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Lord Halifax and the Recognition of Anglican Orders.

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LEO XIII. AND ANGLICAN ORDERS. By Viscount Halifax.

THE LIFE OF EDWARD WHITE BENSON, SOMETIME ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY. By A. C. BENSON.

THE LIFE OF CARDINAL VAUGHAN. By J. C. Snead-Cox.

A ROMAN DIARY. By the Rev. T. A. Lacey.

A FEW years ago I crossed the Channel in the same steamer as that in which Lord Halifax returned from one of his visits to Rome. Passing his lordship on the landing-stage, I happened to overhear the newspaper-boy from whom he had purchased some English newspapers, and to whom he had tendered—of course in ignorance—a lira, say to him: "This is Italian, sir." "Which thing," I said to myself, "in an allegory." What Lord Halifax did then, without intending it, was surely significant of what he has so long been attempting to do with deliberate purpose—viz., to introduce into England and the English Church what is distinctively Roman. Should Lord Halifax read this, I trust he will excuse this personal reminiscence, which doubtless has passed from his memory.

It is no exaggeration to say that reunion with Rome has been the burning passion of Lord Halifax's life. The record of his earnest attempts to secure the recognition of English Orders—as one step in the way of reunion, but a very important and far-reaching one—is sufficient proof of this. What he did to secure this result it is now possible to estimate fully, not only from his own recently published record, but also from the corroborative evidence supplied by the Lives of Archbishop Benson and Cardinal Vaughan, and by Mr. Lacey's "Roman Diary." On the one side we have the story of two whose position may be described as antagonistic to the effort—viz., Archbishop Benson and Cardinal Vaughan—and on the other side, of two of the active agents in the endeavour to accomplish the task—viz., Lord Halifax and the Rev. T. A. Lacey. Without going too

deeply into details, it is possible to give from these sources a connected account of the steps taken by Lord Halifax to accomplish the work on which he had set his mind.

It was an accidental meeting with the Abbé Portal in Madeira at the end of 1889 which first opened the way to discussion on the question of possible reunion between the English and Roman Churches. Lord Halifax kept up a correspondence with the Abbé, and afterwards had other meetings with him, and, apparently at the Abbé's suggestion, took Cardinal Vaughan into his confidence, but without much encouragement from him. In 1894 the Abbé published, under the soubriquet of "Fernand Dalbus," a pamphlet on English Orders, and afterwards visited England, both to bring to this country a favourable account of the Pope's attitude towards the question, and to judge for himself of the condition of the English Church. He visited certain churches, mostly of an advanced type, and certain Sisterhoods, and also the Church Missionary College at Islington. He also went to Cambridge and stayed one night with Bishop Creighton, and visited the Archbishop of York at Bishophorpe. He was then taken by Lord Halifax to see the Archbishop of Canterbury at Addington. This was a purely unofficial visit. Lord Halifax observes in reference to this interview :

"The Archbishop was very reserved. It was obvious that he was afraid of being accused of receiving emissaries from Rome."¹

In the Archbishop's "Life" we read that :

"One of those present said that the Archbishop's whole attitude was one of the greatest caution, and that he kept the conversation as general as possible, avoiding any dangerous discussions or compromising statements."

And his biographer adds that his

"view from the first seems to have been that an attempt was being made from Rome, working through the sincere and genuine enthusiasm of Lord Halifax and the Abbé Portal, to compromise the official chief of the Anglican Church."²

The Abbé was summoned to Rome by the Pope, and Lord Halifax gives a deeply interesting account of his interview with

¹ "Leo XIII. and Anglican Orders," p. 100.

² "Archbishop Benson's Life," vol. ii., p. 593.

Leo XIII., on whom the Abbé pressed the desirability of writing to the Archbishops—a suggestion which the Pope promised to consider. But two days later Cardinal Rampolla informed him that he (the Cardinal) would write an indirect letter to give to Lord Halifax, and also told him that the Abbé Duchesne would be charged to prepare a work on English Orders. The Cardinal said that if a favourable response was given to the indirect letter, a direct reply would be sent by the Pope to the English Archbishops.

