

**“WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE
OLD EVANGELICALISM?”**

By

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Published by

CHRISTIAN WATCH

A Protestant Biblical Witness

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Introduction

“We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.” Ps.44: 1

It has always been one of the blessed methods of the Holy Spirit to instruct the succeeding generations of His Church, by the witness of those who lived and experienced His acts in their own days. Not only is such a testimony a cause for praise, but where the Church has declined in zeal and faithfulness, it may be a means of revival and recovery. “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen...”.

In an address, given on 17th March, 2012 at the South-West Ministers’ Fraternal at Beacon Park Baptist Church, Plymouth, Mr Francis ‘Mick’ Harris recounted the vital spirituality of Christian believers in the 1950’s, compared with the spiritual desolations and howling wasteland now seen in most of the churches today, and, in so doing, has done faithful service to the cause of Christ in the world.

As the title suggests, he contrasts the vapid form of ‘New Evangelicalism’ of today with the solid ‘Old Evangelicalism’ of yesteryear, viz. his own generation.

While not suggesting that all that was done then in worship was as one might have wished, this address seeks to show the remarkable drift that has occurred from a relatively God-fearing, doctrinally sound Church, that held to a providentially preserved Bible, to one which has, in practice, generally removed “the ancient landmark” and left the “old paths” given to us by the Lord of the Church in Holy Scripture.

This subject is, or should be, of vital interest to the present generation; for it speaks of a time when men and women really did know their God and did exploits in His Name. It tells of an age when worship was not ‘charismatically’ effervescent, but heartfelt praise was given in awe and solemnity; when there was a love of the Truth, which exalted God and humbled man. Also, the Moral Law (the Ten Commandments) were revered and regarded as binding upon those possessed of a deep love of God their Saviour.

Therefore, our brother presents us with a choice: between the old authentic evangelicalism, with its clear stand on separation from error, “the worship of the unchanging God”; “the Word of an unchanging God”: or the “desires and the preferences of changing sinners” of the New Evangelicalism.

May all readers of this booklet make the right choice for their soul’s sake, and that of the Truth, and for the glory of the Lord.

Michael Hobbs (Committee Member of Christian Watch)

‘Whatever Happened to the Old Evangelicalism?’

By Mr. Francis J. Harris

There are several Scriptures on which I base much of this address:

‘Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.’
Proverbs 22:28

‘If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?’
Psalm 11:3

‘Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.’ Jeremiah 6:16.

“My people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up.”
Jeremiah 18:15

It is not for nothing that we read in Scripture about old paths, ancient landmarks and foundations and the dangers of leaving or removing them. If we undermine or destroy the foundations, ruin will follow; if we remove the ancient landmarks, there will be no guides to keep us from roving in forbidden areas and we shall most certainly go astray. Such verses were inspired by the Holy Spirit to remind us that there are certain principles from which we deviate at our peril.

Jeremiah’s words remind us that those ancient paths were paths that had been appointed by the divine law and were, therefore, paths wherein was the good way; paths which had been walked in by generations of saints; paths which were the right way to their journey’s end, a safe way, and, being well-trodden, were both easy to find and easy to walk in.

But, as in Jeremiah’s day, when men turn from the ancient paths and cease to walk in the King’s highway, in which they can travel safely, and which will certainly lead them to their right end, then they turn into by-paths and

walk in a way not cast up, that is, in a rough way, a way in which they will inevitably stumble. That is the way of all iniquity - it is a false way, it is a way full of stumbling-blocks; and yet that is the way many today are choosing to walk in and lead others in.

Now, my dear friends, this has been happening in our beloved land in the last 50 or so years and has accelerated at an alarming rate in the last decade. What I want to do first in this address is to give you a broad overview of what I call 'old evangelicalism' - the state of evangelicalism in England in the years following the time that I began my Christian pilgrimage - that is from about 1950 onwards - and to outline both the strengths and weaknesses of that old evangelicalism.

Then, secondly, I want to put before you some of the various causes which have brought about the changes which have made evangelicalism today to be almost unrecognisable from that which I and my contemporaries experienced in former decades.

We are seeing again what Jeremiah lamented over 2500 years ago - when God says, 'Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein'. Sadly, like Israel of old, many say, 'we will not walk therein.'

There has been a miserable failure to stand fast and for many years, in many churches, the trumpet has been giving an uncertain sound. As a consequence, many have been ill-prepared or altogether unprepared for the battle.

