



## The Keele Congress of 1967: A Paradigm Shift in Anglican Evangelical Attitudes<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The National Evangelical Anglican Congress which took place at Keele University in April 1967 is widely acknowledged as a major watershed for the evangelical movement in the Church of England. This paper offers a fresh analysis of the event, based on detailed archival research. It argues that there was a decisive attitudinal shift at the congress, driven especially by the younger generation – from piety to policy, conservatism to radicalism, homogeneity to diversity, and exclusivism to ecumenism. It shows how in these four areas the Keele Congress established a new agenda for Anglican evangelicalism, a legacy which still continues today.

**KEYWORDS:** conservatism, ecumenism, evangelicalism, John Stott, Keele Congress, partisanship, pietism, radicalism

The National Evangelical Anglican Congress (NEAC), which took place in April 1967 at Keele University in North Staffordshire, has often been hailed as the most significant event for evangelicals in the Church of England during the twentieth century. Almost a thousand delegates from evangelical parishes, mission societies and theological colleges filled the venue to its capacity for three days of intense debate. The congress chairman, John Stott (rector of All Souls, Langham Place

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at Stirling University in April 2009 as part of the Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in Britain Project. I am grateful to Professor David Bebbington for the invitation to speak on that occasion, and to participants for their helpful interactions. I am also grateful to Peter Webster for his comments.

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in central London) declared that 'nothing comparable has been attempted within living memory, if ever before'.<sup>3</sup> He welcomed the event as a key turning point in the history of the Anglican evangelical movement, a verdict now universally acknowledged. One observer likened Keele's impact to that of the Second Vatican Council upon the Church of Rome, as the 1960s spirit of *aggiornamento* breathed also through evangelicals in the Church of England.<sup>4</sup> More recently Rob Warner has compared NEAC to Gorbachev's *glasnost*, because it signalled the rebirth and reconstruction of evangelical identity.<sup>5</sup>

David Bebbington calls the Keele Congress 'the chief landmark in a postwar Evangelical renaissance'.<sup>6</sup> Likewise Randle Manwaring describes it as 'perhaps the most significant evangelical landmark in twentieth-century Anglicanism'.<sup>7</sup> Alister McGrath points to Keele as 'a watershed' when evangelicals 'chose to turn their backs on the isolationism of the past, and commit themselves to working within the Church of England'. In contrast, he portrays the movement in the 1940s and 1950s as distant from 'the mainstream of church life', bound by a 'siege mentality ... expressed in an aggressiveness which ultimately rested upon a deep sense of insecurity and defensiveness'.<sup>8</sup> R.T. France offers a similar perspective, based on his personal observation:

When I was at theological college thirty years ago [in the early 1960s], most evangelical students had an essentially ghetto mentality. The wider world of Anglicanism was 'them' rather than 'us'. We were evangelicals first and Anglican commitment came a poor second (and in some cases did not survive at all). Our attitude to mainstream biblical scholarship was similar: it was to be humoured for the sake of passing examinations, but little good was expected to come of it. As far as our Anglican commitment was concerned, Keele (1967) marked a decisive

3. John Stott, 'Attempt to Face Today's Crucial Questions', *Church Times*, 31 March 1967, p. 11.

4. David Paton in Philip Crowe (ed.), *Keele '67: The National Evangelical Anglican Congress Statement* (London: Falcon, 1967), p. 16.

5. Rob Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism, 1966–2001: A Theological and Sociological Study* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), p. 180.

6. David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 249.

7. Randle Manwaring, *From Controversy to Co-Existence: Evangelicals in the Church of England 1914–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 177.

8. A.E. McGrath, 'Evangelical Anglicanism: A Contradiction in Terms?', in R.T. France and A.E. McGrath (eds.), *Evangelical Anglicans: Their Role and Influence in the Church Today* (London: SPCK, 1993), pp. 10–21. (16–17).

shift from an attitude of suspicious adherence to one of committed involvement.<sup>9</sup>

This understanding of a decisive shift in attitudes now dominates the historiography, as summarized by Charles Yeats in his provocative book, *Has Keele Failed?* (1995):

Before Keele, Anglican evangelicals lived in a kind of Christian ghetto; they concentrated on the parish church and shunned involvement in national and diocesan church structures. After Keele, having repented of their sectarian attitudes, many have moved out into an impressive engagement with the wider Church and the world.<sup>10</sup>

These recent interpretations derive directly from John Stott's own statements at the time of the congress. Again and again he asserted that NEAC was intended as a movement away from evangelical partisanship, isolationism, defensiveness, obstructionism and a ghetto mentality. For example, at the Islington Clerical Conference in January 1967 he outlined the purpose of the forthcoming congress:

It is a tragic thing ... that evangelicals have a very poor image in the Church as a whole. We have acquired a reputation for narrow partisanship and obstructionism. We have to acknowledge this, and for the most part we have no-one but ourselves to blame. We need to repent and to change. As for *partisanship*, I for one desire to be rid of all sinful 'party spirit'. 'Evangelical' is *not* a party word, because the gospel as set forth in the New Testament is not, and never can be, a party matter. We who love the adjective *evangelical*, because it declares us to be gospel-men, must take care, therefore, that what we are seeking to defend and champion is the gospel in its Biblical fullness and not some party shibboleth or tradition of doubtful Biblical pedigree.

As for our reputation for *obstructionism*, we greatly regret this part of our 'image' also. True, we have often been forced into a negative position because proposals have been laid before the Church which in our conviction are contrary to some vital Biblical truth. But we are increasingly anxious to play our part actively and *constructively* in the Church of England ... we do not want to remain for ever on the defensive, but to take the initiative to speak positively and evangelically to what is going on around us.<sup>11</sup>

9. R.T. France, 'Evangelicalism and Biblical Scholarship', in France and McGrath, *Evangelical Anglicans*, pp. 47–56 (54–55).

10. Charles Yeats (ed.), *Has Keele Failed? Reform in the Church of England* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), p. 7.

11. John Stott, 'The Significance of NEAC', statement to the Islington Clerical Conference, 10 January 1967, Saward MSS (in the possession of Andrew Atherstone).

