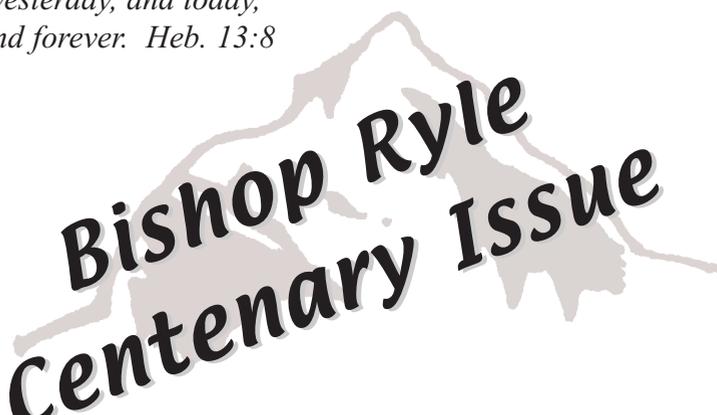


The Journal
of
The Church of England
(Continuing)

*Jesus Christ the same
yesterday, and today,
and forever. Heb. 13:8*



**Bishop Ryle
Centenary Issue**

Issue No: 18
December 2000

CONSTITUTION

1 **Doctrine:** The doctrine of the Continuing Church shall be that of the 39 Articles of Religion understood in their original, natural and intended sense.

2 **Worship:** The worship of the Continuing Church shall be generally according to the Book of Common Prayer (1662).

The Authorised Version of the Bible shall be the only version used in the lectern and the pulpit and in public readings and expositions at all meetings of the Continuing Church.

3 **Ministry:** The consecration and ordination of ministers shall be according to the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer (1662). The Continuing Church believes in the ministry of women according to Scripture which does not permit them to teach or exercise authority, particularly as bishops, priests, and deacons.

4 **Discipline:** The church shall be episcopally governed. A general assembly shall be held not less than once a year consisting of the bishop and the ministers of the church and representatives of the local congregations to transact the business of the denomination and for mutual encouragement and edification.

5 **Membership:** New churches may apply for membership of the Continuing Church on the basis of their agreement with the doctrine, worship and discipline of that body.

Membership of the local church shall be on the basis of baptism and confirmation and approval by the local presbyter.

Any matters incapable of resolution shall be referred to the Ordinary.

Please note that the Continuing Church publishes a prayer letter, "Intercessions." It is available free of charge to those who would like to receive news and to pray for the various needs.

Please write to
Rev. E. J. Malcolm, The Parsonage, 1, Downshire Square, Reading,
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From the Presiding Bishop David N. Samuel

81, Victoria Road,
Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 1EU

Dear Friends,

I am glad that the editor has decided to make this issue one that is devoted to Bishop Ryle. He was one of the last of the great evangelical bishops in the Church of England, and we have much to learn from his writings and his courageous stand for the truth. His days were very different from ours. I suppose he exercised his ministry at the height of the Victorian era when church going was generally observed in our nation. He said on one occasion, in connection with the disestablishment issue, "We have twenty thousand clergy and ten million laity, so we have nothing to fear." That will give you some idea of the contrast between his time and ours. I suppose today there are about nine to ten thousand clergy, of whom one tenth at least are women; and church attendance has dropped to about eight hundred thousand. We have just had a 'decade of evangelism' which seems to have made no impression on the situation; indeed the very opposite has happened during the last ten years, and fewer people attend church now than at the beginning of it. I do not want to be merely pessimistic, but to bring out the profound difference between the church and the nation a hundred years ago and today. There has been a *great falling away*, at least in the outward observance of Christianity in our country. The archbishop, who normally seeks to be up-beat about things, has himself acknowledged recently that we live in an atheistic society.

What are we to do in these circumstances? I make a few suggestions, culled from another great writer, John Owen.

First, let us be chiefly concerned with *the glory of God*. When the people of Israel rebelled in the wilderness, Moses' first thought was not for himself, but for the honour of God's Name; and also Joshua later when he said, *What wilt thou do unto thy great name?* Yet the preoccupation these days seems to be with the prestige and image of the church. But what if the image of the church is wrong, and God is judging the church for its unfaithfulness? Our first concern, and our prayers in this situation should be that the Name of God will be honoured and vindicated.

Secondly, we should *mourn* for the present state of Christianity in the world, for

the dishonour that it brings upon the cause of God and truth. The Psalmist said that he wept, because men did not keep God's laws (Ps. 119:136). God sets His mark upon those who so mourn. The Lord said to Ezekiel, *Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.* And Jesus said, *Blessed are they that mourn.* I fear that there is not much of this spirit about, but rather a vain self-confidence in the church, that if only we could devise the right technique, the skilful and imaginative advertising and marketing, we could put the church back on its feet. But the time for self-sufficiency is not merely past - it never was for the true church and the real people of God. We should mourn over our own weakness and unfaithfulness, and look to the Lord to vindicate His cause. There is nothing too hard for Him, and He can save by many or by few.

Thirdly, constancy of testimony. We should be openly and faithfully contending for the truth. What we have to say is not fashionable, but that should not discourage us. Sadly, it is the case, that public scorn and derision can put some people off, and if they think that those in power in the church do not approve, they will become strangely silent. I have seen this happen. But we should not temper our witness according to whether the message is approved of, or disapproved of, by society in general, or even by leaders of the church. Let us consistently contend for the faith, come rain, come sunshine.

Fourthly, beware of social and national vices, for their very commonness will tend to take off their guilt and remove their shame. If we follow the multitude we shall be swept down stream with them. *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to commit iniquity.* It is no excuse to say that everybody is doing it.

May these directions be of help in these days of widespread disaffection and unfaithfulness.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Samuel". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and 'S'.

J.C. RYLE'S SIGNIFICANCE FOR TODAY

A paper given at the PRS Conference, August 2000

by **David Samuel**

'Ryle', says Marcus Loane, 'marked out a path for evangelical churchmen in days when much of the Church of England was drifting on the tides of liberalism and Tractarianism'. Therein lies J.C. Ryle's significance for us today. But such a statement needs a great deal of unpacking, since times and circumstances have changed very significantly, and we need to trace out the connection between the path he marked out and where we stand today.

The two great movements that Ryle set himself to oppose, Liberalism and Tractarianism, must both be interpreted widely. The liberalism that Ryle resisted shaded off into scepticism and infidelity. It was in effect all one to him in its opposition to the gospel. Likewise, Tractarianism could not be dissociated from Romanism, for the one led inevitably to the other. So here we have two great, broad movements which threatened the very existence of the Church of England, and, in the providence of God, Ryle was the man called forth by God to meet them, and to embody for later generations the essence of the struggle against them.

For example, in the introduction to *Principles for Churchmen* Ryle stated that the position of the Church of England was 'critical'. The church was in great danger and the nature of that danger was twofold. First, there were those who wished to 'unprotestantise' the Church of England, to get behind the Reformation, and to reintroduce practices that 'even Laud at the height of his power never dared to enforce'. If that movement were continued 'sooner or later it would be the ruin of the established Church of England', for the object of the ritualists was 'finally to bring about reunion between the Anglican Church and the Church of Rome'. Secondly, the other thing that endangered the Church of England was 'a spirit of indifference to all doctrines and opinions in religion...Everything, forsooth, is true and nothing is false, everything is right and nothing is wrong, everything is good and nothing is bad, if it approaches us under the garb and name of religion'.

'It is fashionable now', he declared, 'to say that all sects are equal, that the state should have nothing to do with religion, that all creeds should be regarded with equal favour and respect, and that there is a substratum of common truth at the bottom of all religions whether Buddhism, Mohammedanism or Christianity...Everybody is going to be saved and nobody is going to be lost'. Such people 'have a morbid dread of controversy...and an ignorant dislike of party spirit, and yet they cannot define what they mean by these phrases'. This

led to indifferentism.

In the Church of England the call is, every man is to be allowed to hold and teach and do what he likes...No one is to be called to account...This is one of the greatest perils of the Church of England...it must end in the Church of England being broken to pieces. It looks very specious, it suits the temper of the times. What is more likely to provide peace and stop quarrelling than to declare the Church of England a kind of Noah's Ark, within which every kind of opinion and creed shall dwell safe and undisturbed, and the terms of communion shall be willingness to come inside and let your neighbour alone? I must, however, confess my utter inability to understand how the policy could ever be carried out without throwing overboard all Articles and creeds, without doing away with subscription, in short, without altering the whole constitution of the Church of England.

