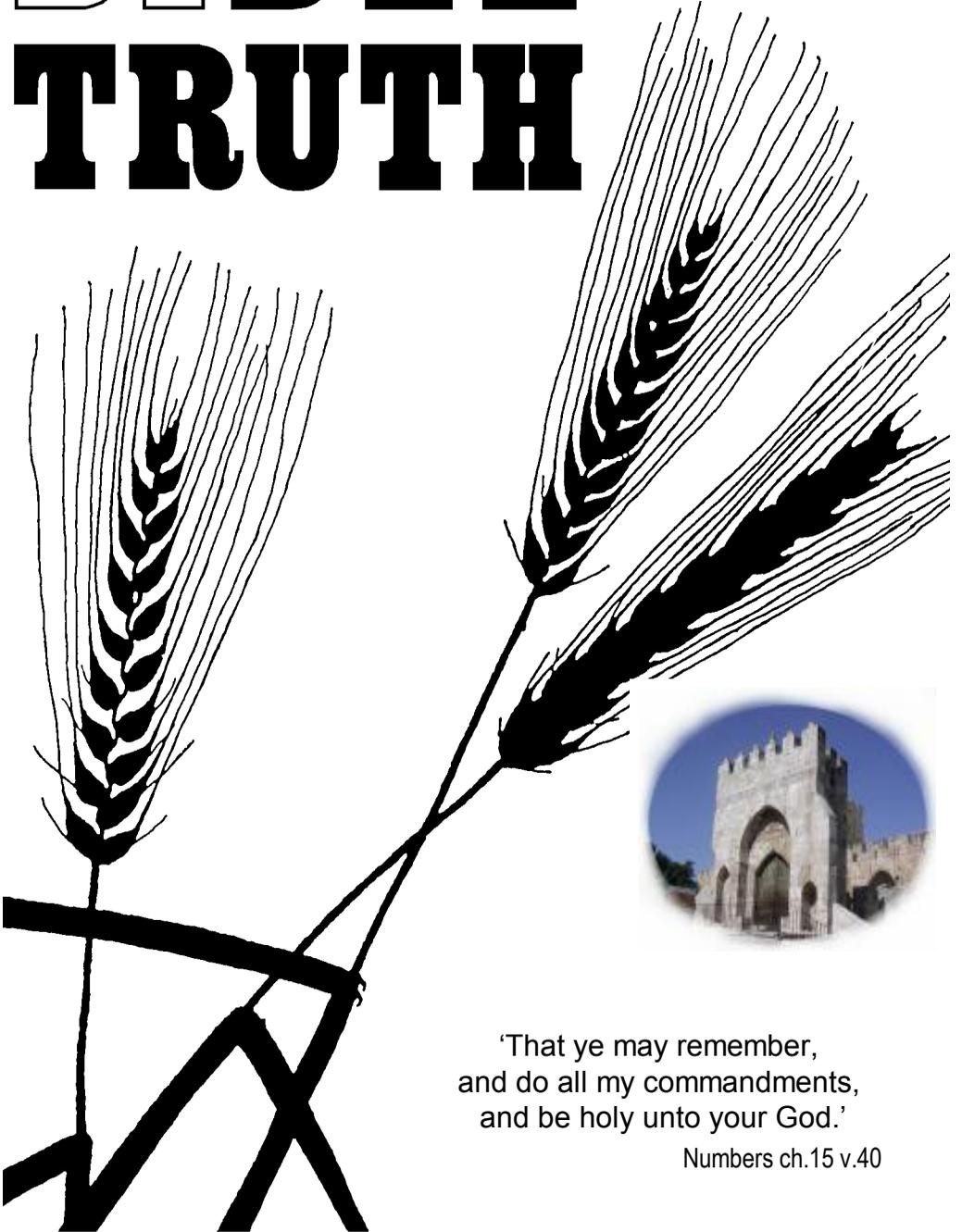


# BIBLE TRUTH

No.252  
October/December  
2008



‘That ye may remember,  
and do all my commandments,  
and be holy unto your God.’

