

The Hand of God In the History of our Country —World War II

That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD,
that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.
Joshua 4:24

Notes of a Talk by
Mr R C T Warboys

Christian Values in Education

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Notes of a Talk by Mr R C T Warboys at Hungerford 12th May 2001

This year the Second World War, 1939-45, is one of the subjects of the GCSE. Our young friends in studying the published histories of the war will read of the bravery, skill and suffering of not only those in the forces but also the civilian population, in their case more so than in any previous war. But they will read little, if anything, of the Hand of God in answering prayer and saving us from the dreadful consequences of losing. This talk is an attempt to redress the balance. I pray that for both young and old it will be as we read in 1 Samuel 23 v 16,

‘And Jonathan Saul’s son arose and went to David in
the wood and strengthened his hand in God.’

That is, that our trust, providentially and spiritually shall not be in an arm of flesh, but in the Lord.

Fifty six years have now elapsed since the end of the war and those that served in the forces must be at least in their mid seventies. In giving this address I shall not in any way attempt to pretend our government was always right and all the faults lay with the Germans. Both governments were not always truthful in what the population was told. For example, we were told what a great help the Free French Forces were under General De Gaulle. After the war it was known that he was a constant trouble to our leaders and that in fact there were more Frenchmen fighting in the German armies than with the Allies. Also, we heard the German losses had often been exaggerated.

Of necessity I shall need to mention the historical events that took place. Also I may mention some of my own personal deliverances during the war, but primarily I want to draw your thoughts in thankfulness to God for enabling us at great cost to win the war. Not only shall we see **The Hand of the Lord** in giving deliverances by miracles that took place, but also in humbling our pride when we relied too much on our weapons. The thought often in my mind during the war was from Psalm 20 v 7

‘Some *trust* in chariots (tanks) and some in horses (aircraft); but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.’

The first question I need to address is, ‘*Was it right to go to war with Nazi Germany*’? Some may say we should have submitted, ‘*turned the other cheek*.’ This is so when something affects us alone, but this was a case of defending loved ones and our fellow citizens. In 1 Timothy 5 v 8 we read,

‘But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel’

and so Britain was right to declare war.

The circumstances that led up to the war were these; After Germany lost the 1914 - 18 war, her colonies were taken from her; reparations were demanded; and limits placed upon the armaments that she was allowed to make, for example, no warship over 10,000 tons. Great inflation took place, I have a 20,000-mark note issued at that time and it probably was only worth a few pence in our money. A man called Adolf Hitler then came to power by stirring up the people, especially blaming the Jews for Germany’s troubles and assassinating his opponents or driving them out of the country. He then made Austria part of Germany, followed by Czechoslovakia. The British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, obtained a promise from Hitler that ‘*He had no more territorial ambitions in Europe*’. Chamberlain returned from Munich declaring, ‘*There would be peace in our time*.’ Within a few months Germany then invaded Poland, and Britain and France who had pacts to help Poland, declared war on Germany. Immediate evacuation of nearly 2,000,000 civilians – mostly children – took place from our cities to the relative safety of the countryside. For children from the slums, going to live in the country, was a great blessing to escape the pollution of the cities. Many of these had lived in almost unbelievable conditions, not used to using a knife and fork, sitting on the floor for meals and having many unsanitary habits, which shocked those with whom they were billeted. Gas masks were issued to everyone, even

suitable models for babies. In the early years of the war I was still at school. If we arrived without our gas mask we would be sent home to fetch it! Through the **Lord's mercies** gas was not used against us. Air raid shelters were dug and at school we had regular practices. A 'black out' was imposed, windows had to be covered so that no light could be seen from outside, streetlights of course were extinguished and car headlights had masks, so that it was quite dangerous to drive at night. The greatest number of deaths on the roads ever recorded in this country was in the winter of 1940/41, although very soon petrol was only allowed for essential users.

