

## THE SIXTH LAMBETH CONFERENCE, 1920.

BY THE REV. THOMAS J. PULVERTAFT, M.A.

### III.

NO statement of the attitude of the Conference towards the great and pressing theological problems raised by Modern thought has been made, if we except the emphasis laid on the "whole-hearted acceptance of the Holy Scriptures as the record of Divine revelation and the rule and ultimate standard of faith and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith and either it or the Apostles Creed as the Baptismal Confession of belief." We think the Conference has acted wisely, for no greater mistake can be made than to attempt to effect a reconciliation between Christianity and the passing phases of scientific and philosophical thought. If men will "whole-heartedly" accept the position established by the unique and final authority of the Bible and the sufficiency of the two Creeds, we can well permit diversity of thought on other matters. Hasty denunciation of incomplete truth—for that is what current thought embodies—may very easily pass into misinterpretation of essential truth. We hold that all truth is of God and that in the past much evil has been done by untimely anathematizing what has been imperfectly understood and by the partial setting forth of the Christian Faith in a desire to preserve it against attacks that are directed against only one aspect of it. We are aware that this attitude of the Conference has been criticized, but the criticism has been due to a misapprehension of the functions of the Conference. We have no great affection for repeated restatements of the faith that has an eternal setting and does not vary with the moods of thought induced by the growth of human knowledge.

Very wisely the Conference has discussed certain "movements outside the Church." We confess we looked forward to a pronouncement that would not command attention, as the Bishops are not specialists on psychology or occultism. Our fears were groundless, for the Report on "Spiritualism, Christian Science and Theosophy" is one of the best expositions of the strength of their

appeal to certain types of mind and of their dangerous incidence on spiritual life and character. It is an open secret that the Bishop of Oxford (Dr. Burge) deeply impressed the Conference by one of the most masterly speeches delivered at its full sessions, and his hand may be seen in the Report which deals with elusive beliefs and undetermined views. All these movements have in common a reaction against materialism. They have been born either in surroundings of a materialistic character or in environments that are prone to mysticism. Spiritualism has its roots in the conviction that man does not all die, and has close affinities to a view of the relation between soul and body that is materialistic. It has never got into the plane of true spiritual contact with God, and owes its strength to the belief that the life beyond is a mere continuance of the life lived in the flesh. Christian Science is founded on a misinterpretation of the idealism that was current in philosophical circles some thirty years ago, and a dualism of mind and matter that no longer possesses the mind of the best thinkers. Theosophy makes its appeal to the sub-conscious, that somehow asserts itself in many minds with a vague assent to the incredible and a faith in an esoteric revelation that cannot be put to the test. But all three are opposed to the rigid self-containedness of the mechanical view of the universe. This is a matter for congratulation, for it is a proof that the human mind cannot feel satisfied with a philosophy which ignores what makes a philosophy possible—mind over against the objects it comprehends. But they are none the less a cause of anti-Christian propaganda, for all three contain elements that are opposed to the fulness of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

The Committee was faced by the difficulty of understanding what is taught by these movements. Those of us who have given time and thought to their consideration have found ourselves bewildered by the different connotations given to essential terms, and have been tripped at times by reading Christian meanings into words used in an esoteric sense. Light is thrown on them by history, for no one of these movements is the child of our age. Human nature has always been given to speculation, and the essential problems investigated have been identical. Therefore it is only to be expected that at certain epochs in the past the same approach was made to their discussion, and similar solutions were found.

'None of these movements finds its centre in the central revelation of the Christian Faith, namely, the Incarnation of our Lord, as the unique fact of human history and the means as well as the manifestation of redemption. Spiritualism practised as a religious cult appears generally to be independent of it: Christian Science seems to allegorize it, or to allow it to fade into a false mysticism: Theosophy loses sight of it in a fusion of various religious systems.' We do not know where we can find anything more illuminating than this short summary, and students will, by bearing it in mind, learn far more of the real character of the movements after a few weeks' study of their text-books than they can discover by reading many other volumes.

Warning is given against the loss of self-control by surrendering the mind and will to the influence of the Unconscious or to the authority of mediums. This is needed, for even those who have but little acquaintance with the subject know how great has been the injury caused by such self-surrender. There are very few perfectly balanced minds—is it too much to say we all have our mental Achilles heel?—and there are great numbers of unbalanced minds that are specially attracted by these movements. It is among this class that their hold is greatest and their evil influence most apparent. We have seen it in adherents of Spiritualism, Christian Science and Theosophy. It has led to the abandonment of faith in Christ, and to instability of mind and character. Men and women of considerable intellectual acuteness have been carried to extremes and have drifted to moral instability as well as to open denial of the root facts of our faith. The Committee was aware of this, and by the studiously moderate terms of its Report has done much to save others from the evils incidental to these one-sided speculations. On the other hand, full recognition is given to the truth mingled with the error, and shows how Christianity supplies all that is true in these systems without the errors that are attached to them.