If the Church of England long survived such a chaotic state of things, it would be a miracle indeed. When there are no laws and no rules there can be no order in any community. When there is no creed or standard of doctrine there can be no church, but a Babel...The end of the Church of England, unless God interferes, will be either Popery or infidelity.

This was the twofold danger facing the Church of England as Ryle saw it, at the end of the nineteenth century and at the end of his long ministry. His remarks have an astonishingly modern ring to them. Let us then consider Ryle's understanding of the Church of England, its doctrine, ministry, establishment, and indebtedness to the Reformation, which he set in opposition to both these views which were gaining currency at the time, and which, he considered, alone could vindicate her if it were faithfully and consistently maintained.

First, **Doctrine**. Ryle was of the opinion that the genius and character of the church of England had been settled by divine Providence at the Reformation. It had as a result been given an identity which, if denied and effaced, must result in its ruin. The character of the Church of England is defined by its doctrine, by the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. In his paper *The Church's Distinctive Principles*, he declares, 'The principles I am going to consider are the principles of the Reformed Church of England, which was emancipated from Rome three hundred years ago'; and he continued,

When I speak of the 'distinctive principles of the Church of England' I do not mean for a moment its distinctive episcopal government, or its distinctive liturgical mode of worship. No! the distinctive principles of the Church of England which I have in view are those

mighty doctrinal principles which have been its strength and stay for 300 years...once let those principles be forsaken and repudiated, and our church will decay and die...Now where shall we turn in order to find out these great distinctive principles? I answer unhesitatingly, to the Thirty-Nine Articles.

He then goes through the distinctive tenets of those Articles. 1. An unvarying reverence for Holy Scripture. It always recognises the supremacy and sufficiency of God's Word written as the only rule of faith and practice, (Lambeth Synod 1878). 2. Its doctrinal evangelicalism, by which he means all the articles on original sin, free-will, the need for God's grace, justification by faith, etc. 3. Its clear, outspoken testimony against the errors of Rome. 4. Its rejection of any sacerdotal or sacrificial character in the Christian ministry. 5. Its wise, well-balanced and moderate estimate of the sacraments.

All these, Ryle considered, defined the nature and character of the Church of England, and gave it not only a distinct identity, but also a destiny. The Thirty Nine Articles of Religion had set an unmistakable stamp upon it. The doctrine of the Articles are the only doctrine which are life and strength and health and peace. 'Never be ashamed of them, and be very sure that these doctrines are the religion of the Bible and of the Church of England.'

In answer to those who pleaded the comprehensiveness of the Church of England, he responded by saying that the Church of England is only as broad as her Articles, and that the church which regards Deism, Socinianism, Romanism and Protestantism with equal favour or equal indifference, is a mere Babel, a 'city of confusion' and not a church. The National Church, he acknowledges, is not a sect. A sect can afford to be narrow and exclusive. A National Church ought to be liberal and generous. But there must be clear limits to such comprehensiveness. 'Destroy these limits, or refuse to maintain and enforce them and our candlestick will be removed...The English National Church must be Protestant, and have doctrinal 'limits' or cease to exist'.

With regard to the co-operation between different schools of thought within the church, Ryle considered, that it ought to be possible for 'temporal objects', eg, for the relief of poverty, for maintaining the union of church and state, and resisting infidelity. But cooperation in spiritual matters, the saving of souls, etc., seems to me, he said, to be impossible.

Can men from different traditions preach in each others pulpits? An unreflecting mind may say 'Yes'. But I answer on the contrary...Some have called for cooperation in foreign missions. A beautiful thought, no doubt! But utterly chimerical and impractical. It will not work. I can imagine no scheme more sure to fail as the scheme uniting all schools of thought in a kind of joint-stock board to carry it on. The certain consequences would be either helpless feebleness or a

scandalous quarrelling, and the whole result would be a disastrous breakdown of the movement.

Some will undoubtedly say that Ryle's views were simply circumscribed by the time in which he lived. Today he would see things differently. But on the contrary, Ryle's views arose out of the principles he held, not the time in which he lived, and were he alive today and holding the same principles he would inevitably come to the same conclusions. It is departure from principle rather than the passage of time that makes some contemporary evangelicals see things differently. And have not events, in fact, borne out the truth of what he said, for the Church of England, adopting the views which he condemned, has progressed from scandalous quarrelling to helpless feebleness, just as he foretold.

The concluding words of his paper on this subject are prophetic. 'Do not underestimate the importance of unity in doctrine; *A house divided against itself cannot stand*. A self governing church, unchecked by the state, with free and full synodical action, divided as much as ours is now, would most certainly split into sections and perish'. Synodical government has only been in existence for a short time, but already there is before the Church of England the prospect of a severe disruption. I refer of course to the impending ordination of women bishops.

Secondly, **with regard to the ministry** of the Church of England, Ryle states, that it is a most wise and useful provision of God. 'For the uninterrupted preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments, no better plan can be devised than the appointment of a regular order of men who shall give themselves wholly to Christ's business'. But he quickly proceeds to a warning: 'Never is a land in worse condition than when the ministers of religion have caused their office to be ridiculed and despised. It is a tremendous word in Malachi, *I have made you contemptible and base before all the people according as ye have not kept my ways* Mal. 2: 9'.

Ryle says it is important to fence the ministerial office, as the Thirty-Nine Articles do, with cautions. The Christian minister is not a mediator, he cannot give grace, he is not a confessor, he is not infallible, he is not a sacrificing priest. What then is the chief work of a minister?

To preach the word of God, this is the main and principal task, but of course all the other duties mentioned in Scripture and the ordinal are to be undertaken also. The minister is to be a trumpeter to awaken to danger, to show the soldiers their duty, to recall the troops together. He stands by the commanding officer. The proportion of Scripture should be observed in the carrying out of his duties. The Lord's Supper is mentioned but a few times. But about grace, faith, justification, etc., there is line upon line. The ordination service is principally about preaching. The minister is to declare the whole counsel

of God and keep nothing back. If he does not know how to preach his work is vitiated before it is begun.

Today preaching is fallen into desuetude, and what little there is largely lacks the Scriptural, dogmatic content that Ryle thought it required to be effective and to fulfil its object. It was said in *The Times* obituary of the late Robert Runcie, that he elevated the place of the sacraments and did not like the preaching side, which is generally true, I suppose, of the Anglican clergy these days. Humphrey Carpenter, his biographer, also said that he did not write his own speeches and addresses, and that there was no acknowledgement of those who did, which Carpenter considered was 'fundamentally dishonest'. What an enormous contrast with the first Bishop of Liverpool.

Thirdly, **Establishment**. Disestablishment was a burning issue towards the end of the last century when Ryle was at Liverpool. In a paper given to his diocesan conference he discussed the pros and cons. He considered that it would not, in fact, benefit dissenters at all, as was often imagined it might, and it would not mean either the end of the Church of England; but it would impoverish it and lead to divisions. It would, however, do great harm to the state.

God rules everything in the world; national decline and prosperity are ordered by him. If we believe this, it is absurd to say that governments have nothing to do with religion, and that they may safely ignore God. The government that refuses to recognise the place of religion, in order to save itself trouble, and to avoid favouring one church more than another, may think it is doing a very smart and politic thing. But I believe its line of procedure is offensive to the Most High and eminently calculated to draw down his displeasure.

Again, reason itself points out that the moral standards of a nation's subjects is the grand secret of its prosperity.

Gold mines, and manufactures, and scientific discoveries, and eloquent speeches, and commercial activity, and democratic institutions are not enough to make and keep a nation great. Tyre and Sidon, Egypt and Carthage, Athens and Rome, Venice and Spain and Portugal, had plenty of such possessions as these and yet fell into decay. The sinews of a nation's strength are truthfulness, honesty, sobriety, purity, temperance, economy, diligence, brotherly kindness, charity among its inhabitants. Let those who deny this dare, - And will any man say there is any surer way of producing these characteristics in a people than by encouraging, and fostering, and spreading, and teaching pure Scriptural Christianity?

Fourthly, **indebtedness to the Reformation**. In his paper *Lessons from English Church History* Ryle draws out the benefits that have accrued from the Reformation.