Food rationing took place, the amount varied at different times but these are typical amounts of food allowed for an adult for a week; Bacon 4ozs, butter 2oz, 1 egg, tea 2oz, sweets 12oz per month. (1 ounce = 28.35 grammes). **Very wonderfully it was not necessary to ration bread during the war.**

Here we see again the **Lord's mercies**. For about eight months apart from a few minor bombing raids, there was virtually no fighting. It must be remembered that Germany had now been preparing for war for many years, Britain had only started a measure of rearming in 1938. Had Germany invaded the Low Countries in 1939 instead of 1940, humanly speaking they could have invaded this country and defeated us easily. But they did not and this respite enabled us to begin to equip our forces with better weapons, for example with Spitfires and Hurricanes. These were equipped with the most powerful aircraft engine then invented, the Rolls Royce Merlin. This engine later on was used to power the Lancaster bomber and the Mosquito aircraft. Robert Watson-Watt had invented radar in 1935. This enabled approaching aircraft to be detected at a great distance and was invaluable in the battle that followed. France had built a very strongly defended line of fortifications called the Maginot Line on their border with Germany. Rather than attack this with consequent heavy losses, Hitler decided to outflank it.

In May 1940 Germany invaded Holland, Belgium and France followed by Norway, completely overwhelming the opposing armies by their far superior forces. These countries quickly capitulated and our army was driven back to the French coast, in particular to Dunkirk. Although the vehicles, tanks, guns etc had to be destroyed and left behind, again the **Hand of the Lord** was seen. Hitler overruled his Generals and ordered their armies to stop when they



King George VI

could, humanly speaking, have captured our troops. King George VI requested a 'Day of Prayer' to be on Sunday May 26th. **God heard this prayer and several remarkable events followed.** The German Air Force was grounded on the 28th May due to a violent storm and this enabled our troops to reach the coast under cover of darkness and rain. Despite this storm, in the following days the North Sea was as calm as a millpond, this enabled even small fishing boats and pleasure craft to cross the sea and bring home 335,000 troops. The 9th June was appointed as a 'Day of National Thanksgiving'.

In many Churches and Chapels Psalm 124 was sung or read.

Psalm 124

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; ² If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: ³ Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: ⁴ Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: ⁵ Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. ⁶ Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. ⁷ Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. ⁸ Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

How aptly it described the nations experience.

By the 5th June France had completely surrendered and Britain was now the only country fighting against Germany and Italy, who had also entered the war on the side of Germany. Hitler had hoped Britain would also surrender and in that connection one of his assistants, Rudolf Hess, flew to Scotland to negotiate and, as I read only recently, to encourage the Scottish Nationalists and the IRA in Ireland to rebel. Winston Churchill made several stirring speeches; some of us remember such phrases as '*We shall fight on the beaches we shall fight in the streets we shall never surrender*'. The American Ambassador

in London, (the father of J F Kennedy, later President of the USA), told the American government we would soon be defeated.

Further answers to the Day of Prayer followed and instead of Hitler ordering an immediate invasion, when our country was practically defenceless and could only have put up a token resistance, **he did not do so**. At this time the Home Guard was formed and although not lacking in bravery, their only weapons in the early days were shotguns and not all of them had these. At that time the concrete 'Pill Boxes', many of which still exist, were constructed, and road signs and village and railway station names were removed in the hope that German parachutists would not know where they had landed. Beaches had barbed wire entanglements and land mines were laid.

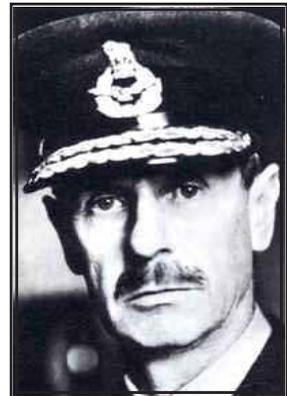
In the autumn of 1940 Germany sent over fleets of bombers escorted by fighters. Their instructions were to concentrate on destroying our airfields. Although greatly outnumbered, our Spitfires and Hurricanes, (with which, due to the respite mentioned, we had been able to equip our Royal Air Force, replacing the biplane Gloster Gladiators), shot down many more German planes than we lost. However, our losses both in aircraft and men were great and the airfields suffered serious damage. Just when we were on the edge of defeat Germany switched to bombing London. Again, the **Hand of the Lord**. For example, on September the 7th a thousand bombers and fighters attacked London, but suffered great losses. While these attacks on London continued we were able to repair the damage to the airfields.

King George VI in a broadcast in this dark year said, *'Put your trust in God as I do'...*and he illustrated it with this quotation *'I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown," and he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way"'*.

