

C. The Foundations Under Attack The Roots of Apostasy

(Address given by the author to the United Protestant Council on November 1 ,1997)

The apostasy that we have witnessed in the twentieth century; the compromise on essentials and the attack on the fundamentals actually have their roots in the nineteenth century. That century provided Great Britain with unprecedented prosperity, political power and global influence as well as the "feel good factor." At the same time, prominent committed Christians such as Livingstone, Wilberforce and Shaftesbury brought the gospel to the lost and social reform to the deprived and excluded. Victorian values, to which we look back with such nostalgia today, were derived from the Scriptures and brought many blessings and earned much respect abroad. On the face of it, all seemed to be well with the church too, but appearances were deceiving. Malign spiritual forces were at large, principalities and powers, spiritual wickedness in high places conspiring to undermine the very foundations of the faith.

During the course of that benign and well-intentioned century the Protestant Reformed religion established by law, which for centuries had stood firm, yielded ground to its sworn enemy – and came under sustained attack on several fronts. The Catholic Emancipation Act was enacted in 1829 and the Jesuits allowed to return to England. Within four years the Romanising movement within the Church of England had been launched at Oxford. As we shall see, Anglo-Catholicism was set to play a crucial role in the attack on the foundations of the Reformed faith and in the strategy of the Counter-Reformation.

That strategy was laid out unmistakably by Cardinal Manning speaking to a gathering of Jesuit leaders in 1870 – the very year that Papal Infallibility was instituted.

"Great is the prize for which you strive. Surely a soldier's eye and a soldier's heart would choose by intuition this field of England. None ampler or nobler could be found. It is a head of Protestantism; the center of its movements and the stronghold of its power. Weakened in England it is paralyzed everywhere. Conquered in England it is conquered throughout the world. Once overthrown here, all else is a war of detail. All the roads of the world meet in one point, and this point reached, all the world is open to the Church's will."

As at the time of the Reformation the Word of God itself came under sustained attack. The Futurist interpretation of Bible prophecy propagated unsuccessfully by the Jesuits at the time of the Reformation had been repackaged and disseminated into the church through the flood of tracts of the newly formed Brethren movement and the Anglo-Catholic Tractarians. This new understanding of Daniel, 2 Thessalonians and Revelation laid the foundation of a false theology of Antichrist – the spurious Scriptural basis for the modern ecumenical movement. A new Bible was required; and was duly produced by Anglo-Catholic scholars, Professors Westcott and Hort. Their Revised Version of the Bible was based on corrupted manuscripts rejected by the Reformation, but it became the father of almost all modern versions. Its translation of the prophetic passages related to Antichrist lent itself to the new futurist theology. Protestant author and former Secretary of the Protestant Truth Society, Albert Close wrote in 1916: "The Jesuits have enticed our theological professors and the Plymouth brethren to fire high over the head of the great Antichrist; one in the past the Praeterist, the other in the future the Futurist Antichrist. Between these two schools the whole Christian ministry has been mixed up, and is practically sitting on the fence. Few ministers now preach Daniel or Revelation." Of course that remains the case today.

Given the impact in the theological colleges and the wider church of the new Higher Criticism in the climate of Darwinism and advancing humanism it is not surprising that the new understanding of Bible prophecy spread as quickly as it did. The Scofield Reference Bible appeared in the 1920s and was greatly influential especially among Pentecostals. Full of scholarly footnotes, it incorporated Futurist theology into its Dispensationalist scheme in such a way that few were able to distinguish it all from the inspired Scriptures. Dispensational Futurism has subsequently spread widely in evangelical circles especially among Charismatics and is now accepted by the majority of Christians as the new orthodoxy. This has seriously weakened the spiritual armoury of the church. With the Antichrist yet to appear and the Papacy vindicated from its accusers, the authority of Scripture was enhanced among those who sought reconciliation with Rome. The Counter-Reformation, so hostile and confrontational towards heretics in the past had emerged with a new face and a new strategy, and an ecumenical Bible. In 1910 at the *Edinburgh World Missionary Conference* the modern ecumenical movement was born.