Whatever England is among the nations of the earth, as a Christian country, whatever political liberty we enjoy, whatever freedom we have in religion, whatever safety for life and property there is among us, whatever purity and happiness there is in our homes, whatever protection and care for the poor, - we owe it, in very great measure to the Protestant Reformation.

He argues that as Archbishop Laud's want of sympathy with the Reformation and attempts to 'unprotestantise' the Church of England resulted in tragedy for the Church and nation, so Ritualism in 19th century England was a fresh departure from the principles of the Reformation, and a movement towards Rome, and that as such it endangered the very existence of the Church of England. Many, said Ryle, would argue that it is not a Romanising movement, but simply a desire to introduce more ornate ceremonial. 'I have no sympathy with that opinion at all.' Ritualism is a Romeward movement and leads to Popery. It is proved by the writings of the leading Ritualists of the day. 'I believe that Ritualism has done and is doing universal damage to the Church of England, and that unless it is checked or removed, it will prove the destruction of the Establishment'.

At the conclusion of this paper he declares,

There can be no real peace while our church tolerates and fosters Popery. God forbid that we should ever sacrifice truth to a love of peace. What others think I do not know. My own mind is made up. I have come to one decided conclusion. I say, give me a really Protestant and Evangelical Established Church or no Established Church at all. When the Reformed Church of England renounces her Protestant principles and goes back to popery her life and her glory will have clean departed, and she will not be worth preserving. She will be an offence to God and not a resting place for any true Christian.

With those solemn words of warning ringing in our ears let us now trace out something of what has happened to the Church of England since they were uttered. Very many things have happened since Ryle's death in 1900. To try to enumerate them all here would not be helpful and would only serve to confuse the picture. I shall confine myself simply to those movements which have gone on as a natural progression from those which Ryle himself castigated and condemned in his writings, and they are, in the first place concerned with the drift towards Rome.

The Anglo-Catholic movement, which Ryle saw as threatening the very exist-

tence of the Established Church, soon after his death manifested the very signs which he feared of actively seeking reunion with Rome. In the 1920s an attempt was made with the blessing of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Davidson, at a *rapprochement* with the Church of Rome, through the Malines conversations. Cardinal Mercier and some other leaders of the Roman Catholic Church met with Lord Halifax and several other Anglo-Catholics. The conversations were held from 1921 to 1926. After the death of Cardinal Mercier they broke down. Later it was disclosed by the Vatican that it had never envisaged the reunion of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, but only a *rapprochement* with Anglo-Catholics. This caused much astonishment at the time. However, the ice had been broken and the way prepared, despite the self-confessed duplicity of Rome, for further conversations, which came about after the second world war when Archbishop Ramsey and the Pope set up The Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission in 1966.

This was a much more serious attempt than the Malines Conversations to seek unity, and it is evident by its fruits that it has made considerable progress towards the reunification of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. In 1982 ARCIC, as this body is known, published its final Report, which claimed substantial agreement between the two sides on Eucharist, Ministry and Authority. Major concessions were made by the Anglican side in the acceptance of the Lord's Supper as a propitiatory sacrifice and in the nature of substantial change in the elements, though much of it was concealed in ambiguous and recondite language. The Report also affirmed the sacerdotal character of the ministry. It unashamedly uses the term *hierus* or sacrificing priest for the Christian minister, which is never used of ministers in the New Testament. Finally, the Report states, that 'in a reunited church a universal primacy will be needed, and that primacy should properly belong to the Bishop of Rome'.

Would it not have been well with the Church of England if at all times she had heeded Ryle's words, and 'cultivated a godly simplicity in all her statements about the Lord's Supper'? 'There is', he said, 'no sacrifice in the Lord's Supper, no real presence of Christ's body and blood in the bread and wine, no change in the elements, no grace conferred, no *ex opere operato*, no altar at the east end of our churches, no sacrificing priesthood in the Church of England'. A Godly simplicity is indeed required of us. *Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay - no shifts, stratagems and ambiguities - for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

In a cleverly scheduled operation the Pope visited this country for the first time in 1982, just after the publication of this report, was received by the Queen in Buckingham Palace, and took part in a service in Canterbury Cathedral. I do not think that Ryle, had he been able to witness these scenes, would have been altogether surprised. Had he not repeatedly warned of what would happen if the Anglo-Catholic movement were not checked? But he would nevertheless have

been horrified at the apostasy of the national church.

But that is by no means all that happened. Following these unprecedented events, the General Synod, in 1985, debated the *ARCIC Final Report*, and approved it in several motions which were passed with significant majorities in all houses of bishops, clergy and laity. The following day *The Times* carried a report which stated,

The Church of England, through its representative body, declared its willingness to take into its system the office of universal primate, the Bishop of Rome. That was a historic moment'.

And so indeed it was, for it meant an effective cancelling out of the Reformation in the Church of England. Warning had been given before the vote was taken, by Church Society, that it was not merely a motion for talks to continue between the Church of England and the Church of Rome, but, as the resolution stated, for the next concrete steps to be taken towards, the reconciliation of our churches.

However, the story does not stop there. The same resolutions were sent down to all the diocesan synods and were similarly approved by every one without exception. And, finally, in 1988 the same Report and resolutions came before the Lambeth Conference representing the whole Anglican Communion and were overwhelmingly endorsed by all the bishops present, save one. What would Ryle have thought of all this had he been there? But we must bring the story up to date.

Immediately following the approval of ARCIC by the whole Anglican Communion, Dr Runcie made arrangements to go to Rome to meet the Pope. He was going to Rome with the special mission to deliver up the Church of England and the Anglican Communion to the Pope, to bring him this glittering prize and to receive a reward for what he had done. But he returned a very disappointed man. The Pope was no doubt pleased with what had been done, but he made it clear that it did not by any means go far enough. The primacy of the pope that the Church of England must accept is not merely a primacy of honour, but of jurisdiction. Until that was forthcoming there could be no reunion. I saw Archbishop Runcie on television immediately following his return, and he was a broken man.

Since then the ARCIC process has continued with a view to educating Anglicans into full acceptance of the primacy of the Pope. That is the significance of the latest statement of ARCIC entitled *The Gift of Authority*. The Rubicon has already been crossed, as I have shown; the primacy of the pope has been accepted by Anglicans, in principle; the only thing now for ARCIC to do is to show what that really means. It means a primacy of jurisdiction. *The Gift of Authority* declares: 'Within his wider ministry, the Bishop of Rome offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth, as an expression of universal

primacy' (para 47). And it goes on, 'Anglicans must be open to and desire a recovery and re-reception under certain clear conditions of the exercise of universal primacy by the Bishop of Rome'.

This would have fulfilled all Ryle's worst fears. Does not his ultimatum now come to have immediate relevance and force? 'Give me a really Protestant and evangelical Established Church or no Established Church at all'?

But somebody may say, what about his words, 'So long as the Articles and the Prayer Book are not altered, we are in an impregnable position'? Well, since then the Prayer Book has virtually disappeared, and as for the Articles, what ARCIC has done is not to alter or remove them, but simply to ignore them and go round them. Between the wars the French built a great line of defence against the Germans called the Maginot Line. They said it was impregnable, and I believe it was, for it was never breached. But when war was declared, the German army ignored it and pushed through the Low Countries, outflanking the Maginot Line and capturing Paris. ARCIC has outflanked the Thirty-Nine Articles. It has left them standing, but the operative doctrine of the Church of England now is no longer the Thirty-Nine Articles but the ARCIC Statements. The fact that the Articles remain unaltered is of very little significance,

The Church of Rome has had long experience of doing things this way. She has the Scriptures and the Catholic Creeds, but they are not determinative of her theology. They have long been overtaken by the tradition of the Church of Rome, by her Councils, especially the Council of Trent, and her doctrine is determined now not by Scripture, but by those traditions. What does the celebrated Bishop Hall say in his book, *No Peace With Rome*? 'Look on the face of Rome and she is ours and God's. Look on her back, and she is quite contrary, Antichristian...Rome doth both hold the foundation and deny it. She holds it directly, she destroys it by consequence...in that she destroys it, whatever semblance she makes of piety and holiness, she is a Church of Malignants'. And what coquetry and harlotry she has learned over the centuries, she is now teaching her little sister, who seems eager to learn and to imitate her.

What the Anglican Church is now doing is the same as Rome has done, putting in place a tradition based upon ARCIC which will, indeed already has, superseded the Articles as the determinant of Anglican doctrine.