Upon this the Abbé hurried back to England to report to Lord Halifax. The latter at once wrote to Benson asking for an appointment, stating that he had “some very wonderful things” to tell him. The Archbishop was then staying at Dulverton, in Somersetshire, and so anxious was Lord Halifax to see him that he telegraphed that he would visit him the next day. To Benson’s astonishment he was accompanied by the Abbé. The account of the interview, as given both in the Archbishop’s “Life” and by Lord Halifax, is extremely interesting. The Abbé

“gave a full account of what had passed at Rome, and explained that the letter addressed to him by Cardinal Rampolla was an indirect step to make sure of the friendly dispositions of the heads of the English Church, and that, if the Archbishops could indirectly give him such assurance, direct overtures in the interests of reunion would be made by the Pope.”¹

“The Archbishop’s attitude,” writes Lord Halifax, “was not encouraging.” Certainly it was one of caution. He himself said, “they were trying to make him commit himself, when the Pope had not committed himself”; that Rampolla’s letter was “a nice letter, but very general,” and that “it contained several expressions offensive to us, as that the Roman Church was our ancient mother and mistress, and ‘the only centre of unity,’” adding that

“infallibility was not the only difficulty in the Pope’s position, and the Pope’s position not the only difficulty in the Roman doctrine”;

and, further, that

“Portal had only seen one side of English Church life with Lord Halifax, and that the Pope could have no complete view of England before him.”²

¹ “Leo XIII.,” p. 123.

² “Archbishop Benson’s Life,” vol. ii., p. 600.

Although the Archbishop promised to consider whether he would write such a letter, Lord Halifax writes :

“At the moment it was a profound disappointment to the Abbé Portal and myself. To me it seemed, as it still seems, the throwing away of the greatest opportunity a man ever had, and quite inconsistent with the duty of one claiming to be the successor of St. Augustine.”¹

As no letter came from the Archbishop, Lord Halifax wrote to him on October 18, forwarding a summary drawn up by the Abbé and himself in French of what had passed, and urged :

“Will your Grace, in conjunction with the Archbishop of York, write me such a private letter as I can take to Rome? Your Grace may trust me. I know all the difficulties, and would say and do nothing which could, if it were made public to-morrow, compromise anyone but myself.”²

He suggested the form which the Archbishop's letter should take, and enclosed a sketch of such a letter as the Pope himself might write to the Archbishops. But the most startling thing of all is his temerity in writing :

“Dante assigns the lowest place to those who, having a great opportunity, refuse to take it.”

It is only right to say that he added :

“My dear Lord, forgive me for writing as I do. No one can be more conscious than I am of the amazing liberty I am taking, but the circumstances are so extraordinary that I cannot help it.”³

To this Benson replied, after expressing his desire for unity, but stating that “this responsible position of mine binds me above all not to risk Truth for the sake of any policy of unity :”

“If I had known when you asked for that interview that M. Portal would accompany you, I would have pointed out that my position almost required that I should be informed beforehand of any grave matter which he had to lay before me.”

And he proceeded to say that

“The Archbishop of Canterbury is not in a position to take a private and unofficial line with secret agents from great Powers. It is not our English method of procedure. It is not possible for me to say more upon that letter than that I also most deeply desire and pray that all the dissensions of Christendom might be ended, and rejoice that others long for it. But among its kindly lines that letter contains expressions totally inadmissible and inconsistent with the primitive model to which England appeals. But what is

¹ “Leo XIII.,” pp. 125, 130, 131.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

most important is, that at this very time (before and since that interview) the head and representative of the Roman Catholic Church in England is officially declaring in a series of public utterances the absolute and uncompromising repudiation by the Papal See of the Orders of the Anglican Church."¹

Lord Halifax replied that nothing could be further from his thoughts and intentions than to have treated his Grace without due consideration, and, after referring to his action and to the attitude of Cardinal Vaughan, expressed his conviction that the Archbishop's letter as it stands could only have the effect of closing the door to much that might have been productive of consequences inspiring the brightest hopes, and concluded by suggesting some modifications in the letter, and a conference with the Archbishop of York.

On October 27 the Archbishop wrote a general letter alternative to that of October 15, in which he said :

"The Church of England must always be desirous to stand in amicable relation to all other branches of the Catholic Church, so long as this can be done without any sacrifice on her part of Scriptural truth, or of the great principles for which she has contended in making her appeal to primitive antiquity, to the *quod semper* as well as the *quod ubique et ab omnibus*. It is her daily prayer, that 'all who profess and call themselves Christians should be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.'"²

He concluded by referring to the gain which unity would be in conflict with the powers of evil.

Lord Halifax was still dissatisfied, and after further correspondence visited the Archbishop at Addington, to urge on him the issue of an amended letter. After waiting apparently about a month, Lord Halifax again wrote earnestly requesting such a letter as he had drafted, and asking the Archbishop to trust him. On December 11 the Archbishop finally declined to modify the terms of his letter, and said :

"I really cannot accept it [*i.e.*, Lord Halifax's draft]. It omits safeguards which I had used. It inserts phrases which would compromise me extremely in England, and which do not represent my views. The effect is to alter the tone and animus of both the letters, entirely different as they are from one another."

