

A Nation in Crisis – A Time of Opportunity

- **The United Kingdom now stands in greater danger as a Nation than at any other time since World War 2.**
- **The Christian Church in the United Kingdom is now presented with the best opportunity for 300 years to proclaim the Gospel, and God's way forward for the British people, across the Nation.**

1. Financial and Social Disaster – A Spiritual Opportunity

These two propositions are not contradictory, but represent the two complementary facets of the crisis now engulfing the United Kingdom.

The crisis we face is graver than any we have known for generations:

- We are in financial turmoil. The IMF has assessed Britain as the worst-placed Western country to cope with present events.
- But the crisis is not just economic. It is far more deep-rooted and potentially damaging. It is a sign of an underlying spiritual and moral crisis that threatens the fundamental structure and social cohesion of our society. As the full consequences develop, there is a real prospect of social disorder and collapse.

To recover, therefore, we need a spiritual and moral transformation. And the very fact that so many of our people are finding their perspectives, priorities and security shaken by the financial earthquake provides an unprecedented opening for the Church to proclaim God's words of truth and light widely across our Nation.

2. For a Time Like This...

To do this effectively, the churches and committed Christian believers in the United Kingdom must raise their game radically from the low level of expectation that has become widespread (though not universal) in recent decades, and seize the moment.

To that end, this document, addressed to Christian leaders and church members, gives a perspective to the present peril, outlines the way that God himself brought our Nation into being and has continuing purposes for us, and urges Christians of like mind to take ownership of the present opportunity to declare God's way forward for our Nation.

3. The Scale of the Financial Problem

In recent years we in the UK have tried to live a debt-fuelled illusion. Government, banks and commerce alike have promoted dependence upon national and personal debt: 'live today, pay tomorrow'. The 2003 change in the measure of inflation used by the Bank of England to set interest rates, excluding essential items like the cost of housing and the council tax, fostered the illusion of cheap money.

At the same time, our standards of stewardship of public money have become unacceptable: the National Audit Office and the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee regularly reported massive public waste.

As a result, we have the biggest budget deficit in the developed world and the highest level of per capita personal debt in the world. So, when the present crisis hit, we were especially vulnerable because as a nation we were already overspent.

We now face mass unemployment and thousands of people's homes being repossessed. Numerous families and marriages are at risk because of financial problems. Responsible observers note that public borrowing over the next few years could reach unmanageable levels. The Institute for Fiscal Studies, for example, suggests that on present trends our national debt would hit 73.5% of national income in 2015-2016.

The net result has been to impoverish responsible savers and to burden future generations with crippling debts.

4. The Political Gulf

The Government has tried to portray the financial problem as essentially international, rather than one that we have played a large part in bringing upon ourselves. But the public are now aware of the levels of greed, corruption and incompetence which have grown within our own financial system, as well as elsewhere.

Moreover, revelations of the 'dirty tricks' initiated by the Prime Minister's closest advisers, and now of the level and nature of expenses being claimed by MPs and MEPs, have led to widespread public disgust and revulsion.

Despite its substantial majority, the present Government secured only 36% of the popular vote and the support of only 22% of the electorate. The increasing numbers of people, especially young people, who do not vote demonstrates how public confidence in politicians has evaporated. A huge gulf has opened up between politicians and people.

5. The Moral Vacuum

Over the last 50 years, the distinction between right and wrong, in both personal and corporate terms, has been blurred, or even denied, in Britain. Moral absolutes have been abandoned. We have embraced a secularist culture that has no moral compass.

There has been a sustained assault on the marriage-based family. This and other influences have spawned the growth of violence, lawlessness and anti-social behaviour, widespread drug abuse and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. We now have 1.5 million young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Many are disconnected from society.

If our nation is to avoid calamity, the societal norms of our nation must be challenged now. Just as Jesus Christ overturned the tables of the money-changers in the temple, so the Christian believers in our Nation must be ready to stand up and proclaim God's way forward from the present crisis.

6. Where do We Turn?

The simple truth is that we are now embroiled in a battle for the soul and future of our nation. Our very existence as a nation was based on Christian foundations, but in the last 50 years our Judaeo-Christian ethical foundations have been systematically undermined. We are now paying the inevitable and severe price.

This gives us an extraordinary opportunity to call our Nation to turn away radically from selfish, corrupt and inefficient consumerism; to reaffirm the supreme value of individual men and women; and to recognise our commitment before God to work for justice and to stand with the poor and disadvantaged. We have the opportunity to release goodness into a declining and sick society.