Before we leave this question of reunion with Rome, I must refer to a matter of great moment and that is the doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone. In his paper on *The Fallibility of Ministers* Bishop Ryle says: 'There is no doctrine about which we ought to be so jealous as justification by faith without the deeds of the law'. It is clear that Ryle, like the Reformers, attached enormous importance to this great doctrine of Scripture. He refers to the incident at Antioch, when Paul 'withstood Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed'. 'And what article of the faith had Peter denied?' asks Ryle, None. What doctrine had he publicly preached that was false? None. What then had he done? He had

done this. After keeping company with believing Gentiles, he had publicly withdrawn from them. He seemed to think that they were less holy and acceptable to God than the circumcised Jews. He seemed to add something to simple faith, and to be saying in answer to the question, What must I do to be saved? not merely 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ', but 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be circumcised, and keep the law'.'

So this doctrine, which is so fundamental to the church, must be guarded jealously in all ages. There is no place here for sleights of hand, ambiguity or sloppy thinking. This doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law, is essential to true peace...It is the doctrine that Satan hates and above all seeks to overthrow...He is always trying to seduce churches and ministers to deny and obscure its truth. No wonder that the Council of Trent directed its chief attack against this doctrine and pronounced it accursed and heretical...The doctrine is gall and wormwood to unconverted hearts.

It is essential to the true success and well-being of the church. And Ryle added, 'Its schools may be in every parish, its buildings may strike the eye all over the land. But there will be no blessing of God in that church, unless justification by faith is preached from its pulpits. Sooner or later its candlestick will be taken away'.

These, indeed, are solemn words. What would Ryle think of what is taking place today? When the ARCIC report on *Salvation and the Church* was published in 1986, I was invited to give a paper on it to the Church of England Evangelical Council. I pointed out that the statement on justification was deliberately ambiguous. It's intention was to make a bridge between the Roman and Protestant doctrines; to subvert the Scriptural teaching, namely that it is a declaration of the believing sinner as righteous, by combining with it the Roman teaching, that it is an inward infusion of righteousness. I was attacked by an evangelical bishop as uncharitable and wrong. I cannot remember that anyone came to my aid.

But since then we have had *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* - a further attempt to skew the teaching on justification in a Romeward direction. It has been signed by leading Evangelicals. What would Ryle have made of all this? I think the answer is quite clear. In his paper *Apostolic Fears* he wrote, 'False doctrine is the engine Satan has chosen to corrupt and pollute the church. Unity is worthless if purchased at the cost of truth'. In his paper *Pharisees and Sadducees* he wrote

We must not think that a man, once an evangelical, can do no wrong. *Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*, ie, false doctrine. He [the Lord] gave this as a perpetual warning to the church. There is no security against the doctrine of the Pharisees unless we

resist it at the very beginning. (*I fear that it has been allowed to run for too long now in the case of ARCIC to be remedied.*) Beginning with a dislike to 'evangelical religion' as 'old fashioned,' 'narrow and exclusive' (*precisely the epithets used about it at Keele*) you may end up by rejecting every leading doctrine of Christianity - the atonement, the need of grace, and the divinity of Christ.

Again, in the same paper he says,

Let us beware of the insidiousness of false doctrine, the very small beginnings...Every heresy began at one time with some little departure from the truth. There is only a little seed of error needed to create a great tree...it is a little leaven that leavens the whole lump...Very striking is the vision in *Pilgrim's Progress* which describes the hill Error as 'very steep on the furthest side'.

I fear Ryle's words of warning have not been heeded, and the Gadarene rush having once begun cannot be turned back.

In this paper Ryle goes on to speak words that are remarkably prescient.

To keep Gospel truth in the church is even of greater importance than to keep peace...The apostle Paul valued unity very greatly as we know, but here he runs the risk of all the consequences that follow...Why? Because he dreaded false doctrine. He feared the loss of truth more than the loss of peace. Many people have a morbid rear of controversy - They would have said, with Ahab, that Elijah was a disturber of the peace. They would have thought that Paul at Antioch went too far! To maintain truth in the church men should be ready to make any sacrifice, to hazard peace, to risk dissension. They should no more tolerate false doctrine than they would tolerate sin. (*But, good Bishop Ryle, if I may so address his shade, now in the church is so desensitised that it can tolerate sin as well as false doctrine!*) Peace without truth is a false peace; it is the very peace of the devil. Unity without the Gospel is a worthless unity; it is the very unity of hell. Let us never be ensnared by those who speak kindly of it.

Ryle thought that a man should leave his parish church if the doctrine taught there was false. He had no business going there at all.

The state of the times and the position of the laity in some parts of England require plain speaking. I am not ignorant of those magic expressions, the parochial system, order, division, schism, unity, controversy and the like... False doctrine and heresy are even worse than schism. But what is schism? Is it not false doctrine that rends the body of Christ? or can the body of Christ be rent? If people separate them-

selves from teaching which is positively false and unscriptural, they ought to be praised rather than reproved. In such cases separation is a virtue rather than a sin...He is the schismatic who causes the schism.

Unity, quiet, order...give beauty, strength, efficiency to the cause of Christ. But even gold can be bought too dear. Unity which is obtained by the sacrifice of truth is worth nothing. It is not the unity that pleases God.

We have reviewed Ryle's assessment of the Roman system and the dangers that it posed to the Church of England, especially from the infatuation of many of her clergy and lay people with it in one form or another. It is clear that the whole thing was utterly abhorrent to him, and his attitude may be summed up in his impassioned words in his paper on *Idolatry*,

To say that reunion with Rome would be an insult to our martyred Reformers is a very light thing; rather than be reunited with the idolatrous church of Rome, I would willingly see my own beloved church perish and go to pieces. Rather than become popish once more, she had better die.

I wish now to turn to Ryle's view of what may broadly be termed Liberalism.

Ryle was fighting on two fronts. He saw not only the dangers that arose from the prospect of the Romanising of the Church of England, but also those which threatened from the growing liberalism and scepticism of the age. He warned not only of the doctrine of the Pharisees, ie, formalism, tradition worship, and self-righteousness, but also that of the Sadducees, which he said may be summed up in three words, free-thinking, scepticism, and rationalism. The Sadducees did not deny revelation altogether. Many of them were priests. But the practical effect was to break men's faith in revelation. Our Lord gave this warning as a perpetual one to the church. He knew that these would be the upper and nether millstones that would crush the truth. The spirit of the Pharisees and the Sadducees would live on amongst professing Christians. We see the one today in Romanism and the other in Socinianism. The doctrine of free-thought and liberalism does not work out in the open, but like leaven in the meal, it is hidden and works secretly.

In his paper *The Wants of the Times* Ryle declared that it was his conviction that the professing church of the nineteenth century is much damaged by laxity and indistinctness about matters of doctrine within, as much as by sceptics and unbelievers without. Myriads of professing Christians seem nowadays utterly unable to distinguish things that differ. Like people afflicted with colour blindness, they are incapable of discerning what is true and what is false, what is sound and what is unsound. Popery and Protestantism, an atonement or no

atonement, a personal Holy Ghost or no Holy Ghost, future punishment or no future punishment...nothing comes amiss to them; they can swallow it all, if they cannot digest it! Carried away by a fancied liberality and charity they seem to think everybody is right and nobody is wrong...everybody is going to be saved and nobody is going to be lost...They dislike distinctness and think all extreme and decided and positive views are very naughty and very wrong.

These people live in a kind of mist or fog. They see nothing clearly and they do not know what they believe. They have not made up their minds about any great point of the Gospel and seem content to be honorary members of all schools of thought.

Elsewhere he describes this 'creed' as 'Nothingarianism'.

This sort of thing, so common then as now, he ascribes to a sense of false charity. There are those who pride themselves on never pronouncing others mistaken whatever views they may hold.

Your neighbour, forsooth, may be an Arian, or Socinian, or Roman Catholic, or Mormon, or Deist, or Sceptic, or a mere formalist, or a thorough Antinomian. But the charity of many says that you have no right to think him wrong. From such charity may I ever be delivered!...True charity does not think everybody right in doctrine. True charity cries *Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world* I John 4:1.

Such ignorance and indifference to truth is due also, says Ryle, to an astonishing ignorance of Scripture.

In no other way can I account for the ease with which people are, like children, *tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine*, Ephesians 4: 14. There is an Athenian love of novelty abroad, and a morbid distaste for anything old and regular, and in the beaten path of our forefathers.