Let me take you back 60 years. When the Lord saved me in 1950, it was in a Mission Hall which was superintended by a godly London City Missionary. In those days you could have gone to any London City Mission Hall - or indeed to any other Mission Hall - and you would have heard the Gospel preached, the Authorised Version of Scripture read and a company of zealous and prayerful people assembled. Of course, the Authorised Version was virtually the only Bible available but it was read, loved and memorised by ordinary Christians and without the difficulties which so many seem to find today.

Though not so generally true, one could have found a similar situation in a good number of the Non-Conformist and in some Anglican churches of the day, although, sadly, the pernicious and soul-destroying teachings of liberalism were affecting an increasing number.

In those days, the F.I.E.C. would have been different from other church

groupings, in that every affiliated Church would have subscribed sincerely to a brief statement of fundamental doctrines. Although many F.I.E.C. Churches would have been of the Mission Hall type, there were larger Churches with faithful ministers such as Lansdowne Hall, West Norwood, where my wife and I became members after our marriage. The congregation of over 200 was well taught by a faithful Pastor.

The strength of the Mission Halls and the Churches which had remained untainted by liberalism was an uncomplicated view of the Scriptures as the inspired word of God; faithful preaching, prayerfulness, unity and warm fellowship. It is true that the preaching was generally of a devotional nature but the preachers loved the Bible and the Gospel was consistently preached.

The services would have been structured and conducted with reverence and God would never have been addressed in prayer in any other way than as 'Thee and Thou'.

In most Mission Halls and Churches there was also a thriving Sunday School and with only one Bible in use, many children grew up with much Scripture stored in their memories.

There was generally a popular Protestantism with Rome being everywhere recognised as a false church, although there was not a great deal of understanding of its erroneous teachings.

Also in those days, finding a Church in which you could worship comfortably on holiday, was not the problem it is today.

So, on the whole, without looking through the rose-tinted spectacles of nostalgia, one could say that the spiritual condition of our land was considerably healthier than it is today.

But those Churches and Mission Halls undoubtedly had their weaknesses as well as their strengths and it was those weaknesses which made it easier for the various errors which have so devastated the church today to enter. What were those weaknesses?

1. Most of the preaching, though broadly Biblical, tended towards Arminianism and the ministry was largely evangelistic or devotional. But the whole counsel of God was not preached; there was not a strong doctrinal emphasis. Expository preaching was virtually unknown and consequently believers were ill-equipped to face the dangers and errors that were very soon to appear. Very few evangelical Churches had more

than a brief summary of the fundamentals of the truth as a Statement of Faith and it is doubtful if more than a handful of Churches in England and Wales held to one of the great 17th century Confessions as their subordinate standard of belief.

2. The kind of sanctification taught and practised was rather superficial, majoring on a kind of unwritten code of negatives – things that Christians didn't do, particularly in connection with what were considered to be external manifestations of worldliness. For women, make-up and earrings were considered worldly and cinema-going and dancing were frowned upon. This tended towards a legalistic and sometimes pharisaical view of holiness with heart religion or experimental religion seldom emphasised.

3. Although a structured service was the norm, this was largely traditional with no real understanding of the Biblical reasons for such a form. The Regulative Principle was virtually unheard of and consequently questionable methods were used in evangelism such as films, soloists and choirs, testimonies by so called celebrities, crusades, appeals and so on. Some of these were a fairly regular part of the general worship of the Churches.

4. Although Protestantism was upheld, there was little understanding among the majority of believers concerning the errors of Rome and no conception of the Papacy as the Antichrist. There was a similar situation with the cults; although they were recognised as false, believers were not generally able to answer the well-primed Jehovah's Witness who would confidently deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and assert that verses like 1 John 5:7 were not in 'the oldest and best manuscripts.'

5. Because there were no other versions in use in most Churches (the Revised Version was scarcely ever used and the Revised Standard Version, published in 1952, was rightly regarded with suspicion by most evangelicals), there was an almost total ignorance of the textual issues involved in the translation of the Revised Version and subsequent modern versions.

As a consequence many Ministers, and almost every believer, were not able to deal with the many omissions of hundreds of verses from the text of these versions and the footnotes which proclaimed with a spurious authority that 'the oldest and best manuscripts do not contain these verses.'

6. Another weakness was that there was virtually no understanding of the Biblical teaching concerning the need to separate from those who denied

fundamental evangelical belief and the consequence was that, apart from the F.I.E.C., almost all the sound Churches remained in doctrinally mixed denominations. As a result, many Ministers and congregations were exposed to association with liberal Churches and would hear the preaching of non-evangelical denominational leaders.