Stott reiterated these themes in a lecture to the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship in Liverpool diocese. He hoped that the Keele Congress would not only be a symbol of evangelical strength but also 'a turning point in Evangelical fortunes'. He continued: 'There are some things of course about which I am as inflexible as anybody. But I long for greater flexibility in this age of flux. Our loyalty as Evangelicals is to the Gospel, not to ourselves or to a party.'<sup>12</sup> Likewise in March he told a press conference in London:

Anglican evangelicals have now grown to such an extent - in numbers, scholarship, cohesion and confidence - that they are anxious to speak to the Church as a whole. For many years we have been a small minority, despised, rather self-conscious, and irresponsibly inward-looking. We want now to emerge from our ghettos, to speak in such a way as to be heard, and to take a positive and responsible part in the work of the Church in this country, especially during this era of revolution.<sup>13</sup>

Stott deliberately chose phrases such as 'this age of flux' and 'this era of revolution' to link the Keele Congress in public discourse with the wider context of cultural transformation taking place in the 1960s. The decade which brought sexual liberation, psychedelia, the decriminalization of abortion and homosexuality, civil rights protests, student riots, the Beatles and James Bond, was a time of crisis for the Christian churches, as historians like Callum Brown, Hugh McLeod and Michael Walsh have recently shown.<sup>14</sup> Anglican evangelicals were eager to demonstrate that they too were able to change with the times, and to engage with contemporary questions, no longer stuck in the mindset of the pre-war generation.

Stott admitted that NEAC was partly an exercise in 'public relations', and appealed to the catholic readers of the *Church Times*:

I frankly hope that the Congress will gain us greater respect in the Church as a whole. Not that we hanker after respectability, that snare of middle-age and of the bourgeoisie. But we are a little tired of being so widely ignored, scorned and smeared. ... I know that we are partly to

12. *Church of England Newspaper* (hereafter *CEN*), 3 February 1967, p. 1.

13. John Stott, 'National Evangelical Anglican Congress', press statement, 14 March 1967, Saward MSS.

14. Callum Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson, 2006), pp. 224-77; Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Michael Walsh, 'The Religious Ferment of the Sixties', in Hugh McLeod (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity. IX. World Christianities c. 1914-c. 2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 304-22.

blame for our public image. Yet the other part of it is stamped upon us against our will. For example, we are not negative and obstructionist by temperament, or opposed to all change as a matter of policy. Far from it. These things are often forced upon us because proposals are laid before the Church in the formation of which we were allowed little or no share. Give us more say in drawing up the agenda, and our contributions to the debate will obviously become more positive and constructive. ... We want to speak responsibly. But will you listen to what we say?<sup>15</sup>

Another architect of the Keele Congress, J.I. Packer (warden of Latimer House, Oxford), used similar expressions. Reflecting two months after the event, he observed:

Keele showed the rest of the Church not only evangelical strength and vitality, but also evangelical openness to dialogue and constructive concern for the future. At Keele, evangelicals appeared to be decisively *renouncing* obscurantism, isolationism, pessimism, and party spirit.<sup>16</sup>

In subsequent decades Stott and Packer have consistently maintained this line of interpretation. For example, Packer celebrated Keele as 'a milestone in twentieth-century evangelical history, for it broke with a long-prevalent pietist and sectarian mood'.<sup>17</sup> Likewise in an interview a quarter of a century after the event, Stott confessed that before 1967 Anglican evangelicals were 'guilty of a double withdrawal, withdrawal from the visible Church into the parish, and from the secular world into our own pietistic circles', but that they 'repented' of these attitudes at Keele, eschewing withdrawal for engagement.<sup>18</sup>

Within contemporary Anglican debate today, the legacy of the Keele Congress remains hotly disputed. Some disillusioned evangelical commentators have begun to describe it not as a moment of renewal but as 'a sign of doctrinal declension'.<sup>19</sup> Rival Anglican evangelical journals, *Churchman* and *Anvil*, have been said to represent divergent 'pre-Keele' and 'post-Keele' strands within the movement.<sup>20</sup> A rejection

15. Stott, 'Attempt to Face Today's Crucial Questions'.

16. J.I. Packer, 'Following Up Keele', memorandum to NEAC committee, 9 June 1967, Saward MSS.

17. J.I. Packer, 'Taking Stock in Theology', in John King (ed.), *Evangelicals Today* (London: Lutterworth, 1973), pp. 15–30. (15).

18. Michael De-la-Noy, *The Church of England: A Portrait* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1993), p. 159.

19. D.A. Carson, 'Observations of a Friend', in Melvin Tinker (ed.), *The Anglican Evangelical Crisis* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 1995), pp. 203–22. (216).

20. R.T. France, 'Evangelicalism and Biblical Scholarship', pp. 54–56; R.T. France, 'James Barr and Evangelical Scholarship', *Anvil* 8 (1991), pp. 51–64 (53, 61).

of the NEAC legacy was also a major factor in the founding of the vocal evangelical pressure-group, Reform, in February 1993. In the organization's first position paper, David Holloway explained that evangelicals at Keele

decided to 'enter' the structures of the church at every level and participate fully so as to 'capture the Church of England' for an Evangelical gospel. It is now clear, however, that this strategy has resulted in many Evangelicals being captured by the Church of England and themselves appearing ineffective for Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup>

Although the Keele Congress still polarizes opinions, the event itself has largely escaped historical scrutiny. Christopher Idle speaks of 'the myth of Keele', so little have the original context and sources been studied.<sup>22</sup> This paper seeks to shed light on the significance of the congress, through an analysis of contemporary newspaper correspondence and original archives. It will argue that NEAC did indeed represent a decisive shift within the Anglican evangelical movement – not doctrinally, but attitudinally. Analysis of the disputes among participants and observers reveals four significant areas of changing attitudes – from piety to policy, conservatism to radicalism, homogeneity to diversity, and exclusivism to ecumenism. Each theme will be addressed in turn.

### *Shift from Piety to Policy*

The original plan was for nine keynote addresses to be delivered from the Keele Congress platform, to be published subsequently as a book and circulated to local parishes for further study. With that in mind, a team of eminent Anglican evangelical scholars were recruited to tackle nine significant topics – Packer on theological confessionalism, Stott on the authority of Scripture, Professor James Atkinson on salvation, Michael Green (tutor and later principal of the London College of Divinity) on the atonement, Alec Motyer (vicar of St Luke's, Hampstead) on Christian ethics, Professor Philip Hughes (editor of *Churchman*) on ecclesiology and ecumenism, William Leathem (vicar of St John's, Harborne) on the renewal of parish ministry, Professor

*(Footnote continued)*

See further, Andrew Atherstone, *An Anglican Evangelical Identity Crisis: The Churchman-Anvil Affair of 1981–1984* (London: Latimer Trust, 2008).