Antichrist was no longer the Roman Papacy, except to a diminishing remnant, but a political world ruler who would appear at the end of the age. A few generations would pass and Christians raised on or drawn to the new Bible versions and the new eschatology would be ready to abandon and even repent of the Reformation separated position regarding Rome (this is also the Constitutional position). The new climate in which tolerance and unity is preferred to truth ensured this would happen. The "ancient landmark" could be removed within the Church of England. It was, at Keele, in 1967.

The First National Evangelical Conference met at Keele in April 1967 with 1000 clergy and laity taking part. It has been described as having marked a turning point in Anglican evangelicalism in the twentieth century. And now thirty years after Keele, the majority of evangelicals who are still in the Church of England look back with considerable satisfaction at what they see as the great achievements of the Keele Conference. They believe it was at Keele that at last the unity, which they had longed for and prayed for, became a reality. Those who were regarded as conservative evangelicals repented of their withdrawal and their sectarian attitudes and began to engage with the wider church and the world.

The conference had been primed to deal with the new policy of Anglican evangelicals towards ecumenism. The ecumenical movement had gained wide acceptance within the Church of England and beyond, and careful preparations had been made for the Keele Conference to successfully launch the "new evangelicalism" which was to unite evangelicals with their Anglo-Catholic and liberal brethren.

Dr Michael Ramsay, the Anglo-Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, was there to open the Conference. It was highly significant that he was the Conference's choice. It set the tone for what was to follow. Ramsay was sympathetic towards reunion with Rome. He had officially visited the Pope in the Vatican in 1966 and described the whole ecumenical enterprise as "the Holy Spirit working in us, uniting us in love and building us up in truth." He looked upon evangelicalism as sectarian, and even heretical, and took the opportunity afforded him by the conference to lecture a passive audience on their need to draw closer to Anglo-Catholics.

"Let us recognise," he said, "that amongst us Anglicans, some may have experienced the centrality of the Cross in ways different from others. For instance, those who value, as others do not, such things as Sacramental confession or the Eucharistic sacrifice."

Bishop J.C. Ryle's warnings about the dangers presented by Anglo-Catholicism still echo down to us from the last century. The Anglo-Catholics, formerly known as the Tractarians, had long had a well-concealed plan for Church and nation to be reunited with the Church of Rome. Societies within their movement pursued this aim. They included the *Society of the Holy Cross*, the *Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament* and, most particularly, the *Order of Corporate Reunion* – much of their business done in secret. At the end of the last century an article on the "Newest Fashions of Ritualism" appeared in a Jesuit publication, *The Month*. It declared that "At any rate the ritualists are doing a good work, which in the present state of the country Catholics cannot do in the same proportion; they (the ritualists, or Anglo-Catholics) are preparing the soil and sowing the seed for a rich harvest, which the Catholic Church will reap sooner or later."

Cardinal John Henry Newman, hero and Saint to most Anglo-Catholics, and most influential leader of the Oxford movement, was said by Clifford Longley to have written the agenda of the Second Vatican Council from the grave. Newman's contribution to the cause of reunion with Rome is highly valued by the Vatican and he seems sure to emerge as the first Ecumenical Saint of the Roman Church. His defection to Rome in 1845 was described at the time it happened, by a future prime minister, as possibly the greatest religious crisis since the Reformation. How far things have moved since then!

Through the Anglo-Catholic movement, Newman's reformulation of doctrine (which is synonymous with continuing revelation) has had enormous influence inside and outside the Church of England. It has greatly influenced many Charismatics and liberals (and evangelicals too!) and provided good food for ecumenical believers. Newman's essay called *The Development of Christian Doctrine*, which he began as an Anglican and finished as a Roman Catholic, was the proof-text for those who helped put together the Agreed Statements of ARCIC (*The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission*). As such it has helped to bring about the original goal of the Tractarians of convergence with Rome. The final ARCIC report, approved by the General Synod in 1986 and by the Lambeth Conference of Bishops in 1988, and the report's 1994 "Clarifications", show Anglican doctrine and practice on Ministry and the Lord's Supper to be reformulated in line with the Council of Trent. When Newman had met with Cardinal Wiseman in the Vatican in 1833 he had asked him on what terms the Church of England would be received back into the Roman fold. "By swallowing Trent whole" replied Wiseman. This has now been accomplished on behalf of the Anglican Communion. Only the issue of Women's ordination stands in the way of merger – or rather take-over – by the Church of Rome.