¹ "Leo XIII.," p. 137; "Archbishop Benson's Life," vol. ii., pp. 604, 605.

² "Archbishop Benson's Life," vol. ii., p. 607.

After alluding to the proposed inquiry as to the validity of English Orders, the letter proceeds :

“I must be pardoned for saying, what is only the part of friendship to say, that I am afraid that you have lived for years so exclusively with one set of thinkers, and entered so exclusively into the usages of one class of Churches, that you have not before you the state of religious feeling and authority in England with the completeness with which anyone attempting to adjust the relations between Churches ought to have—the phenomena of his own side clearly and minutely before him. And as to me, any action of mine in the matter of the relations is *ipso facto* public action. It is impossible for me to accept private assertions as to what is going on. It is equally impossible for me to adopt the part of a secret diplomatist among the counsels of the Church. Secret diplomacy is a recognized part of the machinery of the Church of Rome, and it is contrary to the genius and sense of the English Church.”¹

Lord Halifax then asked Mr. Athelstan Riley to see Cardinal Vaughan—who throughout was definitely opposed to recognition—and a memorandum of his interview is contained in Lord Halifax’s book. He then once again wrote to the Archbishop asking what answer he should make if he should be asked at Rome what would be the attitude of the English Episcopate towards a step on the part of the Holy See suggesting a possible conference on the validity of English Orders, to which the Archbishop replied :

“I must say at once that it would be impossible for me to frame or approve any answer to a question which has not been asked. . . . Neither, I am afraid, can I give the most capable and trusted person leave to give to any probable supposed question replies in my behalf in any specified direction. This would be constituting a delegacy—almost appointing an ambassador—which I certainly should not think of doing, however great my confidence. Misunderstandings would ensue. But even if it were not so, no such plenipotentiary ought to exist when responsibility is so great as mine is.”²

Meanwhile Lord Halifax delivered an address at Bristol on “Corporate Reunion,” which he sent to various Bishops ; and, armed with their acknowledgments of the paper, he went to Rome, and presented them, together with a *mémoire*, to the Pope. Afterwards he went to Florence, where he met the Archbishop. It is interesting to see what Benson’s private views of

¹ “Archbishop Benson’s Life,” vol. ii., p. 611.

² *Ibid.*, p. 612.

Lord Halifax's persistent efforts to win him over were. Thus, on November 6, 1894, he writes in his diary :

"Halifax is like a solitary player of chess, and wants to make all the moves on the board himself on both sides."¹

After the visit to Florence the Archbishop observes :

"Halifax does not seem to have done harm or compromised us, but to have made himself pleasant to them."¹

Then followed the issue of the Pope's letter—*Ad Angelos*—addressed by "Leo XIII. to the English people who seek the Kingdom of Christ in the unity of the Faith." Of this letter Lord Halifax remarks that it was "on the lines he had suggested, but that it was not addressed to the Archbishops he attributed to the influence of Vaughan. He called on Benson at Florence to beg him to be "gracious about the letter," and started off to England the same evening "to do what he could with others in the same direction." The Archbishop remarks in his diary :

"Halifax very much agitated about the Pope's 'Encyclical to the English' . . . very anxious I should make an answer in the same spirit, and say nothing of difficulties—very determined in minimizing every Roman error, as if they were all matters of taste, pious opinion, or 'allow a large liberty, and say nothing about it now!'—as if it were a matter of which the English ever could think lightly. . . . As if the Reformation did not rest on principles far beyond all he talks about. But he is a most saintly man of heart."²

On reaching home the Archbishop, on April 29, 1895, wrote a letter to Lord Halifax, in which he defined his position in regard to reunion :

"With my whole soul I desire reunion. Disunion with Nonconformists, Foreign Reformers, Rome, Easterns, is the main and most miserable cause of delay in the Christianization of all men in Christian and heathen countries alike."³

He went on to say that he should regard the recognition of English Orders as a sign of Rome being in earnest, but "we do not sue to have them recognized," and, he added, that "secret and private correspondence would be certainly impossible."

Passing over the visit to Paris paid by Lord Halifax in the spring of 1896—a visit undertaken in order to meet various

¹ "Archbishop Benson's Life," vol. ii., pp. 608, 614.