Many congregations were not equipped to understand the errors which were often propounded with great subtlety. As an example, within a couple of generations of C.H. Spurgeon leading the Metropolitan Tabernacle out of the Baptist Union in 1887 because of the doctrinal confusion within that Union, it had rejoined. Thankfully, that decision was soon reversed when Dr. Masters became the Minister.

7. In the Mission Halls there was no doctrine of the Church at all and in many of the more regular Churches there was little understanding of Biblical Church government and practice.

But, notwithstanding these weaknesses, the situation on the whole was very different from what it is today and the Churches generally were in a healthier and sounder state. They were not plagued with irreverent forms of worship nor the multiplicity of errors that subsequently came into the Church - errors which have accelerated to such an extent in more recent years that they have brought the utter disarray, confusion and lawlessness that we see today, even within the ranks of those who continue to describe themselves as evangelicals; even as reformed evangelicals.

There were, of course, a number of Churches where the ministries were exceptions to those weaknesses I have outlined, with most larger towns and cities having several strong evangelical Churches.

The most influential of such Churches was undoubtedly Westminster Chapel in London where Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was the Minister. After the end of the Second World War, he began a series of discussion meetings at Westminster Chapel concentrating on the practical issues of the Christian life. So many questions were asked concerning the various doctrines involved that he began a series of Bible Studies on the major doctrines...which was to last 3 years – from 1952 to 1955. This series concluded with 18 lectures on eschatology, where many would have heard for the first time a view of the future that was not either pre-millennial or dispensational. (These volumes are available in one hardback or three paperback volumes.)

Following those lectures, Dr. Lloyd-Jones began his great series of expositions of the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians and it was almost

entirely due to his influence that Reformed truth was re-discovered and expository preaching began to be heard. Many younger Ministers embraced reformed truth under his ministry but, sadly, as they grew older, although they still held to the doctrines of grace, they ceased to be reformed in their practice and the result is that many of the strong evangelical Churches of those days are today but shadows of their former selves.

But I must not run ahead of myself. That former evangelicalism which I have outlined is what I shall refer to as the 'Old Evangelicalism' and, sadly, it is hardly recognisable in the new face of evangelicalism that is so prevalent today.

To use a worldly illustration, most of you will remember that when Tony Blair became Prime Minister in 1997, he immediately began to introduce what became known as 'New Labour'. No longer was the Labour Party the Party of the working class – it was going in an entirely new direction - and many of the old style Labour politicians were greatly distressed because everything they thought the Labour Party stood for seemed to be vanishing away.

So it is with the new face of evangelicalism. Is it any wonder that those of us who love the truths which were at the heart of the 'Old Evangelicalism' are grieved as we see those blessed truths undermined in so many ways – those truths which exalt God and humble man; truths which safeguard the honour of Christ and His redeeming work; truths which emphasise reverence and holiness; truths which demonstrate unswerving confidence in an infallible Bible.

Those of you who are under fifty years of age will probably have had very little, if any, experience of that old evangelicalism and you may wonder how, in not much more than a generation, we have come into the confused situation which prevails in evangelicalism generally today.

So we must ask the question, 'What were the factors then that contributed to the decline of that comparatively healthy situation? What led to the old landmarks being removed?' There were four main factors:

1. The rise of what came to be known as New Evangelicalism in the United States.

This resulted in far-reaching changes in many areas of the Old Evangelicalism, not only in the U.S.A., but soon afterwards here in the U.K. When Billy Graham burst upon the British scene in 1954, he was to become not only a world famous evangelist but the popular face of

New Evangelicalism. He led the way in practicing increasingly close fellowship with many who denied the cardinal doctrines of the faith, welcoming them on to the platform in his Crusades and speaking of them in glowing terms.

2. **There was the vast shift in the attitude of the evangelicals in the Church of England** to liberals and Anglo-Catholics and to the Roman Catholic Church – a change which increased rapidly following the two National Evangelical Anglican Congresses at Keele in 1967 and Nottingham in 1977.
3. **There was the rise of the Charismatic Movement** which influenced all the denominations and greatly accelerated the Ecumenical Movement. The Charismatic Movement was also largely responsible for bringing in first informal, then irreverent, styles of worship and seeking after experiences and gifts rather than after grace and godliness.
4. **What has come to be known as New Covenant Theology** - a new kind of antinomianism with its basic tenet that the moral law of God, as summarised in the Ten Commandments, is no longer binding on the New Testament believer. Although its proponents like to describe it as ‘theoretical antinomianism’, it produces an unbiblical attitude to the law and particularly to the 4th commandment, the observance of the Sabbath Day. Consequently, we have a new kind of lawlessness which would describe itself as Christian liberty and would criticise as ‘legalistic’ those who believe in the unchanging standards of God’s moral law.