21. David Holloway, *Reform: Discussion Paper No. 1* (Sheffield: Reform, revised edn 1995), p. 5.

22. Review in *Churchman* 107 (1993), p. 279.

J.N.D. Anderson on social responsibility, and A.T. Houghton (former general secretary of the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society) on worldwide evangelization. They were high-profile speakers and major themes. Nevertheless as the congress approached, Stott was forced to acknowledge a mood of 'growing unrest' and 'widespread disquiet' about its purpose, especially among some younger evangelical ministers who began to call for a change of direction.<sup>23</sup>

NEAC's introductory brochure had promised:

The aim of the Congress is to do some serious up-to-date thinking, and to grapple with live issues. It is emphatically not just to beat old evangelical drums or shout old evangelical slogans. The Congress will concern itself with some of the urgent theological and practical issues confronting the Church today, and aim to speak to them evangelically.<sup>24</sup>

Yet critics asked whether it was really possible to fulfil these aims by forcing one thousand evangelicals to listen in silence to lengthy platform speeches with no opportunity to participate – what some described gloomily as a 'three-day Islington Conference'.<sup>25</sup> There were also concerns that the congress would just reassert standard evangelical principles while neglecting contemporary policy and practice. One young clergyman complained: 'If this Congress passes resolutions affirming the deity of Christ and saying that sex outside marriage is wrong, it will be a waste of time.'<sup>26</sup> David Towers (vicar of St Paul's, Brixton) warned against a mere regurgitation of doctrinal formularies from popular evangelical classics like T.C. Hammond's *In Understanding Be Men* (1936). He predicted a 'minor explosion' among the delegates if NEAC made no attempt to bridge the 'glaring gaps' between evangelical truth and its application to the modern world.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Philip Crowe (tutor at Oak Hill Theological College in north London) keenly anticipated the congress as 'an unparalleled and unrepeatable opportunity', but observed:

On some issues we may get no further than clearing away the dead wood of excessive conservatism. But the real issue is whether NEAC will face up honestly and realistically to the challenge of today and tomorrow. It would be disastrous if NEAC sprayed like a fountain into the deserts of long-dead controversy. It would be equally disastrous if the basic and urgent questions being asked today were avoided.<sup>28</sup>

23. John Stott to NEAC speakers, 5 December 1966, Saward MSS.
24. *Christ Over All* (NEAC Introductory Brochure, Spring 1966), Saward MSS.
25. John Stott to NEAC speakers, 5 December 1966, Saward MSS.
26. 'Talk of the Week', *CEN*, 2 December 1966, p. 5.
27. 'Countdown to Keele', *CEN*, 10 February 1967, pp. 1, 16.
28. Philip Crowe, 'Jamboree at Keele', *CEN*, 17 February 1967, p. 7.

Crowe declared: 'I hope for the exploration and charting of some of the large blank areas on the Evangelical map, for movement on from the well-marked roads of Evangelical theology to the footpaths and the jungles of policy and practice.'<sup>29</sup> This desire for action and exploration was stirred up by the *Church of England Newspaper*, which worried that the congress would simply churn out 'platitudinous generalities' like so many evangelical conferences in the past.<sup>30</sup> It called upon delegates to go to Keele 'armed with tough, realistic questions about the place of Christianity in the world today to fire at the Congress speakers. NEAC is too important to be smothered in bland answers to questions nobody is asking.'<sup>31</sup>

In June 1955, as a 34-year-old rector, Stott had revived the Eclectic Society to bring together Anglican evangelical clergy under the age of 40 for consultation and mutual encouragement. It began as a small circle of his friends, but within a decade had spawned 17 local branches across the United Kingdom with a combined membership of over a thousand.<sup>32</sup> Now in its adolescence, the Eclectic Society came back to bite its founder. At their national conference at Swanwick in November 1966 there was revolution in the ranks. Six young clergymen – Philip Crowe, Frank Entwistle, George Hoffman, Gavin Reid, Michael Saward and Eddie Shirras, all aged between 29 and 34 – stayed up until nearly two o'clock in the morning debating the NEAC programme, which they viewed as an 'intolerable prospect' which must be fought 'tooth and nail'.<sup>33</sup> The next day they put forward resolutions endorsed by the whole Eclectics conference, demanding a change of direction. NEAC delegates must be allowed to contribute from the floor rather than listening to pronouncements from the platform, and the congress must issue a 'statement of findings' (an idea which Saward borrowed from the 1964 Faith and Order Conference in Nottingham).<sup>34</sup> The *Church of England Newspaper*

29. Letter from Philip Crowe, *CEN*, 24 February 1967, p. 6.

30. 'Islington and Keele', *CEN*, 6 January 1967, p. 1.

31. 'One Clear Duty', *CEN*, 10 February 1967, p. 1.

32. John Stott, 'World-Wide Evangelical Anglicanism', in King, *Evangelicals Today*, pp. 176–99 (180); Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: The Making of a Leader* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), pp. 304–308.

33. Michael Saward, *Evangelicals on the Move* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1987), p. 38. See also Michael Saward, 'Behind the Plenaries', in Yeats, *Has Keele Failed?*, pp. 17–41 (21) and Michael Saward, *A Faint Streak of Humility: An Autobiography* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), p. 250.

34. Resolutions from the Eclectic Society National Conference, 17 November 1966; NEAC Committee Minutes, 1 December 1966, Saward MSS.



happily threw its weight behind these proposals. It observed that Stott enjoyed 'an affection and loyalty from hundreds of young clergymen that must be seen to be believed', but continued:

It appears, however, that John Stott is now being pressed by many of his protégés in the 30–40 age bracket to commit himself as clearly on matters of church reform as he is already committed on pure theology. John Stott has always shunned acrimonious ecclesiastical disputes and has persistently sought to expound Evangelical doctrine and live peaceably with all men. Whether he is willing to risk a split by allowing NEAC to look pressing controversial issues in the face is likely to be decisive for the congress.<sup>35</sup>

The NEAC committee took these concerns seriously and in December 1966 adopted a radically revised plan. The keynote papers would now be published in advance and 'taken as read'. Each speaker would only be allowed 30 minutes for a popular exposition of his subject and the rest of the programme would be devoted to discussion in small groups, sub-assembly and assembly sessions to hammer out a congress statement. Heeding the groundswell of criticism, Stott now promised: 'Delegates will not have the bore of listening in silence to endless papers!'<sup>36</sup> He acknowledged that the old plan would 'simply kill the Congress'.<sup>37</sup> Instead the new emphasis was on participation, with a view to policy and action. As Reid explained, the congress statement would focus on 'applied rather than pure theology'.<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, Stott continued to argue for the importance of reasserting evangelical doctrine. In response to his critics he protested:

It would be disastrous if this part of our duty were dismissed as platitudinous or irrelevant. There can be no evangelical policy without evangelical belief. Besides, it is not true to say that the generality of Church of England members know what evangelicals believe. I am frequently astounded by the ignorance and misunderstanding of evangelical belief displayed even by church leaders who ought to know better. No. We must make a clear, bold, modern statement of evangelical essentials. But we cannot stop there. We must go on to the outworking of evangelical faith in evangelical policy, in the perplexing practical realities of the Church today. Indeed, since the congress book

35. 'How the Keele Congress Came About', *CEN*, 17 February 1967, p. 16.