² *Ibid.*, p. 615.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 617.

persons interested in reunion—we come to the appointment by the Pope, in March, 1906, of a Commission to consider all the evidence in regard to English Orders. It was not, however, a conference on which both sides would be represented, such as Lord Halifax and the Abbé Portal desired; but was exclusively composed of Roman theologians, three of whom (foreigners) were known to be in sympathy with Anglican claims, and three (English), appointed by Cardinal Vaughan, on the other side. Two others were added afterwards, one on each side. But, on the invitation of one member of the commission (Mgr. Gasparri), and through the efforts of Abbé Portal, but without the approval of Archbishop Benson, the Rev. F. W. Puller and the Rev. T. A. Lacey went to Rome to give any information that might be required. The story of their efforts is well told in Mr. Lacey's "Roman Diary," and need not be repeated here; but it may be added that on their return to England, in June, 1896, Father Puller sought an interview with the Archbishop, which was granted; but the Archbishop wrote cautiously:

"I am sure that you realize that you come to me unofficially and simply by your own desire, and that I am not doing more than hearing anything that you may wish to say to me upon a matter of the highest importance and difficulty."¹

Exigencies of space have led to the omission of the story of Mr. Gladstone's intervention in the controversy by the suggestion of Lord Halifax, who again indicated the lines which a letter from him should take—with a view of influencing the course of events in Rome. That letter was written and published in the London newspapers in May. On June 30, the Pope's Encyclical *Satis cognitum* was published in England, just a year after his former letter to the English people. It treated of the Unity of the Church, basing the claims of the Papacy on the teaching of our Lord, but claiming for the general Episcopate all that Rome considered had been given to St. Peter. A summary of the Bull was communicated to the Press by Cardinal Vaughan, which, however, omitted much that was afterwards

¹ "Archbishop Benson's Life," vol. ii., p. 621.

found in the actual text. But, as the Cardinal said, the Pope's language would "dispel vague and hazy theories which are rich only in delusive hopes."¹

The issue of the Encyclical was the prelude to the entire destruction of Lord Halifax's hopes and to the failure of his earnest efforts. It was followed in September by the issue of the Encyclical *Apostolicæ Curæ*. Notwithstanding the premonition of failure conveyed by the previous Bull, Lord Halifax writes :

"The foundations we had sought to lay, on which others might build and carry on the work for the reunion of Christendom, were not to be laid by us. The blow was as sudden as it was unexpected."²

The Bull declared that English Orders were

"entirely null and void, partly on the ground of previous Roman decisions, partly on the ground of defects of 'form' up to 1662, and also on the ground of defective intention on the part of the framers of the Prayer-Book."³

The Archbishop was in Ireland when the Encyclical was published, shortly before his death ; and with the thought of the Bull in his mind, he noticed a motto at a meeting he attended, which bore the words describing the Church of Ireland as "Catholic, Apostolic, Reformed, and Protestant," and said :

"There was not one of those words which could be spared. . . . If ever it was necessary, if ever we began to doubt whether it was necessary, to lay so much stress upon that last word, I think the events which have been occurring in the last few weeks, and the tone which has been adopted towards this primeval Church of Ireland and of England, are things which warn us that the word is not to be forgotten."⁴

The keen disappointment of Lord Halifax is seen in the attempts which he makes to put the blame for failure partly on the Cardinal and partly on the Archbishop. He writes :

"I say it with regret, the whole of Cardinal Vaughan's conduct . . . was unworthy of him, and it is no less painful to have to admit that what is true of Cardinal Vaughan is true in its degree of Archbishop Benson. . . . Few men have ever had so great an opportunity offered to them as the Archbishop ; no man, I think, ever so completely threw it away."⁵

This, we venture to think, will not be the judgment of fair-minded members of the Church of England. His biography

¹ "Leo XIII.," p. 325.

² *Ibid.*, p. 354.

³ "Archbishop Benson's Life," vol. ii., p. 621.

⁴ "Archbishop Benson in Ireland."

⁵ "Leo XIII.," p. 386.

shows that he was not a bitter antagonist of the Church of Rome ; but he was not blind to its errors. And all through the persistent efforts of Lord Halifax to win him over to his side, he firmly maintained the position he took up from the first—that there could be no union with Rome at the expense of Truth. To charge him, as Lord Halifax does, with “ hesitation ” is only to conceal the chagrin which he felt at his failure to convince the Archbishop and to gain his support to efforts which, if successful, might have paved the way to a reconciliation with Rome (without any abatement of her claims or acknowledgment of her errors), and undone the work of the English Reformation.