7. Our Origins as a Nation, and God's Ongoing Purpose for Us

Historian Sir Arthur Bryant wrote that Britain only ever became a nation because its hitherto warring local tribes embraced Christian principles and practice. It is almost certain that Christianity reached Britain very soon after Pentecost. It was well established here long before well known missionaries such as Augustine arrived. But 'The most formative part of Britain's long history was that in which the national consciousness of its rival and quarrelling peoples grew out of the Christian faith... Everything educative and enduring in medieval Britain was the legacy of the Christian Church and its creed of creative love... Out of Christ's teaching arose... the creation of law and order and personal freedom through the exercise of Christian love.'¹

That is, we, the British people, only ever came into being as a nation by choosing the way of Christ. Several deductions flow from this:

- **God himself brought us into being as a nation.** God is the initiator of people's response to him, not a disinterested spectator.
- **God had a purpose for us as a nation.** God does not act purposelessly. If he brought us into being as a nation, he did so for a purpose, to accomplish part of his plan for this world.
- **God has further purposes to fulfil through our nation.** We may turn away from God and thwart his purposes, or so abandon his way that he has to discipline us by bringing us under judgement. But he does not grow tired of his purposes and give up.
- **We should therefore expect him to take action to bring this nation back to himself, and to show his glory to the world at large through what he does here.** In recent decades we have thrown off God's rule in much of our law-making and conduct. He may choose to put us under judgement, for example by allowing an Islamic government into power here, or the terrifying experience of social and structural collapse. Either would purge and purify his Church in this country and wake all our British people up to what we have done. But he will not simply walk

¹ Sir Arthur Bryant, *Set in a Silver Sea – A History of Britain and the British People*, BCA London 1985.

away. A visible re-establishment of God's rule of love and law-abiding, Godly living in this nation would make news and have repercussions around the globe.

8. Past Deliverance, and Our Abandonment of God's Way

Past national leaders have commented on God's specific provision for and protection of our nation.

King George VI called Britain and the Commonwealth to prayer at each of the critical points of WW2, and we experienced specific *times of deliverance*. Lt-Gen Alan Brooke played the key military part in delivering 335,000 men from the Nazi army at Dunkirk, but later, as Field Marshal the Viscount Alanbrooke, he wrote, 'I shall always remain convinced that, had it not been for the guiding hand of an Almighty Providence, the B.E.F.² would never have left the shores of France. Repeatedly throughout the war I realized the influence of this same guiding hand, this same superhuman Power, watching and guiding the destiny of humanity.'³

Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, later Lord Dowding, commanded the RAF's Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain. He was similarly convinced that he could trace the intervention of God in altering the sequence of events in the period leading up to and during the Battle: 'That intervention of God was no last-minute happening. It was part of the mighty plan.' He thought that God's purpose was to do with 'the part that our dear country is to take in the regeneration of the world'⁴ – that is, he saw an on-going distinctive spiritual role for us as a nation.

Unfortunately, by our national embrace of the secular humanist agenda and of multiculturalism, our spiritual indecisiveness, and our moral degeneracy, we have not played that part.

The Royal Mint's 2009 coin designs provide a timely 'metal metaphor'. The reverse side of the 20p coin shows the tail ends of two heraldic lions. Their heads, chests and forelegs are off the edge of the coin, and the right-hand part of the coin is blank apart from the border. To an engineer, this looks just as if the blank disc of metal from which the coin was made, when it was put in the press, was out of register with the die that was supposed to stamp the designer's pattern upon it. Entirely unintentionally, the coin designer has provided us with a vivid illustration of the moral and spiritual state of our nation today. As a nation, we are out of register with our Heavenly Designer's pattern:



- We were created as a nation through coming into register with God's pattern.
- We have abandoned Biblical principles as the basis for our lawmaking and social mores.
- We are paying the price for this not only in the debasing of our currency but in all the other indications of moral, social and political breakdown that we see around us.

² B.E.F: the British Expeditionary Force – the elements of the British Army that had been sent to France in 1939 and 1940 to attempt to hold off the German invasion of France.

³ Quoted in Sir Arthur Bryant, *The Turn of the Tide*, The Reprint Society, 1958.

⁴ Quoted in David E Gardner, *The Trumpet Sounds for Britain*, ISBN 1-903725-20-8.