Numbers ch.15 v.40

# An Historic & Unique Event

*By Paul Boyd-Lee*



Part of the Conference banner with its Ten Commandments & the Lord's Prayer

At the end of June the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) met for a week in Jerusalem. It was an unique event for several reasons, not least of which was because this was the largest Anglican conference (1,400 people) to have gathered in this remarkable city. What prompted this great assembly? Was it in opposition to the Lambeth Conference to be held in Canterbury, England, a few weeks later? Was it to cause schism in the Anglican Communion and begin a new church? The answer is no on both counts.

Some words of explanation might be helpful. First, the Archbishop of Canterbury as 'primus inter pares' (first among equals, i.e. of fellow bishops) every ten years hosts what is known as the Lambeth Conference. Until 40 years ago this centred on Lambeth Palace in London but then it moved to the University site in Canterbury. The Archbishop has the prerogative of inviting whom he wishes to the conference from the bishops of the Anglican Communion around the world as well as a few from other churches as well. The wives of these bishops are similarly invited by the Archbishop's wife to a parallel event. Thus this is very much an Episcopal affair.

However, the GAFCON event in Jerusalem was quite different in several ways. Notably, it was hosted by a team of bishops, rather than only one, and they asked a broad spectrum of church membership, including bishops, significant clergy and lay people to attend.

Second, the Church of England is only one section of the world-wide Anglican Communion, nevertheless it is an unique and crucially important part. For example, it has played a key role throughout the centuries in preaching the Gospel to the world thus fulfilling,

‘... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’.

Mark ch.16 v.15

The following quotation shows how this came about.

‘In and after the 1790s there arose in Britain a series of new missionary societies, which were to be so strongly supported that for more than a century Britain was to remain in the foremost place in the world-wide spread of true Christianity. This small country down to 1900, and beyond, was to contribute more men and more money to the missionary cause than any other nation. Reflecting on this position of leadership in his preface to *Robe’s Narrative of the Revival of Religion*, reissued in 1839, Robert Buchanan spoke of the opportunity given to Britain “to bring an influence to bear on the rest of the world, unexampled perhaps in the history of mankind”. Britain is manifestly at this moment the citadel of the Christian world ... Britain’s Christianity and Britain’s singularly favoured position together, appear in the eye of the thoughtful Christian like the streak of light which glimmers at early dawn along the horizon’s verge. (Of the 13,607 Protestant foreign missionaries in 1900, 5,901 were from the British Isles, and 4,110 from the United States. In that same year of the \$17.1 million contributed to Protestant foreign missions, \$8.2 was from the British Isles and \$5.4 million from the United States.)’

A History of the Expansion of Christianity, 1945, vol 4,95

In equating the descendants of the tribes of Israel with the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples, both in the United Kingdom and the United States, the foregoing passage shows how they have fulfilled their calling of showing the glory of God and spreading His word.

Many of the aforementioned missionary societies were, and still are, members of the Anglican Communion. It was only natural therefore in days gone by for those touched by the Gospel in far off

lands, to find their fellowship to be with, or even themselves to found, an Anglican Church of some sort in their own community. Many of those attending the Lambeth Conference and this year's GAFCON show the fruit of these missionary endeavours of yesteryear.

As already mentioned, the Church of England holds a particularly important position in these structures. Centuries before the Church of Rome was formed, missionary bishops from several parts of Britain were attending world Christian councils (such as that of Arles in AD 314 attended by bishops from York, London and Caerleon). In the time of Henry VIII, England broke from the Roman Church which caused its Church Councils, later Parliament, to decide their own ecclesiastical business. In 1919, by the Enabling Act, this power was returned to the Church of England whereby a council (nowadays the General Synod) conducts this business and as such is the third legislative body of Parliament. Its bishops are appointed by the Sovereign and 26 of these, the 'Lords Spiritual', currently are members of the House of Lords. Through the 'Parish system' every person in the country, whether of a different religion or none, is entitled to the ministrations of a clergyman.