Whether such an outcome, such success for the Counter-Reformation was envisaged by those who determined the agenda at Keele is not known. But most of the facts and solemn warnings that I have referred to must have been well known to the evangelical leadership. But at Keele warnings of this kind were brushed aside by Dr. John Stott, who chaired the Conference. He and the other leaders were set on accommodation with the Anglo-Catholics. Earlier in 1963 a skirmish had been fought by these progressives with those who held fast to separation from doctrinal compromise. The Anglo-Catholic ritualists succeeded in a court action in making mass vestments and stone altars lawful. As a result of this many reformed evangelicals departed the Church of England at that time. Their loss made the task of those who were set on accommodating the Anglo-Catholics at Keele that much easier.

John Stott warned the Assembly at Keele that evangelicals had "acquired a reputation for

narrow partisanship and obstructionism and that they needed to repent and change ... The initial task for divided Christians is dialogue, at all levels and across all barriers. We desire to enter this ecumenical dialogue fully. We recognize that all who 'confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit [that is the *World Council of Churches* basis – Authors note] have a right to be treated as Christians, and it is on this basis that we wish to talk with them.'" This Statement made clear that the Keele Conference was accepting not only Anglo-Catholics and liberals as fellow Christians but Roman Catholics too. Let us just pause to consider the enormity of this. Thirty years ago the Church of England's most widely respected evangelicals, headed by John Stott, determined that ALL Roman Catholics are saved. It is interesting to note that it was 27 years before leading evangelicals on the other side of the Atlantic did the same, with *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*.

The influence of Billy Graham and his new evangelicalism played its part at Keele. Graham's apparently hugely successful ministry had long since accepted Catholics and liberals as fellow Christians. His example, in Martyn Lloyd-Jones words, "of Christian fellowship without agreement in the truth of the gospel, had shaken people's convictions as to what exactly it means to be an evangelical."

The sea change in the evangelical attitude to ecumenism ratified at Keele by Anglicans greatly influenced the other denominations. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, probably the greatest preacher of the twentieth century, led the opposition to the departure from Protestant evangelicalism that Keele represented. Lloyd-Jones believed that far from providing the solution to the main problems of the church, Keele left the Church with much bigger questions to answer.

"What is a Christian?", for example, and "What is a church?". The abandoning of the stand of the Reformers against counterfeit Christianity and the downgrade of doctrine implicit in Keele's Statement meant in fact that true unity among evangelicals was no more. Addressing the *British Evangelical Council* in 1969 and citing the Scripture in 1 Corinthians 14, verse 8, – "For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself for the battle?" Lloyd Jones made clear that he saw the enemy as not just present, but rampant, in the camp. "Sound the alarm", he thundered, "Sound the alarm."

Opposing the new unity movement was a lonely task for him. So many of those leaders who had previously shared his views were shifting their position. For example, according to Iain Murray, Dr. J.I. Packer, once so close to the Doctor, changed his view between 1963 and 1965 to the very position that he had once criticised as inconsistent with evangelicalism. His endorsement of the Keele Statement was a telling blow to Dr. Lloyd-Jones, and others, with whom Dr. Packer had previously allied himself.

It was a very few years before, in 1961, that Jim Packer described the doctrine of justification by faith alone, *sola fide*, as, "like Atlas, it bears a world on its shoulders, the entire evangelical knowledge of saving grace." But his position on this defining doctrine changed as well, perhaps at that same time prior to Keele. His revised view has been recently demonstrated by his signing of *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, the document that has rocked American evangelicalism. In a 1994 article, *Why I Signed It*, he refers to *Sola Fide* (faith alone) as "small print." He asked the question: "May ECT realistically claim, as in effect it does, that its evangelical and Catholic drafters agree on the gospel of salvation?" "Answer Yes and No."

