Colin Morris (1929-2018) and the Crises of Colonialism, Culture, and Communication

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Introduction

The *Dictionary of National Biography* was one of the great academic achievements of Victorian Britain. Planned by the publishers Smith, Elder and Co. in the early 1880s, with Leslie Stephen as the first editor, the project was launched in 1882 and the first volume of the *DNB*, covering names from Abbadie to Anne, appeared on 1 January 1885. By 1900 the series was complete, with sixty-three volumes recording 29,120 lives, and representing the work of more than 700 contributors. Supplementary volumes continued to appear through the twentieth century, until in 1992 Oxford University Press undertook a revision of the *DNB*, planning to add some 14,000 new entries to the 36,000 already in the original series and its supplements.[1]

Since the publication of the *Oxford DNB*, in hard copy and online, in 2004, the database of subjects has continued to grow. And a careful process of scrutiny is applied, so that the significance of potential candidates for inclusion is rigorously assessed.

Searching the *Oxford DNB* database for the term 'Methodist' produced a surprising 1500 hits, but this includes people who married in a Methodist church, attended a Methodist school or university, studied Methodism, disliked Methodists, or had Methodist forebears. Selecting for those born since 1900 brought the total down from 1500 to 338; selecting for those born since 1924 reduced the total to 119 – an interesting cross-section of politicians (like Margaret Thatcher, Peter Archer, and Rhodes Boyson), artistic and cultural figures (like Robert Bolt and Kenneth Williams), children of the manse who turned decisively away from the faith of their forebears (like the historian E.P. Thompson) and a very few church leaders – John Newton, Pauline Webb, Rob Frost, and Colin Morris.

The subject of this paper is the fourth of those British Methodist born since 1924 who was deemed to merit inclusion in the *Oxford DNB*. Like John Newton, he attained high office in the Church, serving as President of the British Methodist Conference. Like Pauline Webb, he was a broadcaster, an advocate for world missions, and a radical voice in the corridors of power. Like Rob Frost, he was a gifted communicator and a visionary, provoking admiration and exasperation in equal measure. Arguably, he achieved greater eminence than any of the others, occupying the Presidential chair in Churches on two continents, writing best-selling works of popular theology, and holding senior posts in the BBC for a dozen years.[2] The

[1] For the history, see https://www.oxforddnb.com/page/1016, accessed 24 June 2024; for a reflection on the old DNB and the new, see H.C.G. Matthew, *Leslie Stephen and the New DNB* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997). This 1995 Leslie Stephen Lecture was given by the editor of the *Oxford DNB*.

[2] The *Daily Telegraph* began its obituary by asserting that Colin Morris 'was a rare example of a Methodist minister who outgrew the trappings of his church both within the United Kingdom and abroad': *Daily Telegraph*, 23 May 2018, 27.

purpose of this paper is to explore how The Revd Dr Colin Morris, Officer-Companion of the Order of Freedom (Zambia) brought glad tidings of salvation in an age of crisis. After a brief biographical introduction, the paper will consider Colin Morris's response to three crises – colonialism, culture, and communication.

Let's begin with the biography.[3]

Colin Manley Morris was born on 13 January 1929, in Bolton, an industrial town in the north-west of England. His family was solidly working-class, rooted in the coalmining and cotton industries. There were Salvationists and Methodists of various types in the extended family, but other views were also represented - Morris's maternal grandfather, John Edward Edmondson, was an admirer of Marx, Engels, and Darwin, a stanch Socialist and atheist, who addressed crowds from Bolton Town Hall steps every Saturday afternoon.[4]

Morris came to Christian faith during his National Service in the Royal Marines. He was accepted as a candidate for the Methodist ministry in 1949 and took a theology degree at Hartley Victoria College, Manchester. He also developed skills as an open-air speaker, working with Bill Gowland, then minister at Manchester's city centre Albert Hall.[5] After two years working on the Doncaster Coalfields Mission, Morris won a research scholarship at Nuffield College, established in Oxford in 1937 with a brief to specialise in the social sciences. Morris spent two years studying industrial relations, and this expertise led to his appointment following ordination in 1956 to the Free Church in Chingola, in the Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia, later Zambia.[6]

We'll come to Morris's ministry in Chingola in a few minutes but note now that he became fully engaged in the complex politics of Zambian independence and served as President of the United Church of Central Africa (1960-4) and then of the United Church of Zambia (1965-8).