36. John Stott, 'National Evangelical Anglican Congress', press statement, 14 March 1967, Saward MSS.

37. John Stott to NEAC speakers, 5 December 1966, Saward MSS.

38. NEAC Committee Minutes, 1 December 1966, Saward MSS.

is weighted on the theological and theoretical side, the congress statement must seek to redress the balance.<sup>39</sup>

Likewise he told the Islington Clerical Conference that the Keele statement would 'apply the unchanging evangelical faith to the changing situation in the Church and the world, in a relevant and readable way ... it will combine principles and policy, so as to give us a sense of direction for the future'.<sup>40</sup>

The keynote papers were published as *Guidelines: Anglican Evangelicals Face the Future*, which all delegates were expected to read before reaching Staffordshire. Yet even the NEAC organizing committee acknowledged that it was 'heavy going'.<sup>41</sup> One lay delegate suggested they send the book to J.B. Phillips for translation into modern English.<sup>42</sup> Another appealed for the speakers to 'drop the technical jargon' and use 'everyday language for everyday Christians'. He claimed to have persevered with *Guidelines* for 18 hours, with the help of English and Latin dictionaries, but had only reached page 100!<sup>43</sup> John King (editor of the *Church of England Newspaper*) blasted the book as

largely irrelevant to the problems before us today. Instead of bread (clear decisions after facts have been faced) delegates have been given a stone (detached theologising). The stone is of good quality and delicately chiselled, but what the delegates (and the rest of us) need is bread.

He complained that the Keele delegates had been left 'to blaze a trail through the secular society which their mentors have hardly begun to explore', and wondered whether it was because the contributors were mostly academics lacking 'ground level experience'.<sup>44</sup>

Keele's shift of emphasis between principle and policy is illustrated by the contrasts between the congress book and the congress statement. Yet their divergence should not be overemphasized. It is not true to claim, as some recent sociologists and historians have done, that the Keele statement reveals a doctrinal shift towards a more liberal theological agenda. There is no evidence for this assertion.<sup>45</sup> In fact the congress was careful to reaffirm traditional evangelical

39. John Stott, 'That Word "Radical"', *CEN*, 24 February 1967, p. 7.

40. Stott, 'The Significance of NEAC'.

41. NEAC Committee Minutes, 10 January and 2 March 1967, Saward MSS.

42. 'Congress Round-Up', Keele Supplement, p. iv, in *CEN*, 31 March 1967.

43. Letter from John Stride, *CEN*, 7 April 1967, p. 6.

44. 'Today, at Keele', *CEN*, 7 April 1967, p. 8.

45. *Contra* David Smith, *Transforming the World? The Social Impact of British Evangelicalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), p. 90; Mathew Guest, *Evangelical Identity*

essentials and made no attempt to challenge them. One self-styled 'liberal evangelical', R.R. Osborn (a member of the defunct Anglican Evangelical Group Movement) welcomed the Keele statement's 'moderation and irenic spirit', especially its emphasis on social responsibility and ecumenical dialogue. Yet he spoke of his 'revulsion' at the statement's blunt and dogmatic assertions about hell, penal substitutionary atonement, the existence of a personal devil and the worthlessness of non-Christian religions.<sup>46</sup>

Nor is it accurate to suggest that *Guidelines* was only concerned with reasserting evangelical principles while ignoring practical questions. Admittedly the sole application in Motyer's paper on biblical ethics was predictably limited to the place of sexual intercourse within marriage.<sup>47</sup> Yet other speakers addressed a wider range of pressing practical issues. For example, Leathem wrote:

To stand aloof and apart from the real world means death to the church.  
It will not do either to scream from the housetops or purr in the pulpit.  
... Balcony religion is no longer acceptable, if it ever was. The Church  
and Christians must step down into the arena of everyday life.<sup>48</sup>

He exhorted Anglican evangelicals to take action concerning local housing provision, working conditions, immigration, family breakdown, and care of the elderly and disabled. Leathem encouraged parishes to arrange training courses to address the concerns of teachers, factory workers, businessmen and housewives. Likewise Anderson urged the evangelical rediscovery of social justice and responsibility in his paper on 'Christian worldliness'. He proclaimed:

Instead of being content ... to teach Church members the 'faith once for all delivered to the saints' in quiet rooms shaded by Venetian blinds, we need to rethink that message while looking out of an open window on our world in all its chaos, and we need to ask ourselves with new seriousness, not only how to evangelize the individual, but also how to do the whole will of our Lord and Master in the material order in which we have been so unequivocally set. ... Thus the Christian ideal of holiness is not the cold aloofness of the iceberg, nor the enervating

(Footnote continued)

and *Contemporary Culture: A Congregational Study in Innovation* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), p. 51; Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism*, p. 180.

46. R.R. Osborn, 'Keele and the Liberal Evangelicals', *CEN*, 7 July 1967, p. 7.

47. J.A. Motyer, 'New Men in Christ', in J.I. Packer (ed.), *Guidelines: Anglican Evangelicals Face the Future* (London: Falcon, 1967), pp. 121–46. (141).

48. William Leathem, 'Renewing the Local Church', in Packer, *Guidelines*, pp. 183–209 (198–99).

insulation of the hothouse, but rather the life-and-death participation of the soldier, whose mission it is to liberate enemy-occupied territory and restore it to the sway of its proper Lord.<sup>49</sup>

Anderson called for deeper evangelical thinking on questions such as education, economics, industry, race relations, poverty, contraception, divorce, abortion, euthanasia, leisure, literature, music, art and war. Several parts of his chapter were copied word-for-word into the congress statement. The momentum generated by the Keele Congress towards evangelical engagement in social action contributed directly to the founding of new organizations such as the Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund (TEAR Fund) in 1968 led by George Hoffman (a Keele delegate) and the Shaftesbury Project in 1969 led by Alan Storkey. These initiatives were part of the wider tapestry of resurgent evangelical social concern in the 1960s, exemplified by NEAC's public assertion that 'Evangelism and compassionate service belong together in the mission of God'.<sup>50</sup>

#### *Shift from Conservatism to Radicalism*

The *Church of England Newspaper* observed that expectations for NEAC were

as diverse as they are great. Indeed, there is every possibility that Keele, 1967, may prove a traumatic experience for Evangelicals within the Church of England. It may be the decisive moment when the Evangelical group splits into radicals and conservatives.<sup>51</sup>

The newspaper thought it unlikely that Keele could 'sufficiently satisfy younger go-ahead clergymen without outraging those of traditionalist views'.<sup>52</sup>

Age was acknowledged to be an important factor. As King put it, Keele 'was an event that made young Evangelicals jubilant'.<sup>53</sup> The nine congress speakers, originally recruited to reaffirm evangelical orthodoxy, were noticeably senior, with an average age of 50. Only

49. J.N.D. Anderson, 'Christian Worldliness', in Packer, *Guidelines*, pp. 213–32 (214–15).

50. Crowe, *Keele '67: The NEAC Statement*, para 20. See further, David Bebbington, 'The Decline and Resurgence of Evangelical Social Concern 1918–1980', in John Wolffe (ed.), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780–1980* (London: SPCK, 1995), pp. 175–97.