"No", Professor Packer says, "with respect to the 'small print.'" Thus *Sola Fide*, a burning issue for Reformation martyrs, and an issue which "bears a world on its shoulders", is relegated to "small print."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones felt that, by compromising with ecumenism, Anglican evangelicals were putting their denomination before the gospel and downgrading doctrine. Personal relationships, and superficial unity, tolerance and love were preferred to the confrontational truths of Scripture. He urged evangelicals to come out of the denominations united in the truth of God's word. How this was to be accomplished he felt was for others to determine, but he was convinced that it could happen and should happen. There had to be clarity – rather than the confusion that was overtaking the understanding of the gospel. "We should not be asking", he said, "'How can we have a territorial church', 'how can we have unity and fellowship' or 'how can we find a formula to satisfy opposing views?' We should be asking, 'What is a Christian? How does one become a Christian? How can we get forgiveness of sin and what is a church?'"

Keele legitimised compromise for evangelicals within the established Church. But, at Nottingham, the second *National Evangelical Anglican Conference* (NEAC II), which followed 10 years later, gave compromise its seal of approval. The ecumenical charismatic movement, which had begun in Britain in the early 1960s, had been opposed at Keele by that Conference's organisers. But at Nottingham it was highly praised. The Nottingham Statement declared: "We see a particular significance in the charismatic movement, especially in its strong witness to the primacy of God."

And it was at Nottingham that leading charismatic, David Watson, friend and mentor to John Wimber, spoke of the Reformation as "one of the greatest tragedies that ever happened to the church." He went on to tell the conference how he had come to sense the profound grief that God must feel at the separation of his body.

The Charismatic Renewal movement had begun in the United States in the 1950s and rapidly swept across the Christian world. It was widely seen as a great work of the Holy Spirit, a new Pentecost. Para-church groups within the movement like the *Full Gospel Businessman's Fellowship International* brought Roman Catholics and Protestants together "under the banner of love" in what they called the "unity of the spirit." They placed emphasis on experiential testimony rather than Scripture.

It was less than two years before Keele that the Second Vatican Council gave its blessing to what they called this new movement of the Holy Spirit. The "separated brethren could now be welcomed back into the fold," announced Jesuit Cardinal Augustin Bea to the delegates in 1965. The heretics had become "separated brethren" and their abandoning of sound doctrine meant that they could come back to the Mother Church. The Vatican officially adopted its own renewal movement. To what extent this movement was spontaneous, or planned, we do not know. But with all the emphasis on gifts and experiences, it certainly helped to sweep aside doctrinal differences. At the same time it demonstrated, as did the Billy Graham crusades, what the evangelist called "the role in the Christian family of our Catholic brethren." With the reinstatement of Catholics as "brethren" in the minds and hearts of so many, the once secure fortress of biblical separation was breached. Keele was the formal surrender to the forces of new evangelicalism. Nottingham made the surrender unconditional.

The momentum from Keele and Nottingham and from the new evangelicalism seemed

irresistible. The new spirit of tolerance and "love" outlawed arguments over biblical truths. Unity through compromise of doctrine was sought as the will of God to transform the church. The great doctrines of grace and reformed theology were seen as the province of those living in the past, fighting the same old irrelevant battles behind crumbling ramparts. Conservative evangelicals, who would have no truck with ecumenism, were marginalised, being seen as unloving and intolerant.

The decision by the Keele Conference of a majority of evangelicals to dialogue with ecumenism was of immeasurable spiritual consequence. It was extraordinary that such a momentous change should be brought about by those very Christians best placed to understand its implications and without serious protest too! In a very real sense evangelicals had ceased to be evangelicals. Doctrine had been relegated from its position of supreme authority to a lesser position. The high view of Scripture was abandoned: God's Word was no longer infallible. The part played in this by the acceptance of modern Bible versions in place of the King James was surely very considerable. "Thus saith the Lord" was allowed to give way to "depending on what version you have" – reminding us of the serpent's seed of doubt, "has God said?"

