohs. They delight in *isolating* God's people so that they can keep them silent. It is a technique employed from Stalin to Mao Tse-Tung to prevent any resistance to their tyrannical regimes. Israel was stripped of its identity, even to the re-naming of certain people. The message of our unbelieving world is clear, for it is Pharaoh's message too: "You Christians are all 'nobodies'." Meekly Israel for many years accepted this soul-destroying brainwashing that they were all representatives of an old, worn-out religion whom Pharaoh could arrogantly dismiss with his question, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). Exodus 2:23 explodes the myth of the invincibility of the ungodly:

And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

THE SONSHIP CRY OF ROYAL ADOPTION: THE LIFT TO GLORY

Someone has remarked that a third of Psalm 107 is a cry for salvation (Psalm 107:4-6, 11-13, 27-31). Usually, we associate crying with defeat and despair and failure, but that is not so for the biblical cry! Here we find the first sign of biblical faith in Israel after many years of submission in silence. It is the cry of complete dependency that you hear from babies, but at the same time it is the cry of hope that adults make when at last they return to God. Paul tells the Roman Christians that their loud cry — “Abba”! (an intimate word for “father”) is one of the distinguishing privileges of the people of Israel: “to whom pertaineth the adoption” (Romans 9:4).

Doctor Lloyd-Jones emphasizes in his sermon on Psalm 107, “There is only *one* LORD we can cry out to. No man is a Christian unless he has cried out to the LORD.”³¹ Just as a mother lifts her child into her arms when she hears his cry, so God hears our cry and lifts the repentant sinner right out of the black hole of sin into His welcoming arms — and into Glory-Land. The original recognition of Israel’s sonship only came when she was being oppressed and suffered for her faith. She by “crying” in her desperation broke the Egyptian ban on gathering together in order to worship. Now Israel broke her silence and began to cry out to the living God. Her cry is a recognition of the unique privilege of adoption (Exodus 4:22). It is significant in Scripture that the loud cry — “Abba”! — the cry of adoption usually came to the lips of the faithful when they were persecuted and suffering for the faith (Exodus 2:23-24; Romans 8; Galatians 4). The questions that Lloyd-Jones’ ministry constantly posed were: Does our verbal witness (N.T. meaning) provoke the world’s hostility? Peter tells us that persecution is inevitable (1 Peter 4:12). If we poke the hornet’s nest of unbelief, should we not expect to be stung? Have we been stung sufficiently to raise our level of urgency in prayer and witness? Are we prepared to forget ourselves and our inevitable rejection in order to see sinners saved? Are we content with this casual routine worship? Do we earnestly pray for revival?

Here is the testimony of one former Westminster Chapelian who was uplifted and rejoiced with many in this doxological ministry. Anne Connan was married to a Dane, Carl Johan Bruhn. He died on the night of December 28-29, 1941 when his parachute failed to open while he was being dropped to assist the Danish Resistance. His wife, Anne, remained for most of her life at Westminster Chapel and she wrote of the Doctor's ministry: "He so exalted the Lord Christ, and never obtruded himself, that he created a real thirst in me for the living GOD, but never left me with a feeling of self-satisfaction, neither so deflated as to be near despair."³²

RECOGNITION OF ACTUAL ROYAL SONSHIP: ROMANS 6

What is it that distinguishes one Christian from another with respect to their holiness and growth in grace? The Doctor's exposition of Romans 6:11-12 stresses the importance of spiritual deductions based on the fact of the Christian's royal sonship accomplished in the once-for-all union with the glorious Son of God. The importance of realizing *the reality* of this amazing union of mortal man with the divine omnipotent Son of God lies in its dramatic effect in the spiritual life of the believer. By it, he seems as if he has been placed on a super trampoline that propels him beyond the gravitational down-pull of sin. Now he is living "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). John Murray has identified this radical transfer from the Adamic kingdom of darkness to Christ's kingdom of life as "definitive sanctification": "a decisive and definitive breach with the power and service of sin in the case of everyone who has come under the control of the provisions of grace."³³ In his comprehensive application, flowing from the believer's realization of his actual royal sonship, the Doctor set our hearts to sing with joy! He speaks of "that old sense of hopelessness which we have all known and felt because of the terrible power of sin." Despite our repeated resolutions, we all backslide:

The only way I know to get rid of that sense of hopelessness is the teaching of this chapter and especially this verse. Thank God, I do know it, because this sixth chapter has been to me, since I came to understand it, the most liberating chapter in my whole Christian experience.³⁴

Can you imagine what a sense of relief we privileged hearers felt when we heard such liberating preaching? The window is open to the

preacher's own experience of joy and hope, and that in turn, plucks the doxological cords in his hearers' hearts. Listen in as the Doctor further explains:

When you realize these things you begin to smile; you stand up, you shake yourself. You say, "What a fool I have been for being so depressed for so many years!" Why did I ever allow the devil to tyrannize over me? Why have I listened so much "to the accuser of the brethren"? You stand up on your feet, and you begin to rejoice. You may indulge in a holy laughter as you realize your position, and what is happening to you. "The joy of the Lord" comes in, and as Nehemiah reminded his hopeless people, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).³⁵

During the 1960s, my wife and I heard a number of Reformed preachers at a time when the Puritan and Reformed movement was taking root. At that time, what was centrally distinctive about the Doctor's preaching was absent from the preaching of others whom we heard. Perhaps in reaction to the easy-believism background from which many of these preachers came, there was a heavy emphasis on the believer's obligations and responsibilities to keep the Law. Noteworthy, by way of contrast, the Doctor continually drew our attention to the privilege and joy of our new identities in Christ. He particularly emphasized the enabling power of the Holy Spirit within us. This constant reminder of the enabling power of the Holy Spirit within us was an informing principle that underlay all his sanctification teaching. His doxological exhortations to holy living *were* attainable because the Holy Spirit motivated us to joyfully desire to do all of God's will as a willing response to our Saviour's sacrificial love:

It is constantly going on; there is a working of the Spirit constantly in the life of every believer. Such is the teaching of Scripture. It is not just a question of being converted, and then remaining like that for years, and then going to a convention and getting a second blessing. Not at all! From the moment you become a Christian this "working" begins, and it goes on and on, leading, prompting you "to will and to do."³⁶

PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING

It was in his wide-ranging Pastoral Prayer that men in Westminster Chapel first experienced his pastoral care. His Pastoral Prayer did contain expressions that appeared regularly, but there was always a freshness about them. The preacher's pitfall of falling into mechanical, lifeless worship was avoided by his constant prayer. Mrs. Lloyd-Jones once overheard some men discussing her husband. From her close personal observation, she interjected "that he was first an evangelist and a man of prayer."³⁷ He revealed his personal aim to preserve unselfconscious urgent prayer in his penetrating *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Chapter 2, "How to Pray"):

What I try to do when entering a pulpit is to forget the congregation in a certain sense. I am not praying to them or addressing them; I am not speaking to them. I am speaking to God, I am leading in prayer to God, so that I have to shut out and forget people. Yes; and having done that, I shut out and forget myself.³⁸

Here there is still his consciousness of communal worship, with the pastor as representative of the people. He led us all into the felt presence of the holy and glorious God. Our hearts were joined together in his flights of doxology, and with him we praised our awesome, living God. One of his frequent expressions that has remained with me for forty-seven years is "we pray for them that cannot pray for themselves." As a doctor he was acutely aware of the disabling effects of senility and mental illness. There was an evident compassion for people deprived of worship. In his ministry he would assure relatives who were caring for Christians whose faculties were failing, that uncharacteristic even blasphemous expressions did not mean that their afflicted relatives had ceased being Christians. He lifted up these troubled folk, and taught them that Satan still attacks us to the very end. However, our triumphant, resurrected Lord had justified His saints once and forever, and no one could rob them of their justification.

Our personal experience of the Doctor's quick sensitivity toward the needs of his flock happened during his 1969 visit to Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. As I daily drove him to and from his temporary residence in Jenkintown to the Seminary, he often asked about my family. On one occasion my wife was experiencing back

pain as the result of a fall. The next morning the Doctor telephoned to discuss this pain with her, and immediately recommended a medical treatment. During our studies at the Seminary, my wife and I felt quite disconnected and discouraged. We had no connections with any home church in Canada, since the last one in which I served had a Reformed Confession, but it was treated as just an historical document. During our time at the Seminary, we had not discovered a suitable Reformed church. We had no medical insurance for ourselves, but were glad to have medical care for our two young children. We were considering leaving the Seminary, but the Doctor strongly advised us to complete our studies there. Before the Doctor completed his time at the Seminary, he said, one day, that he thought we needed a holiday. He had investigated several places and had chosen Pinebrook, a Christian Conference Centre in the Pocono Mountains. He had pre-paid for a week's stay there for my wife Miriam and me, and for our three-year-old son Timothy and our ten-month-old daughter Rachel. The Doctor had no idea how much his warm pastoral care had encouraged us, and had opened our mouths to sing the praises of Jehovah Jireh!