51. 'Countdown to Keele', *CEN*, 10 February 1967, p. 1.

52. 'Drafting Committee Has Tricky Job', *CEN*, 24 February 1967, p. 14.

53. King, *The Evangelicals*, p. 120.

Green (aged 36) was young enough to qualify for the Eclectic Society, while the oldest speaker, Houghton (aged 70), was born in the nineteenth century and had served in the First World War. It was no coincidence that the call to revolutionize the congress programme came from Eclectics. Likewise the men responsible for drafting the congress statement – Crowe, Reid and Colin Buchanan (tutor at the London College of Divinity) – were all under 33, a generation apart from the congress speakers.

There were several appeals for conservatives and radicals, young and old, to pull together at Keele. For example, Charles May (on the staff of the Church Pastoral Aid Society) urged:

If the radicals could come to the Congress in a spirit of humility, having zeal tempered by love, not forgetting that they owe much to the past, and the conservatives come with open minds and hearts, not forgetting the complexities facing younger men and the need to meet new situations with new methods, then we should have a very worthwhile congress.<sup>54</sup>

Likewise Canon H.W. Cragg (vicar of Christ Church, Beckenham) wrote:

Let the older men reckon with the fact that youth is stretching forward to meet the needs of the 1970s with initiative and drive. Let the younger men demonstrate that they owe more than they seem to realise to the generation that gave them birth. Let us all expect and cultivate a unity which is deep and rich, embracing the insights of both old and young.<sup>55</sup>

Nevertheless some remained alarmed at the restless mood of the younger clergy. Basil Gough (principal of Clifton Theological College, Bristol), aged 53, protested in the *Church of England Newspaper*:

There is ... a minority of somewhat vociferous angry young men among the Evangelicals, if your newspaper is any guide, who appear to see little good in their spiritual fathers. I deplore their intolerance of those who in the past have borne the burden and heat of the day in 'contending for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints'. I see in such an attitude and conduct little humility of mind which esteems such elders very highly in love for their work's sake. Moreover, I sense danger in these young men who want to lead before they have learnt to follow.<sup>56</sup>

Stott had long been known as a 'conservative evangelical', as distinct from the 'liberal evangelical' movement which enjoyed its heyday between the world wars. Yet now, perhaps in an attempt to

54. Letter from Charles May, *CEN*, 17 February 1967, p. 6.

55. Letter from H.W. Cragg, *CEN*, 17 February 1967, p. 6.

56. Letter from Basil Gough, *CEN*, 17 March 1967, p. 7.

conciliate the younger generation and attract them to Keele, he described himself in January 1967 at a meeting of the Liverpool Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship as a 'radical evangelical'.<sup>57</sup> It was an 'unscripted, parenthetical remark', but received front page billing in the *Church of England Newspaper* and left him on the horns of a dilemma. Forced to explain himself, Stott felt unable to disown the term, but was clearly much more comfortable with the title 'conservative'. In print he chose his words more carefully:

The proper use of the word 'conservative' when applied to evangelicals, is that we hold tenaciously to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles as given to us in the New Testament, and are determined to 'conserve' the whole Biblical faith. This was the Apostle's charge to Timothy: 'keep the deposit', conserve it, preserve it, never relax your hold upon it, nor let it drop from your hands. As for 'radical', in recent years the word has been applied to views emanating from Germany, systemised in Cambridge, Massachusetts, espoused in Cambridge, England, and popularised on the South Bank. With radicalism of this kind evangelicalism is irreconcilably at loggerheads – not in the questions which radicals are asking ... but in the answers which they give.<sup>58</sup>

How then could Stott call himself a radical? In self-defence he offered a rather tame definition of 'radicalism' (gleaned from the pages of the *Guardian* newspaper), as a willingness to 'question questionable things, however sacred they may seem'. Or as Stott put it, radicalism meant 'the courage to ask ourselves awkward and embarrassing questions, and to grapple with them'. In this limited sense he was glad to welcome 'a synthesis of conservatism and radicalism', and proposed the convoluted label 'radical conservative evangelical', which was never likely to catch on. He admitted that evangelicals had 'often allowed our theological conservatism to permeate us so thoroughly that we cannot contemplate reform or change of any kind', and declared:

we need both 'radicals' and 'conservatives' at Keele, who come ready to debate with one another in a spirit of mutual understanding and restraint. But what we need even more is that *every* delegate will embody in himself something of the conservative-radical tension – determined on the one hand never to surrender any part of 'the faith once for all delivered to the saints', and on the other hand equally determined to reform what needs reformation. It is, in fact, this combination of inflexibility and flexibility, of the negotiable and the non-negotiable, together with a God-given discernment to discriminate

57. "'Radical' Plus 'Biblical' Equals What?', *CEN*, 3 February 1967, p. 1.

58. Stott, 'That Word "Radical"'.

between them and between their proper spheres, which is so greatly needed among us.<sup>59</sup>

Six months after the congress, Crowe told the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship in Oxford diocese that the only Anglican evangelicals who were resisting the NEAC process were those who shared Keele's conservatism but not its radicalism.<sup>60</sup>

### *Shift from Homogeneity to Diversity*

The change of emphasis in the Keele Congress programme from silence to participation, and from speakers to delegates, had two major implications. First, the congress statement could genuinely claim to be an Anglican evangelical consensus. Analysis of the official attendance list reveals that there were 945 delegates (not counting observers and press), almost equally divided between clergy (499) and laity (446). The laity included at least 125 women delegates, but also over 100 theological students who were soon ordained.<sup>61</sup> Initially the *Church of England Newspaper* worried that the laity would be outnumbered and outmanoeuvred at NEAC:

It may be that the lay delegates will pipe up with abrasive questions, but it is all too likely that the lay delegates will find themselves as artfully manipulated by their clerical steersmen as they are in their PCCs. But, who knows, it may be different on the day. The lay delegates may – against all the odds – show that they too have teeth and claws – and they may use them to puncture clerical pretensions. It will be a memorable congress if they do.<sup>62</sup>

Only one of the nine congress speakers was a layman and only four of the twenty-strong NEAC organizing committee.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, Stott said of the delegates: 'they are grassroots folk rather than brass hats ... whatever statement is issued by the Congress will not be the pronouncement of a few experts, but the common mind of a widely

59. Stott, 'That Word "Radical" '.

60. 'Keele Aftermath', *CEN*, 13 October 1967, p. 2.