9. From God's Protection to God's Judgement

But that is not the limit of the consequences of being out of register with God's pattern. While we sought to follow sound spiritual and moral principles, we could expect to enjoy God's provision and protection. In abandoning our Christian heritage and throwing off the discipline of God's rule, we have lost not only the true freedom which springs from living in the way in which we were designed to live, but we have forfeited any right to his provision: we have stepped out from under his protection.

There is no intrinsic reason why this process should not continue until we actually lose our identity as a nation. The EU is increasingly becoming a supra-national 'state' that refuses to acknowledge the Christian origins of most of the nations of which it is formed, refuses to submit to recognised standards of financial accountability, and is taking over the rights and privileges that properly belong to sovereign nations. Our own failure to stand up for our Christian origins and the principles of national and international life that derive from them is allowing us to be progressively stripped of our nationhood.

Here at home, there is massive evidence of the removal of Christian values from the public space.⁵ It includes the way in which we are bending over backwards to accommodate Islam without regard to the damage that doing so does to our British standards and way of life. While our Christian approach to the individual Muslim is and always must be one of love in the name of the Lord Jesus, we are equally called to be as wise as serpents in our appreciation of and response to the objectives and methods of institutional Islam.

Yet the Prime Minister has said he wants to see London established as a global centre of Islamic finance, and the Archbishop of Canterbury sees no reason why elements of Shari'a law should not be accommodated within the British legal system. There is danger in failing to understand that Islamists see both Shari'a finance and Shari'a law as instruments of political and territorial advancement.^{6,7}

Unfortunately, over the last 50 years the Church in Britain has not maintained a lively awareness among our people, both within and outside the churches, of our Christian calling as a nation and the history of God's provision and protection for us. We have similarly not maintained a strong and unequivocal witness to scriptural truth and standards to counter the assault of secular humanism, the ambitions of Islam, and this kind of ignorance.

Deuteronomy 28 sets out God's promises of blessing to the people of Israel if they obeyed him, and the penalties that would ensue if through disobedience they moved from being under his protection to being under his judgement. Verses 43 and 44 give a remarkably apt and vivid picture of the potential effects if God decided to respond to our collective national disobedience by putting our own nation under judgement and allowing an Islamic government to take over:

⁵ The Maranatha Community, *Our Christian Identity*, July 2008.

⁶ Shari'a finance, in itself, follows Mosaic principles more closely than does modern Western finance, and in that respect might be a desirable alternative; but Islamists are ready to use it as a tool for establishing Islamic dominance.

⁷ Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, *Understanding Shar'ia Finance*, ISBN 978-0-9787141-7-8, and *The Challenge of Islam to the Church and Its Mission*, ISBN 978-0-9787141-5-4.

The alien who lives among you will rise above you higher and higher, but you will sink lower and lower. He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him. He will be the head, but you will be the tail. (NIV)

We have a tradition of receiving the persecuted, oppressed and exiled from other lands, and we properly welcome foreigners who wish to make their home in our Nation, respecting and submitting to our founding principles, laws and wholesome social conventions. But we are under no duty as Christians to welcome and accommodate **aliens** who wish to undermine our national foundations, change our laws to their own, and rule over us.

10. A Prospect of Hope – The Way Forward

Against that picture of our national failure and our high calling to rectify it, there is a prospect of hope before us, albeit one that will be costly to realise.

Charles Spurgeon wrote to a former Prime Minister, ‘You do not know how those of us regard you, who feel it a joy to live when a Prime Minister believes in righteousness. We believe in no man’s infallibility, but it is restful to be sure of one man’s integrity.’ Even in unexpected quarters there is recognition that there is no way forward for society other than that founded upon the Judaeo-Christian ethics of justice and love.⁸

Unfortunately, history is likely to look back on the last 10 to 12 years in Britain and identify a fundamental **lack** of wholesomeness and integrity in our political and national life as a defining characteristic of the period: probably **the** defining characteristic.⁹

But putting our national house in order spiritually and morally must begin, not with finger-pointing at politicians or bankers, but with the churches. The essence of the matter is that we, the Christians of this Christ-formed Nation, have in general singularly failed to rise to the occasion. We have not loved the Lord our God with all our heart and all our mind and all our strength, and we have not proclaimed his word clearly to our neighbours, to our towns, and to our nation. Who knows now what ‘The Nonconformist Conscience’ was?

We have too readily gone along with the agenda of the unChristian world and kept silent while people have been hammering ever more nails into Jesus’s hands and feet on the Cross. We have all too readily kept silent as our nation has moved further and further out of register with its Designer’s pattern.