Returning to Britain in September 1969, Morris served for four years as Superintendent Minister at Wesley's Chapel in City Road. He was then appointed General Secretary of the Methodist Church Overseas Division (1973-8), during which time he was also President of the British Methodist Conference (1977-8). In this decade and the next, Morris not only preached and published sermons, but also lectured and wrote on the craft of preaching.

Already an experienced broadcaster on radio and a television presenter since 1973, Morris moved into a fulltime role with the BBC in 1978, first as head of religious programmes for

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[3] This section largely summarises the *ODNB* article: see Martin Wellings, 'Morris, Colin Manley (1929-2018), Methodist minister and broadcaster', *ODNB*, https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780198614128.013.90000380559, published online 10 March 2022 and accessed 24 June 2024.

[4] 'Jed Weaver', in Colin Morris, *Snapshots. Episodes in a Life* (Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House, 2007), 3-4.

[5] David Gowland and Stuart Roebuck, *Never Call Retreat. A Biography of Bill Gowland* (London: Chester House Publications, 1990), 79-85.

[6] The blurb on the back cover of *Anything But This!* claims that Morris arrived in Chingola in May 1955, but Morris's own account gives the date as 1956: Colin Morris, *The Hour After Midnight* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1961), 1, 4.

BBC TV and then as Controller of BBC Northern Ireland from 1987-90. He continued to present programmes, particularly on the radio, long after his retirement from the BBC, and he was writing articles for the *Methodist Recorder* until the final months of his life. He died on 20 May 2018.

Glad Tidings of Salvation in an Age of Crisis: (1) Colonialism

Colin Morris offered for overseas service with the Methodist Missionary Society and was assigned to Northern Rhodesia, travelling by ship to Cape Town and then by rail to the Copperbelt. He arrived at a time of growing political turbulence in Southern and Central Africa, as the aspirations and fears of white settlers, African nationalists, and British politicians and colonial officials intersected and collided.

Northern Rhodesia had been nominally under British control since 1889-90, when Cecil Rhodes' British South African Company secured a vaguely-worded grant from the British Government and negotiated subsequent concessions with the independent African kingdoms stretching north of the Zambezi. Succeeding decades saw the transfer of control from the Company to the Colonial Office; during the Second World War, Northern Rhodesia's copper industry boomed; and after 1945 white immigration, especially to Southern Rhodesia, increased dramatically.[7] Southern Rhodesia, with its larger settler population, was a self-governing colony; Northern Rhodesia remained a protectorate under direct rule from London; and from 1953 the two Rhodesian territories and Nyasaland were linked in a Central African Federation, seen by critics in Africa and Britain as an attempt to stave off the granting of political rights to the African majority and a step towards a new white-controlled Dominion, ruled from Salisbury. John Darwin, the historian of empire, describes the Federation as 'a constitutional cat's cradle' and it proved woefully unable to cope with the competing demands of the three territories, their very different political establishments, and their growing nationalist movements.[8]

Colin Morris brought to Northern Rhodesia a commitment to racial justice – in *The Hour Before Midnight* he records disembarking at Cape Town clutching a copy of Trevor Huddleston's *Naught For Your Comfort* as a silent protest against apartheid.[9] His first months in the Copperbelt led him to question his presuppositions about Africa and he found himself inadvertently adopting what he called 'the White Settler Point of View'. Meeting the nationalist journalist Sikota Wina unsettled these assumptions; encounters with other nationalist leaders, including Kenneth Kaunda, transformed his outlook, and prompted a new engagement with the crisis of colonialism.[10]

Three strands of Morris's engagement may be identified. The first was preaching. From his arrival in Chingola, Morris established a reputation as an eloquent and forceful preacher,