So we have these four factors but we need to ask how and what it was that began this tremendous decline from the basically sound, if not strong, situation which characterised evangelical Churches in the situation which I first described. Clearly there was something new which began the decline – *new* being the significant word. So I begin with the New Evangelicalism – and I will spend most time on this.

1. New Evangelicalism

There is a saying that ‘when America sneezes, Britain catches a cold’ and in the United States a Movement was developing which came to be known as ‘New or Neo-Evangelicalism’; following the first use of that term by Dr. Harold Ockenga in 1948.

I want to mention two ways in which this Movement has done such terrible

damage – two ancient landmarks which have been removed. There are others but I believe these are the two which have done the most damage.

- a) The repudiation of the need to separate from error.
- b) Undermining the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. This last is, of course, the crucial issue but I begin with the first aim of the New Evangelicals.

a) The first landmark removed - a repudiation of the need to separate from non-evangelicals.

The first well known spokesman for New Evangelicalism was Harold Ockenga and, in the foreword of a book by Harold Lindsell entitled 'The Battle for the Bible', Ockenga wrote these words:

"Neo-evangelicalism was born in 1948 in connection with an address which I gave in Pasadena. While re-affirming the theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. The ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and the summons to social involvement received a hearty response from many Evangelicals. It differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the Gospel to the social, political, and economic areas of life."

No one can deny that the primary determination of New Evangelicalism is the "repudiation of separatism." The statement is made twice and is termed "The ringing call."

Whereas those known as Fundamentalists in the U.S.A. had previously kept apart from liberals and Roman Catholics, that practice began to be first undermined, then criticised, as unloving and arrogant and subsequently denounced as the very opposite of the heart of Christianity, which was said to be love. Love and unity were exalted above faithfulness to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

In 1957 and frequently afterwards Billy Graham said, "The one badge of Christian discipleship is not orthodoxy, but love."

Edward Carnell, second president of Fuller Seminary in the U.S.A., had already said: "Jesus names love, not defence of doctrine, as the sign of a true disciple."

What do we think of such statements?

Those who speak in this manner have no real conception of that love which the Bible teaches. This is, first of all, love to God and is therefore jealous of anything which reflects on His glory. It is, as the Apostle John emphasises, a love for the truth and as Paul writes, a love that may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment (Philippians 1:9). The love which is all-embracing, which is non-discerning, which puts fellowship with those who deny fundamental Gospel truth above faithfulness to Christ and His word is a love which Christ and His Apostles knew nothing of.

Separation from such teachers is not an optional part of Christianity; it is a commandment. Separation is not unloving; it is obedience to God. Separation is a wall of protection against spiritual danger. Failure to separate from error inevitably leads to being influenced by error (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Virtually the whole history of Israel in the Old Testament is a commentary on the dangers of failing to practise separation from falsehood.

Concerning false teachers the Scripture says: “mark them . . . avoid them” (Romans 16:17); “Be ye not unequally yoked together with” (2 Corinthians 6:14); “Have no fellowship with” (Ephesians 5:11); “Come out from among” (2 Corinthians 6:17); “withdraw thyself” (1 Timothy 6:5); “shun” (2 Timothy 2:16); “from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5); “reject” (Titus 3:10).

Rejecting Biblical separation from error was the first ancient landmark which the New Evangelicals removed.

But how different that was to the teaching of the Apostles: Paul called false teachers “dogs” and “evil workers” (Philippians 3:2). Of those who pervert the Gospel he said, “Let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8, 9). He called them “evil men and seducers” (2 Timothy 3:13); “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith” (2 Timothy 3:8); “false Apostles, deceitful workers” (2 Corinthians 11:13). He named the false teachers and called their teaching “vain babblings” (2 Timothy 2:16, 17). He warned about “philosophy and vain deceit” (Colossians 2:8). He spoke plainly of their “cunning craftiness.” He warned about false teachers who would come into the Churches, calling them “grievous wolves” (Acts 20:29), who would teach “perverse things” (Acts 20:30). Those who queried the bodily resurrection he called “fools” (1 Corinthians 15:35-36). He warned about false Christ’s, false spirits, false Gospels (2 Corinthians 11:1-4). He called false teaching “doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1). In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul warned of false teachers and compromisers by name 10

times, and this is the example that the Spirit of God has left for the Churches.

