

THE SIXTH LAMBETH CONFERENCE, 1920.

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I.

IN endeavouring to estimate the meaning and authority of the "Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with the Resolutions and Reports" of the Lambeth Conference, it is necessary to detach the mind from the "glamour of the Conference," and to grasp clearly what the Conference was. All who were brought into personal contact with the Bishops in 1908 and 1920 observed a striking contrast in their outlook and estimate of their position. In 1908, the Pan-Anglican Congress gave them a distorted view of the Anglican communion as a great world-force. They had been hearing of its work in all parts of the globe, of its unique position and opportunities and "Passing Protestantism—Coming Catholicism" was the motto driven home on many platforms by prominent speakers. It was not a matter for surprise that as the Conference following the Congress proceeded, the weight the Bishops believed to be attached to their opinions grew in their own minds, and their friends noted a certain autocratic manner which gave the appearance of the conviction "when we speak, the last word has been said." The Anglican communion was, in their opinion, the key communion of the world, and its influence and authority would bring other Churches into line with its declarations. In 1920 the exact opposite was the case. Humbled by the experience of the past six years, convinced of the need of a union of all the forces within the Kingdom of God uniting for the spread of world righteousness and realizing that the Anglican Communion only represents a fraction of the spiritual forces at work throughout the Christian world, they faced the problems submitted to them in the consciousness that they are members of a great Brotherhood, and that the appeal to personal authority or united wisdom must be abandoned in favour of the presentation of sound reasoning, brotherly sympathy, and a call to self-denying service. No document ever issued by any Ecclesiastical Assembly has been less dogmatic. It breathes the spirit of Christian freedom, it brings everything to the touchstone of the Law of Christ, and shows a humility that is as genuinely felt by the reader as it was experienced by all who came into personal contact with the Bishops or heard

from them accounts of the tone of the Conference. This in itself marks a great step forward. The men of God met as Fathers in God, not as ruling Prelates. They took counsel as to the mind of God and sought to do His will in all things.

This spirit is reflected in the documents that constitute their deliverance. They have no binding authority on the various independent Churches of the Anglican communion, but they have a moral authority of the highest class. This authority is not the consequence of their adoption by 252 Bishops—although that gives them a claim on our most respectful consideration. It comes from their temper, their appeal, and their evident desire to put into words what God has taught them in their dependence on the Holy Spirit. This makes the Conference an influence outside our own communion to an extent that has not been shared by any of its five predecessors. The Anglican communion in this volume is presented as one among many Christian movements and communions, that has a duty to all, and reflects in itself the spiritual forces that exist outside its ambit. But we and those who read the Report are bound to study it as the mature deliverance of a deliberative Assembly that weighed every word and put into its pages the common opinion, or, to express it in mathematical language, the Greatest Common Measure of agreement that could be reached in 1920. It represents what all could accept, taking the various parts as contributory to the whole. There are ambiguities and apparent contradictions that will come to light in our examination, but we are convinced that the spirit enshrined by the expression of the mind of the Conference is one which will permeate the Anglican communion and the Christian world that is not hide-bound by an ecclesiasticism that is foreign to the mind of the Master. This ecclesiasticism kills the spirit, by exalting the institution which ought to enshrine, not destroy, the teaching of Christ in its blessed freedom and power to reach the hearts of all men. We may expect to find the most striking parts of the Report interpreted in a fashion that will surprise the "plain man," but the glosses will be removed in the course of time, and the real force of the document will assert itself in spite of the attempts to throw its parts out of focus. The Encyclical Letter, which was adopted at the closing meetings of the Conference after the Resolutions had been passed, gives the directive orientation to the interpretation of all its proceedings. The Bishops looked back on their work. They