61. *National Evangelical Anglican Congress: Official List of Delegates, Observers and Other Participants* (1967), Saward MSS. In the official Keele history, George Hoffman claims there were 519 clergy and 481 laity, making exactly 1000 delegates, but this is an overestimate; see George Hoffman, 'The Story of the Congress', in Crowe, *Keele '67: The NEAC Statement*, pp. 7–14 (10).

62. 'Who Will Go to Keele?', *CEN*, 3 March 1967, p. 16.

63. For details of the organizing committee, see *Christ Over All* (NEAC programme, April 1967), p. 17, Saward MSS.

representative crowd of ordinary parish people'.<sup>64</sup> Philip Crowe agreed: 'They will come with down-to-earth knowledge of local situations, and their presence should prevent the congress from launching into an orbit of irrelevant fantasy.'<sup>65</sup> All participants were divided into small groups to discuss one of the six sections of the draft statement, according to their own interests. The section on 'The Church and the World' was most popular, attracting 184 delegates, while the section on 'The Church and its Unity' mustered only 59 delegates. Younger members gravitated towards 'The Church and its Worship' (65 per cent under the age of 40), while 'The Church and its Message' attracted the oldest age profile (64 per cent over the age of 40).<sup>66</sup> Once the discussion groups had done their work, the statement was redrafted before passing through a series of further revisions in sub-plenary and plenary sessions. It was intended to be a fully collaborative process. One layman was glad to report that 'we kept our rubber stamps in our pockets, but really wielded out pens, scissors and paste'.<sup>67</sup>

The second implication of allowing vocal participation by the delegates was the possibility that evangelical disagreement would be made public. The nine carefully selected keynote speakers stood shoulder to shoulder. Indeed one wag observed that the only evident division between them was that John Stott famously enjoyed watching birds while Michael Green famously enjoyed shooting them!<sup>68</sup> Yet the theological opinions of the delegates, and thus the final form of the congress statement, were unpredictable.

Some on the NEAC organizing committee were worried that to expose evangelical discord to a watching world would damage their witness, but it was conceded that divergence should be 'frankly acknowledged' because 'Ability to disagree in love and in public should be taken as a sign of maturity.'<sup>69</sup> Again Stott promised:

The debate will be free and unfettered. No issues have been prejudged. No attempt will be made to impose a ready-made statement on the delegates and induce them to rubber-stamp it. You may be quite certain that whatever emerges from the Congress in the end will be genuine

64. Stott, 'Attempt to Face Today's Crucial Questions'.

65. Crowe, 'Jamboree at Keele'.

66. Hoffman, 'Story of the Congress', pp. 13–14.

67. Dennis F. Turner, 'A Cog in the Keele Machine', *CEN*, 14 April 1967, p. 12.

68. 'Talk of the Week', *CEN*, 7 April 1967, p. 5.

69. Summary of Recommendations made by Buchanan, Crowe and Reid (Drafting Committee) with Dudley-Smith and Stott (Organizing Committee), 7 February 1967, Saward MSS.



and not spurious. On some issues we may have to agree to disagree, but a willingness to do so in fellowship and in public should be taken as a mark of growing maturity.<sup>70</sup>

The *Church of England Newspaper* welcomed such sentiments:

Evangelical unity does not ... mean that all Evangelicals must be agreed about everything. It would be a very dull business if they did. NEAC may go down in history as marking the occasion on which Evangelicals found it possible to disagree amicably over matters of policy while remaining united in doctrine. This will be the first adult step towards surviving and influencing the Church in the 1970s. If that step can be taken the future is bright indeed.<sup>71</sup>

John King later celebrated that Keele had 'shattered' the aspiration for monolithic evangelical unity within the Church of England and had witnessed 'the emergence of independent opinion and argument':

Suddenly, Evangelicalism came alive. From being a dull, inert, old-fashioned conformity to a received pattern it turned into a questioning, self-critical search for sensible answers to questions before Christians today. Submission to patriarchal authority melted as young Evangelicals looked at the received answers (or evasions) and found them wanting. It was as though Evangelicalism had come out of the tunnel and men had begun to breathe again.<sup>72</sup>

Nevertheless, although Stott affirmed that public disagreement among Anglican evangelicals was now allowed, and even welcomed, there were some signs that dissentients were sidelined at Keele. He celebrated the remarkable cohesion of the congress, and the near unanimity of the statement, as signs of the Holy Spirit's blessing.<sup>73</sup> Yet Trevor Beeson, a press observer (and later Dean of Westminster), said that the chairmanship of the plenary sessions by Stott and Anderson was 'as ruthless as anything likely to be encountered this side of the Iron Curtain'.<sup>74</sup> How else would one thousand people agree a ten thousand word statement in two days? Those who wanted reference to the Pope and the World Council of Churches erased from the statement were 'laughed out of court'.<sup>75</sup> Others, mostly traditional

70. Stott, 'Attempt to Face Today's Crucial Questions'.

71. 'Drafting Committee Has Tricky Job', *CEN*, 24 February 1967, p. 14.

72. King, *The Evangelicals*, pp. 122–23.

73. John Stott, 'Introduction to the Statement', in Crowe, *Keele '67: The NEAC Statement*, p. 18; John Stott to Michael Ramsey, 8 April 1967, Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey Papers, vol. 118, fo. 241.

74. Trevor Beeson, 'Evangelical Marathon', *New Christian*, 20 April 1967, p. 9.

75. *Frontier* 10 (Summer 1967), p. 82.

'conservatives', felt they had been ridden over rough-shod with their views ignored.<sup>76</sup> This was one of the ironies of Keele's wide embrace – all evangelical perspectives were now valued, but some were more valued than others.