Similarly Peter spoke sternly of the false prophets in his day and those he knew would come in the future. He called their heresies “damnable” and warned of their “swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). He called their ways “pernicious” and their words “feigned”; he declared that “their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Peter 2:3). He warned them of eternal punishment (2 Peter 2:4-9) and called them “presumptuous” and “self-willed” (2 Peter 2:10). He likened them to “natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed” (2 Peter 2:12).

But what about John, the Apostle of Love? He warned about antichrists (1 John 2:18-19), calling them liars (1 John 2:22) and seducers (1 John 2:26) and deceivers (2 John 7). He stressed testing the spirits (1 John 4:1-3) and forbade the believers to allow the false teachers into their houses or to bid them God speed (2 John 10-11).

In this connection, let me quote two worthies of the 19th century:

J.C. Ryle - "From the Liberality which says that everybody is right; from the Charity which forbids to say that anybody is wrong; from the Peace which is bought at the expense of Truth; may the good Lord deliver us."

C.H. Spurgeon - "On all hands we hear cries for unity in this and unity in that; but in our mind the main need of this age is not compromise but conscientiousness. 'First pure, then peaceable', says the Scripture. That union which is not based on the truth of God is rather a conspiracy than a communion. Charity by all means: but honesty also. Love, of course, but love to God first and love of truth as well as love of union. It is exceedingly difficult in these times to preserve one's fidelity before God and one's fraternity among men. Should not the former be preferred to the latter if both cannot be maintained? We think so."

How truly did Charles Woodbridge speak when he said, "The New Evangelicalism advocates toleration of error. It then follows the downward path of accommodation to error, co-operation with error, contamination by error, and ultimate capitulation to error".

b) The second landmark which the New Evangelicalism removed was the clear view that our evangelical fathers had, and which we by grace also hold to, concerning the verbal inspiration and consequent inerrancy of Holy Scripture. I want to show how New Evangelicalism undermines that doctrine.

Whereas the old evangelicalism regarded Scripture as the written Word of God and wholly true, New Evangelicalism has made concessions concerning the authorship of various Biblical books such as Deuteronomy and Isaiah. Other aspects of their faulty view of Scripture are as follows:

(i) They undermine inspiration by distinguishing between its divine and human aspects. That is a half-truth, for it is true that the word of God came through human instrumentality. 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Peter 1:21). But the New Evangelical goes on to say that because sinful human beings were involved, there was always the possibility of error.

But this is a distinction that Jesus and the Apostles did not make. Jesus used "the law of Moses" and "the law of God" as synonyms. Paul said the Scriptures were written by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16). He did not focus on the human element in Scripture, only on the divine. Peter said it was the Holy Spirit who spake through the prophets (1 Peter 1:10-11).

(ii) They undermine inspiration by dividing the cultural, historical and scientific aspect of Scripture from the theological. That means that they teach that although Scripture speaks truly on matters concerning redemption it may not be accurate in scientific, historical or cultural statements.

But if the Bible is only partly inspired and partly trustworthy, who is to determine which part is the authentic Word of God? The Church would be at the mercy of the critics and not one of them could ever show where a line could be safely drawn. The only alternatives are an acceptance of the truthfulness of all Scripture or a questioning of the whole.

(iii) They undermine inspiration by claiming that God's thoughts are too great to be contained infallibly in a Book written in human words. But human language was created by God and the individual words of Scripture were chosen by God; the Scripture therefore contains the deep things of God and the very mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:10). ***'But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.'***

(iv) They undermine inspiration by claiming that to be bound by the letter of the Scripture is legalism and Bibliolatry. But the Lord Jesus taught us to revere the very words and letters of the Scripture (Matthew 4:4; 5:18). The Bible believer does not worship the Scriptures; he worships the God of the Scriptures; but he understands that God has revealed Himself infallibly in

the Scriptures. It is God who has exalted the Scriptures, having magnified His word above His Name (Psalm 138:2). It is the devil who has always questioned God's Word (Genesis 3:1 & 4) and those who question the inerrancy of the Bible today are of the devil.