had in their minds all that had been done. They knew as those outside cannot know the cross-currents that flowed—the “*non possumus*” attitudes that had to be faced, and either had to be avoided by omission or compromised by ambiguity or apparently contradictory deliverances. They discovered that they had been consciously or unconsciously governed by the idea of fellowship. “To a world that craves for fellowship we present our message. The secret of life is fellowship. So men feel, and it is true. But fellowship with God is the indispensable condition of human fellowship. The secret of life is the double fellowship—fellowship with God and with men.” This ruling idea presents itself all through the volume. We find it on every page, and “The foundation and ground of all fellowship is the undeflected will of God, renewing again and again its patient effort to possess, without destroying, the wills of men.” “And so He has called into being a fellowship of men, His Church, and has sent His Holy Spirit to abide therein, and that by the prevailing attraction of that one Spirit He, the one God and Father of all, may win over the whole human family to that fellowship in Himself, by which alone it can attain to the fullness of life.” When the thought underlying these sentences is borne in mind, we shall find a recognition of the fellowship of men in God as the main element in the minds of the assembled Bishops, and we shall discover over against that, limitations to the fellowship which must be interpreted as either in accord with or contrary to the declared mind of God. By dwelling on the positive side of declarations we shall in all probability be more in the main stream of the Conference thought, than by insisting upon the exceptions and limitations which from time to time obtrude themselves on our notice. It can never be forgotten that the Conference was a Conference of Christian Bishops governed by the teaching of Christ and accepting “the Holy Scriptures as the record of God’s revelation of Himself to man, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.” That is the one permanent limitation that should govern Christian thought and outlook. The brotherhood of the sons of God in Christ is the aim of fellowship that attains the Christian ideal, and the Bishops fully recognize this regulative fact.

Let us now turn to the groups of subjects considered by the Conference in the order of the Resolutions. Naturally the wider brotherhood of man first demanded attention. They looked upon a

world " full of trouble and perplexity, of fear and despair, of disconnected effort and aimless exertion."

That world consists of peoples segregated into nations Christian and non-Christian. All feel the effects of the shock of devastating war, with its aftermath of social disturbance and uncertainty as to the future. All ought to know that the greatest of their interests is international peace. All realize what war means. But the memories of risks run that should have been avoided, and of dangers incurred that should never have had to be faced, lie fresh upon them. The conflict between international regulation and national independence is experienced in all peoples. The small nations know that they can alone hope for continued existence as long as they live with the good will of the great States, and trust themselves to the world as a whole rather than to the promises of their powerful neighbours. The Conference urges on all citizens of all nations to promote international comity and good will, and to secure expression for these by an increased recognition of international law and custom. It sees that this, the kingdom of peace and good will can only come through the acceptance of the sovereignty of our Lord and Saviour, and through the application of His law of love. The League of Nations is commended, and steps should be taken by the whole Church to urge its principles on the whole world. Germany and other nations should be admitted as soon as conditions render admission possible. Injustice to indigenious or native races must be sternly opposed by the League, and " the tenure of land, forced labour, and the trade in intoxicating liquors, and also the morphia traffic in China " are singled out as needing special attention. The final Resolution, recognizing the inter-relation of nation, calls upon all Christians to do their utmost to relieve the sufferings of the peoples in Europe and Asia who are now bearing the effects of war devastation and social distress. The Report of the Committee is a well-balanced utterance, and makes a special appeal to the Press; which has in its power either to maintain or discourage international hatred. Many will be surprised to learn that the opium evil in China has been revived in the form of morphia-taking. There can be no doubt as to the mind of the Committee. As an organized effort for the overcoming of moral evils in distant lands " the League of Nations with its mandatory principles is the very ally for which, in the past, we have looked in vain."

The relation of Christians and Christian Churches to one another was the chief subject under the consideration of the Conference. The events of the past twelve years made it essential that the Conference should consider the problems from a fresh view-point. The world has not stood still, and the Anglican communion has become impressed by the isolation of itself and the needs of a clearer understanding of its position. "The war and its horrors waged as it was between so-called Christian nations, drove home the weakness of the Church with the shock of a sudden awakening. Men in all communions began to think of the re-union of Christendom, not as a laudable ambition or a beautiful dream, but as an imperative necessity." "The preparations for the World Conference on Faith and Order had not only drawn attention in all parts of the world to Christian unity, but had led to discussions in many quarters which brought to light unsuspected agreement between the leaders of different communions. The great wind was blowing over the whole earth." But the greatest urge had come from the Mission-field where, in the presence of heathendom and non-Christian systems, the divided forces of the Cross could not effectively prosecute their divine mission. The Christian world at the base might be able to wait and live on in traditional environments—missions could not do this. The time was ripe for unity. The duty of bringing it about between those who are one in faith and outlook was an imperative necessity. The 1908 Conference had appointed a Consultative Committee, which had met to consider its Kikuyu problem, and the Archbishop of Canterbury had issued his opinion on the subject. The main points considered by the Consultative Committee were interchange of pulpits, the reciprocal communicating of converts in Anglican and non-Episcopal Churches, and the justifiability or otherwise of the Joint Communion Service of the members of the Conference. The Committee approved interchange of pulpits duly safeguarded, the relaxation of the Confirmation principle in admitting unconfirmed non-Episcopalians to Communion, and deprecated the communicating of Anglican adherents at non-Episcopal communions as inconsistent "with the principles of the Church of England." It also pronounced the joint communion, as inspired by the laudable motive of charity towards those from whom we are unhappily separated, but grievously hurtful to charity among ourselves. The Archbishop of Canterbury, in his pamphlet "Kikuyu," practi-

