

THE LAMBETH APPEAL.

HOW WE CAN BEST RESPOND TO AND FOLLOW IT UP.

BY THE REV. W. ELLIOT BRADLEY, M.A.,
Vicar of Crowthwaite and Rural Dean of Keswick.

NO one can read the Report, Resolutions and Appeal of the Lambeth Conference on Reunion without being filled with a deep sense of gratitude to God for the wonderful unanimity which was obtained and for the Christian spirit of brotherliness and fellowship which it breathes. And this sense of gratitude gives rise most naturally to a great longing and desire to contribute something towards the realization of that most necessary ideal. It seems to be the opinion and testimony of all those who were present that in answer to the prayers of God's people the Holy Spirit moved over that assembly and that His power was really felt. To His unifying influence and operation we must ascribe the remarkable findings to which their deliberations led them.

Reunion with the great historic episcopal churches of the East and West must be kept before us as the ultimate goal in any scheme of reunion if the vision of one Catholic Church is to be realized, and I believe that no Church of West or East, historically, doctrinally and ecclesiastically, is more suitable as a rallying ground (from the historic, doctrinal and ecclesiastical point of view) than our own beloved Church of England. But reunion with the great non-conformist churches in our own land (in our colonies, dependency, and protectorates)—what is known as Home Reunion—must be our immediate concern and objective. For the accomplishment of this object, I venture to believe and maintain that no school of thought in the Church of England is more suited as a rallying ground than the Evangelical. We are one with them on the great Fundamentals of the Faith, e.g., the Incarnation, Atonement, Centrality of the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension, Justification by Faith. Like ourselves they do not exalt the Sacraments to the belittlement of the preaching of the Word. Like ourselves they regard the errors, casuistry, intrigues and the whole system of Roman Catholicism as inimical to true religion and to the best interests of the State and of our beloved land. They are as apprehensive as ourselves of the

tendency of the extreme party in the Church of England to Romanize the Church of England, because their avowed object is to bring about Reunion with Rome at Rome's price, and that is our renunciation of the Reformation settlement and our complete submission to the Pope of Rome. Reunion with Rome on those terms is impossible, and were it ever seriously mooted it would split the Church of England in two and put back Home Reunion *sine die*.

I shall therefore confine this paper as to how we can best respond to the Lambeth Conference Appeal with a view to Home Reunion. Before doing so let us remind ourselves what the Spirit saith to the churches on this great subject of Unity through the Scriptures.

St. Matthew vi. 33 : " Seek ye first the Kingdom of God." Had the Church always made this her prime object, the unity of the Church might have been maintained. This injunction faithfully carried out would have made for unity. The Kingdom can only be successfully realized by a united Church. St. Mark x. 42-44 : Our Lord after reminding His disciples that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, tells them " it is not so among you ; but whoever would become great among you shall be your minister or servant." This is another injunction which, if the Church had faithfully adhered to, would have made for unity. The Church would then not have established or acquiesced in an Autocratic Hierarchy or Episcopate, and much of the sad history of the divisions of christendom would never have been written. St. Luke ix. 49-50 : Here Christ sanctions diversity of operations in His name for the one Cause. St. John xvii. 21 : The Lord's prayer for the unity of His Church.

Acts iv. 31-35 : A description of the unity of the Church. Acts xv. deals with the averting of schism by apostolic consultation, resulting in a concession and an exhortation to the Gentile churches conveyed in a fraternal letter drawn up in the spirit of love.

Romans xii. 9-21 : An exhortation to love, meekness, one-mindedness and peaceable living. Romans xiv. 19 : An exhortation to follow after the things which make for peace and mutual edification. 1 Corinthians xii. 4-22 : The analogy of the one body, many members and one head, with the one Body of Christ having its many members, controlled and operated by the one Spirit. Ephesians iv. 1-6, 13-16 : The unity of the spirit kept in the bond of peace with an exhortation to unity. Philippians ii. 2-4 : An exhortation

to unity. Colossians iii. 8-15 : The " new man " knows no barriers of race, class or custom. An exhortation to the practice of those virtues which make for unity, especially those of love and peace. I Thessalonians iv. 9-10 : An exhortation to increase more and more in brotherly love. James iii. 14-18 : A warning against strife, because it makes not for unity but confusion and every evil work. I Peter ii. 1-5, 17 : An exhortation to put away malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking. He reminds his readers that they are built up a spiritual house on the one foundation Jesus Christ. They are to " Honour all men, love the brotherhood." I Peter iii. 8-12 : An exhortation to unity, forbearance, love, goodness and peace. I John iii. 11, 18-23 ; iv. 11-21 : Exhortation to brotherly love.

From these various references we are not left in doubt as to the mind of God in this matter. And judging from the findings of the various conferences culminating with the Lambeth Conference, we know that the minds of all men of goodwill in the churches is one with the mind of God on this matter of Reunion and Unity. And this oneness of mind is without doubt the result of the operation of the One Holy Spirit moving over the chaos of our unhappy divisions. It is an evidence, if we need one, that the Spirit is striving with men, bringing home to their consciences the sin of acquiescing in divisions, the grievous harm that these divisions are doing to the cause of Christ, and working in them and with them that they may break down the barriers that divide and draw them together in love as brethren.