Without any disrespect to the members of the Committee that dealt with "Problems of Marriage and Sexual Morality," we believe they would be the first to acknowledge that whatever their collective influence may be, their special authority to speak on the subject was not greater than that of any other of the Committees. Unfortunately it is open to the criticism that a large proportion

of its prominent members are celibates, and therefore are not the men best suited to commend its decisions to the general membership of the Church. They were obviously aware of the delicacy of their position, for they ask that their recommendations " may be regarded, not as the outcome of cold ecclesiasticism, but as the warm-hearted effort of experience to guide and to sustain alike those who work for souls, those who long to see nations fit for great world responsibilities, and those who know that they cannot fulfil God's purpose unless they have learned, whether in married or single life, to be straight and clean before God and man." No one will quarrel with the contention that the Church has a code of morals as imperious in its claims as the rule of faith given in the creeds. But as many wish to make part of the Catholic Faith much that is not contained in the Creeds, so some have their own ideas as to what should and should not be the moral law in all its details. The family must be preserved at all costs, our bodies must be treated as the temples of the Holy Ghost, and there are very grave evils to be faced in the social conditions of our day that can only be arrested by the power and principles of the Gospel.

Divorce is an evil, but adultery is a greater evil, and the condemnation of the Gospel is against adultery. Divorce enters only incidentally into the teaching of our Lord, and we can never understand the many textual and other problems involved unless we bear that regulative fact in mind. Did our Lord, contrary to His usual practice, legislate on marriage by laying down rules instead of propounding principles? Among members of the Conference we know that differences of opinion existed on this point. We also are aware that the two views on St. Matthew v. 32 and xix. 9 found their advocates in the discussions, and in consequence we have the Resolution which lays down the principle of the indissolubility of marriage and admits " the right of a national or regional Church within our Communion to deal with cases which fall within the exception mentioned in the record of our Lord's words in St. Matthew's Gospel, under provisions which such Church may lay down." It adds that " in every country the Church should be free to bear witness to the Christian standard through its powers of administration and discipline exercised in relation to its own members." We know that in England a certain section of the clergy refuse to acknowledge the right of the re-marriage of the innocent

party, although the Church has not thought fit to excommunicate the clergyman who takes advantage of the secular law by solemnizing the marriage. In some dioceses he will have to bear the frown of the Bishop, in other dioceses he may be under no condemnation. The Lambeth Conference leaves it an open question whether or not the innocent party should be re-married or admitted to communion after re-marriage. No one after this pronouncement can say that the Church has spoken definitely through its Bishops on the question.

As regards Resolution 68, we may comment that it is capable of being read both ways and was probably intended to be so. There is evidence in the wording of the Report and in the Resolution that there was an acute conflict of opinion, and we do not think that the treatment of the whole subject has been marked by the wisdom and knowledge we had a right to expect from the Conference. On the rest of this section of the Report and Resolutions we need only say the utterances deserve the most careful consideration. We hope that the appeal for greater interest in rescue and preventive work will be followed throughout the Communion. No work is more Christ-like or more disappointing to those who expect immediate results, but the blessing of God rests upon it, and that is the main point. Wise words are said on the importance of giving children sex instruction. The responsibility is thrown on parents, who are told to prepare themselves for this duty. They will only be too glad to do so if they know how, and we suggest that the Men's Society and the Mothers' Union should arrange for occasional gatherings at which advice can be given. Nothing is more difficult than to avoid feeding a sense of pruriency, and yet many find it hard to be explicit without verging on the inadvisable.

The Report on the Duty of the Church in regard to Industrial and Social Problems bears the marks of having been written by one who knows the subject. It could very easily have been made a party manifesto, a bowing in the house of King Demos; but it has avoided the danger and gives us a balanced view of existing conditions and the Christian attitude towards them. We are passing through a crisis in our industrial organization, and the time has not yet come for predicting what the final outcome will be. Mere selfishness or force on the part of employers or employed will not stand the examination and approval of Christian men. The interests of all depend on the captains of industry working for and

with their men. In the war it was the duty of every officer to know his men and to sympathize with their conditions of home life. The growth of industrialism has led men to be considered hands, and women to be looked upon as mere cogs in the great machine. That must disappear, and those who lead as well as those who follow directions must both learn to respect one another and co-operate. Every man and woman ought to have a place for himself or herself in which the best possible work can be done and remunerated accordingly. God has not given us unequal powers for the purpose of inutilizing them when they are above the standard of the least competent. He has not wished employers to have powers that make or mar happiness to be used in an arbitrary manner. The Committee fixed its eyes on the personality of all engaged in industry, and saw the eternal worth of men and women, their common brotherhood and responsibility. Neither they nor we can see the way out of the wage system, but it ought to be administered with justice.