(v) They undermine inspiration by claiming that the doctrine of verbal inspiration was a product of 19th century Presbyterians, especially Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield.

This claim is utter nonsense. The great 17th Century Confessions could not be clearer. The Westminster, the Baptist and the Savoy Confessions of Faith all stated: "The Old Testament in Hebrew...and the New Testament in Greek...being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them."

The great Puritan theologian John Owen wrote, "We affirm, that the whole Word of God, in every letter and tittle, as given from Him by inspiration, is preserved without corruption" (Works, Vol. 16, p. 301). Francis Turretin, Professor of Theology at Geneva and prominent Reformed Protestant leader, stated in 1674: "Nor can we readily believe that God, who inspired each and every word to these inspired men, would not take care of their entire preservation" (*Institutio Theologicae Elencticae*).

(vi) As I have already indicated, inspiration is undermined by that form of evangelicalism which makes concessions to science regarding the creation of the universe, the creation of man, the flood and other supernatural events.

That is a sad summary of the curse of New Evangelicalism – the first great cause of the decline. The second, third and fourth I will deal with more briefly.

2. The great change in the approach of evangelical Anglicans to non-evangelicals in the Church of England – a change which was mirrored in Non-conformist denominations.

The first National Evangelical Anglican Congress met at Keele in 1967 with a thousand delegates present, divided approximately between Ministers and lay people. Here the policy which had already been in operation was spelled out – there was to be no confrontation with non-evangelicals.

John Stott was the Chairman and he said that 'Evangelicals have acquired a reputation for narrow partisanship and obstructionism' (**that's how he**

defined standing for the truth!) and he went on to say that we must acknowledge this and admit that the blame lies with us. He further said that we need to repent and change.

That change was very apparent, for Michael Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was the preacher invited to open the Conference. Just 10 years before, Ramsey had said that evangelicals were heretical and sectarian; that he expected to meet atheists in Heaven. He was an Anglo-Catholic who was a liberal in theology and very sympathetic to re-union with Rome.

10 years after the Keele Conference, the second National Evangelical Anglican Conference (also chaired by John Stott) met at Nottingham. It was during that Conference that David Watson, one of the younger generation of so called Anglican evangelicals, deplored the division of the Church at the Reformation and spoke of the ‘profound grief that God must feel at the separation of His Body.’

Part of the statement issued at the end of the Nottingham conference contained these sad words: “Seeing ourselves and Roman Catholics as fellow-Christians, we repent of attitudes that have seemed to deny it. Deeply regretting past attitudes of indifference and ill-will towards Roman Catholics, we renew our commitment to seek with them the truth of God and the unity He wills, in obedience to our common Lord on the basis of Scripture.”

It is tragic beyond words to express that such a statement should be made, not by liberal and Anglo-Catholic Anglicans, but by those who had met as evangelicals! There you have the sad spectacle of those who would regard themselves as part of the bride of Christ embracing that system which Scripture described as the great whore, the mother of harlots.

The Apostle Paul had already spoken of this evil – *‘Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid!’* 1 Corinthians 6:15.

We have firstly then the rise of New Evangelicalism and secondly the capitulation of the evangelical wing of Anglicanism to liberals and Roman Catholics.

3. The third reason for the decline and that which greatly accelerated the Ecumenical process and the co-operation

between all the denominations, including the Roman Catholics, was the rise of the Charismatic Movement.

In 1962, Michael Harper, one of John Stott's Curates at All Souls Church in Central London, claimed that he had received the "Baptism in the Spirit".

This involved, among other things, speaking in tongues, uttering prophecies, performing healings and casting out demons. He left All Souls and was instrumental in setting up the Fountain Trust as a means of propagating the Charismatic Movement, as it came to be called, and as we know, his efforts met with considerable success.

Meetings were held and Conferences convened up and down the country, and the magazine *Renewal*, which he edited, achieved a wide circulation.

The so-called "Baptism in the Spirit" was soon widely claimed as being experienced in Anglican evangelical parishes, in many Free Churches and among some Roman Catholic congregations. This led to much closer fellowship among those who claimed to have had this experience and many from all denominations began to attend large charismatic gatherings and this greatly hastened the spread and influence of the Ecumenical Movement.

The meetings were characterised by a new, much more informal, style of worship and it cannot be denied that the Charismatic Movement was undoubtedly in the forefront of introducing worldly standards in conduct and dress and of bringing in musical groups of an increasingly worldly style and that a great deal of time was spent in the repetitive singing of choruses and songs. It also introduced a kind of evangelism in which anything would be permitted which would attract outsiders and it ignored truths which might cause them any offence.