cally accepted the findings of the Committee, and the principles at issue were referred to the Lambeth Conference that has just been holden.

The strongest Committee that ever sat at Lambeth considered reunion. Men of all types were represented, under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of York. The Committee met as a whole and also in two groups, one dealing with the relation of the Anglican communion with Episcopal Churches—the other with non-Episcopal Churches. “As their work proceeds, the members of it felt that they were being drawn by a Power greater than themselves to a general agreement. Their conclusions were accepted by the Conference under the same sense of a compelling influence. The decision of the Conference was reached with a unanimity all but complete. It is embodied in our appeal to all Christian people.” This appeal is the interpretative document on the subject of reunion. The Committee had written before the quotation given from the Encyclical was penned. “We cannot insist too strongly that the Resolutions which we now submit must be read and understood in the light of the ideal and principles which are set forth in the appeal which we have asked the Conference to issue. Taken by themselves, they would inevitably misrepresent the warmth of desire and strength of hope by which we are animated. They must be regarded as counsels which the Conference may rightly be expected to give to the authorities of Churches in the Anglican communion who desire to be guided aright in their efforts to set forward the cause of Christian unity.” The Resolutions that follow were proposed by the Committee section that dealt with non-Episcopal Churches. They have been accepted without alteration by the Conference as a whole. They must be read with the appeal and interpreted in its light.

When this is done it will be seen that we have made an immense step forward. We have long believed that the two greatest needs of the Church to-day in facing reunion are a right conception of the Church and a true view of the validity of ministries. Many champions of reunion felt that this would arise in the process of discussion, and should rather be discovered as a conclusion from deliberation than set forth as a goal to be reached. Lambeth judged otherwise, and has told us very clearly in the appeal what its convictions are. “We acknowledge all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ,

and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the universal Church of Christ which is His Body." "The vision which rises before us is that of a Church, genuinely Catholic, loyal to all truth, and gathering into its fellowship all who profess and call themselves Christians," within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to the present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole body of Christ. "Within this unity Christian communions now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled. This means an adventure of good will and still more of faith, and nothing less is required than a new discovery of the creative resources of God. To this adventure we are convinced that God is now calling all the members of His Church."

"We believe that the visible unity of the Church will be found to involve the whole-hearted acceptance of—

The Holy Scriptures, as the record of God's revelation of Himself to man, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith, and the Creed commonly called Nicene, as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith, and either it or the Apostles' Creed as the Baptismal confession of belief.

The Divinely instituted Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion, as expressing for all the corporate life of the whole fellowship in and with Christ.

A ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body."

The Lambeth Quadrilateral becomes a Triangle, and the Conference argues that the Episcopate, exercised in a representative and constitutional manner, will prove to be the best instrument for maintaining the unity and continuity of the Church. The Christian family will have its Father in God, and the Conference looks forward to the day when, through the acceptance of the Episcopate, "we may all share in that grace which is pledged to the members of the whole body in the apostolic rite of the laying on of hands, and in the joy and fellowship of Eucharist in which as one family we may together, without any doubtfulness of mind, offer to the One Lord our worship and service." This is a crucial passage—every word of which must be well weighed, and is the source of the apparent contradictoriness of the wording of some of the Resolutions to the spirit of the appeal. Doubtfulness of mind as to the character of the unpledged grace of

the ministries of non-Episcopal Churches possessed the thought of some of the Bishops, and they therefore wish to safeguard against the consequences of this doubtfulness. The Bishops propose—