These are but four reasons why the Church of England differs greatly from all other provinces of the Anglican Communion. Elsewhere, bishops are elected, rather than appointed (by the Sovereign) to their task, their churches are but one denomination striving amongst many others and there is little formal association, if any, with the State. As one considers the restrictions and persecution of churches in other parts of the world, the people of England should recognise their privileges and not discard them lightly. Whatever denomination people may belong to in England, the Lords Spiritual still have a place within the Parliament of the land to plead their cause.

Even so, the situation is changing rapidly on a global scale. Western world society, though once largely based on Christian ideals, is rapidly being replaced by an egocentric, humanist and increasingly atheistic culture. Sadly, increasingly churches rather than resist this trend are replacing traditional morals, godliness and Christian teaching with secular values.

In common with many other denominations the Anglican Communion is also experiencing these disturbing patterns of change. During the last few years tensions have come to the fore between the liberal wing with its 'culturally conditioned' view of the Bible and

others that are determined to hold fast to a traditional view of teaching Scripture. In between are many with no zeal either way which is a sober reminder of the call to the Church of the Laodiceans.

‘ . . . thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, ...’

Revelation ch.3 v.15-17

The aforementioned tensions heightened recently because certain governing parts of the Anglican Church in North America and Canada were condoning homosexual bishops, services (in effect marriages) between same gender couples, and questioning various credal values. In recent years there has been much deliberation aimed at appeasing one party or the other over these sort of subjects, but recommendations were flouted and the questionable practices continued. Meanwhile, traditional parts of the Anglican Communion became impatient because of the energy they had poured into resolving these sorts of issues rather than mission work.

Last year two things brought this to a head. First, a deadline passed when The Episcopal Church of the United States were asked to repent of their behaviour and did not. Second, it appeared that the Archbishop of Canterbury was inviting bishops sympathetic to the inclusive church view (particularly over homosexuality) to the 2008 Lambeth Conference, whilst ignoring some opposed to this. In the background to this mêlée, governments around the world were increasingly legislating against free proclamation of God’s Word, and society as a whole were finding it fashionable to snipe against the Christian religion at any opportunity.

This was the background to and impetus for the Global Anglican Future Conference in Jerusalem last June. It had the clear and simple objective of preparing ‘an Anglican future in which the Gospel is uncompromised and Christ-centred mission is a top priority’. This aim sharply contrasted with the forthcoming Lambeth Conference goal which was to, ‘become more confident in our Anglican identity, by deepening our awareness of how we are responsible to and for each other; and second, that we grow in energy and enthusiasm for our task of leading the work of mission in our Church’.

At first glance the latter looks a commendable statement, indeed I believe it was intended to be so. However, it highlights the cracks

within the Anglican communion that it seeks to paper over. 'Become more confident in our Anglican identity', indicates that those of this church body to gather, are not of one mind. The Jerusalem convention on the other hand quickly showed that participants were of one view and that was to seek, the mind of Christ. It could be said that the writing of Paul to the Corinthians was manifested.

'Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.'

1 Corinthians ch.1 v.10

The GAFCON invitation included the words, 'Christ-centred mission'. The uniqueness of Christ is a subject that some liberal sections of the churches struggle to agree with. How this can be so with those claiming to be Christians, beggars belief even amongst infidels, but that is the situation that orthodox believers are faced with today. Hence, the Lambeth Conference had real problems before it even started whereas GAFCON could make progress from day one. Archbishop the Right Reverend Rowan Williams realised this and introduced a 'governing concept' to his Lambeth Conference. It was 'indaba', a Zulu word meaning 'gathering for purposeful discussion in which each voice and the perspectives of all are considered in exploring topics of central importance to the life of the community'. He hoped that the two interwoven themes would equip bishops for leadership in mission. Make what you will of that, but it is a far cry from the consistent teaching and application of Scripture that took place at the June conference gathered in the Holy Land.