*Shift from Exclusivism to Ecumenism*

As late as February 1967 John Stott continued to assert that from his theological perspective the words 'biblical', 'evangelical' and 'Christian' were 'virtually synonymous'.<sup>77</sup> This exclusivist position had long been typical within the Anglican evangelical movement, but according to John King the ground began to shift at Keele. Writing in 1969, in typically provocative style, he proclaimed:

Keele knocked the stuffing out of this misconception [that evangelical was synonymous with Christian]. It accepted the Church as a body of baptised people, containing Evangelicals and others. It decided that church unity must be sought within the historic Church rather than among Evangelicals in various Churches. By doing this it bitterly disappointed non-Anglican Evangelicals and uprooted what had for a generation been a corner-stone of Evangelical membership of the Church of England – the view that the Church of England is a federation of parish churches which allows its members to lead an independent life and pay a minimum subscription.<sup>78</sup>

In another passage King asserted:

The outstanding effect of Keele was to deal a death-blow to the idea of an Evangelical unity existing as a kind of alternative to the ecumenical movement. This particular will-o'-the-wisp was extinguished once and for all ... Keele '67 in fact set Church of England Evangelicals squarely in the historic Church. Loyalty to the historic Church (which, for the present, is the Church of England) came before loyalty to Evangelicals wherever they might be found.<sup>79</sup>

It is true that King often wrote 'with an imp of mischief at his elbow' and therefore Timothy Dudley-Smith is right to warn against uncritical acceptance of this provocative journalism. Yet he protests too much when he dismisses King's perspective outright. Eager to defend John Stott's legacy, Dudley-Smith rejects the idea of a conflict of allegiance between Anglicanism and pan-evangelicalism as 'a false

76. See, for example, letter from Harry A. Birch, *CEN*, 28 April 1967, p. 4.

77. Stott, 'That Word "Radical"'.  
 78. King, *The Evangelicals*, p. 122.

79. King, *The Evangelicals*, p. 120–21.

antithesis: many Anglican evangelicals found no difficulty in combining a loyalty to those who shared the same gospel across denominational boundaries, with a loyalty to their own church whose formularies they saw as fully biblical'.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless contemporary sources show that this tension between competing loyalties was keenly felt by some during the NEAC process.

Keele's engagement with non-evangelicals was apparent in several ways. Among the observers invited to attend (though not speak in debates) were representatives from the Anglo-Catholic Church Union, the Mirfield Fathers, the Cowley Fathers, the Kelham Fathers, the Society of St Francis, and the Parish and People Movement. There were also representatives from the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Methodist and Congregational denominations, as well as the British Council of Churches and the Student Christian Movement. The welcome given to these non-evangelical visitors was largely uncontroversial, though there was a hint of unease among some of the delegates. One young evangelical minister sarcastically asked why the Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses had not been invited too!<sup>81</sup>

The Anglican episcopate was conspicuous by its absence from the congress, a symptom of evangelicalism's sparse representation within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. They could muster only two diocesan bishops, Stuart Blanch of Liverpool (former vice-principal of Wycliffe Hall) and Gordon Savage of Southwell (former general secretary of Church Society), supported by one elderly suffragan, Russell White of Tonbridge. There were also two retired missionary bishops, Frank Houghton (former director of the China Inland Mission and bishop of Szechwan) and Lawrence Barham (former bishop of Rwanda and Burundi, who played a leading part in the East African Revival in the 1930s). The most high-ranking evangelical dignitary, Archbishop Donald Coggan of York, was unable to attend due to commitments in the United States. Another sign of Anglican evangelicalism's disconnection with the diocesan hierarchy was that among nearly 500 clerical delegates only 16 held honorary canonries.<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless, two non-evangelical bishops appeared on the platform at the start of the congress. First, Bishop Arthur Reeve of

80. Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry* (Leicester: IVP, 2001), p. 100.

81. Letter from John E. Hollins, *CEN*, 20 January 1967, p. 6.

82. *National Evangelical Anglican Congress: Official List of Delegates, Observers and Other Participants* (1967), Saward MSS.

Lichfield (in whose diocese Keele lay) to offer some brief words of welcome. Next, Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury to deliver the opening address on the subject 'Jesus is Lord'. He focused upon the person and ministry of Christ and referred to the New Testament, said one observer, 'in a way that even the most ardent fundamentalist could not but approve'.<sup>83</sup> Building bridges with his audience, the archbishop spoke of 'our evangelical calling'.<sup>84</sup> Yet in his concluding remarks, he exhorted them to learn from their fellow Anglicans who valued sacramental confession and eucharistic sacrifice as other ways of expressing the centrality of the cross of Christ. Ramsey also urged the evangelical delegates to face questions of scientific and historical criticism 'vigorously and fearlessly', as theologians like Albert Schweitzer and Rudolf Bultmann had done.<sup>85</sup> In a private letter of thanks, Stott applauded Ramsey for this 'splendid Biblical study ... which illumined our minds and warmed our hearts'.<sup>86</sup> Yet this feting of the archbishop was viewed with alarm by others. The *Evangelical Times* chastised the NEAC organizers for inviting 'an avowed enemy of fundamentalism, and a man who is a committed advocate of harmony with Rome'.<sup>87</sup> Years later Martyn Lloyd-Jones of Westminster Chapel (leader *par excellence* among independent evangelicals) continued to speak of his amazement that Ramsey was 'called onto an evangelical platform ... I still personally have to be satisfied that the man is really a Christian in the New Testament sense of the term at all'.<sup>88</sup>

Keele's attitude to non-evangelicals was most starkly displayed in the congress statement. As has been seen, the divergence between *Guidelines* and the statement should not be exaggerated. There is close harmony between them in many areas, often word-for-word parallels, but on the subject of church unity the tone is sharply different. In February 1967, two months before the congress, the three young drafters of the statement (Buchanan, Crowe and Reid) were summoned to the

83. Ann Cheetham, 'Evangelicals in an Age of Revolution', *British Weekly*, 13 April 1967, p. 4.

84. Michael Ramsey, 'Jesus is Lord', *Churchman* 81 (Summer 1967), pp. 89–94 (94).

85. Ramsey, 'Jesus is Lord', p. 93.

86. Stott to Ramsey, 8 April 1967, Lambeth Palace Library, Ramsey Papers, vol. 118, fo. 241.

87. 'What Sort of History Is This?', *Evangelical Times*, May 1967, p. 2.

88. Sermon by Lloyd-Jones, 1 November 1974, quoted in John Brencher, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) and Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), p. 168.