From Keele the slippery slope has rapidly led us downwards and we see the consequences today in the Church of England and in the other Protestant denominations too. During the past thirty years there has been such radical and profound change in the Church of England that this once great institution seems to have lost its very identity. The collapse of Protestantism at Keele and Nottingham had sold the pass to the new evangelicalism; and accelerated the downgrade of doctrine. The abandoning of our God-given Reformation heritage – enshrined in the 39 Articles and formularies of the Church of England – has "removed the ancient landmark, which our fathers have set."¹ The Scripture from Joel 2:17 – ... *Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?* Where is their God? That question is now very relevant to our national church, to its Bishops, priests and laymen – so many of them so uncertain of their faith. It is a question that the nation is asking of itself as that once august body that many of us can remember falls further into disrepute.

At Keele and afterwards, the ancient landmark was removed; and our heritage was given to reproach. There was an act of betrayal. The legacy of those who gave their lives for the truth of the Word of God was abandoned. The verdict of Keele and Nottingham was that the martyrs of the Reformation were mistaken; they were party to one of the greatest tragedies that ever happened to the church. For all but a very few in the Church of England the flame of Hugh Latimer's candle was extinguished – the blood of the martyrs denied.

The same is true in the Free churches too. Free churches are no longer so free; indeed they are no longer so non-conformist. There is conformism – conformism to the spirit of the age – the spirit of tolerance and unity. We have seen even the Bible-based Baptist denomination succumb to this seductive spirit. Carried along by the stream that became a river that flowed from Keele, the Baptist Union gradually moved its position until in 1995 it routed those who remained in opposition and voted overwhelmingly to fully participate in *Churches Together in England*.

The new evangelicalism provides for love at the expense of truth. But this is not the expression of love of the bride of Christ, but rather of the harlot of Revelation 17. What has become of the love of truth, the jealousy for purity in doctrine and the hatred of idolatry?

Where is the urgent concern for the souls of more than a thousand million religious Catholics, Orthodox and Anglicans in the ecumenical Church today, without assurance of salvation, in bondage to the sacraments and to a system of works and ritual? Where are hearts of compassion for those who seek truth and are imprisoned by deception? Where is the cry for the cleansing of the church and for deep repentance because we have failed them, our own kinsmen, by pretending not to see? Where today are the preachers who do not persistently avoid the clear message of Revelation 17; or "the man of sin" and "mystery of iniquity" of 2 Thessalonians 2; or the persecuting "little horn" of Daniel 7, in the time of the fourth kingdom, "wearing out the saints of the most high". Where are the watchmen who sound the alarm? Why do they who hear the sound of the trumpet not take warning?

The fact is that in this land of such a precious heritage, very few pastors are prepared any longer to call to remembrance the sacrifice of the martyrs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The cause of those martyrs – of denying the sacrifice of the Mass as an appalling blasphemy, and the identification of the Papacy as Antichrist – that cause is now the preserve of the very few.

The Reformation provided Christians with two great truths – the just shall live by faith (and not by the works of Romanism or any other religion) and that the Papacy is the Antichrist as revealed in Scripture. If we lose the second we unquestionably do injury to the first, and that is being amply demonstrated today. Pastors won't preach it; they fear the disapproval of men – they should fear the disapproval of God. Few there are who scorn popularity and are ready to lay down their reputations, let alone their lives. But "evil abounds when good men stay silent."

At his enthronement as Archbishop at Canterbury in 1991, George Carey spoke of the example to us of former archbishops who were martyred. He named the Benedictine monk Alphege and he named Thomas a Becket, both of whom were canonised by the Roman Catholic Church; and then he spoke of William Laud. Both Becket and Laud sought to bring the Church of England under the authority of the Church of Rome and into her faith and practice. Conspicuous by its absence from George Carey's recollection of martyrs was the name of Thomas Cranmer, the Protestant martyr, whose quincentenary had been commemorated in a rather muted manner the previous year. George Carey's enthronement involved a commitment to upholding the *39 Articles of Religion* and the *Book of Common Prayer*, for both of which Cranmer was the man, under God, most responsible. The present Archbishop's commitment to the Articles and Prayer book has been borne extremely lightly. During his latest visit to the Pope in the Vatican, George Carey did have some good things to say in defence of the Reformation, but he continues eagerly to seek full unity with the Roman Church. This ambivalence illustrates and epitomises the leadership problem of today's church – man-centred and totally inconsistent.