Preaching of any kind, let alone solid Biblical preaching and the reading of Scripture began to be regarded as less important parts of the service. This, coupled with a very inadequate view of the Holiness and Majesty of God, introduced a great deal of informality which gradually degenerated into an unhappy irreverence with much levity in the services.

Sadly the Movement infiltrated, radically changed and divided many churches in the U.K. and the effects are everywhere seen today, where the great majority of Churches of all denominations now conduct what they call worship in a very informal manner. It is no longer the truth which

grips people but the desire to enjoy themselves.

The Movement very quickly became a recognised force which the doctrinally mixed denominations gladly embraced. Thus was confusion worse confounded. Most Christian bookshops stocked almost nothing but paperback books setting forth the experiences which, it was said, would revitalise the Churches and this was the diet that many Christians lived on.

While it is largely true that the emphasis on spiritual gifts and the Baptism of the Spirit which were the hallmarks of the Charismatic Movement at its beginning began to be less emphasised as the years passed, the wholesale change in attitudes to worship remained and spread across all denominations, so that there are very few Churches today which do not have modern so-called ‘worship’ to a greater or lesser degree.

4. The fourth cause of decline was a new antinomianism which generally goes under the name of New Covenant theology.

I shall not spend long on this as it is a comparatively new phenomenon among those who describe themselves as reformed evangelicals and many of you will, therefore, be familiar with its errors and dangers. As we have already seen, its basic tenet is that the moral law of God, as summarised in the Ten Commandments, is no longer binding on the New Testament believer.

There is, of course, a connection between this teaching and some of what I have already related; for the informal style of worship which was brought in by the Charismatic Movement has resulted in a less reverent and submissive attitude towards God in every area. If God can be ‘worshipped’ in an informal and often irreverent way, then it will inevitably follow at some stage that His holy law will be treated with less than that holy obedience which it requires as being the revealed will of the sovereign God.

Historic Reformed Theology has *always* maintained that the Moral Law, as summarised in the Ten Commandments, is the Christian’s rule of life. The great 17th Century Confessions - the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Savoy Declaration and the Baptist Confession – are unanimous in declaring the Decalogue to be a continuing rule of moral conduct.

New Covenant Theology speaks of the Moral Law but, because it refuses to acknowledge the continuing authority of the Ten Commandments, it fails to identify exactly what the moral law is. It says, somewhat glibly, that the moral law is found in the teachings of Christ (which is of course true) but it does not acknowledge that our Lord confirmed and expounded the

spiritual nature of the Ten Commandments, particularly in His Sermon on the Mount.

Moreover, the Ten Commandments are continually appealed to throughout the New Testament. For example, in Paul's words to the Ephesians – 'Honour thy father and mother (which is the first Commandment with promise)' and in the verses in 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

The difference between New Covenant Theology and Reformed Theology with reference to the Fourth Commandment is a fundamental difference. New Covenant Theology denies it. Reformed theology affirms it, declaring that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance (Genesis 2:3). That the 4th Commandment directs us to 'remember' it and its continuing validity was confirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ when He said, 'The Sabbath was made for *man*', not only for the Jews, thus indicating its universal observance.

CONCLUSION

To come to a conclusion then, I am very conscious that in attempting to cover 60 years in 60 minutes, much of what I have said is just skimming the surface and contains generalisations. I have not mentioned the 'New Perspective on Paul' which teaches a false view of justification or 'Open theism' which denies God's knowledge of future events, as these are comparatively recent aberrations and cannot be said to be responsible for the decline which has taken place over half a century.

But what I have sought to do has been to outline the main Movements and trends which have reduced the old, or more properly, the authentic evangelicalism of former years, to the unhappy condition of the majority of so-called evangelical Churches today. The ancient landmarks removed by New Evangelicalism, the collapse of evangelical Anglicanism, the Charismatic Movement and New Covenant Theology – these are factors which have led to the removal of the ancient landmarks and brought the Church into its present confusion.

The miserable fruit of all this - repudiating separation from apostasy, fellowshiping with false teachers, a low view of Scripture, the increasingly worldly and irreverent attitudes to worship and the removal of the obligation to obey the moral law of God have all sadly downgraded the honour due to the God of Heaven as revealed in the blessed standards set forth in His Holy Word and brought confusion, division and worldliness to many Churches.

