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“LAMBETH AND REUNION.”¹

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

WE are met at the outset of our inquiry into recent developments of the Lambeth pronouncements by the question, “Is it not wrong to investigate critically the findings of two hundred and fifty Bishops brought from all over the world, when they tell us they have seen a vision and have been drawn together by a Power greater than themselves? Have we not been asked to wait before discussing, to pray before criticizing?” Even the strongest advocates of the claims of the Lambeth Conference to speak with an authority due to the marvellous spirit that was evoked during the discussions, cannot attribute to it as much importance as we pay General Councils of the Church. The Anglican teaching on the inerrancy of these bodies is left beyond doubt in the Article which declares they “may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining to God.” The number of Bishops is no guarantee of the permanence of their work or of their convictions. In A.D. 400 there were no fewer than 600 Bishops in North West Africa, and their Conciliar pronouncements are not universally accepted, and of their work outside the written pages not a trace remains. God has promised to them who ask Him His Spirit to guide them into all truth. His Son is present wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name. We believe with all our heart that both promises are fulfilled, but we know by experience that the conclusions of General Councils even have not always been in all respects trustworthy and final. Their chief value lies in their witness to the belief of the Church of their own time. They attached anathemas to their conclusions, and as this age will not have anything to do with anathemas, the modern custom of either an individual, or a group, or a Council convinced that it has reached right conclusions, is to claim to have seen a vision and thereby to be exempt from the criticism that falls to the lot of less convinced bodies. No one can have a higher opinion than the writer has of the devotion and the honest search for truth of the Lambeth Bishops. He has too many friends among them to have any doubt on this point, but he respect-

¹*Lambeth and Reunion*, 1920. By the Bishops of Peterborough, Zanzibar and Hereford. (London, S.P.C.K., 3s.)

fully dissents from the claim made by many, that the decisions are to be accepted as the fruit of the Spirit of God working inerrantly through them in Council.

After all the Anglican Communion only represents about one-seventh of the children of the Reformed Churches. It represents numerically a much smaller proportion of the Roman and Greek Churches, and the Decrees of the Vatican Council nominally speak for at least ten times as many Episcopal Christians as were represented at Lambeth. Truth does not always lie with the big battalions, and it is our sacred duty to test all utterances in the light of Divine revelation, history and experience. If Churchmen will not fully and frankly discuss the Appeal, Reports and Resolutions of the Conference, other people will. In this connexion we may quote the words of Dr. Salmon on the dictum of St. Francis de Sales, who maintains that "the arguments take place only in the porch, the final decisions in the sanctuary." "This appears to me to put a severe strain on the faith of those who receive it. We might accept the pretensions of a professional accountant without dreaming of examining his work. But if we heard him performing his additions in the process, six and four are eleven, and five are thirteen, and seven are twenty-four, how could belief in him be restored? Who could have the face to say, It is true not a single column in my preliminary calculations is added correctly, but you may rely implicitly that I never fail somehow or another to bring out the correct sum total?" This can only be deemed correct when, like a schoolboy who knows the only possible answer, he manages to get it in some unconventional manner during the last few summaries of his results!

The problem presented to the Lambeth Fathers may be stated in this fashion. "To-day in opposition to the declared mind of God His Church is divided. Every part of the Church acknowledges the necessity of a Common Faith in God, belief in the Scriptures of Truth, acceptance of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as means of grace and of a Ministry which ministers the Word and Sacraments to His people. How can we bring together these divided groups of Christian men and women? We can only do so by determining what is the Highest Common Measure imposed on us by loyalty to the revealed mind of God. The Ministry is the crucial point, for while all accept the first three requirements,

all do not accept a common ministry, and it is therefore essential that we must have a ministry of a type accepted by all, which will enable us to worship and serve God together without any doubtfulness of mind." The need for fellowship which God wills has never been so clearly expressed by a great ecclesiastical Assembly as by the Lambeth Conference. Every member of the Body felt this, and their conclusion was reached with practical unanimity as that which by common consent—although differently interpreted—expressed the mind of God as revealed to the Bishops.