As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: "*... so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*"²

The same ambivalence and inconsistency is apparent in the Alpha course which is beginning to spread like a bush fire not just in the UK, but across the USA and Canada, too. In the spirit of Keele, doctrinal differences are glossed over; indeed Catholic theologians have endorsed the course and, backed by Cardinal Hume, plan their own Roman Catholic Alpha courses in

1997. Alpha stems from Holy Trinity Brompton church, which was first in the United Kingdom with the 'Toronto Blessing', as it was with the 'Kansas City Prophets'. Like ECT (*Evangelicals and Catholics Together*), in America, the Alpha Course is providing a highly successful means of reconciling the irreconcilable. The *Promise Keepers Movement*, another import from the USA launched in England in November '97 likewise builds bridges without foundations.

The consequences of surrender to ecumenism at Keele and elsewhere have been very apparent to the nation as well as the church. Given such a free hand, the church of Rome with its mastery of the media has been positioning itself to take over when the Anglican Church has disintegrated beyond recall. To what extent the Church of Rome's agents are assisting in this process is not revealed to us, but history relates very clearly what lengths the Pope's followers will go to in order to further the cause of the "Mother church." *The Catholic Herald* is now confident enough to predict: "The days of the Anglican Church are numbered, and most of its worshippers will return to the true faith of their distant mediaeval forbears." Many of them already have returned, at least in spirit.

Earlier this year *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* both gave front page coverage to the news that the Church of England has arranged for the return of the relics of St. Thomas a Becket, on loan from Rome, where they were sent for protection at the time of the Reformation. Fragments of bone and brain tissue, they are the first relics to be displayed at Canterbury Cathedral since the Reformation.

The tomb of Thomas Becket in Canterbury and the spiritual presence of this "Saint" of the Roman Catholic Church in the principal Anglican Cathedral has proved important for the ecumenical movement, and will continue to be so. In 1982 Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Runcie prayed together at Becket's shrine, and in 1989, the Archbishop of York, John Hapgood, led pilgrims who had arrived for the first multi-faith gathering at the cathedral into the shrine as their final destination. The three strands of this fully ecumenical pilgrimage had earlier converged at another place, another "sacred site" where Henry II had paid penance to the Pope following Becket's murder in 1170. Services are now held annually across the country on the 29 December to commemorate Becket's "martyrdom" with unusual media attention. Becket's "martyrdom", which stemmed from his preferred allegiance to the Papacy rather than the Crown, may well prove to be important in the revival of the principle that the State should not have power over the Church.

The public perception of Becket's life and death has been greatly altered in this ecumenical century by plays and films like Anglo-Catholic T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Even more so in relation to Sir Thomas More, who, according to Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, scourged and tortured in his garden "those guilty of reading the Scriptures and holding purely Protestant doctrines". Robert Bolt's film *A Man For All Seasons*, which has established Thomas More as a great and godly Christian man unequalled in his faith in Christ, is based on history rewritten, ecumenical propaganda. A year of "England's Christian Heritage" began in May 1997 with a celebration of the 14th Centenary of Saint Augustine's arrival in Britain. At his inauguration the Archbishop of Canterbury said that Augustine had brought Christianity to the British Isles from Rome. This is also no more than ecumenical propaganda. There is a wealth of evidence that Christianity had taken root in these islands at the end of the first century and saints of Christ such as Alban and Patrick were martyred or persecuted for the sake of the gospel centuries before Augustine arrived to enforce papal supremacy. This year of Christian heritage that is said by its organisers to herald a "fresh spiritual breeze" and "a religious stirring" features numerous pilgrimages celebrating pre-Reformation Saints. The veneration or

worship of Saints and relics is reversion to spiritism and necromancy, which are condemned in the Bible; but their practice is consistent with the Pope's recent advice to his flock "to call on dead ancestors for protection."