The plague which, in Ryle's day, was in the floor of the house and the skirting, is now in the walls and the roof. Broad liberal and agnostic views have spread through every rank and echelon the church. What would Ryle think today of a bishop who can deny with impunity the bodily resurrection of Christ? What would he think of a report commissioned by the Church of England which sanctioned such views? What would he make of an Archbishop so muddled and confused as to assert that 'while we can be absolutely sure that Jesus lived, and that he was certainly crucified on the cross, we cannot with the same certainty say we know he was raised from the dead'. And what would he think of a church that

meekly accepted such an extraordinary statement, and see nothing absurd or perverse in it? No doubt the Archbishop thought he was saying something very clever, but in fact he was saying something very foolish. For if we cannot know that Christ is raised 'our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins'. And, what is more, as the apostle Paul himself says, 'we (the apostles) are found to be false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not' (I Corinthians 15: 14 & 15).

The leaven of the Sadducees is at work today in the church, no longer secretly, but openly, denying revelation in the scriptures, denying the resurrection of Christ and opposing itself to all supernatural religion. In opposition to all this Ryle stressed *the importance of dogma*. Indeed, there is no other way this evil can be countered.

In his paper of that title, Ryle explained that *dogma is simply definite, ascertained truth*. If there is no dogma there is no known truth. 'Dogmatic theology is the statement of positive truths of religion'. He draws attention to the difference between dogma in science and religion. In the former it is presumption, in the latter it is a positive duty. Science has no revealed truth, only induction; we ought therefore to be modest in our assertions. In religion, on the contrary, we start with an infallible Book to guide us. With the Bible in the minister's hands, there ought to be nothing faltering, hesitating and indefinite in his exhibition of the things necessary to salvation.

Compare this with the Church of England's *Doctrine Report (1987)*, which stands Ryle's thesis on its head, and deliberately takes scientific method as the model for theology, and comes to the inevitable conclusion that theology is 'tentative, provisional and incomplete'. Ryle was already aware in his own day of a growing dislike of all dogma in religion. He regarded it as a sign of the times. Hence, he said, arises the peculiar importance of holding and teaching it. He noted how newspapers praised Christian morality, but ignored Christian doctrine (now they no longer praise Christian morality, they condemn it). He noted the substitution of 'earnestness' for beliefs. He noted how the Broad Churchmen of the day wanted tabernacles for Socrates, Plato, and Mahomet, *et al*, as well as Christ, Moses and Elias. (Now multi-faithism is the order of the day. The current president of the Methodist Conference is a 'born again' Sikh, but he still attends the Sikh temple). But, Ryle said, there is nothing strange or new about this; 'For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine'.

However, despite all this denigration of dogma that was going on at the time, Ryle said that there remained a catena of facts in support of dogma which it is impossible to explain away. 'It is not enough', Ryle contended, 'to say simply, We believe the Bible. We must understand what the leading facts and doctrines of the Bible are, and that is exactly the point of creeds and confessions, and why they are useful'. He refers to the speech by Burke in the House of Commons, at

the time of Archdeacon Blackburn's petition, which sought to do away with subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and substitute in its place subscription to the Bible. 'Subscription to Scripture alone', said Burke, 'is the most astonishing idea I have ever heard, and will amount to no subscription at all'.

What was even more astonishing to me was that Evangelicals, at the time of the Keele Congress were advocating the same policy, and saying that we had no further need of the Thirty-Nine Articles. We could forget about them, for we had the Bible. But the teaching of the Articles is no more than the dogmatic teaching of Scripture. To drive a wedge between them is, in effect, to say that you do not wish to state dogmatically what the Bible teaches. You wish to leave the matter open. I think this is what is meant by the 'open evangelicalism' that has now come into fashion. Men (and women) do not wish to be tied down to any particular teaching. But as Ryle pointed out, when we turn to the whole history of the progress and propagation of Christianity, there has been no converting work done without the proclamation of dogma. 'The victories of Christianity...have been won by distinct doctrinal theology. Christianity without dogma is a powerless thing. No dogma, no fruits.'

In conclusion, let all honest, true-hearted churchmen...stick to the old paths. Let no sneers, no secret desire to please, and conciliate the public, tempt us to leave the old paths. Let us beware of being foggy and hazy in our statements. Let us be specific in our doctrine. It was dogma in the apostolic age which emptied the heathen temples and shook Greece and Rome. It was dogma that awoke Christendom from its slumbers at the time of the Reformation and spoiled the pope of one third of his subjects. It was dogma which a hundred years ago revived the Church of England.

I desire to raise a warning voice against the growing disposition to sacrifice dogma on the altar of so-called unity...Peace may be bought too dear, and it is bought too dear if we keep back any portion of Gospel truth in order to exhibit to men a hollow semblance of agreement! Let us never compromise sound doctrine for the sake of pleasing anyone, whether he be Bishop or Presbyterian, Romanist or Infidel, Ritualist or Neologian, Churchman or Dissenter or Plymouth Brother. Let our principle be, *amicus Socrates, amicus Plato sed magis amicus veritas!*

Well says Martin Luther: Accursed is that charity which is preserved by shipwreck of faith or truth, to which all things must give place, both charity, and apostle, or an angel from heaven.

Well would it have been if those who professed to be evangelicals in the Church of England had heeded those words and eschewed involvement in ecumenical dialogue and engagement with other traditions, and had not been ashamed to be dogmatic.

I come now to the conclusion of this paper. Ryle still speaks across the century that divides us from him. His voice is clear, his warnings plain. He was a man who lived in and by his faith. His faith was not some speculative intellectual system that he carried round with him, but which did not control and direct his life. Søren Kierkegaard criticised Hegel because, he said, in his speculative philosophy he had constructed a palace, but he actually lived in a hovel at the side of it. I think that is true of much contemporary evangelicalism. Men delight in it intellectually as a system, but they do not live by it, it does not control all that they do. Faith is not demonstrated by commitment to the truth.

There will be many addresses, no doubt, given this year on Ryle, and what a great man he was and what wonderful things he said, by those who have no intention of living out the faith he proclaimed and by which he lived. It will be an exercise in garnishing the tombs of the righteous, which our Lord so severely condemned in the Pharisees of his day. The acid test is not what lip service we pay to Ryle, but whether we live by the same principles and doctrines he upheld, and demonstrate the same spirit, by showing that we will have no truck with the compromise, shifts and mendacity of the present age as it is manifested both inside and outside the church.

There is a subject before your eyes of vast importance. I mean the subject of religious zeal.

It is a subject, like many others in religion, most sadly misunderstood. Many would be ashamed to be thought 'zealous'. Many are ready to say of zealous people what Festus said of Paul, 'They are beside themselves - they are mad.' (Acts 26:24).

But it is a subject which no reader of the Bible has any right to pass over. If we make the Bible our rule of faith and practice, we cannot turn away from it. We must look it in the face. What says the Apostle Paul to Titus? *Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of all good works.* (Titus 2:14) What says the Lord Jesus to the Laodicean Church? *Be zealous, and repent.* (Rev 3:19).

Reader, I say plainly, I want to plead the cause of zeal in religion. I am not afraid of it. I love it. I admire it. I believe it to be a mighty blessing. I want to strike a blow at the lazy, easy, sleepy Christianity of these latter days, which can see no beauty in zeal, and only uses the word 'zealot' as a reproach.

Be Zealous. From 'A New Birth' by Bishop Ryle.

THE SECOND ADVENT

by J.C. Ryle

Of all the doctrines of the Gospel, the one about which Christians have become most unlike the first Christians, in their sense of its true value, is the doctrine of Christ's second advent. I am obliged to say this of Protestants. I know not of any exception. In our view of man's corruption, of justification by faith, of our need of the sanctifying work of the Spirit, of the sufficiency of Scripture—upon all these points I believe we should find the English believers were much in one mind with believers at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, or Rome, in former times. But in our view of the second advent of Christ, I fear we should find there was a mighty difference between us and them, if our experience could be compared. I am afraid that we should find that we fall woefully short of them in our estimate of its importance : that in our system of doctrine it is a star of the fifteenth magnitude, while in theirs it was one of the first. In one word, we should discover, that compared with them in this matter, *we slumber and sleep*.