Behind the Reports and the Resolutions, as well as the Appeal, lies a theory which to many seems novel. Unlike the Church of Rome which considers the Anglican rites (except Baptism) to be no Sacraments, the Appeal does not call in question for a moment "the spiritual reality" of the Ministries of those Communion which do not possess the Episcopate. "On the contrary we thankfully acknowledge that these ministries have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace." These words mark an advance in official Anglican thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for which we cannot be too grateful. They are a return to the thought of the days when the Church of England recognized herself to be in communion with the non-Episcopal Continental Churches. They are the most hopeful feature of the whole Appeal, for they provide a basis for brotherly discussion and exchange of views that will do more to make for reunion than any other words that have fallen from their pen. We thank God for their frankness and believe that they have cleared away a barrier of stumbling stones. The Resolutions, however, with the disapproval of the celebration of the Holy Communion in Anglican churches for members of the Anglican Church by ministers who have not been episcopally ordained, and the assertion "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," are reminiscent of the Roman treatment of the Uniate Churches, whose members though in communion with the Pope are deprived of the privilege of reciprocal communion.

This leads to the remark that although the Pope is not in communion with the Greek Church the validity of its orders is not questioned by Rome. They are schismatic, not invalid, as ours

are said to be, and therefore a different problem arises when the relation of the Greek to the Roman Church is considered. Underneath the whole difficulty in the relation of the Anglican Communion to the non-Episcopal Churches lies the character of the Ministry. Many efforts have been made to show that the Lambeth documents have made no pronouncement on this subject—the burning question of Apostolic Succession. The three Bishops have no doubts on this matter when in *Lambeth and Reunion* they expound the situation:

“The Appeal asserts that the bishop stands for continuity. The bishop is by the nature of his office a successor in an unbroken line of witnesses to the Christian religion. From the Apostles’ time there have been officers in the Church appointed to preside over the local Churches, to hand on the Gospel story, and to maintain the family tradition of faith and worship. This office has been kept filled down the ages in unbroken succession. The Church’s rule has always been that no one can hold the office who has not been appointed to it by the laying-on of the hands of some one already holding it.” (The writers seem to have forgotten the Alexandrian custom of appointing bishops.)

We quote the interpretation of the Lambeth documents given by the Dean of Wells—one of the most acute minds in our Communion:

“The Church must have some doctrinal interpretation of “the fact of episcopacy,” and that interpretation is found firmly but moderately enunciated in our Ordinal, especially in the words used in the act of consecration. The “office” is committed, and the Holy Ghost is given, by the laying-on of hands. We must be quite plain on this point. An episcopacy which does not connote the transmission of office from the Apostles and through them from Christ Himself, and at the same time the giving and receiving of the spiritual gift which is required for the due exercise of that office—an episcopacy in short—which is little else than an elective magistracy—is not what is meant, or ever has been meant, by what we know as the Historic Episcopate. The important matter is not expressly dealt with in any part of the Lambeth Report. But two quotations will serve to show that the position of our Church in regard to it is left in no doubt. The opening words of the Encyclical letter are these:

“We who speak are bearers of the sacred commission of the

ministry given by our Lord through His Apostles to the Church."

And again, the Report of the Sub-Committee which considered "Relation to, and Reunion with, Episcopal Churches" speaks thus (p. 148): "We need at the present time not only or chiefly to afford to the Easterns historical evidence of the handing down of our ministry, but also to explain the doctrinal position held by our Communion. It is in particular of the first importance, in order to remove Oriental misconceptions, to make it clear from our formularies that we regard Ordination as conferring grace, and not only as a mere setting apart to an ecclesiastical office."

It is possible to put another interpretation on the Appeal and the associated documents, but it is plain that the view taken by the three Bishops and Dean Armitage Robinson is one that was adopted by a considerable section of the Bishops.