This fact and the testimony of God's Word that a united Church is His plan and purpose, are two powerful incentives to our working and praying for Reunion, but there are two more. One is that the divisions of Christendom are weakening the effectiveness of the Church's witness to the world and hindering the successful evangelization of the world. The whole world will only be evangelized and won for Christ by the whole Church praying, working and witnessing—unitedly in the spirit of love, obedience, sacrifice and service. And the other is the opportunity that the churches in union have of saving the country. " The Christian churches have now a great opportunity," says Dean Inge—" the last, perhaps, that an offended Providence and a justly impatient public will allow them—of showing that they can put aside intestine divisions and their preoccupations with matters of small account and unite to save the country. . . . If the moral forces of the nation could be organized and focussed by the

churches acting together, the conscience of the whole community might be shamed into penitence, and the politicians, who, it is fair to remember, can only play the cards which are dealt to them, might feel strong enough to resist the wreckers of civilization" (*Times*, September 7, 1920). "If Christian witness is to be fully effective it must be borne by nothing short of the whole body of Christian people" (Lambeth Conference resolution). "This hits the nail on the head," as Dean Inge says.

Let me suggest a few ways in which we Clergy can respond to the appeal and follow up the Lambeth Conference resolutions on Reunion. I will place them under three heads: I. *Prayer*. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." We shall do more by prayer than by anything else, for Prayer is a force which sets in motion the power that makes for Righteousness, Peace and Love, and these are the foundations of Unity. Therefore, I would urge that we make Reunion a matter of personal prayer, and get our people to do so. Let us make it a subject of corporate prayer in the congregations and in the prayer meetings. If we issue subjects for prayer in our magazines let us make Reunion one of them. Let us pray that the appeal of the Bishops may be met and responded to by our Nonconformist brethren in the same spirit of brotherly love in which it was issued. Let us pray that the Spirit of God may move mightily and effectively in their hearts and minds as He evidently did in those of the Bishops as they prayed and took counsel together.

II. *Propaganda*. (i) We should draw the attention of our Church people and the Nonconformists in our parishes to the Appeal and Report. We can do it by the spoken word in Church and by the printed page in the magazine. We should get them to buy the Report and read it, especially our Church officers and sidesmen and Church Councillors. In poor parishes it would be worth while to buy a few copies out of the offertories and circulate them among the people. I would urge the issue of a simplified form of the Report for this purpose. (ii) We should print the Resolutions and extracts from the Report in the magazine. This could be extended over a few months to get them all in. (iii) We should form Conference Circles to read, study and discuss the Appeal and Report. (iv) We should preach a few sermons on the subject.

III. *Action*. (i) Let us form where possible a branch of the Christian Social Service Crusade on interdenominational lines and

make it as far as possible a lay movement. This will help to promote fellowship and co-operation in matters that relate to the welfare of the community. The public will then see the churches working together for the public good (*vide* Resolution 13). (ii) Let us promote interdenominational prayer meetings on the lines of the Evangelical World Alliance which promotes the Week of Prayer in the New Year. (iii) Let us promote interdenominational open-air services encouraging the lay people of the churches to lead and assist in speaking and singing. (iv) Let us encourage attendance by invitation at one another's annual congregational gatherings. (v) Let us promote and encourage confraternals between clergy and ministers to discuss the Lambeth Conference resolutions and see how far it is possible to carry out Resolutions v., vi., vii., viii., ix., x., xi., xii., xiii. (vi) Let us visit and speak at one another's missionary meetings, recognition of new Ministers' services and meetings. (vii) Let us in our parishes set ourselves to discover communicants among the nonconformists who would wish to avail themselves of Resolution 12 ii., and submit their names to the Bishop for his approval and sanction. (viii) Let us in our gatherings initiate and foster the interchange of pulpits within a given area between the clergy and ministers who are ready to make this move towards an ideal of reunion such as is described in the Appeal, and get the Bishop's sanction for the working of such a scheme (*vide* Res. 12 A i.).

It has often been said that the lay people of our own and of non-episcopal churches are more opposed to Reunion than are the clergy and ministers. If this is so, we must do all in our power by promoting and fostering brotherly intercourse and fellowship, by conferences and co-operation, to heal old wounds, remove antagonisms and clear away prejudices. Reunion of the whole Church and the Vision of one Catholic Church must be our aim and object. Towards this end we must keep moving, though we may have to move slowly, lest we do more harm than good by hurrying our own people to run in this matter before they have learnt to walk. While working for Reunion in our own area we must not lose sight of the great whole, and above all we must move forward in dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God, be led every step of the way by Him if we would truly realize the Vision, translate our purpose into achievement and attain to the glorious Ideal.

W. ELLIOT BRADLEY.