I mention at this point that, although we cannot say that the King and our leaders knew Christ as their souls salvation, yet they did acknowledge God's overruling providence and I believe God honoured this in answering their prayers and sending deliverances.

Our Military Intelligence found that a large fleet of ships and barges and thousands of men were prepared for an imminent invasion. Normally in September the Channel is calm and barges could have been used to bring over the army, but now the sea became unseasonably stormy and rough, the very opposite of what it had been like at the time of Dunkirk. **Another interposition by the Lord.** Orders were issued that Church bells were to ring only if the invasion started and not at other times.

We now know that instructions were given for September the 14th to be the day for the German army to force a landing between Folkestone and Worthing. However, for the invasion to be successful, Germany needed to gain the mastery of the sky. Not knowing the date of the proposed invasion King George expressed the desire that Sunday 7th September should be a **National Day of Prayer**. The population responded and Churches and Chapels were crowded. A few days later wave after wave of bombers and fighters were sent against us, greatly outnumbering the 204 Spitfires and Hurricanes sent against them. Churchill was in the Operations Room and asked the Air Vice Marshall what reserves there were. The reply was, "There are none"! But suddenly it was reported that the bombers were jettisoning their bombs and fleeing back across the Channel. Hitler then postponed the invasion "until further notice", and the invasion fleet was dispersed. By the 29th the weather had become calm but it was then too late. Air Chief Marshall Sir Hugh Dowding said that *'During the battle one had the feeling that there had been some Divine Intervention to alter some sequence of events which otherwise would have occurred'*. Winston Churchill made his famous statement, *'Never before in the field of human conflict, was so much owed by so many to so few'*.



**Sir Hugh Dowding
Commander-in-Chief
Fighter Command**

Turning now to the events at sea, Germany although building the 'Pocket Battleships', (which were actually of 14,000 tons, instead of keeping to the limit of 10,000 tons) and two super Battleships, the Tirpitz and Bismark of over 50,000 tons, relied chiefly on submarines, known as U-Boats. The U-Boats began to sink a vast amount of the shipping,

which was bringing food, oil and other essential supplies to this country. The U-Boats used for communication a cipher machine, known as the 'Enigma', which had millions of possible permutations. The Germans considered the codes could not be broken. Through the **Hand of God** we obtained a machine from a U-Boat before it sank and a team of mathematicians at Bletchley in Bedfordshire managed to find out how it worked. The Germans made many modifications to the machine during the war, but each time after a period, the codes were again broken. Throughout the war this enabled us to understand most of their communications and in measure to divert our convoys and send attacking forces to destroy the U-Boats. It has been estimated that being able to intercept most of the German and later, Japanese messages shortened the war by two years and saved thousands of lives.

Returning to the bombing campaign, a great deal of damage was done. I can remember looking out of my bedroom window at Oakington, 65 miles from London and seeing the red glow of the fires in the sky, particularly at the docks. Although I did not know my wife at the time, her parents house was bombed, she was in an air raid shelter, but her father was severely injured. London was bombed every single night from September 7th to November 2nd in 1940. On May 10th 1941, 3000 Londoners were killed in that one night. Altogether 20,000 Londoners were killed and 1,500,000 were made homeless during the war. Many other cities also suffered many casualties and great damage.

About this time I was helping an uncle with the harvest at his farm at the village of Bourn between Cambridge and St Neots. Most of his land had been taken for Bourn aerodrome and the three hangars still visible from the main road were being built.

Early one morning (about 2 a.m.) a German bomber was heard circling overhead and I saw a flare coming down on a parachute (some of its cords I still have) and it set light to a shock (stook) of corn. My uncle and I went out and put the fire out with buckets of water and he told me to go one way round the buildings while he went the other to see if there were any more fires.

While I was about half way between the farm drive and the hangars near the trees that still exist, (I think of it every time I go past them), the plane was

still circling above, I heard the whistle of bombs. I threw myself flat on the ground and mercifully, although in the direct line of the 'stick' of bombs, one fell between myself and the main road about 50 yards to my left and the others from 50 yards to my right and so my life was spared. This plane then flew to Oakington a few miles away and my parents watched as the searchlights found it and the anti-aircraft guns fired at it. They heard the crew of the gun near the chapel call out 'Got it!' My father went to where the plane crashed in flames, and found all the crew had been burnt to death. I hope no one here glorifies war, don't forget they were probably someone's husband or father, and certainly were someone's sons! Plane crashes in our area were so common (usually our own pilots trying to land a badly damaged aircraft), that I did not bother to go and see it.