As is well known the vision of the Conference was of a reunited Church consisting of groups preserving their own identity and particular customs, enjoying a common ministry which would bring all into communion with one another. We have to look for the source of this view of the Church which has in it elements that would have been considered, to say the least, novel some years past. Twenty-six years ago the Church of England was deeply agitated by the "intrusion" into a Roman Catholic Diocese of three Irish Bishops who consecrated a Spaniard, Bishop of the native Reformed Church. It was then laid down that this action was contrary to Catholic principles, as there could only be one Catholic Bishop in the same place. Much time and learning were wasted on the discussion, and those of us who were compelled to study the by-ways of ecclesiastical history were impressed by the contrast between the ancient and the modern Christian world. The futility of applying old-time Canons to modern instances was proved when it was found that their application practically made the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States an "intruder" in the great majority of its home Dioceses, while its missionary Dioceses in the American Continent, the Islands and the Philippine Islands were condemned by the principles supposed to be inviolate in the practice of Catholic Christendom: We forgot also the strange position of the Diocese of Gibraltar, and it is interesting to know that probably its greatest Diocesan (Dr. Collins) held that jurisdiction is primarily over persons and secondarily over places. That view

lies at the basis of the administrative side of the Lambeth theory. There would be a group synod of each group. The local Bishops representing the several groups would sit in synod and this common synod would deal with all matters affecting the whole fellowship and mediate where necessary between group and group. "Each group would retain its own characteristic mode of self-determination. The Conference was quite clear that each group must be autonomous, exercising its autonomy in the way it likes best. Provided the whole fellowship be not harmed by its acts, each group would remain self-governed. There is no conceivable reason why the Presbyterian, or the Congregational, or any other mode of autonomy should not be preserved within a group. The bishops expressly desired that all should bring into the one fellowship the riches of their past experience." We see here conditions similar to those in some continental cities where American Episcopal Churches are under the jurisdiction of their own Bishops and Anglican Churches under their Bishops, and the Churches are in full communion with one another. The difficulties that would arise from this group system can be overcome with good will and brotherliness, and they need not concern us further.

But it is important to discover the source of the ideal of a common ministry of an Episcopal character and what it involves. Two missionary Bishops took a leading part in the Reunion discussions. Every one was impressed by their earnestness and passion for reunion. Both Bishops looked as much to reunion with Rome and the East as with our non-Episcopal brethren. Both have a hatred of what is called Pan-Protestantism. Both have given outside the Conference expression to their convictions. We are therefore able to see for ourselves what is involved. The Bishop of Zanzibar made many friends and no enemy at Lambeth. His transparent zeal for God and personal charm won all hearts. Those who expected to find him cast-iron *intransigence* personified, discovered him to be a delightfully human person with a real passion for reunion. At the Kikuyu Conference in 1918 he was present and put forward an alternative scheme. He secured in the addendum to the constitution of the Alliance the clause, "In the meantime we adopt the basis of alliance, not as the ideal, but as the utmost possible, in view of our unhappy divisions. And the members of the alliance pledge themselves not to rest until they can all share

one ministry." The Bishop of Uganda describes his attitude as, broadly speaking, "Secure the absolute essentials, and in everything else allow to each the widest possible liberty." We need only quote the following clauses from his proposals to show their fundamental identity with those accepted by Lambeth. "Episcopacy need not involve us in a monarchical, diocesan episcopate. Many bishops may serve one local Church. The bishops should be freely elected, and should rule with the clergy and laity. Nor is it essential that we hold any one *view* of episcopacy on the doctrinal side, provided the *fact* of its existence and continuance be admitted." "Non-episcopal bodies accepting episcopacy would remain in full exercise of their own constitutions working parallel with the present episcopal Churches." This is the foundation conception of the Lambeth vision, and we are told by Bishop Willis (Uganda): "The bishop assured the conference that, if the non-episcopal bodies would accept some such proposals as these, and consent to some episcopal consecration and ordination so as to enable them to minister by invitation in episcopal churches, he for his part would gladly come before any of their congregations, and accept any form of popular recognition." He could not move from his own position, or allow doubt to be cast upon his ministerial authority received by ordination and consecration. In *Lambeth and Reunion* the three Bishops—of whom the Bishop of Zanzibar is one—say, "They claim to be Catholic bishops in the same sense in which the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris is a Catholic bishop. None the less they are aware that possible objection to their ministry might be raised in Eastern or Roman congregations. To meet these objections they declare themselves ready to accept from Constantinople and Rome such a form of commission as would make their ministry acceptable within the other groups. They do not refuse ordination, provided they be not asked to deny their present orders. They say frankly in effect that (were all other terms of union satisfactorily settled) they would humble themselves, out of deference to Eastern and Roman consciences, to receive what the East and Rome might wish to give them. It is not likely that the Orthodox Churches would wish to act upon this suggestion. It is almost certain that Rome would. In any case the bishops at Lambeth have made this offer. To them it is a sign of their sincerity. They really desire unity. All have sinned in the matter of disunion. The English bishops would