We believe that for all the truly equitable approach to union is by the way of mutual deference to one another's consciences. To this end, we who send forth this appeal would say that if the authorities of other communions should so desire, we are persuaded that, terms of union having been otherwise satisfactorily adjusted, Bishops and clergy of our communion would willingly accept from these authorities a form of commission or recognition which would commend our ministry to their congregations, as having its place in the one family life. It is not in our power to know how far this suggestion may be acceptable to those to whom we offer it. We can only say that we offer it in all sincerity as a token of our longing that all ministries of grace, theirs and ours, shall be available for the service of our Lord in a united Church.

It is our hope that the same motive would lead ministers who have not received it to accept a commission through Episcopal Ordination, as obtaining for them a ministry throughout the whole fellowship.

In so acting no one of us could possibly be taken to repudiate his past ministry. God forbid that any man should repudiate a past experience rich in spiritual blessings for himself and others. Nor would any of us be dishonouring the Holy Spirit of God, Whose call led us all to our several ministries, and Whose power enabled us to perform them. We shall be publicly and formally seeking additional recognition of a new call to wider service in a reunited Church, and imploring for ourselves God's grace and strength to fulfil the same.

The spirit of the appeal is truly Christian. There is no halting charity in its wording. It raises the whole Anglican position to a new plane, and breathes the promise of spring to all who look forward to the harvest.

The Resolutions, in so far as they emphasize the appeal, need not be considered by us, but the practical steps on the vital subject of inter-Communion require attention. No one can object to the regulations for the interchange of pulpits under authority, or to the instruction that forbids the refusal of Communion without the Bishop's sanction beforehand to a baptized person kneeling before the Lord's Table—unless he be excommunicate by name, or, in the canonical sense of the term, a cause of scandal to the faithful. But we are not sure as to there being an accepted interpretation of the statement which forbids Bishops from questioning the action of "any Bishop who, in the few years between the initiation and the completion of a definite scheme of union, shall countenance the irregularity of admitting to Communion the baptized but unconfirmed Communicant of the non-Episcopal congregations concerned in the scheme" read in connexion with the declaration "Nothing in these Resolutions is intended to indicate that the rule of Confirmation must

necessarily apply to the case of baptized persons who seek Communion under conditions which, in the Bishop's judgment, justify their admission thereto. "Tot episcopi tot sententiæ" will solve the difficulty. Taking all these Resolutions together, practical difficulties of admission to Communion in our Churches will not arise to any great extent.

"Is commissioning by a non-Episcopal Church equipollent to ordination?" is asked by non-Episcopalians when they read. "In accordance with the principle of Church Order set forth in the Preface of the Ordinal attached to the Book of Common Prayer, it cannot approve the celebration in Anglican Churches of the Holy Communion for members of the Anglican Church by ministers who have not been Episcopally ordained: and that it should be regarded as the general rule of the Church that Anglican communicants should receive Holy Communion only at the hands of ministers of their own Church, or of Churches in communion therewith." Is this an explicit prohibition of Anglicans receiving Communion in non-Episcopal Churches, or does it simply imply that Anglicans generally should communicate in their own Churches and receive the Communion from their own ministers, but may occasionally receive the Communion from the hands of those non-Episcopally ordained? To many it is as illogical as un-Christian to maintain that grace is conveyed by the non-Episcopally ordained to the members of non-Episcopal Churches, but is so doubtful that it cannot be pledged to members of Anglican Churches. Differentiated grace is abhorrent to Christian men, and this Resolution passed to satisfy the "doubts" of some members of the Conference.

A "common ministry" cannot be considered applicable to the whole body of Christians as long as Rome will not acknowledge Anglican orders. We are convinced that the Conference did not mean to question the validity of the ministry or the grace of the Sacraments of non-Episcopalians, and its general approval of the proposals during a time of transition, although silent concerning the continued right of the non-Episcopally ordained to administer Communion in congregations that have not possessed an Episcopal ministry, implies that it casts no slur upon the validity of the Communion in these Churches. The freedom granted to local Churches to plan reunion is an important step which will facilitate developments in many lands.

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(To be continued.)