[7] Brief summary in David C. Mulford, *Zambia. The Politics of Independence 1957-1964* (Oxford: OUP, 1967), 1-6; more detail in Richard Hall, *Zambia* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), 54-86 and 145-90. For the wider background of British imperialism in this period, see John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire. The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 342-85.
[8] Hall, *Zambia*, 145-90; Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 367, 372.
[9] Morris, *Hour Before Midnight*, 3.
[10] Morris, *Hour Before Midnight*, 6, 28-34; Morris, *Snapshots*, 42-3, 46-50.

prepared to tackle contentious issues: the press dubbed him 'the Fighting Parson'.[11] In Lent 1957, Morris turned his pulpit rhetoric against racial discrimination in Rhodesian society and in the Church. He confessed his collusion in the Church's silence and in its reliance on gradualism in remedying the injustice of racism, affirming that '[R]acial discrimination is contrary to the Will of God …' and a denial of the nature of God and the teaching of Jesus.[12] In Morris's view, the doctrine of racism, as seen in contemporary South Africa, was fundamentally Fascist.[13] Having laid this foundation, Morris went on to argue for multi-racial politics and to call for action to tackle ignorance and prejudice.[14] The Lent sermons, published as *Anything But This!* included comments on the neuralgic issue of interracial marriage and provoked a storm of controversy.[15] Morris continued to use the pulpit to proclaim a gospel of inclusion and to call for repentance in the face of a coming judgment on an unjust society and an unfaithful Church.[16]

The second strand of Morris's engagement was continuing to develop personal contacts across Northern Rhodesian society, and particularly with leaders and activists in the nationalist movement. One strong and enduring relationship was with Kenneth Kaunda, whose United National Independence Party grew in strength and influence in the final years of the Federation.[17]

The third strand was political involvement. In *Anything But This!,* Morris criticised both political parties currently operating in Northern Rhodesia, and expressed his personal preference for 'a multi-racial party implementing a Socialist policy'.[18] He was active in the short-lived Constitution Party and then in the Liberal Party, as deputy leader to Sir John Moffat. In this role Morris took part in the 1961 Lancaster House Constitutional Conference, which laid the groundwork for Zambian independence in 1964. Although unsuccessful in his efforts to win a seat on the Legislative Council in 1962, Morris was active in the complex inter-party machinations leading up to independence and continued to play a political role for President Kaunda after 1964.[19]

Glad Tidings of Salvation in an Age of Crisis: (2) Culture

During Colin Morris's lifetime the membership of the British Methodist Church experienced a decline which some commentators have described as a 'meltdown'.[20] Morris was born as

[11] Leslie Charlton, *Spark in the Stubble. Colin Morris of Zambia* (London: Epworth Press, 1969), 35.
[12] Colin Morris, *Anything But This! The Challenge of Race in Central Africa* (London: Lutterworth, 1958), 6, 15, 16.
[13] Morris, *Anything But This!,* 43.
[14] Morris, *Anything But This!,* 41-64.
[15] Morris, *Anything But This!,* 50-7; Morris, *Hour Before Midnight*, 41-66, noting the headline '"My daughter could marry a Native," says Parson', at 58.
[16] Morris, *Anything But This!,* 22.
[17] On UNIP, see Mulford, *Zambia*, 143-77; Morris, *Snapshots*, 46-50, and Kenneth D. Kaunda and Colin Morris, *A Humanist in Africa. Letters to Colin Morris from Kenneth Kaunda* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1966).
[18] Morris, *Anything But This!,* 37. The parties criticised by Morris were the governing United Federal Party and the right-wing Dominion Party, both white: Mulford, *Zambia*, 54.
[19] Mulford, *Zambia*, 229-300, with note of Morris's role at 246; Charlton, *Spark in the Stubble*, 104-18.
[20] This was prompted by the release of triennial membership statistics in 1996. For an example of the 'meltdown' vocabulary, see 'Chapel keeps few friends in the North', *The Independent on Sunday*, 24 March

the legislative process of bringing together the three main branches of disunited Methodism was coming towards its conclusion in the Union of 1932. At Union, the combined Wesleyan, Primitive and United Methodist Connexions claimed a total membership of 919,099, with 31,600 Local Preachers, 13,000 Sunday Schools, and 1,360,000 scholars. Methodism was by far the largest of the English Free Churches, and hopes were high that reunion and the elimination of wasteful denominational competition would release energy for a new 'Forward Movement' taking the Connexion into the mid-twentieth century.