I must speak my mind on this subject, now that I am upon it. I do so most unwillingly. I do so at the risk of giving offence, and of rubbing against the prejudices of many whom I love. But it is a cross I feel duty bound to take up. And speak I must.

I submit, then, that in the matter of Christ's second coming and kingdom, the Church of Christ has not dealt fairly with the prophecies of the Old Testament. We have gone on far too long refusing to see that there are two personal advents of Christ spoken of in those prophecies : an advent in humiliation, and an advent in glory—an advent to suffer, and an advent to reign; a personal advent to carry the cross, and a personal advent to wear the crown. We have been *slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have written*. (Luke 24. 25). The disciples went into one extreme: they stumbled at Christ's sufferings. We have gone into the other extreme: we have stumbled at Christ's glory. We have got into a confused habit of speaking of the kingdom of Christ as already set up among us, and have shut our eyes to the fact that the devil is still the god of this world, and served by the vast majority : and that our Lord, like David in Adullam, though anointed, is not yet set upon His throne. We have got into a vicious habit of taking all the promises spiritually, and the denunciations and threats literally. The denunciations against Babylon and Nineveh and Edom, we have been content to take *literally*, and hand over our neighbours. The blessings and promises of glory to Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob and Israel, we have taken *spiritually*, and comfortably applied them to ourselves and the Church of Christ. To bring forward proofs of this would waste time. No man can hear many sermons, and read many commentaries, without being aware of the fact.

Unfair Interpretation

Now I believe this to have been an unfair system of interpreting Scripture. I hold that the first and primary sense of every Old Testament promise as well as threat is the literal one - and that Jacob means Jacob, Jerusalem means Jerusalem, Zion means Zion and Israel means Israel as much as Egypt means Egypt and Babylon means Babylon. The primary sense, I believe, we have sadly lost sight of. We have adapted and accommodated to the Church of Christ the promises that were spoken by God to Israel and Zion. I do not mean to say that this accommodation is in no sense allowable. But I do mean to say that the primary sense of every prophecy and promise in Old Testament prophecy was intended to have a literal fulfilment, and that this literal fulfilment has been far too much put aside and thrust into a corner. And by so doing I think we have exactly fulfilled our Lord's words in the parable of the ten virgins - we have proved that we are *slumbering* and *sleeping* about the second advent of Christ.

But I submit further, that in the interpretation of the New Testament, the Church of Christ has dealt almost as unfairly with our Lord's second advent, as she has done with the interpretation of the Old. Men have got into a habit of putting a strange sense upon many of those passages which speak of *the coming of the Son of Man*, or of *the Lord's appearing*. And this habit has been far too readily submitted to. Some tell us that the coming of the Son of Man often means death. No one can read the thousands of epitaphs in Chuchyards, in which some text about the coming of Christ is thrust in, and not perceive how widespread is this view. Some tell us that our Lord's coming means the destruction of Jerusalem. This is a very common way of interpreting the expression. Many find the literal Jerusalem everywhere in New Testament prophecies, though, oddly enough, they refuse to see it in the Old Testament prophecies. Some tell us that our Lord's coming means the general judgment, and the end of all things. This is their one answer to all enquiries about things to come.

Now I believe that all these interpretations are entirely beside the mark. I have not the least desire to underrate the importance of such subjects as death and judgment. I willingly concede that the destruction of Jerusalem is typical of many things connected with our Lord's second advent, and is spoken of in chapters where that mighty event is foretold. But I must express my own firm belief that the coming of Christ is one distinct thing, and that death, judgment and the destruction of Jerusalem are three distinct things. And the wide acceptance which these strange interpretations have met with, I hold to be one more proof that in the matter of Christ's second advent, the Church has long slumbered and slept.

The Truth of Scripture

The plain truth of Scripture I believe to be as follows: Christ will come again to this world with power and great glory. He will raise His saints, and gather them to Himself. He will punish with fearful judgments all who are found His

enemies, and reward with glorious rewards all His believing people. He will take to Himself His great power, and reign, and establish a universal kingdom. He will gather the scattered tribes of Israel, and place them once more in their own land. As He came the first time in person, so He will come the second time in person. As He went away from earth visibly, so He will return visibly. As He literally rode upon an ass - was literally sold for thirty pieces of silver - had His hands and feet literally pierced - was numbered literally among the transgressors - and had lots literally cast upon His raiment - and all, that the Scripture might be fulfilled - so also He will literally come, literally set up a kingdom, and literally reign over the earth, because the very same Scripture has said that it shall be so.

The words of the angels, in the first of Acts, are plain and unmistakable: *This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* So also the words of the Apostle Peter: *The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.* (Acts 3:19-21). So also the words of the Psalmist: *When the Lord shall build up Zion He shall appear in His glory.* (Ps. 102:16). So also the words of Zechariah: *The LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.* (Zech 14:5). So also the words of Isaiah: *The LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.* (Is 24:23). So also the words of Jeremiah: *I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.* (Jer 30:3); *I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap.* (Jer 30:18). So also the words of Daniel: *Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.* (Dan 7:13-14). All these texts are to my mind plain prophecies of Christ's second coming and kingdom. All are yet without their accomplishment, and shall yet be literally and exactly fulfilled.

Literal Exactitude

I say 'literally and exactly fulfilled' and I say so advisedly. From the first day that I began to read the Bible with my heart, I have never been able to see these texts, and hundreds like them, in any other light. It always seemed to me that as we take literally the texts foretelling that the walls of Babylon shall be cast down, so we ought to take literally the texts foretelling that the walls of Zion shall be built up - that as according to prophecy the Jews will be literally gath-

ered - and that as the least and minutest predictions were made good on the subject of our Lord's coming to suffer, so the minutest predictions shall be made good which describe our Lord's coming to reign. And I have long felt it is one of the greatest shortcomings of the Church of Christ that we ministers do not preach enough about this advent of Christ, and that believers do not think enough about it. A few of us here and there receive the doctrine, and profess to love it, but the number of such persons is comparatively very small. And, after all, we none of us live on it, feed on it, work from it, take comfort in it, as much as God intends us to do. In short, the Bridegroom tarries, and we all *slumber and sleep*.

It proves nothing against the doctrine of Christ's second coming and kingdom, that it has sometimes been fearfully abused. I should like to know what doctrine of the Gospel has not been abused. Salvation by grace has been made a pretext for licentiousness - election an excuse for all manner of unclean living - and justification by faith a warrant for Antinomianism. But if men will draw wrong conclusions, we are not therefore obliged to throw aside good principles. We do not give up the Gospel because of the outrageous conduct of the Anabaptists of Münster, or the extravagant assertions of Saltmarsh and William Huntingdon, or the strange proceedings of the Jumpers and Shakers. And where is the fairness of telling us that we ought to reject the second advent of Christ because there were Fifth Monarchy Men in the days of the commonwealth, and Irvingites and Millerites in our own time. Alas, men must be hard pressed for an argument when they have no better reasons than this!

It proves nothing against the second advent of Christ, that those who hold the doctrine differ among themselves on many particular points of prophecy. Such differences need never stumble anyone, who recollects that unity on great points is perfectly consistent with disagreement on small ones. Luther and Zwingli differed widely on their views of the Lord's Supper; yet who would think of saying that therefore Protestantism is all false? Fletcher and Toplady were both clergymen in the Church of England, but differed widely about Calvinism: yet where would be the sense of saying that all Evangelical religion was therefore untrue? In common fairness this ought to be remembered when people talk of the differences among those who study prophecy. It is possible for men to differ much as to meaning they place on the symbols in the book of Revelation, and yet on the matter of Christ's coming and kingdom they may substantially agree.

It proves nothing against the doctrine that it is encompassed with many difficulties. This I fully concede. The order of events connected with our Lord's coming, and the manner of His kingdom when it is set up, are both deep subjects, and hard to be understood. But I firmly believe that the difficulties connected with any other system of interpreting unfulfilled prophecy are just twice as many as those which are said to stand in our way. I believe too that the difficulties connected with our Lord's second coming are not half so many as those connected with His first, and that if was a far more improbable thing, *a priori*, that the Son

of God should come to *suffer*, that that He should come to *reign*. And, after all, what have we to do with the 'how' and 'in what manner' prophecies are to be fulfilled? Is our miserable understanding of what is possible, to be the measure and limit of God's dealings? The only question we have to do with is, 'Has God said a thing?' If He has, we ought not to doubt it shall be done.