The bombing campaign continued at night for many months and beside London, Coventry and many other cities suffered great damage.

Within a few months Germany had occupied Norway and the Balkans and the Italians, North Africa, threatening the Suez Canal. Germany and Russia had made before the war a non-aggression pact, when Germany invaded Poland in 1939 she allowed Russia to have part of the country and did not interfere when Russia attacked Finland. Ignoring the Pact, in 1941, instead of continuing the war against Britain alone, the **Lord caused Hitler** to attack Russia, thus making the classical military error of attempting to fight on two fronts at once. We had warned Stalin, the Russian dictator, of Germany's imminent attack but he ignored the warning. This attack gave some respite and enabled us to begin to build up our forces for what was to be called "The Second Front" when we invaded France in 1944. The Communist Party, which at that time was quite powerful in this country and had up to this time fermented strikes and hindered the war effort, now suddenly changed and did all they could to help the prosecution of the war. This fight between former allies reminds me of the occasion when the Moabites, Ammonites and the inhabitants of Mount Seir came against the Israelites in the time of godly Jehoshaphat.

¹²O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes *are* upon thee. ¹³And all

Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. ¹⁴Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; ¹⁵And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, but God's. ¹⁶Tomorrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷Ye shall not *need* to fight in this *battle*: set yourselves, stand ye *still*, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the LORD *will be* with you.

²¹And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

²²And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. ²³For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy *them*: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. ²⁴And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they *were* dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

(2 Chronicles 20 v 12 - 17 and 21 - 24.)

Notice how they praised the Lord in verse 21, which was *before* the deliverance came. This sets forth their faith in God delivering them.

In the Middle East, Italy, who had joined Germany, attempted to seize the Suez Canal but was easily defeated. About 250,000 men surrendered with scarcely a fight, and we gained control of Libya. However, the Germans then sent in their forces and ours were driven back to the Canal Zone to a place called El Alamein, where our forces made a stand. There was a short battle and then, surprisingly German tanks and artillery withdrew. Suddenly a remarkable thing happened. Over a thousand of the elite Panzer troops surrendered and with parched and swollen tongues they crazily drank the water our troops gave them. For 36 hours they had had no water to drink. When they overran our positions and found a six inch water pipe, they shot holes in it and deeply drank the water (they were used to drinking brackish water), only to find it was sea water, this of course gave them a terrible thirst. The reason it had salt water was this - the pipe had been just laid and to conserve fresh water it had been tested with seawater. Had the Panzer troops arrived a day earlier it would have been empty, two days later it would have had fresh water in it.

For some reason that has never been given a natural explanation, the Germans did not follow up their advance but stopped. Had they advanced to the Canal, they would have gained control of the oil supplies and of course deprived us of them. Convoys of ships sent to reinforce our troops suffered great losses in passing through the Mediterranean, but Malta provided an invaluable air base to help to protect the convoys. Although it seemed the obvious thing to do, Hitler never attempted to invade Malta. If he had tried, there would have been little that we could have done to prevent it. Again, the **Hand of the Lord**.

Malta had as its Governor a God fearing retired General, Sir William Dobbie, who said afterwards that when he was asked to go to Malta *'I knew that was what God had in mind for me'*. Sir William afterwards wrote a book called *A Very Present Help*. Malta at that time had only 5000 men to defend it, sixteen anti-aircraft guns and four Gloster Gladiators - obsolete fighters that were found in crates in the dockyard. General Dobbie records in his book how he remembered the servant of Elisha's saying,



General Sir William Dobbie, Governor of Malta

‘Alas my master, how shall we do?’ Elisha had replied
“Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they
that be with them” (2 Kings 6 v 16).

In one of his first Orders of the Day he said that *‘With God’s help we will maintain the security of this fortress. I therefore call upon all officers and other ranks humbly to seek God’s help, and then in reliance upon Him to do their duty unflinchingly’*. He was encouraged to receive a telegram from General Ironside, the Chief of the army, containing a reference to Deuteronomy chapter 3 v 22, where we read,



**General William
Ironside**

‘Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your
God he shall fight for you.’