lead the way in confessing their share of the sin." If this means anything it implies that the Bishops believe Rome cannot give them anything they have not already. "Other terms of union satisfactorily settled" is a phrase that covers much. Do the non-Episcopal ministers claim that they are Catholic Priests or Bishops in the sense the Bishop of Zanzibar claims to be a Catholic Bishop? We ask this as an introduction to the Bishop of Bombay's answer to the query.

Dr. Palmer (Bishop of Bombay) has written an inspiring volume, *The Great Church Awakes*. Like the Bishop of Zanzibar he made a great impression on his Lambeth brethren, and reading his book we find the theory of groups expounded with freshness and vigour. He says much that all will admit, and he is specially frank in his discussion of the Sacraments in non-Episcopal Churches. "There seems no object in continuing to talk of invalidity. God's will is constant. He wills to give men grace through the Sacraments. The first and governing expression of His will is the institution of two Sacraments by His Son. A Sacrament can only be really invalid if God refuses to send forth His grace in it. It is hard to me to conceive any reason sufficient to cause such a refusal on God's part, except a deliberate intention on the Church's and recipient's part *not to obey His Son*, that is an intention *to do otherwise than as the Lord Jesus commanded*." "I cannot dismiss all Eucharists celebrated by ministers, not episcopally ordained, as invalid, because not implying the will to obey the Lord and do what He commanded to be done." These sentences, and many similar might be quoted, are a welcome contrast to the Roman Catholic view of Anglican Sacraments. We are indeed glad to place them on record as coming from a man of Dr. Palmer's recognized learning and leadership.

It is desirable to state in his own words Dr. Palmer's idea of the contrast between the non-Episcopal and his ideal of ordination. This is the real crucial point from which there is no escape. "The Free Churches (a) *recognize* a gift of God to a man which he knows by an inward call that he has received, and (b) give him licence or jurisdiction that he may exercise it within the Church and as a representative of the Church. To the Great Church ordination has meant much more than this. These aspects have not been absent from its idea of ordination, but they have been subordinate to it. The characteristic meaning attributed to ordination has been (a)

that God at the prayer of the Church gives a gift of the Holy Spirit—an empowering grace, which the man most likely did not possess before—to enable him to fulfil the commission to a certain ministry ; (b) that at the same time Christ through the Bishop gives a commission to the man to perform a certain definite ministry in the Church ; and (c) that the body of ministers who are already possessed of that commission, pass on, through their representatives to the man ordained a share of their God-given authority. Ordination incidentally gives a man ‘social opportunity’ in Dr. Forsyth’s sense, *i.e.*, opportunity to work within the Society. But it gives this as a consequence of the commission to work.”

Here we may quote Dr. Garvie’s conception of the meaning of the laying-on of hands. “The laying-on of hands does not confer grace ; it is a significant symbol of benediction accompanying the prayer which invokes the divine blessing upon the ordained. He who responds to the solemn appeal of the ordinance in faith is often conscious of an increase of grace, as this outward seal is set upon his self-dedication ; and he looks back to his experience as a manifest divine appointment of himself to his work. In Presbyterianism elders as well as ministers are ordained, but in the one case by their own minister, in the other by the Presbytery. Experience has confirmed the wisdom and rightness of the Apostolic practice, although it cannot claim the Lord’s direct authority as do the two sacraments.” He adds : “When the Eucharist came to be regarded as a sacrifice the bishop or presbyter became a priest. Protestantism rejects both these transformations as illegitimate.”