The accelerating reversion to pre-Reformation Christianity – to superstition and idolatry – is supported strongly by well-respected Catholic columnists such as Paul Johnson, who have prayed all their lives for England to be restored to Mary's dowry. The press has given extraordinary prominence to the very public conversions to Rome of public figures such as Ann Widdecombe, John Gummer, Alan Clark, Charles Moore, and, most significantly, the Duchess of Kent. So much has been made of these conversions, and yet, in this ecumenical age that we now live in, it's not supposed to matter.

Multi-faith worship has followed on – not unnaturally – for once the gates are thrown open all may come in. Reflecting this, the leading members of the Royal family have embraced other religions. The Commonwealth Day Service, especially dear to Her Majesty the Queen is no longer recognizably Christian, and she has not listened to the protests of two thousand evangelical clergymen concerned about the insult done to the unique claims and supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was Prince Philip who in 1989 launched the *International Sacred Literature Trust* to significantly contribute to inter-faith dialogue; and Prince Charles, the heir in waiting, whose allegiance is to faiths rather than faith, has gone out of his way to encourage Islam. The Muslims now plan to build 100 new mosques in the next three years – describing this project as "the biggest expression of religious faith in Britain for centuries."

In November 1992 the Church of England Synod deferred to the prevailing politically correct view and voted in the measure to ordain women. Dr David Samuel, who resigned his ministry in the Church of England as a result of the adoption of this measure, described something of his reaction at that time. "This was a decision that would have enormous implications and would set the course and direction of the Church of England for the future, and that course would be one of ever increasing divergence from Scripture, from its formularies, from orthodoxy and from truth. If the official doctrine of the Church of England can be changed arbitrarily by a show of hands in the Synod, then it has been undermined and revealed to be a fiction." It is likely that within a very few years there will be women bishops in the Church of England and archbishops too.

Then there is the "Christian" gay and lesbian movement. It was as long as twenty years ago that the NEAC Conference at Nottingham resolved that, "There should be a full welcoming voice in the Christian fellowship for the Christian homosexual." It was just a few months before that the Lesbian Gay Christian Movement was launched. The service at Southwark Cathedral in November 1996 "celebrated" its twenty-year anniversary. Protest at the Cathedral and across the nation was minimal. Informed observers in the General Synod now believe that the ordination of practising homosexuals is a foregone conclusion. Robert Runcie announced last year that when he was Archbishop of Canterbury this was already happening.

Once evangelicals allow compromise to enter in, and fail to stand their ground on the rock of Scripture, continuing retreat is inevitable. It is well known that leading evangelicals including John Stott convinced themselves that there is no literal Hell. Now just a few years later the doctrine of eternal punishment has been "officially" abolished by the Synod of the Church of England. Annihilationism is the reformulated doctrine of the Anglican Church – flying in the face of 2000 years of orthodoxy and the plain teaching of our Lord in Scripture. Another decision of the Synod is that cohabitation before marriage is now no longer "living in sin." The

teaching of the New Testament in relation to fornication is crystal clear. But this is the new hermeneutic and the new evangelicalism. With the Synod legislating against the clear teaching of Scripture there must have been many who were reminded of the psalmist's question, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"³

Meanwhile pulpits are physically disappearing, stone and other altars reappearing, crucifixes abound, roods are returning, as are confessions and "holy places" and "holy water"; and more and more ministers are styled as "priest" and "father", contrary to Scripture. The law is rarely preached in the church today. In the new ecumenical climate of live-and-let-live preachers do not want to run the risk of offending their congregations and losing numbers. It is sobering to learn from the press that a 1997 survey has revealed that less than 25% of Anglican vicars now know the Ten Commandments. Without the law how does one properly preach the Gospel?