The evils of unemployment, absence of leisure, underpay, ill protection against accidents are noted. But we miss a reference to the most striking fact in our great industrial struggles. Those classes which have the best security of tenure, the greatest opportunity for leisure, the best pay and the most careful guardianship against accidents are precisely those that have embarked in strikes on a large scale. While co-operation is the goal at which we should aim, we hope that this does not in the mind of the Committee imply a condemnation of competition in every shape and form. Most of us are so weak that we do not always do our best unless we are in competition. Experience proves that this has been always the case and probably will be. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in men doing their best and by example urging others to do their best, and in spite of much that has been recently written on the subject we are convinced that in a world such as we inhabit there is nothing unchristian in men co-operating for the good of the whole and doing their utmost in competition for their own benefit as well as for the public well-being.

We heartily endorse the recommendation that "the Church is bound to use its influence to remove inhuman or oppressive conditions of labour in all parts of the world, especially among the weaker races, and to give its full support to those clauses in the League of

Nations Covenant which aim at raising by international agreement the status of industrial workers in all countries."

The Conference by expressing sympathy with American prohibition showed that it is in line with the best opinion of our day and that the Church cannot afford to stand outside world movements even if it does not see its way to support in every part of the world the particular steps taken in some countries. Conscious of the reproach levelled against itself for countenancing evils, the Conference concluded with the remark that the Church must get rid of its own abuses, promote brotherhood and bear witness by the lives of all its members to the principles it supports. There is a measured and well-balanced tone in all the references to industrial and social problems. The Conference was more concerned with the ideal of Christ than with the favourite remedies of a one-sided character that are so popular to-day. "Put first your service to the community and your fellowship in that service. Do your work heartily and keenly, carefully as to God, because you are benefiting His children. Have good will, and expect others to have it. Rearrange your mutual relations, as men co-operating in fellowship, not competing in suspicion and hostility." This is well said and contains more wisdom and sacred guidance than are to be found in many books dealing with Christianity and economic questions. Only by frank reliance in the Spirit of God and by determination to follow His guidance is there any hope for the recovery from the effects of war in our psychological and material attitude to every-day work and duties. The world still reels under the shock of war. Men think wildly and forget their duty to God and one another. A new selfishness masks itself as brotherhood, and right values can only be ascertained by using the Law of Christ as the determining factor in deciding what is right and what is wrong. That is the lesson taught by the Committee presided over by the Bishop of Lichfield and by the Resolutions and Encyclical on "Industry and Commerce."

Was the Conference worth while? On an average Bishops have been kept from their spheres of duty for three months, during which they devoted five earnest weeks to reflexion, debate and solemn questioning of themselves and the importance of the problems submitted to them. We believe that the reports will have a wide influence on the future of the Anglican Communion. Its missionary

work will tend more and more to come under the control of Central Church Bodies, as distinct from Societies; its Liturgies will develop on controlled lines that may have a grave effect upon the unity of the Communion as a whole; and its new organization may very easily cause friction that is now happily avoided. But these are small points compared with the notable utterance on Reunion. We may interpret differently the Resolutions and their limitations. The narrow ecclesiastic will find in them support for his exclusiveness; the warm-hearted Christian will discover in them nothing that can prevent his manifesting his brotherhood with all who love the Saviour and follow His teaching. The Lambeth Fathers deliberately avoided the danger of defining practical steps, until Rome be reconciled to reason and scripture. They fixed their eyes and hearts on the Churches of the Reformation, and we are convinced that the spirit of the appeal will work on hearts and minds, until barriers are broken down. The estrangements of centuries will be ended by the Church of Christ reuniting itself in the conscious possession of a spiritual unity, that under the guidance of the Divine Spirit must find outward expression. May God hasten that day!

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## SOME LATTER-DAY HERESIES.

### V. MILLENIAL DAWNISM OR RUSSELLISM.

BY THE REV. E. L. LANGSTON, M.A.

**T**HE so-called "Pastor" C. T. Russell, founder of "Millennial Dawnism" in his early years was of quite humble life, having had no special training in the higher schools of education. He certainly had no training at any university and knew nothing whatever of Greek or Hebrew. "Pastor" Russell was never ordained and belonged to no recognized Church. In 1879 he married, but his wife eventually divorced him. "Pastor" Russell advertised himself as the President of the "International Bible Students' Association" and Pastor of the Brooklyn (N.Y.) Tabernacle, the