He writes that it encouraged him to know that others in high places at home were thinking along the same lines as they were in Malta. By the time that Dobbie left Malta two years later there had been over 2000 bombing raids causing much damage, but the **Lord’s Hand** was seen in that there had been no invasion.

On the Russian Front, Germany initially made great advances. Had the Germans treated the prisoners they captured, and the civilian population they overran, with kindness, the Russians would have welcomed them as liberators from the cruel dictator Stalin. Instead the Germans massacred and starved them; consequently this stiffened the resolve of the Russians to resist. The Germans reached the outskirts of Moscow and Stalingrad on the Volga, but by this time the bitterly cold Russian winter had started and this proved to be the turning point of the war against Russia. Hitler himself said that the Russian winter of 1941 ‘Came weeks earlier than science could foresee, and had been unknown for forty years’. The **Hand of the Lord!** Although we could ill spare supplies, we sent a great deal to the Russian northern ports, losing many ships and men in so doing. After the war it was learnt that, even when the German forces were desperately short of food and other essentials, Hitler said that priority was always to be given to

the trains that were transporting Jews to the gas chambers from the parts of Russia they had occupied.

In December 1941 the Japanese, without warning, attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbour in the island of Hawaii in the Pacific, causing immense damage. This brought the Americans into the war on our side, with the immense resources of the USA and its production completely free from the bombing that our factories continued to sustain. We also sustained great losses in the Far East with the fall of Singapore (which we had been told was impregnable), and the sinking of two of our battleships the Prince of Wales and the Repulse. The Japanese used many suicide (or as they called them kamikaze) pilots. These were equipped with an aeroplane stripped of its inessentials, only enough petrol to fly to the target and loaded with explosive and detonators to explode on impact. The kamikaze pilot would deliberately fly his plane into the battleship, causing great damage and of course losing his own life. They also quickly occupied the whole of Southeast Asia and threatened to invade Australia. As a nation we tended to despise the Japanese. In general our experience of them was the cheap trashy toys and similar toys they exported to us before the war. We were also told their eyesight was so bad they would never be able to aim their guns. Can we not see, in the bringing low of our pride, the **Hand of the Lord?**

The Japanese considered it a great reproach to be captured and therefore inflicted great cruelties on the prisoners of war. It was said that the infamous Burma railway cost a life either of a prisoner or a slave labourer for every sleeper that was laid. A boy I was at school with was taken prisoner at Singapore and his relatives never heard what happened to him. If the Japanese soldiers were liable for capture they would commit suicide by disembowelling themselves.

On the 3rd of September 1942 a 'Day of National Prayer' was held to mark the anniversary of the outbreak of war. This marked the turning of the tide of war in our favour. On the 24th October 1942, having received reinforcements, our army opened the Battle of El Alamein .

General Montgomery issued the following order to the Eighth Army: '*Let us pray that the Lord, mighty in Battle, will give us the victory.*'



Field Marshal Sir Bernard
Law Montgomery,
1st Viscount Montgomery
of Alamein

Remarkably Rommel, the outstanding German General-in-charge, had to report sick in September for the first time in his life and had flown to Germany for treatment. General Stumme, who was left in charge, died of a heart attack just after the battle commenced. The General in Rome responsible for petrol supplies had gone on leave without arranging for the petrol to be supplied. These things all occurring at the same vital time was no coincidence, but was indeed the **Hand of the Lord**.

In the battle of the Atlantic, as it was known, a new potential disaster loomed when the battleship Bismark was completed and passed between Scotland and Iceland to attack our convoys. The pride of our Navy was the battle cruiser, Hood, that was sent to intercept it. But a shell hit the magazine of the Hood causing an explosion, which blew the ship in half and of the crew of 1419, only three were rescued. The **Hand of the Lord** was seen here in humbling our pride. The Bismark, which had sustained some damage and was leaking oil, headed for Brest in France for repairs while all our available warships were then sent to search for her.