The Writer's Testimony

For myself, I can only give my own individual testimony: but the little I know experimentally of the doctrine of Christ's second coming makes me regard it as most practical and precious, and makes me long to see it more generally received.

I find it a powerful spring and stimulus to holy living - a motive for patience, for moderation, for spiritual-mindedness - a test for the employment of time - and a gauge for all my actions: 'Should I like the Lord to find me in this place - should I like Him to find me so doing?'

I find it the strongest argument for missionary work. The time is short. The Lord is at hand. The gathering out from all nations will soon be accomplished. The heralds and forerunners of the King will soon have proclaimed to Gospel in every nation. The night is far spent. The King will soon be here.

I find it the best answer to the infidel. He sneers at our churches and chapels, at our sermons and services, at our tracts and our Schools. He points to the millions who care nothing for Christianity after 1900 years of preaching. He asks me how I can account for it, if Christianity be true. I answer, it was never said that all the world would believe and serve Christ under the present dispensation. I tell him the state of things he ridicules was actually foreseen, and the number of true Christians, it was predicted, would be few. But I tell him Christ's kingdom is yet to come; and although we see not yet all things put under Him, they will be so one day.

I find it the best argument with the Jew. If I do not take all the prophesies of Isaiah literally, I do not know how I can persuade him that the 53rd chapter is literally fulfilled. But if I do, I have a resting-place for my lever, which I know he cannot shake. How men can expect the Jews to see a Messiah coming to suffer in the Old Testament prophecies, if they do not themselves see a Messiah coming to reign, is past my understanding.

And now, is there one among the readers of this address who cannot receive the doctrine of Christ's second advent and kingdom? I invite that man to consider the subject calmly and dispassionately. Dismiss from your mind traditional interpretations. Separate the doctrine from the mistakes and blunders of many who hold it. Do not reject the foundation because of the wood, hay and stubble which some have built on it. Do not condemn it and cast it aside because of injudicious friends. Only examine the texts which speak of it, as calmly and fairly

as you weigh texts in the Romish, Arian or Socinian controversies, and I am hopeful as to the result on your mind. Alas, if texts of Scriptures were always treated as unceremoniously as I have known texts to be treated by those who dislike the doctrine of Christ's second advent, I should indeed tremble for the cause of truth.

Is there any one among the readers of this address who agrees with the principles I have tried to advocate? I beseech that man to endeavour to realise the second coming of Christ more and more. Truly we feel it but little compared with what we ought to do, at the very best. Be gentle in argument with those that differ from you. Remember that a man may be mistaken on this subject, and yet be a holy child of God. It is not the slumbering on this subject that ruins souls, but the want of grace! Above all, avoid dogmatism and positiveness, and specially about symbolical prophecy. It is a sad truth, but a truth never to be forgotten, that none have injured the doctrine of the second coming so much as its over-zealous friends.

J.C. RYLE - BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL

by John Westmacott*

On Wednesday 13th June 1900, a train arrived at Liverpool from Lowestoft bearing the body of John Charles Ryle, who was to be buried next to his third wife at All Saints, Childwall. People came in their thousands to the funeral, to bid farewell to their former pastor. The simple service included Ryle's favourite hymn, 'Rock of Ages', and readings from Psalm 90 and 1 Corinthians 15. On the gravestone were engraved two texts, Ephesians 2:8 and 2 Timothy 4:7. In a memorial sermon on the following Sunday, Ryle's close friend, Rev Richard Hobson, spoke of him as a man who was *great through the abounding grace of God. He was great in stature; great in mental power; great in spirituality; great as a preacher and expositor of God's most holy word; great in hospitality; great in winning souls; great as a writer of Gospel tracts; great as an author of works which will long live....great as first Bishop of Liverpool.* Bishop Chavasse, his successor, described him as *that man of granite with the heart of a child.*

* This article first appeared in *Our Inheritance*, Summer 1998, and is reproduced by kind permission.

Early Life and Education

John Charles Ryle was born on 10th May 1816 at Macclesfield to John and Susanna Ryle. His grandfather, a staunch evangelical, had used much of his wealth to further the work of the Gospel, but his father did not appear to share the same convictions and although he maintained a connection with a local evangelical church, he appears to have been engrossed in his trading pursuits.

After attending private school Ryle entered Eton in February 1828 where he studied Latin, Greek, History, and French and English literature, and, for a scholarship, the doctrinal basis of the Church of England. His happiest days were on the cricket field where he became 1st XI captain. In later years he looked back on them as good training for they gave him *power of commanding, of managing, organising and directing, of seeing through men's capacities and using every man in the post to which he was best suited, of bearing and forbearing, of keeping the men around him in a good temper*. In October 1834, Ryle entered Christ Church Oxford where he gained a brilliant first, also captaining the University Cricket XI.

Conversion

Ryle's early experience of religion seems to have been social. He later admitted that he had not read his Bible seriously or said his prayers from the age of seven to the age of twenty one. He had no sense of guilt or spiritual need, living without care for the things of God. During holidays when he worshipped with his family, he heard evangelical preaching, but not until 1835 when a cousin and one of his sisters were converted, did he ponder deeply upon spiritual things. Following a friend's rebuke for swearing, which so startled him that he never swore again, he began to see the contrast between his own life and that of the Christians whom he knew. Shortly before his finals at Oxford in 1837 he fell ill, and began to read his Bible and pray. His subsequent success he attributed to this. Later that year, at a church service one Sunday afternoon, the Holy Spirit laid hold of him during the reading of Ephesians 2:8. His heart was awakened to the wonder of the Gospel of grace and mercy, he was convicted of sin, and left the church a transformed man. By the end of 1837, Ryle could say that he was *fairly launched as a Christian*.

Ordination

After Oxford, Ryle spent six months in London reading law, but illness forced him to return home, where he joined his father's banking business. His ambition was to win a seat in Parliament but his new found faith led to tension and strain and the next three years were times of great trial and difficulty. In 1841, his father's business collapsed, everything had to be sold to pay the creditors, and the family were scattered. Ryle and one of his sisters moved to the New Forest to stay with an old family friend. Ryle traced this disaster back to

spiritual declension by his father, and through this experience learnt that *submission to God's will is perfectly compatible with intense and keen suffering under the chastisement of His will*. In late 1841 Ryle began to consider becoming a clergyman. This had never occurred to him previously, but seeing no other course open to him, he felt that God was driving him towards this life's work. The decision must have been taken quickly, for on 12th December 1841, Ryle was ordained to the curacy of Exbury, near Southampton. Living amongst a poor rural population, he threw himself into the work. He preached twice on Sundays, conducted two house meetings a week, visited every home in the parish once a month, and began the distribution of tracts. Here he developed the homely, simple, direct style of preaching which remained characteristic of him. In November 1843 due to ill-health he resigned and moved to the parish St Thomas in Winchester. Once again the people flocked to hear him, and the church was regularly filled.

Ministry in Helmingham

In May 1844, probably through the influence of Georgina Tollemache, an old friend and staunch evangelical, he accepted the living of the small village of Helmingham, Suffolk. Helmingham Hall, the home of the Tollemaches, was the focal point of the parish and Ryle lived there whilst the rectory was being repaired. Once again he put his energies into preaching and visitation. In October 1845, he married Matilda, daughter of John Plumtre, MP for East Kent. *I do not think marriage made any difference in my manner of living*, he wrote, *and I just worked on and preached as I had done before*. In 1846 Georgina Tollemache died. *To me it was an enormous loss*, he wrote, *she was always most kind and friendly to me, and I believe delighted in my ministry...taking her for all in all, she was the brightest example of a Christian woman I ever saw*. Helmingham was never the same again. In June 1847, the Ryle's first child was named Georgina in her memory. However shortly after giving birth his wife was taken ill, and within twelve months she was dead. In February 1850 he married Jessie Walker, a close friend of his late wife and their daughter's godparent. They had a daughter and three sons, but in 1860 Jessie died, and Ryle was again left alone, now with five young children. At Helmingham, Ryle found time to write, and his tracts, pamphlets and books were published and distributed not only in Britain but in many parts of the world. There he began work on his *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, the seven volumes being published between 1856 and 1873. In the preface to 'Matthew', he wrote *I indulge the hope that the work may be found suitable for use at family prayers...an aid to those who visit the sick and the poor...for private reading as a companion to the Gospels*. He made no apology for the theological stand-point which he took, writing in the introduction to 'John', *I belong to that school in the Church of England which, rightly or wrongly, is called "Evangelical" ...I have no sympathy whatever with either Romish or*

Neologian tendencies...I hold firmly the distinctive theological views of the Reformers and doctrinal Puritans...I totally disapprove the loose and broad theology of some modern schools of divines. Towards the end of the 1850s, Ryle's relationship with John Tollemache turned sour, and it was a relief when he was offered the living of Stradbroke, a village about twenty miles away.