Dr. Palmer sheds a flood of light on his position when he informs us that the Church insists far more strongly on having a priest for the minister of the Eucharist than for the minister of Baptism. The former takes the part of Christ, the latter does not. Christ Himself did not baptize. “His own action made the Eucharist. To ‘take the part’ of the Lord in the Lord’s Supper, a man must be His specially commissioned representative.”

The careful reader will find again and again the ideals of Dr. Palmer expressed in the Lambeth documents. He maintains the doctrine that from bishops to bishop “the grace gift *charisma*” is received, and he is convinced that this is essential in the constitution of the Church. Therefore according to him Episcopal Ordination gives to men something that cannot possibly be obtained elsewhere

and that involves additional ordination for all who have received non-Episcopal ordination if they are to be admitted to the ministerial roll of those authorized to administer the Lord's Supper to members of the Anglican Communion. On the other hand the bishops and priests who receive recognition in non-Episcopal communions will simply receive a legal extension of their commission. They are welcomed into the family life of the groups, but do not, in any way, receive a special gift such as the Bishops of Zanzibar and Bombay insist on, as characteristic of Episcopal ordination. That constitutes a real difference between the "give and take" proposals. The Bishops say to Rome and the East: "You cannot give us anything that we have not—we admit your men to our fellowship without further ordination, and the terms of union we arrange, make it plain that you are not conferring on us anything additional to what we have already as Priests and Bishops of the Church of God," whereas they say to the non-Episcopal ministers: "You have not the grace of orders which will permit you to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to our people, and before this is permitted you must receive the gift from those commissioned as representatives of Christ and His Apostles in the Succession."

Our non-Episcopal brethren who are as anxious for union as the bishops feel they are asked to make a sacrifice, and if they are sure that it is in accord with the will of God they will do so. It is not for them a matter of humbling themselves—it is the surrender of the whole conception of their work and ministry and the acceptance of theological and historical opinions they cannot find in Scripture or in the Primitive Church. They feel that this is a barrier to union that has been made by man and not imposed by God. Some of them—a small minority—are prepared to accept the proposals, but the vast majority of the ministers are unable to look upon the question as one of expediency for the obtaining a great boon they fervently desire, but of principle as implying the abandonment of the convictions derived from study of the Bible and the Primitive Church.

Non-Episcopalians are also faced by an ambiguity which we Churchmen do not so strongly feel. What is the type of unity desired by God? Is it unity of organization displayed in common membership of a great Church marked by unity in diversity? Or is it the unity of the Spirit manifesting itself in brotherly co-operation, in sharing on occasion the ministry of one another's pulpits and of

joining together in the reception of the Eucharist—asking no questions but fully admitting the right of the officiating minister to consecrate and deliver the elements? Both types of unity are advocated in non-Episcopal circles, but it is probably true to say that the latter is the prevailing view at present. They are no more eager than Lambeth is for absorption—but they hold that by an alliance they can best display their essential unity. They are convinced that unity in the Body of Christ already exists. They have unity of faith—unity in sacrament—unity in love for the Bible, and in addition they have living unity of command under the Great Captain of our Salvation. The divisions are to them matters of non-vital importance, for in spite of them they can work together, pray together, worship together in every department of Church life without any doubtfulness of mind. They appreciate to the full the noble spirit of fellowship that breathes through the Lambeth Appeal, and are convinced that if for the present the realization of the unity they have at heart be delayed, the free working of the Spirit of God in the hearts of Anglicans and non-Anglicans will remove what they consider arbitrary in the resolutions and unjustified in the proposal for additional ordination. They will go with us as far as they can; when they part company they do so unwillingly, for they would gladly join with us at the Lord's Table and are now ready to admit us to His Table in their Churches. Lambeth has done much to kill the old rancour that embittered the relations between us and them. The war had already accomplished much, but the formal expression of brotherhood has set its seal upon the comradeship.