Due to the distance and mist, it seemed as if the Bismark would elude her pursuers. One of our Aircraft Carriers sent up planes carrying torpedoes to look for her and through a break in the cloud, saw her and launched an attack. It should be understood that a battle ship is very heavily armoured against torpedoes, and also that torpedoes carried by aircraft were not as powerful as those used by submarines. However, the **Lord's hand** was seen in that a torpedo hit the Bismarck's stern damaging and jamming the rudder so that it caused the ship to turn sharply in a circle. The Bismark was probably travelling at over thirty knots. How close that torpedo came to missing the ship altogether! Also, if the rudder had been damaged in a straight-ahead position the ship could have continued on its course, using its separate engines to achieve the minor steering necessary until it reached the safety of being within the range of air cover from France. Our battle fleet was then able to close with the Bismark and sink it, so another deliverance was given to us. Sadly, as our

ships were attempting to rescue the hundreds of German sailors in the water, a warning was given of the approach of a U-Boat and, because of the danger of our ships being sunk while stationary, the rescue was abandoned and the sailors had to be left to drown. Of the crew of 2200, only 115 were alive nine days later. Such is war! The other great German battleship the Tirpitz was attacked by midget submarines in a Norwegian Fiord, successfully bombed and sunk.

Returning to Africa, after the Germans had been driven back to Tripolitania, it was decided to land British and American forces in north west Africa to try and trap the Axis forces between our armies. A force of 650 ships was sent and apart from a U-Boat seeing one straggler and thinking it was of no consequence, this armada approached Africa completely unknown to our enemy. General Sir Frederick Morgan said, *'The rest of our ships were being obscured by a squall that seemed to travel with them'*.

The **Hand of the Lord**, as it was when the Lord caused a pillar of cloud to be between the Israelites and the Egyptians. Apart from a few long-range bombers, the aircraft needed to support the operation had to land at Gibraltar to refuel. Had the enemy put this airfield out of use the whole operation would have failed. But no attempt was made to do so. Within six months of the battle of El Alamein, the whole of Africa was freed from the enemy.

When the time came for our forces to land in Sicily a storm was raging as our ships and landing craft approached the coast. The enemy, knowing no landing could take place in those conditions, relaxed their guard; the patrol boats kept to the harbours and the sailors went to bed. There are records of Captains of our ships calling men to prayer as there could be no turning back, but with barely an hour and a half to go, the wind dropped. Commander Kimmins said the swell went down quicker than he had ever seen it before, and so the landings were successful.

In May 1944 the Germans sent 'Flying Bombs' (or V1's) against the south east of England from northern France. These were cheaply made pilot-less aircraft with sufficient fuel to reach London. They then crashed and exploded causing great damage. I was working at the British Telecom (then called the Post Office) Research Station at Dollis Hill in northwest London. We used

to have the windows open in the hope that flying glass would not cut us. When we heard a V1 coming (their engines made a distinctive sound), we dived under the tables to obtain some protection if the building was hit. After waiting what seemed a long time, although it would only have been a fraction of a minute, we would hear the explosion, feel the building shake and come out from under the tables. At least in my case, prayer was answered and so the **Hand of the Lord** can be seen in my being spared to this time.

During the last three years of the war our bombers, especially the Lancasters, some of which incidentally were based at Oakington aerodrome opposite my house, inflicted great damage on the German factories. But it was inevitable that the civilian population would also suffer. Although reserved from being called up during the war, afterwards I served in the Royal Corps of Signals and was stationed in Germany for a year. I remember standing on Hannover Station platform (it was raised on a viaduct) and as far as the eye could see, probably a mile, there was not a building left standing.

The Germans started mass bombing, but as we read in **Hosea 8 v 7**,

‘For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind’

so they suffered far more than we did in this respect.

By May 1944 preparations were well in hand for the invasion of Europe. Just before D-Day, as it came to be known, King George VI broadcast to the nation. Among other things he said, *‘We shall not ask that God may do our will, but that we may be enabled to do the will of God.’*

I commend these words to you each, young and old... General Montgomery repeated what he had said before El Alamein *‘Let us pray that the Lord, mighty in battle, will give us the victory’*. It needs to be understood that only on certain days when the moon and tides were suitable, could an invasion take place.

At Christ Church Portsdown, where many of the forces were assembled, a service was held just 48 hours before the invasion. General Dempsey said *‘It was one of the most moving experiences of my life’*. The Chaplain recited the prayer that Drake had offered before Cadiz in 1587; *‘O Lord God, when Thou givest to thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it*

is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same, until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory; through Him that for the finishing of Thy work laid down His life, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.'