For such a prestigious Anglican assembly (angles = angels = messengers) it is sad to report that even after several years of planning, the Canterbury event was still struggling to get organised, as well as financed, as delegates arrived. GAFCON on the other hand was all organised, and the finance raised, in just a few months. As many gathered at Jerusalem remarked, and as a spokesman for the Jerusalem Department of Tourism endorsed, 'the fact that a programme of such a large and complex gathering and its logistics in a foreign land worked so well was nothing short of miraculous'. Praise God for answering the many prayers that were offered for it! In this respect it is worth noting that throughout the Holy Land during that time, various groups of people regardless of whether they were directly involved with the meetings or even of the Anglican Church,

nevertheless felt called to pray for the success of what they saw as such an historic and important event for the Christian Church.

Indeed, to meet in the land, and the city, where Jesus taught and wrought His miraculous works gave huge impetus to the proceedings as well as invaluable inspiring participants for what lay ahead. To see more than a thousand pilgrims singing the praises of God, whilst on boats crossing the Sea of Galilee, brought tears of rejoicing to the eyes and touched the souls of many, deeply. These included several hundred bishops from around the world who had not left their, 'first love' of the truth of the Word of God (see Revelation ch.2 v.4).

So the GAFCON was unique because of the scale of event in Jerusalem, the zeal of those present for using the plain sense of the Bible and the miraculous way it came to pass and was sustained. In the days that followed it presented a tremendous challenge to the beliefs of those that would meet at Canterbury. In hindsight it can now be said that, with regret, the Cantab. event did not produce anything so astounding, in fact it seemed a relief to several who attended Lambeth that there were no great eruptions. In fact the news media were at a loss to find stories to report on at all!

Between these two great councils of the Anglican Church was another that presented the press with a field day; this was the Church of England General Synod meeting during the first week in July. I would not want to bore readers with yet more Anglican politics but this also really was an historic Synod. The key subject that attracted the media was, if women should be permitted to become bishops then how could this be done legally. More importantly was the question of, what would be done with church members who could not subscribe to women's ordained ministry and certainly the episcopate? Would they be forced to leave the Church of England?

Earlier in this article I rather disparagingly referred to middle-ground luke warm Christians. At the July Synod even this body of people could not digest the possibility of a significant number of their brethren being made to leave, simply because of their strong Biblical views. The Church is not exactly growing at present and this would exacerbate the problem. During the debates, time and again endeavours were made to have provision written into the legislation to accommodate those whose consciences prevented them receiving the oversight of women bishops. Even so, in spite of pleas from a number of leading bishops including the archbishops of York and Canterbury, the Liberal ground would not give way. Every amendment to make

legal provision was by tactical voting defeated. It should be said that it is exceptionally rare for the majority of Synod not to follow the lead of archbishops, yet here it happened before the eyes of the world media! Needless to say, there were murmurings that this did not bode well for the Lambeth Conference that was imminent.

So what does this mean? Does it not show that those who see themselves as Liberals, those that claim equality for all, have a different view of fairness to others? It brings to mind George Orwell's epic words of the seven that were replaced by the 'single Commandment',

*'All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others'.*

Animal Farm, Penguin 1951, p.90

How this will all work out in practice is yet to be determined but it certainly sets a new precedent in Church affairs; already some of the Catholic persuasion, including senior churchmen, will wait no longer and are in discussions about converting to Rome. One thing is clear, the Liberal agenda thrusts ahead with what now seems to be relentless determination. What were once seen as second order issues, such as homosexuality and the role of women in ministry, have become first order matters overriding those of belief in the virgin birth, the resurrection, miracles, the uniqueness of Christ and so on. Make no mistake about it, this is not just a matter for England nor its Established Church; it stretches to other denominations, beyond to the whole of the British Isles and on to those places where its inhabitants migrated to in former days: Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, the United States of America and so on.