The familiar words of 2 Chronicles 7.14 are the word of God to the Christians of our nation at this moment:

⁸ For example, the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas has written that a society that embraces the ideals of freedom, morality, conscience, human rights and democracy ‘is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of continual critical reappropriation and reinterpretation. **Up to this very day there is no alternative to it.**’ Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity*, ed Eduardo Mendieta, MIT Press 2002, p 149, our emphasis.

⁹ This paragraph was drafted in November 2008, some six months before the Parliamentary expenses scandal broke, and refers to very much deeper matters of governmental style and method than disclosures of opportunism and greed amongst parliamentarians. Sir Alistair Graham, chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, appears to have been thinking along the same lines in commenting, upon leaving office in 2007, that ‘My greatest regret has been the apparent failure of government to place high ethical standards at the heart of its thinking and most importantly its behaviour.’ Quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 May 2009.

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

11. A Transformation of Christian Expectations and Action

Before the Church can be God's agent of spiritual, moral and social transformation in our nation, we need a transformation of our own expectations, attitudes and action as Christians.

Although there are numbers of mature leaders with deep insight within the Church, many committed Christians look at life from a standpoint of incapability. This mindset prevents them from applying their faith in a dynamic, transforming way in their own lives and the life of our society. Instead of feeling free to live as 'spiritual conquerors', they function in a 'survival mode'. So we have a whole breed of believing Christian politicians, business people, educationalists and others who are individually strong in their faith but who live almost entirely within the boundaries of the world's culture.

We need to ask God the Holy Spirit to give us a new understanding of who the Body of Christ is, and what our capabilities under his direction and gifting are. We can only expect this full restoration of New Testament effectiveness in the Church if we are prepared to commit ourselves to deep repentance and a new spirit of obedience.

John Wesley saw his ministry as spreading 'scriptural holiness' throughout the land. The United Kingdom became a spiritual powerhouse from which missionaries went out to take the Good News of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ around the globe. The power and prosperity of the British Empire and our command of the seas provided the setting in which this could be done. Meanwhile, at home, Christian laymen and women became leaders in addressing many social justice issues of the day.

A Scottish Episcopal minister said recently that, as our nation has become generally submerged under a tide of ungodliness, so the churches – our local fellowships – need to become 'islands of holiness'. But if we as a Nation return to our high calling, then not just the churches, but these British Isles themselves, could become 'Islands of Holiness' – beacons of light in a lost and confused world. Could this not be the ultimate purpose for which God originally created us a nation?

In this situation it is essential that alert Christians, listening to God, help our churches to prepare to play their part in the spiritual recovery of our nation. If we are not on fire, we are unlikely to be able to set the fire of the Holy Spirit among our people.

Reordering our national spiritual life, cleansing our national impurity, paying off our financial debt and reinstating our God-ordained purpose as a sovereign nation are bound to involve pain. The false gods of 'political correctness' and multiculturalism will have to be recognised for what they are and set aside. The false promises of secular humanism and the territorial objectives of Islamism will need to be exposed to the nation and overcome. Some parts of the Church will need to put an end to vacillation and compromise, and return to the proclamation, in love, of authentic scriptural holiness. To quote Dean Inge: 'The Church that is married to the Spirit of the Age will be a widow in the next.' Parliamentarians will have to find ways to put nation before party.

Now is the time for the people of our nation to seek another *time of deliverance*. If the Church does not act decisively, the voice of God will not be heard in our land. The crisis we face now is no lesser than those that we faced in World War 2. Then, the Monarch called the Nation to days of prayer for deliverance. We honoured God by turning to him as our Sovereign Lord, and he honoured us by granting us deliverance.

If we turn to God in the same way now, to seek his forgiveness, renewal and deliverance from the potential catastrophe facing us as a Nation, he will hear and answer our prayer. Then we must be ready to set our hearts and minds to the task of returning to the high calling from which our Nation was born, to serve God's purpose for us in the world.

This is a time of immense opportunity.

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The logo for Maranatha, featuring the word "maranatha" in a white, lowercase, serif font, centered within a solid red rectangular background.

The Maranatha Community is a national movement and network of Christians in all denominations. Comprising thousands of active members of churches of all traditions, it is committed to healing, unity and renewal of faith. Formed 28 years ago, its members have been very deeply involved in care and relief work, and it has also taken the initiative in broad areas of national concern both in Parliament and throughout the country.

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