The weather that June, instead of being placid as usual, was stormy, so much so that the German weather forecasters told their Generals there could not be an invasion in the period including June 6th. Consequently, many German officers took the opportunity for a short leave and were not with their units at the vital time. However, General Eisenhower was told there was likely to be a short interval of calm at that time and so the invasion was ordered to start. As it had been in Sicily, the enemy was relaxed until the bombardment of the shore defences commenced. This immense force of over 4000 ships and 11000 aircraft did not meet a single ship or plane to oppose them, unusually the Channel was free of U-Boats at the time. There were of course, many casualties in our forces when the enemy realized what was happening and started to fire on the invading force, but not so many as there would have been but for the **Hand of the Lord** again appearing for us.

And so, after another eleven months of battles, some of which we lost such as Arnhem, victory was at last gained. It was not until we entered Germany that we fully realized the evil of the enemy we had been fighting against. Adolf Eichmann, Hitler's lieutenant, devised what was called, 'The final solution to the Jewish problem'. Over six million Jews, men, women and children were put to death, mostly in the Concentration Camps and the Gas Chambers.

The father of one of our members was a chauffeur for an officer and they were the first to enter one of the concentration camps (Belson). He used to speak of the terrible sights of starving men, women and children, many of whom were beyond saving. Also, the torture chambers of the Gestapo (the German secret police) and the factories where slave labourers from the occupied countries, were literally worked to death.

And these things would have been done in our land but for the mighty **Hand of God**.

Appendix 1

Since giving the Address the following additional information has been given to me, by Mr David Relf of Croydon.

Re Page 3

Sir Thomas Inskip, (later Lord Caldecote) a Lord Chief Justice, had monthly Prayer Meetings in his room in the Law Courts. He was head of a committee to rebuild the Royal Air Force (against Labour opposition), and it was largely through his efforts that the Spitfire was developed.

General Allenbrooke was in France just before Dunkirk and heard a telephone ringing. As there was no one else there he picked it up and found that it was the Prime Minister. Churchill ordered that we must keep up with the French and fight the Germans. Allenbrooke told him in no uncertain terms that the French had already given in and that the British must be evacuated. So he received his orders to do so and time was saved. If he had not been there when the telephone rang there would have been delay and many troops might not have been saved.

Re Page 13

General Montgomery was left for dead in World War I, but a doctor saw a leg move and he was spared. General Gott was appointed to command the Army at El Alamein, but the plane carrying him was shot down and so Montgomery was appointed in his place. When Montgomery was GOC South Eastern Command he addressed 100 officers by saying, *'Gentlemen, I read my Bible every day and I recommend you to do the same.'*

Appendix 2

The following extracts from Lord Allenbrooke's War Time Diaries add further detail to the additional information that has been provided.

Copy of the footnote in Lord Allenbrookes War Time Diaries for 16th November 1941 when the Prime Minister Winston Churchill, offered him the post of Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS):

'There is no doubt that I was temporarily staggered by the magnitude of the task I

was undertaking. Let it be remembered the situation we were in at that time, left alone and unsupported in the war against Germany. Let it be remembered the task we had in defeating Germany in the First World War, when we had the assistance of a strong France, Italy, Russia and finally the USA. Now we were faced with a possible invasion across the Channel, with increasing difficulties in the Middle East, a closed Mediterranean, dark clouds growing in the Far East and not an ally to help us. The horizon was black from end to end with only a shaft of light, in the possible entry of America into the war. To pick up the strategic reins at the War Office at such a moment was surely sufficient to cause one the deepest anxiety. Added to that was the certain trial of working hand in hand with Winston in handling the direction of the war. I had seen enough of him to realize his impetuous nature, his gambler's spirit, and his determination to follow his own selected path at all costs, to realize fully what I was faced with. I can remember clearly that after he had taken me away to his study and had offered me this appointment, he left me alone temporarily to rejoin the others. I am not an exceptionally religious person, but I am not ashamed to confess that as soon as he was out of the room my first impulse was to kneel down and pray to God for the guidance and support in the task I had undertaken.