Within the Church of England the *Reform Group* of Anglican Evangelicals was formed from those who opposed much of what had been agreed at Keele. They expressed their disillusionment with the post-Keele direction of the church by advocating non-payment of part of the parish's share of the diocesan budget. They continue today to oppose some of the unbiblical trends in the Church of England. But they have no clear-cut position in relation to the ordination of women issue, nor do they take a stand with regard to separation from the ecumenical movement. *The Church of England* (Continuing) separated from the Anglican Church after the Women's Ordination measure was passed by General Synod in November 1992. It seeks to preserve the real identity of the Church of England through the Authorised Version of the Holy Scriptures, the *39 Articles of Religion*, the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Ordinal. David Samuel, the Presiding Bishop, has described these texts as the identity card of the Church of England without which those who belong would be mere vagrants in Christendom.

In bringing this brief survey to a conclusion I feel I must speak of the very real danger, both political and spiritual, that confronts us as our new government and those behind the scenes who influence it weaken and dismantle the Union and prepare us for submergence into a federal Europe. To what extent the retreat of Protestant evangelicalism, epitomised by Keele, has been responsible for the drift into abandoning our cherished independence, only the Lord knows. But as I have sought to argue, our precious and God-given heritage has been betrayed; the lessons of history and the far-sighted precautions of our forefathers in protecting our liberty-enshrined in the Bill of Rights, the Act of Settlement and the Coronation Oath – have been sidelined, sadly not least by the Queen. And the malign experience of the Papacy in our nation's affairs in the past has simply been ignored.

We know that as a nation we deserve judgement. The defection of evangelicals from their Protestant Reformed legacy has, not surprisingly, paralleled that of the Monarch and her Parliament. At her coronation Her Majesty recognised the authority and supremacy of Holy Scripture: "This is the most valuable thing this world affords. Here is wisdom. This is the royal law. These are the lively oracles of God." She then promised to "maintain to the utmost of her power the Laws of God, the true profession of the Gospel and the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law."

In other words, the Queen committed herself, and the Crown-in-Parliament, to upholding the statutes and laws of Holy Scripture and the Christian faith. However during her reign, we have

seen the royal assent given to radical legislation totally opposed to Christianity as revealed in Scripture, and plainly fostering immorality. Bills facilitating divorce, legalising abortion and homosexuality as well as encouraging adultery and pornography have laid the basis of today's moral crisis in society. There are many signs that we are reaping the whirlwind of God's righteous anger and judgement, not least in the devastation being brought about by collapsing family values which has been experienced by the Queen herself. What we are seeing unfolding at breathtaking speed is the withdrawal of the grace and blessing of God that many of us had come to take for granted – as a result of our national apostasy. As a nation we may be about to pay a very heavy price.

Our religious liberties are at stake. As Adrian Hilton, in his 1997 book, *The Principality and Power of Europe*, writes: "Evangelical Christians are classified by the European Union as a 'sect', and any group that does not belong to the majority church (Roman Catholic) is viewed by many MEPs with suspicion." This classification is nothing new. The early church was branded an heretical sect, and this was the earliest basis of persecution. Of course, any impending persecution will not be on overtly religious grounds: an enlightened European Union would consider this abhorrent. Persecution will be political, as it was with the early church, with accusations of "disturbing the peace" or "inciting sectarianism" as in the Book of Acts chapters 16 and 17. David Hallam MEP has confirmed that a European resolution on sects and cults permits the European police force Europol to carry out surveillance on such group's activities. He adds: "In Europe this could include Christians."

With Protestantism's surrender, Apostate Christendom is swiftly unifying world religion, which under its veneer is as intolerant and bloodthirsty as it ever was. Once religions of the world combine with the New Age to form one great ecumenical and multi-faith monopoly, God's little flock will yet again be as lambs to the slaughter. Bishop Ryle's words encourage those evangelicals who will not compromise: "This is the church which does the work of Christ on earth. Its members are a little flock and few in number' one or two here and two or three there – a few in this district and a few in that. But these are they that shake the universe; who change the fortune of kingdoms by their prayers; these are they who are the active workers for spreading the knowledge of pure religion and undefiled; these are the lifeblood of the country, the shield, the defence, the stay and the support of any nation to which they belong." Let us be encouraged therefore and "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."⁴

1. Proverbs 22:28 "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."
2. Galatians 1:9-10
- 3 Psalms 11:3
- 4 Galatians 5:1 "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."