In foreseeing these matters and their increasing development in the US and Canada especially, GAFCON gathered as a witness to uphold God's word and to take a visible stand against those who would ridicule, minimise and seek to destroy it. Following the Lambeth Conference, Archbishop Rowan Williams issued a Pastoral Letter setting



More than 1000 GAFCON pilgrims sit on the same Temple Mount steps where Jesus may have walked & Peter preached. The Mount of Olives is in the background

out his personal reflections on the event. On the other hand, the 1400 strong at GAFCON issued an unanimous proclamation (The Jerusalem Statement) that will go down in history as a document declaring where those who assembled stood as Christians.

It says nothing new but does reiterate the fundamentals of the faith as it has been accepted down through the centuries. It is an uplifting piece of work because it shows that, regardless of the Liberal agenda, there still is this large body of believers who are willing to publicly declare what they truly believe.

A core part of the Statement is included below.-

## ***The Jerusalem Declaration***

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit:

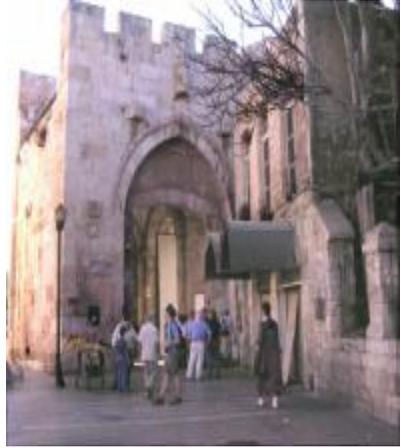
We, the participants in the Global Anglican Future Conference, have met in the land of Jesus' birth. We express our loyalty as disciples to the King of kings, the Lord Jesus. We joyfully embrace his command to proclaim the reality of his kingdom which he first announced in this land. The gospel of the kingdom is the good news of salvation, liberation and transformation for all. In light of the above, we agree to chart a way forward together that promotes and protects the biblical gospel and mission to the world, solemnly declaring the following tenets of orthodoxy which underpin our Anglican identity.

1. We rejoice in the gospel of God through which we have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because God first loved us, we love him and as believers bring forth fruits of love, ongoing repentance, lively hope and thanksgiving to God in all things.
2. We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God written and to contain all things necessary for salvation. The Bible is to be translated, read, preached, taught and obeyed in its plain and canonical sense, respectful of the church's historic and consensual reading.
3. We uphold the four Ecumenical Councils and the three historic Creeds as expressing the rule of faith of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
4. We uphold the Thirty-nine Articles as containing the true doctrine of the Church agreeing with God's Word and as authoritative for Anglicans today.

5. We gladly proclaim and submit to the unique and universal Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, humanity's only Saviour from sin, judgement and hell, who lived the life we could not live and died the death that we deserve. By his atoning death and glorious resurrection, he secured the redemption of all who come to him in repentance and faith.
6. We rejoice in our Anglican sacramental and liturgical heritage as an expression of the gospel, and we uphold the 1662 Book of Common Prayer as a true and authoritative standard of worship and prayer, to be translated and locally adapted for each culture.
7. We recognise that God has called and gifted bishops, priests and deacons in historic succession to equip all the people of God for their ministry in the world. We uphold the classic Anglican Ordinal as an authoritative standard of clerical orders.
8. We acknowledge God's creation of humankind as male and female and the unchangeable standard of Christian marriage between one man and one woman as the proper place for sexual intimacy and the basis of the family. We repent of our failures to maintain this standard and call for a renewed commitment to lifelong fidelity in marriage and abstinence for those who are not married.
9. We gladly accept the Great Commission of the risen Lord to make disciples of all nations, to seek those who do not know Christ and to baptise, teach and bring new believers to maturity.
10. We are mindful of our responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation, to uphold and advocate justice in society, and to seek relief and empowerment of the poor and needy.
11. We are committed to the unity of all those who know and love Christ and to building authentic ecumenical relationships. We recognise the orders and jurisdiction of those Anglicans who uphold orthodox faith and practice, and we encourage them to join us in this declaration.
12. We celebrate the God-given diversity among us which enriches our global fellowship, and we acknowledge freedom in secondary matters. We pledge to work together to seek the mind of Christ on issues that divide us.
13. We reject the authority of those churches and leaders who have denied the orthodox faith in word or deed. We pray for them and call on them to repent and return to the Lord.
14. We rejoice at the prospect of Jesus' coming again in glory, and while we await this final event of history, we praise him for the way he builds up his church through his Spirit by miraculously changing lives.