Extract from Field Marshall Lord Allenbrooke's War Time Diaries for 7th August 1942 on the occasion of the death of General Gott:

'Just as I was starting home for dinner I received the news that Gott had been killed this afternoon whilst flying back from Burg el Arab! A very hard blow coming on top of the planning we had been doing. He was one of our linkpins! I do feel sorry for Mrs Gott. After dinner the PM (Prime Minister), Smuts and I had a conference as to how the matter should be settled. Had some difficulty. PM rather in favour of Wilson. However Smuts assisted me and a telegram has now been sent off to the Cabinet ordering Montgomery out to take command of the 8th Army. I hope we get Alexander and Montgomery out soon so that I can settle details of Corps Commanders and Chiefs of Staff with them.'

Footnote

'Gott's death was a very serious blow, and the most unexpected one. He was flying back on the Burg el Arab - Heliopolis route, considered so safe that no escort had been found necessary for Winston when we flew out. It happened to be an individual German plane, driven out of high altitude in combat, and dashing home

at low altitude. It came across the slow transport plane on its way and shot it down in flames. It seemed almost like the hand of God suddenly appearing to set matters right where we had gone wrong. Looking back on those days with the knowledge of what occurred at Alamein and after it I am convinced that the whole course of the war might well have been altered if Gott had been in command of the 8th Army. In his tired condition I do not think he would have had the energy and vitality to stage and fight this battle as Monty did... Let it not be imagined from these remarks of mine that I did not have a high opinion of Gott. On the contrary I held him in the highest esteem and capable of great things, but he was not at his best, had had too long a run in the desert, and wanted rest'.

Source: War Diaries 1939-1945 Field Marshall Lord Allenbrooke; Weidenfield & Nicolson 2001 (ISBN 0-297-60731-6)

Appendix 3

Mr Francis Oliver who served in the RAF and was present at the battle of El Alamein, has sent the following additional information:

At the beginning of the war an attempt was made on Hitler's life. Had this succeeded, Goering would have taken his place. Unlike Hitler, Goering wanted to attack Britain not Russia, this was at the time when we had practically no defences ready and, humanly speaking, could easily have won the war.

With regard to the 'Battle of Britain', Air Chief Marshall Dowding was asked if he required more pilots or aircraft. His reply was, *'I want both, and I believe in God and I want a miracle.'*

As mentioned on page 5, just as our airfields were badly damaged the enemy switched their attack to London and the airfields were repaired. Prior to this Germany had not bombed London and we had not bombed Berlin. However, a German bomber had been badly damaged and, thinking the aircraft was over the North Sea, the bombs were released but fell on London. We then bombed Berlin and Hitler, who had promised the Germans that they would not be bombed, in a frenzy ordered their aircraft to attack London thus giving the relief to the airfields as mentioned. Again the **Hand of God**.

When the Forces in the Western desert heard that General Gott had been appointed they were very disconsolate, but there was great relief when General Montgomery took his place. 'Monty', as he was known, mixed with the troops and showed an interest in their welfare.

Just prior to the opening of the battle of El Alamein, a rain storm took place which bogged down, completely, the enemies aircraft, but not those of the Allies. We had fine weather and were able to destroy their aircraft on the ground. Again the **Hand of God**.

Monty gave a talk to the desert airforce in which he said, '*Some of us will see our homes again, some of us will not, but if it is His will, the Lord, who is mighty in battle, will fight for us.*' There is no doubt that he did.

In the corner of the airfield where Mr Oliver was, there was a small bowser containing the drinking water for the airmen to fill their water bottles (local water was undrinkable). Although the petrol bowsers were damaged by the enemy, the water one was not.

Psalm 91 vs 5 & 7 were on Mr Oliver's mind

'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day'

And in verse seven as they advanced and saw the corpses of the enemy everywhere,

'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee'

Monty had a small table at the entrance to his tent on which lay a Bible. If this was open it meant he was praying and entrance to the tent was forbidden until the Bible was closed.

With regard to the sinking of the Bismark, Admiral Tovey assembled the ship's company on HMS King George V and read Psalm 124 (see page 4).

So quite a number of our leaders acknowledged God and the **Hand of God** was seen in so many deliverances.



**Lord John Cronyn Tovey
Admiral of the Fleet**

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