All Souls Rectory to meet with Stott and Dudley-Smith, where they were informed of the NEAC committee's concern that the book and the statement must 'relate organically'.<sup>89</sup> Yet Buchanan brazenly replied that the section he was drafting on ecumenism and Professor Hughes's chapter in *Guidelines* would have 'the organic relationship ... of a U-turn'. Buchanan recalls: 'I think they winced at this, but they were over a barrel – the procedure they had set could not now be reversed or supplanted.'<sup>90</sup>

In *Guidelines*, Packer derided 'the pathological state sometimes called "ecumania" – the uncontrolled urge to merge'.<sup>91</sup> Likewise Hughes attacked

the undiscerning attitude of mind which sees all and sundry through rose-tinted spectacles, which deprecates theology as divisive, and encourages dialogue in which accommodation is found for all points of view ... But goodwill without discernment is a corrosive that eats away the foundations of the Church of Christ. The distinctives of the Christian faith cannot be bartered for the blandishments of a fashionable bonhomie.<sup>92</sup>

Alarmed at the ecumenical movement's alleged links with secularism and relativism, Hughes warned that 'the prospect of the organization on a worldwide scale of a vast and immensely powerful church of antichrist, embracing any and every form of pseudo-Christianity, paganism, and heathenism, is far from fanciful'.<sup>93</sup> Yet the conference statement struck an altogether different note:

Schisms, denominations, and exclusive forms of fellowship are contrary to the biblical ideal, yet in the past we have acquiesced in their existence. However, we cannot now rest content with a profession of being one in Christ with all believers if that profession becomes an excuse for refusing to seek local organic unity. ... Too often wrong attitudes at the local level have meant that the cause of unity has been left to international congresses or inter-church commissions. We penitently seek God's grace to put away all such attitudes.<sup>94</sup>

Then came the crucial paragraphs urging Anglican evangelicals to throw themselves into ecumenical dialogue, and accepting the World

89. NEAC Committee Minutes, 2 February 1967, Saward MSS, has 'relate rationally'.

90. Colin Buchanan to Andrew Atherstone, 27 March 2009.

91. J.I. Packer, 'The Good Confession', in Packer, *Guidelines*, pp. 13–38 (15–16).

92. P.E. Hughes, 'The Credibility of the Church', in Packer, *Guidelines*, pp. 149–79 (170–71).

93. Hughes, 'Credibility of the Church', p. 178.

94. Crowe, *Keele '67: The NEAC Statement*, paras. 81–82.

Council of Churches' definition of a Christian, far removed from the old premise that 'evangelical' and 'Christian' were synonyms. The statement declared:

Polemics at long range have at times in the past led us into negative and impoverishing 'anti'-attitudes (anti-sacramental, anti-intellectual, *etc*), from which we now desire to shake free. We recognize that in dialogue we may hope to learn truths held by others to which we have hitherto been blind, as well as to impart to others truths held by us and overlooked by them.<sup>95</sup>

One observer at Keele, Sir John Lawrence, summed up the paradigm shift as 'Pietism is out, ecumenism is in'.<sup>96</sup> More recently, Adrian Hastings called the Keele Statement one of the most important ecclesiastical documents of the twentieth century, partly because of its new ecumenical openness.<sup>97</sup> Michael Harper (Stott's former curate) likened the congress to 'a "coming-out" party, and a very breathless one at that. Evangelical Anglicans, like coy self-conscious debutantes, were launching themselves into the orbit of ecclesiastical society'.<sup>98</sup>

Many welcomed the shift in ecclesiological emphasis. For example, the *Church of England Newspaper* applauded:

we Anglicans should be the last people to stand aloof from other Christians. By definition we are committed to a comprehensive Church. Those of us who are ordained are pledged to work in harmony with others ... Those of us who base our faith on God's Word should not ... find it impossible to combine confidence in God's declarations with humility towards our fellow-Christians.<sup>99</sup>

A few weeks after the congress, Bishop Savage of Southwell told the annual meeting of the Church Pastoral Aid Society that Anglican evangelicals needed 'to leave the touchline and get into the game'.<sup>100</sup> Likewise Canon T.F.C. Bewes (vicar of Tonbridge) hoped that Keele would encourage evangelicals 'to take a full share in the life of the Church of England'.<sup>101</sup> However, outside the national church there was growing alarm. Morgan Derham (general secretary of the Evangelical Alliance) warned that Keele's advocacy of ecumenism

95. Crowe, *Keele '67: The NEAC Statement*, para. 84.

96. *Frontier*, 10 (Summer 1967), p. 82.

97. Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-2000* (London: SCM, 4th edn, 2001), p. 554.

98. Michael Harper, 'Keele and the Holy Spirit', *CEN*, 12 May 1967, p. 9.

99. 'Keele and Unity', *CEN*, 30 June 1967, p. 1.

100. 'Do Not Withdraw', *CEN*, 5 May 1967, p. 2.

101. 'Countdown to Keele', *CEN*, 10 February 1967, p. 16.

and its broadening definition of 'Christianity' were seen by nonconformist evangelicals as 'something near to treachery'.<sup>102</sup> A small minority of Anglican evangelicals felt the same way. Between 1967 and 1976 a dozen clergymen seceded from the Church of England for various forms of independency, heeding Martyn Lloyd-Jones' call for evangelicals to leave doctrinally mixed denominations. In parting, they often blamed the Keele Congress for propelling the Anglican evangelical movement upon a novel and disastrous path.<sup>103</sup>

### Conclusion

The Keele Congress shone a unique spotlight upon the changing nature of Anglican evangelicalism during the 1960s, in a way only possible in such a large and representative gathering. It revealed, and crystallized, a paradigm shift taking place within the movement, not in foundational doctrine but in attitude and outlook. The congress statement gave permanent form to this mood swing, with a new set of ecclesiological and missional priorities. It was soon put into practice in dramatic fashion with the publication of *Growing into Union* in May 1970, an ecumenical tract in which Packer and Buchanan claimed to have established agreement with traditional Anglo-Catholics, to the horror of their former friends within evangelical nonconformity.<sup>104</sup> Meanwhile *Ministry in the Seventies* urged Anglican evangelicals to leave their entrenched positions and begin collaborating with non-evangelical Anglicans, even in pulpit sharing and mission partnership.<sup>105</sup> In these and many other areas of policy, NEAC set the agenda for evangelicals in the Church of England as they entered a new decade. More than 40 years later, the legacy of the Keele Congress is still influential in moulding the identity of the Anglican evangelical movement today.

102. Morgan Derham, 'Evangelical Fellowship Keele-Halled', *CEN*, 28 April 1967, p. 12.

103. See further, Andrew Atherstone, 'Lloyd-Jones and Secession', in Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (eds.), *Engaging with Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Leicester: Apollos, forthcoming).

104. Andrew Atherstone, 'A Mad Hatter's Tea Party in the Old Mitre Tavern? Ecumenical Reactions to *Growing into Union*', *Ecclesiology* 6.1 (January 2010), pp. 39–67.

105. Anthony W. Gough, 'Co-operation with Other Ministries', in Clive Porthouse (ed.), *Ministry in the Seventies* (London: Falcon, 1970), pp. 120–35.