Ministry at Stradbroke

Stradbroke was quite different from Helmingham. Some fourteen hundred people lived in this scattered community, the vicar being the most influential person in the village. As ever Ryle put all his energy into his work. Within two years of his arrival, a village school had been built. A Sunday School was founded, regular mid-week meetings commenced, and the church interior reconstructed. This was perhaps the happiest and most fruitful period of his life. In October 1861, he married for the third time, his new wife, Henrietta, caring for his children with love and devotion. She was a good organist and helped in Sunday School. Ryle also took part in wider activities in the county and beyond, sponsoring visits of evangelists to Ipswich and Stradbroke, and giving his whole-hearted support to Moody and Sankey when they visited Britain in 1872. He encouraged participation in diocesan conferences and church congresses as opportunities for evangelical witness, frequently speaking at such meetings. He was involved in the foundation of both Wycliffe Hall, Oxford and Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and was select preacher at both Universities. In 1873 Ryle took part in the controversy over the nature of Christian holiness. An American, Robert Pearsall Smith, whose views tended towards Christian perfection, addressed an annual conference held to promote Christian fellowship and holiness. Ryle arranged a conference in order to oppose this teaching, and although unable himself to take part, friends expounded the traditional interpretation on his behalf. In June 1875 some six thousand people gathered to hear Pearsall Smith, and though he himself suddenly returned home, the holiness movement continued through the establishment of the Keswick Convention held in July for the first time. Out of this controversy, came Ryle's book, *Holiness* (1877), followed a year later by *Practical Religion*. Although the teaching of Keswick became more balanced, Ryle never felt able to take part in the Convention.

First Bishop of Liverpool

In 1880, Ryle received an invitation to become Dean of Salisbury, but before he could take this up he was invited by the Prime Minister to become first Bishop of Liverpool. He accepted and was consecrated on 11th June 1880. In his speech to the Bishopric Committee on 26th April, Ryle said *You know my opinions, I am a committed man. I come among you a Protestant and Evangelical; but I come with a desire to hold out the right hand to all loyal churchmen, holding at the same time my own opinions determinedly.* In his first Charge to the people of

Liverpool in October 1881, Ryle said *If the Established Church of this country claims to be "the Church of the people" it is her bounden duty to see that no part of the people are left like sheep without a shepherd.* During his time as Bishop, Ryle sought to meet this challenge. In 1880, there were just over 300 clergy to serve more than a million people. By the end of his episcopate the clergy had increased by almost fifty per cent, in addition to which lay men and women supported them in Sunday Schools, Bible Classes and Mission Halls. Forty two new churches were consecrated, and forty eight new mission halls licensed by 1900. Inevitably, most of his time and energy were devoted to diocesan matters, but he also encouraged other activities which would further the work of Christ in Liverpool. He welcomed Moody and Sankey to the city, sponsored Missions and Conferences and also co-operated with non-conformists when appropriate. However there were always those who opposed him, one of whom, Rev James Bell Cox, adopted illegal ritualistic practices at St Margarets, Princes Road. Despite Ryle's efforts to dissuade him, Bell Cox was not prepared to compromise, and eventually proceedings were instituted against him. After nearly two years of legal wrangling Bell Cox won the case in the House of Lords, and returned to his church to continue as before. Outside the diocese, Ryle was involved in Convocation and Congress, but during the 1890s as his health began to fail, an assistant Bishop was appointed to help him in his work. In 1889, his third wife, who had supported him so faithfully, died, being buried at Childwall. Ryle continued to seek the best for the Church of England, using his influence in the appointment of evangelical men within the Church. He also maintained his position as a leader of the evangelicals within the Church, through the reprinting of books and tracts, the publication of addresses and sermons, and by letters to newspapers. In 1899 following a period of ill-health and at the urging of his son Herbert, he submitted his resignation with effect from 1st March 1900. In his *Farewell to the Diocese* issued on 1st February, he wrote *As I look back over the years of my episcopate, I am conscious that I have left undone many things which I hoped to have done when I first came to Liverpool. I am equally conscious that the many things I have had to do with...have been done very imperfectly....I have tried to do my duty.*

Ryle chose Lowestoft for retirement, a favourite place at which he had spent many happy holidays, but only three months later, on Sunday afternoon 10th June 1900, he was taken to be with his Lord.

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Editor of *Journal* and *Intercessions*

Rev. E.J. Malcolm (*See over*) Email: Journaleditor@fsmail.net

**MATERIAL FOR APRIL ISSUE OF *THE JOURNAL*
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We thank all those who sent the names and addresses of others requiring the Journal, or whose names needed deleting. We are very grateful to all who sent donations. Please note that all address details supplied to the Editor for mailing purposes are treated as confidential. We do not pass on addresses to anyone.

* We apologise to our readers for the word demon which we are obliged to use as it is the name of the internet provider (Demonstration), and has nothing to do with the occult.

CHURCHES

St. Mary's, Castle Street, Reading. Sunday Services: 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer (first Sunday Lord's Supper), 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer (third Sunday Lord's Supper). Tuesday 8.00 pm Bible Study. *Enquiries* Rev. E.J. Malcolm 0118 959 5131.

Former Congregation of St. John the Baptist with St. Mary-le-Port, Chapel of the Three Kings, Foster's Almshouses, top of Christmas Steps, Colston Street, Bristol. Sunday Service: 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer. *Enquiries* Dr. Napier Malcolm 01934 712520.

Nuffield Congregation meeting with Nuffield Parish Church, near Henley-on-Thames, the Rev. John F. Shearer. Sunday Services: 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer, 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer. Lord's Supper 8.00 a.m. first Sunday, 6.30 p.m. third Sunday. Bible Study Wednesday 8.00 p.m. *Enquiries* 01491 641305.

St. John's Church, South London Meeting at the Shaftesbury Home, Trellis House (Mill Road (off Merton High Street), Colliers Wood, SW19), for 11.00 a.m. Morning Prayer and 6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer. Midweek as intimated. *Enquiries* Rev. A.R. Price, 0208 642 7885 or 0208 742 0151

St. Silas Church, Wolverhampton, St Silas Church, Wolverhampton Rt. Rev. E. Malcolm, Hon. Minister; Rev. I.R. Budgen, Hon. Curate. Bethany Chapel, (A-Z page 21 2E, junction Lower Prestwood Road/Blackwood Avenue) Wednesfield. Sundays 12.40 p.m. Morning Prayer (1st Sunday Holy Communion); 4.00 p.m. Evening Prayer (3rd Sunday Holy Communion). Tuesdays in term time 4.15 p.m. Children's Class; 7.00 p.m. Bible Study; 7.45 p.m. Prayer Meeting. *Enquiries* 01547 528815.

Clergy in UK & USA

The Rt. Rev. D.N. Samuel, Ph.D., 81 Victoria Road, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 1EU. 01380 722513

The Rt. Rev. E. Malcolm. BA., 15 Bridge Street, Knighton, Powys, LD7 1BT. 01547 528815

The Rev. J.F. Shearer, B.Sc., The Rectory, Nuffield, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon, RG9 5SN 01491 647305

The Rev. E.J. Malcolm, The Parsonage, 1 Downshire Square, Reading RG1 6NJ. 0118 959 5131

The Rev. I.R. Budgen, B.Sc., Dip Th (ITA), 159 Castlecroft Road, Wolverhampton, W. Mids, WV3 8LU. 01902 656514

The Rev. A.R. Price, B.Sc. (Econ.), 17 Weston Road, Chiswick, London, W4 5NL. 0208 742 0151

The Rev. E.A. Powell B.Sc. M.Div., 7615 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood, CA 91605. 818-765-0716

The Rev. R.P. Mortimer, 9 Harrogate Road, Caversham, Berkshire, RG4 7PW. 0118 947 9254

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The Rev. F. Robson Dip. Ed., 71 Springfield Drive, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 1JF 01235 533421
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Mr. P. Karageorgi. Contact on 0208 742 0151