The outcome, of course, was very different. Plans for a great campaign of evangelism were choked by the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, with consequent losses of momentum and resources. Although the Connexion still claimed more than 750,000 members in 1945, with 3,475 ministers and 15,000 chapels from Sark to the Shetlands, the downward trend continued, accelerating through the challenging decade of the 1960s. Methodism lost 100,000 members between 1963 and 1969, while traditional patterns of church life and Christian behaviour came under increasing strain. This remained the story for the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. And, although there were differences in detail between the denominations, the overall picture for Christianity in Great Britain was not encouraging. The social historian Callum Brown, writing a stimulating if not uncontroversial account of the period, could entitle his monograph *The Death of Christian Britain* (2001).[21]

Colin Morris grew up in the era of open-air evangelism, when speakers like Bill Gowland and Donald Soper made the case for Christianity from soapboxes in city centres.[22] Commending the faith in a marketplace of ideas remained important for Morris, although by the early 1970s he had exchanged a soapbox in Manchester's Piccadilly for a radio microphone on BBC Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day'. Sceptical of American tele-evangelists – the subject of a thoughtful essay in *The Listener* in January 1984 – Morris believed nonetheless that faith could be commended to a contemporary audience by an honest and thoughtful approach.[23] In his broadcasting and in connected publications, Morris sought to communicate the glad tidings of salvation to a culture increasingly remote from the beliefs, assumptions, and norms of 'Christendom'. The example considered here is his book *Starting from Scratch*, published in 1990.

1996. For analysis and commentary on Methodism since 1945, see Martin Wellings,'"And are we yet alive?" Methodism in Great Britain, 1945-2010', *Methodist History* vol. LI, nos 1 and 2 (October 2012 and January 2013), 38-60.

[21] For an engagement with Callum Brown's thesis, see Jane Garnett, Matthew Grimley, Alana Harris, William Whyte, and Sarah Williams, *Redefining Christian Britain. Post 1945 Perspectives* (London: SCM Press, 2006). Brown's argument for a rapid decline from the 1960s contradicts models of long-term secularisation from the 1880s (or earlier). For an introduction to the debate and to the key protagonists and texts, see Clive D. Field, *Britain's Last Religious Revival? Quantifying Belonging, Behaving, and Believing in the Long 1950s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1-15.

[22] For Morris's tribute to Donald Soper, see *Snapshots*, 28-31.

[23] 'God on-air', *The Listener*, 12 January 1984. For an earlier renunciation of 'cheap evangelicalism', see *Anything But This!,* 63.

Starting from Scratch began as two separate Lent series – six radio talks given on Radio 4 and five sermons broadcast on television from the chapel of the University of Sussex.[24] The sermon series, 'Letting God be God', was merged with the radio talks, 'Starting from Scratch', using the title of the latter for the composite volume, a slim paperback of just eighty-six pages.

In the introduction Morris argues that the two series were complementary, 'Starting from Scratch' representing 'religion from the bottom upwards' and 'Letting God be God' 'religion from the top downwards'.[25]

Rather than beginning with Bible, creeds, or dogmas, 'Stating from Scratch' begins with common sense and with the human quest for a truth to live by. Morris considers the experience of seeing reality for the first time and recognising what is really the case in the world. He sees these 'penny-dropping moments' as sheer gift, evidence of grace and evocative of reverence and awe.[26] Morris goes on to explore insights from human qualities like humour and conscience, and then to dissect the reality of the mingling of good and evil in the world, and in individual lives and characters.[27] The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus come next, followed by the experience of forgiveness, and then Christian discipleship, including brief comments on church, sacraments, and living each day as an act of faith. The text is conversational in style, full of personal anecdotes and illustrations, and illuminated by quotations from poets and the occasional philosopher. G.K. Chesterton, one of Morris's favourite writers and formative influences, features here, as does C.S. Lewis, whose wartime broadcast talks, later published as *Mere Christianity*, set a standard for accessible but intellectually rigorous apologetics.[28]