The Doctor's views on counselling have often been challenged, but I have found them to be full of biblical wisdom, and of real practical value in the pastorate. He argues for the primacy of preaching over counselling. He taught that a balanced preaching ministry will solve the majority of the personal problems of his listeners. However, he himself spent many hours in personal counselling in his vestry after all services. His counseling ministry was greatly extended by means of letters, and through countless telephone sessions. What seems such an elementary counselling principle after it is stated is his insistence that the first thing the counsellor has to find out is whether the person consulting him is a Christian.³⁹ Christians were often puzzled when they discovered that his counsel to one individual was different, though each individual had sought help on the same matter. The Doctor was very careful about the danger of making men dependent upon someone else for their actions. As a new convert to the faith, I went to see him about baptism. My Brethren landlady had expressed astonishment that the Doctor was going to baptize me by affusion. In great alarm I went to see him, holding out my plate, as it were, to have it filled! "Now, Mr. Powell," he said, "What do *you* think?" The reason for his "different" counsels lay in his insistence that the person consulting him had more knowledge of all the circumstances involved. If his choice did not contravene clear

Christian teaching, then the Doctor encouraged the individual to think it through logically and then to take the appropriate action. Doctor's counselling was a lifting up of the downcast. He used a variety of methods but would invariably engage the responsibility of the counsellor by requiring him to respond to a series of logical questions. The counsellor was taught to stand back from his small self-absorbed world and to view it from new perspectives. We often carry our own burdens of worries as if we were some mighty Atlas. In fact, we are sinfully usurping the place of the Almighty sovereign Lord "upholding all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). I found the Doctor's personal advice a great help when he showed me the biblical method of asking one's self questions: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?" (Psalm 42:5). You do not slip into neutral gear and thereby open your mind to all the temptations of the devil. I later discovered that the psalms of lamentation began with these arresting questions and invariably ended in doxology, songs of praise and adoration: "Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Psalm 42:11).

DOXOLOGY: THE COSMIC SCOPE OF THE GOSPEL

Preaching is necessarily cosmic in scope and therefore doxological: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1), but equally His glory shines resplendently on the earth! "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). As the Doctor puts it, we must move beyond this purely subjective, man-centred gospel to take in the full sweep of God's grandeur. The gospel has:

...a cosmic side as well. We must present the whole plan of salvation as it is revealed. We must show that the ultimate object, as the Apostle Paul puts it in Ephesians 1:10, is to head up in Christ all things, "both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him"... You are emphasizing that salvation is not merely something subjective, a nice feeling, or peace, or whatever it is they are seeking. All that is very important, and is a part of it; but there is something much more important, namely that the whole universe is involved.⁴⁰

Without this larger cosmic scope, we can easily slip into a dead moralism,⁴¹ in which the preaching degenerates into an incessant harangue against those who fail to reach certain moral goals. If your preaching is merely descriptive repetition or a running commentary on the text, it really is not preaching. True preaching invites, it expects and it evokes doxology. It is Good News! With such a glorious message we can stand with the Apostle Paul, and conclude with him: "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 hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? For of Him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Romans 11:33-36). ■

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ENDNOTES

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- 4 D.M. Lloyd-Jones "Preaching" in *Anglican and Puritan Thinking* (Huntingdon: Westminster Conference, 1977), 92.
- 5 S. Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 21, 23.
- 6 D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Psalm 107* (Toronto: Knox Presbyterian Church, September 8, 1963), audiocassette.
- 7 Lloyd-Jones, *Psalm 107*, audiocassette.
- 8 See the printed version of these lectures in D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971).
- 9 Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 325. Author's italics.
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- 11 D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Unity in Truth; Addresses Given by Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones at meetings held under the auspices of the British Evangelical Council*; ed. Hywel R. Jones (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1991), 172.
- 12 Lloyd-Jones, *Unity in Truth*, 172
- 13 Lloyd-Jones, *Unity in Truth*, 176
- 14 The denial of hell as eternal torment and the substitution of the idea that the unrepentant sinner in death enters a state in which his body and soul are finally dissolved and end in total non-being.
- 15 Lloyd-Jones, *Unity in Truth*, 182-183.

- 16 Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 241.
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- 29 John Murray, *The New Bible Dictionary* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962), 1189-1190.
- 30 Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York: New American Library, 1950, 1977), 42.
- 31 Lloyd-Jones, *Psalms 107*, audiocassette.
- 32 This quotation appears as a footnote to a letter of comfort and consolation written to Mrs. Conan by Dr. Lloyd-Jones, "Letter of 15th December 1973" in *Letters, 1919-1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), 83.
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- 39 Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 39.
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- 41 Moralism is defined by J. Douma as viewing "our conduct apart from the work that Christ and His Spirit perform in our lives." See J. Douma, *Responsible Conduct: Principles of Christian Ethics* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003), 41.