The great desire of the Church of Jesus Christ in the latter half of the 20th

Century and onwards has been to change. The motive driving all these changes forward has been the constant cry that we must be contemporary if we are to communicate effectively with modern man. Such a view reflects adversely upon the timeless and unchanging wisdom of God and appears to be ignorant of the fact that it displays a tragic lack of faith in preaching as the divinely ordained way in which the Church is called out, edified, and prepared for glory.

The *worship* of the unchanging God; the *word* of the unchanging God; the *standards* required by the unchanging God have all been changed to accord with the mind and the desires and the preferences of changing sinners. With one heart and voice I trust we can say with the Apostle James, 'My brethren, these things ought not so to be.'

Perhaps not in the sense in which he meant them, we can nevertheless echo the words of Henry Lyte – 'Change and decay in all around I see: O thou who changest not, abide with me'. That is the key.

The God we worship is an unchanging God. I am the Lord, I change not; the Redeemer we trust is an unchanging Redeemer - Jesus Christ, the same yesterday; the Holy Spirit on whom we depend is the eternal Spirit. The Divine purposes are unchanging; Divine truth is unchanging; the moral law is unchanging; the holiness that God requires is unchanging; the needs of sinners are unchanging and have been the same since Adam fell and those needs can only be met by the preaching of the unchanging Gospel.

God says, "Walk ye in the old paths," but, like the Jews of Jeremiah's day, the New Evangelical refuses to do so. God says, "Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set," but the New Evangelical has removed them one by one. God says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," but the New Evangelicalism reasons that such fellowship is necessary.

But, dear friends, I ask you, "What is the use of evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger in number if significant numbers of those who take the name of 'evangelical' no longer hold to that which makes evangelicalism evangelical?"

Today we are choosing between two alternatives - the old or authentic evangelicalism with its clear stand on the Scripture, separation from non-evangelicals, structured worship and adherence to the moral law or the new evangelicalism with its low view of Scripture, its fellowship with apostates, its modern methods of worship and evangelism, its rejection of

the moral law.

If we preach the whole counsel of God, there are many places where we will never be invited and many people who will do nothing but criticise us – if they take any notice of us at all. Does that matter?

The other alternative is to lower the standard a little, to be a little less uncompromising, to be a little less exclusive. But, if we do that, we shall soon find that there will be some aspects of Biblical truth which we will have to soften a little or not mention at all. Away with such treachery. ‘Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong’ (1 Corinthians 16:13).

I conclude with two quotations:

First from James Thornwell, a staunch Old School Presbyterian preacher, who fought against theological modernism in the 19th century. Listen to him:

“To employ soft words in discussing questions of everlasting importance; to deal with errors that strike at the foundations of all human hope as if they were harmless mistakes; to bless where God disapproves and to make apologies where He calls us to stand up like men; though it may be the easiest method of securing popular applause in a weak-minded age, it is cruelty to man and treachery to Heaven. It is not defending the citadel of truth, but betraying it into the hands of its enemies.”

And Dr Lloyd-Jones, speaking nearly 50 years ago at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Library uttered a word which proved to be prophetic. He said, ‘It is more than likely that the times will get worse and worse and that there will be a great searching even amongst us who are called evangelical. We will be driven back to certain foundations and we may become a very small company.’

So it has proved to be, beloved brethren and sisters. We are a very small company but we do not lose heart, we do not faint; remember Gideon’s 300, remember ‘the sword of the Lord.’ Remember Jeremiah, remember Daniel, remember the Lord who is great and mighty. If God be for us, who can be against us?

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour

is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58); “Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:27).

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).
Amen.

Address given at Plymouth: 17th March 2012

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- * To uphold the Protestant Reformed Faith upon which our National Constitution was established.
- * To promote general awareness of our nation's departure from the laws of God, as given in the Holy Scriptures.
- * To form and support **Local Contact Groups** throughout the United Kingdom to promote the **Word of God** and to disseminate information in the local area, thereby increasing an awareness of the solemn national situation in the hope of encouraging others to support and assist in the work.
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- * To encourage all who the Lord has awakened to the serious state of our nation - spiritually, morally and ethically - to warn others of the inevitable judgement of God unless true repentance is given so that many will turn from their wicked ways to serve the Lord.

**Repent; for the kingdom
of heaven is at hand.**

Matt. 4:17

**Except ye repent,
ye shall all likewise perish.**

Luke 13:3

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