In 'Letting God be God', Morris offers reflections on five themes: the mystery of God, the holiness of God, the image of God, the power of God, and the silence of God. In each case, Morris makes connections between Christian experience, common sense, and a theology centred on Christ and the cross. It is the crucified Christ who offers the best insight into an unknowable God, who squares the circle of grace and moral perfection, who models the image of God in us, who reframes God's power as divine Fatherhood, and who speaks in the silent drama of redemption.[29] Morris is keen to defend the classical attributes of God – he is scathing about believers who belittle God by 'treating him with cosy familiarity', seeing this as a greater threat to faith than militant atheism.[30] He seeks to present a thoughtful orthodoxy with freshness of language, apt illustration, and telling humour.

'Letting God be God' began as broadcast sermons, and this makes the link to the third theme of this paper:

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[24] Colin Morris, *Starting from Scratch* (London: Epworth Press, 1990), vii.
[25] Morris, *Starting from Scratch*, vii.
[26] Morris, *Starting from Scratch*, 5-7.
[27] Morris, *Starting from Scratch*, 13-15, 19-26.
[28] Morris, *Starting from Scratch*, 6, 8, 18, 35. On the genesis and reception of *Mere Christianity*, see George M. Marsden, *C.S. Lewis's Mere Christianity. A Biography* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2016).
[29] Morris, *Starting from Scratch*, 60-1, 67, 73, 76, 84.
[30] Morris, *Starting from Scratch*, 55.

Glad Tidings of Salvation in an Age of Crisis: (3) Communication

Colin Morris was pre-eminently a preacher. In his tribute to Donald Soper, another twentieth-century giant of the Methodist pulpit, he observed that Soper 'only wanted one thing, to be numbered amongst John Wesley's preachers.'[31] And Morris inherited a great tradition of preaching, stretching back to the birth of the Wesleys' Methodism in the 1730s.[32] Methodists valued preaching as a means of grace and a crucial instrument in securing the conversion of sinners. Preachers were held in high regard and they could materially affect the fortunes of a local church – it was reported, for example, that when Dinsdale Young died in January 1938, the congregation at Westminster Central Hall slumped from thousands to three hundred before the arrival of the new Superintendent eight months later.[33] Since the successor was W.E. Sangster, numbers soon recovered, but this illustrated the impact of a high-profile preacher, even in the first half of the twentieth century. With parents in their early forties when he was born, and elder sisters born before the First World War, Morris was raised in a household shaped by the late-Victorian and Edwardian exaltation of the pulpit, at the end of the 'golden age' of sermon culture in Britain.[34] The tradition continued with the dedicated Local Preachers of Bolton Methodism, celebrated by Morris as people of 'modest education but considerable culture acquired at great personal cost.'[35]

When Horton Davies published the fifth volume of his study of *Worship and Theology in England* in 1965, he commented on changing styles and emphases in preaching, citing the Methodists Leslie Weatherhead and Donald Soper as examples respectively of preachers of psychological and ethical sermons.[36] Thirty years later, in a volume suggestively subtitled 'Crisis and Creativity', Davies observed that 'confidence in the importance of preaching the Word has clearly diminished,' citing Christopher Driver's judgment that contemporary sermons had become 'muted oracles, conversational, and defensive.'[37]

Plenty of examples could be cited, even into the present century, of people maintaining a high view of preaching and devoting considerable energy and skill to the art of homiletics.[38] Colin Morris demonstrated the art to a high degree. His sermons were carefully crafted but, thanks to an excellent memory, delivered without notes. Widely read in theology and