## Sequel

Notice that the 'coming again' of Jesus concludes the above list. This subject was certainly on the minds of many participants of the GAFCON as they visited pertinent sites in the Holy Land. One excursion brought delegates through the Jaffa Gate of the Old City, to the Citadel where General Allenby's famous proclamation was made in 1917. Here the background of this event was explained to them. In this way Allenby's 'Deliverance of Jerusalem' could be set against the eternal King of Kings who comes to reign.



The Jaffa Gate in June 2008

At that time, Allenby would have seen a significant building directly in front of him. Apart from this great prophetic event, the site of the Citadel played other important parts in the life of Englishmen in days gone by. For example, in the 1600s people began to take note of the prophecy,

'Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:'.  
Jeremiah ch.31 v.31

In that bygone era it caused people to take seriously the idea of God's People returning to the Promised Land where it was also prophesied the Messiah would return (Zechariah ch.14 vv.2-4). The interest grew rapidly after the French Revolution and Napoleon's invasion of the Holy Land. By 1809 what is now the CMJ (Churches Ministry Among the Jewish People) was formed. Their aim was threefold; to bring the message of Jesus as Messiah to the Jewish people, restoring the Gentile Church to its Jewish roots, and to encourage Jewish people to return to the Land of Israel. It predated political Zionism by many decades. William Wilberforce was one of its founders. The British Consulate was associated with this work and in 1838 was established in the Old City of Jerusalem directly opposite the Citadel. This then provoked other rival European powers and America to also establish Consulates in Jerusalem.

Shortly afterwards and using the Consulate building the first Protestant Church in Jerusalem found a home until, within its grounds, in 1849 Christ Church was founded by an Anglican Missionary Society. Hence it was important that members of the GAFCON should visit this historic building and its surroundings which are now managed by CMJ.

In retrospect it can be said that it was no coincidence that when General Allenby proclaimed the end of Turkish rule (indirectly implementing the Balfour Declaration), he made his speech opposite Christ Church. The famous photograph of this event was actually taken from atop the Heritage Centre of CMJ itself. Allenby was surrounded by soldiers from Britain, New Zealand and Australia. Such soldiers returned during World War Two and stopped the German thrust towards Jerusalem in 1942 gaining victory at El Alamein. The Jewish people whose lives were in danger, gave General Montgomery a precious Bible and 'Monty' read the lesson at Christ Church in 1942.



View of Citadel from Christchurch

It is surely no coincidence that Christ Church, the symbol of Restoration, is built opposite the Citadel, the symbol of the Exile. Here in one location are presented a visual aid to both Exile and Restoration.

Any visitors to Jerusalem are encouraged to worship at Christ Church and visit or write to the Heritage Centre near the Jaffa Gate for a fuller explanation of its history.

The Heritage Centre Christ Church, PO Box 14037, Jaffa Gate, Old City, 91140 Jerusalem, Israel

Thanks are expressed to Kelvin Crombie for information in his leaflet *From Exile to Restoration*.

More information on GAFCON can be found on the website [www.gafcon.org](http://www.gafcon.org)

\*\*\*\*\*