Frankly they are disappointed. They expected that the views so nobly expounded by Dr. Headlam would prevail at Lambeth. They looked forward to the abandonment of the doctrine of Apostolic Succession by the Bishops and the frank recognition of their existing Ministers as equally commissioned ministers of the Word and Sacraments with ourselves. That hope has not been realized, but they are convinced that when Bishops recognize "spiritual reality" in their ministries the road to full acceptance of their commission to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper must inevitably follow. The time is not yet, but the day of the Lord will see the perfect work of unity established. We shall be one in heaven, and the prayer "Thy will be done in earth as in heaven" is a prayer for Unity.

May we point to a possible means of overcoming some of the conscientious difficulties of our brethren. The Prayer Book of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States has an alternative formula for use with the imposition of hands at the ordering of Priests. It reads:

“Take thou authority to execute the Office of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed to thee by the imposition of our hands. And be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of God, and of His Holy Sacraments: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” The Wesleyan Ordination service has the formula with the laying-on of hands by the President: “Mayest thou receive the Holy Ghost for the work of a Christian Minister and Pastor, now committed to thee by the imposition of our hands. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God and of His holy Sacraments: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” In both services the Bible is afterwards delivered to the newly ordained with the words, “Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, and to administer the Holy Sacraments in the Congregation” (the American Ordinal adding, “where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto”).

There is not any striking doctrinal difference between the two formulæ. The word Priest certainly occurs in one, but there are many hundreds—if not many thousands of Anglican ministers—who reject its sacerdotal implications. Seventy years ago only the exceptional Anglican clergyman accepted them. The Tractarian movement and its more recent developments have unhistorically changed the sixteenth century interpretation of the word within the Church of England. If the American formula be valid in the United States and those ordained according to it minister freely in English Churches, no objection can be raised to its validity. By good will on the part of the non-Episcopal Churches and by our acting in the Church of England in a Christian spirit for the sake of that unity and brotherhood we have at heart, the American formula might be adopted as an alternative, and by so doing a great step forward would be taken in preparing the way to unity.

Would it not also make for unity if the careful statement of the Preface to the Irish Book of Common Prayer were adopted by the Anglican Communion as a permissible position? “No change has been made in the formula of the Ordination of Priests, though desired by some; for upon a full review of our Formularies, we deem

it plain and here declare that, save in the matter of Ecclesiastical censures, no power or authority is by them ascribed to the Church or to any of its Ministers, in respect of forgiveness of sins after Baptism, other than that of declaring and pronouncing on God's part, remission of sins to all that are truly penitent, to the quieting of their consciences, and the removal of all doubt and scruple ; nor is it anywhere in our Formularies taught or implied, that confession to and absolution by a Priest are any conditions of God's pardon ; but, on the contrary, it is fully taught that all Christians who sincerely repent, and unfeignedly believe the Gospel, may draw nigh, as worthy communicants, to the Lord's Table without any such confession or absolution." This pronouncement of the Disestablished Irish Church has to our knowledge removed the scruples of many.

The great wind of God is blowing throughout the world. The time has come for the unity of the Spirit to be manifested in the bonds of peace and holy brotherhood. Lambeth has reached its conclusions not by the path of compromise, but by the only path open to it, if the Anglican Communion was to avoid a schism within itself for the sake of a wider unity. It is vain, as all who know the facts and read history, to hope that Rome will reform and come to acceptable terms with the Anglican Communion. God wills us not to wait until the stubborn will of a long inherited and deeply entrenched exclusiveness be broken. Gwatkin was right when he wrote, " An infallible Church must go on setting truth and reason at defiance in intrigues for political supremacy, till she either breaks in pieces, or withers away, or sinks into some gulf of anarchy. Meaner Churches may repent and amend, but for Rome reform is suicide." Union with an unreformed Rome is unthinkable. Of the East we know so little and the voices that reach us are so discordant that we cannot determine or gauge the future. Eastern Christianity is something generally unknown to us of the West. We do know our non-Episcopal brethren. We sit at their feet in our studies. We work by their side in our parishes and we share the privilege of joint work in the Mission Field. We who have prayed with them and have felt our deep underlying unity yearn for its expression in outward form, in our pulpits and at the Table of the Lord. May the way be found for us hand in hand to walk together to the City of God where we shall all recognize ourselves as wrongly separated brethren during the days of our pilgrimage !

THOS. J. PULVERTAFT.