[31] Morris, *Snapshots*, 29.
[32] On the place of preaching in Methodism, see Martin Wellings, *Methodism in Victorian Oxford. The Oxford Wesleyan Local Preachers' Book, 1830-1902* (Woodbridge: Boydell for the Oxfordshire Record Society, 2023), 24-31.
[33] Paul Sangster, *Doctor Sangster* (London: Epworth Press, 1962), 124 and 126.
[34] William Gibson, 'The British Sermon 1689-1901: Quantities, Performance, and Culture', in Keith A. Francis and William Gibson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon, 1689-1901* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 5.
[35] 'Jack Longworth', in Morris, *Snapshots*, 9, noting that the intellectual curiosity and limited financial resources of the Bolton preachers led to the development of a rich theology section in the local Municipal Library.
[36] Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England V: The Ecumenical Century, 1900-1965* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1965), 251-2.
[37] Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England VI: Crisis and Creativity* (Grand Rapids: Wiliam B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 261. Davies des not give a reference for the quotation from Driver.
[38] Examples might include Barbara Brown Taylor (Anglican), Paula Gooder (Anglican), Samuel Wells (Anglican), William H. Willimon (United Methodist), and Timothy Keller (Presbyterian), to take a broad cross-section of North American and British preachers, from a range of denominations and theological standpoints.

literature, he was also a master of the apt illustration, the humorous aside, and the telling comparison.[39] To take an example from *Anything But This!*, here is Morris demolishing the argument that discrimination against Africans is based on culture, not colour:

> … the discrimination against Africans in hotels and banks and shops relates to the whole genus African regardless of his educational standard or cultural attainments. Main entrances are for "Europeans" not "Europeans and Africans of Matric Standard." Were I to take one of my Oxford friends, a West African, with me to our local hotel, he would be refused admittance because he is an African. His cultural and educational attainments are higher than my own, and considerably higher than those of some Europeans who may stagger out of the hotel bar at closing time.[40]

Thirty-two years later, in a broadcast sermon on 'The Mystery of God', Morris said this:

> In this belittling process, God's love is reduced to sentimentality, his power converted into benevolence, his judgment shades into acquiescence and his holiness into prissiness. In that well-known hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way", William Cowper has the line, "Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face.' The God often projected in our time has no frowning providence to hide behind; just the perpetual smile of a heavenly Cheshire cat.[41]

As well as demonstrating the art of preaching – showing how in practice to declare the glad tidings of salvation in an age of crisis – Morris also reflected and published on the preacher's craft and calling, principally in his Voigt Lectures on Preaching, delivered to the Southern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church and published as *The Word and the Words* (1975). A brief consideration of this volume will show how Morris addressed what Horton Davies and Christopher Driver identified as a crisis of confidence in preaching.

Morris begins the series of Voigt Lectures by frankly acknowledging 'the storm which now rages about the effectiveness of preaching'.[42] While previous generations debated the competence of particular preachers, in contemporary society and the contemporary Church, 'It is the sermon itself as a method of communication which is widely discounted either as an old-fashioned or even counterproductive way of confronting people with the Gospel.'[43] After considering reasons why this might be the case – shrinking congregations, an emphasis on action rather than worship, theological controversy, and especially the switch from verbal to visual communication in the age of television – Morris reaffirms preaching as a life-changing and world-transforming gift of God: 'When a man, his truth and the moment come into providential conjunction then out of their union the explosive force of the Eternal Spirit

[39] Colin Morris, *Mankind My Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), 126, recalling the importance of Barth and 'rather leaden commentaries' on Genesis and Exodus as sources for him of theological insight for the Zambian Church in the 1960s.
[40] Morris, *Anything But This!,* 11.
[41] Morris, *Starting from Scratch*, 55.
[42] Colin Morris, *The Word and the Words* (London: Epworth Press, 1975), 9.
[43] Morris, *The Word and the Words*, 10.

ignites a holy flame which may run like a brush fire through a society and an historical epoch.'[44]

In the next eight lectures Morris explores the paradoxes of preaching: The Word – Inadequate yet Eventful; The Word – Personal yet Corporate (on the preacher's personality and the importance of the community of the Church); The Word – Relevant yet Divisive (drawing on personal experience of preaching on the colour bar in Northern Rhodesia – and admitting that he is 'still nursing the wounds' of that encounter);[45] The Word – Prophetic yet Priestly (speaking truth and adhering to the tradition); The Word – Liturgical and Sacramental (noting his own formation in a tradition where liturgy was often neglected); [46] The Word – Structured yet Spontaneous (reflecting on the difference between the written and the spoken word); The Word – Silent yet Active (on pastoral care and Christian presence); and The Word – Decisive and Final (setting out the fulness of the Gospel and inviting a response to the Good News of Jesus Christ).

Although Morris affirms that 'I am not concerned with … the nuts and bolts of preaching',[47] the lectures do in fact touch on practical matters like sermon preparation, choice of language, and the debate over using a verbatim manuscript, summary notes, or extemporaneous speech.[48] Morris also comments on some of the more creative methods of communication explored in the contemporary Church, including a service described by John Killinger in *Leave it to the Spirit* in which members of the congregation wrote phrases on one another with grease crayons. Morris's confession of nervousness at such liturgical experimentation may be read as an understatement.[49]

There is a good deal of practical guidance and wisdom born of much experience in *The Word and the Words*. Above all, however, the lectures are a reassertion of the place and value of preaching in the contemporary Church. Unfazed by the theological ferment of the 1960s and by the challenge of the television age,[50] Morris is confident in affirming the enduring importance of the ministry of preaching, where experience, personality, and the spoken word bring the historical and eternal truths of the Gospel into transformative connection with a congregation and a context.

Conclusion

Colin Morris lived through many ages of global crisis. Born as the Great Depression was breaking over the world's economy, he was a schoolboy during the Second World War, and an adult in the era of decolonisation and Cold War. He experienced the nuclear nervousness of the 1950s-80s, and the reshaping of European and world politics after 1989. He saw the

[44] Morris, *The Word and the Words*, 15.
[45] Morris, *The Word and the Words*, 58.
[46] Morris, *The Word and the Words*, 80-1.
[47] Morris, *The Word and the Words*, 16.
[48] Morris, *The Word and the Words*, 109-10.
[49] Morris, *The Word and the Words*, 79-80.
[50] To which Morris devoted another book, *God-in-a-Box. Christian Strategy in the Television Age* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984). Morris comments on the impact of the symbolic world of television on preachers and preaching at 202-04.

building and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the creation and dismantling of apartheid, and the coming of democracy and then dictatorship to much of sub-Saharan Africa. He guided the Church in Zambia into independence and led the BBC in Northern Ireland through the final years of 'The Troubles'. He held high office in the Methodist Church as the denomination faced a slump in membership, explored reconciliation with the Church of England (and was twice jilted at the altar), and underwent a major restructuring, all against the background of theological restatement and growing secularisation in British society.[51] Morris brought to these crises, national and global, a keen intellect, a value-system shaped by the Gospel, and an extraordinary ability to speak and write with clarity and passion. In Chingola in the late 1950s and early 1960s he spoke out against racism in Church and society and held together Gospel proclamation and political engagement. In an increasingly secular Britain from the 1970s he restated the Faith with compelling logic and winsome humour. And as the certainties of Christian belief and practice tottered, inside the Church as much as outside, he exemplified and defended the continuing importance of preaching as a place of encounter between human beings and God, between our illusions and reality, between our need and God's transforming grace in Jesus Christ. Colin Moris was not perfect and would not have claimed to be. But his extraordinary ministry illuminated a daring attempt to proclaim the Good News with passion and verve in times of complex and overlapping political, ecclesiastical, and cultural crises.

[51] Adran Hastings's summary of this era in Methodist history is scathing: 'Methodism in the 1960s, while awaiting union, had little history, except for an unprecedented rate of numerical decline. At the end it was left with only a smack in the face.': Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985* (London: Collins, 1986), 549. The 'indignation, consternation, fever and fret' over the Anglican-Methodist 'Conversations' provoked perhaps Morris's most scathing book, *Include Me Out! Confessions of an Ecclesiastical Coward* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), in which he likened the whole process to 'one of those nightmare games played with utter intensity by the inmates of a lunatic asylum': *Include Me Out!,* 7, 9.