

THE LAUSANNE CONFERENCE.

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WE live in an age of personal friendliness even when our fundamental beliefs are in violent conflict. Forty years ago there were many Christian households in which an Agnostic would not be received. To-day we find it possible to debate, in public or private, differences of belief without any clash of personal feeling. It is usual to see in the same magazine articles directly contradicting one another, and to discover in the same social circle men who are poles apart in their views of God and the Universe talking, quietly and without heat, on their differences. As a rule we endeavour, when we meet those who are known to disagree with us, to find the common ground and to think of our different standpoints as determined by something beyond the power of the individual to obviate. We start with the conviction, if he were only as we are, then we should see eye to eye, and, as it happens that we are different persons, we must expect to disagree. And at Conferences which are summoned to see how differences can be harmonized and unity of outlook attained, we are all ready to think the best of one another, and when we see in those who do not hold our convictions the fruits of noble character, high ideals and consecrated service, we at once conclude that, "in spite of" this, that or the other defect, the Spirit of God works through everything except conscious untruth. Personal links are forged, mutual respect is gained, and while there is no intellectual or temperamental reconciliation, there is interpenetration of personality which goes far to create an atmosphere of good-will and mutual understanding. This is specially the case when picked men, known to be keen on a common vision, are brought together to help forward the vision. The "Conference on Faith and Order" had been long prepared. The Churches, with the exception of the Roman Church and the British Baptists, had officially appointed representatives and many of them had met at Stockholm, where they found it possible to form a basis of co-operation in social and philanthropic work. They did not come together as strangers. They were all of one mind in the resolution that no personal feeling should disturb the harmony of the Conference, and no personal feeling showed itself during the three weeks' deliberation. Looking back on the incomplete publication of the discussions, having seen a little of the Conference and having conversed with many of the members, it is possible to give some impression of the work done and the future of the movement for world Christian Reunion.

It is hardly too much to say that two personalities dominated the Conference. The genial and beloved Chairman, Bishop Brent, spoke words that reached all hearts and proved himself to be a true-souled servant of his Saviour. When the Conference came to grips

with Reports the Chair was occupied by Dr. Garvie—a master of procedure and a linguist of very striking gifts. He was as much at home in French and German as in English. He saved much time by his summaries of addresses and, as a matter of fact, his brilliant *précis*, made on the moment, gave a more accurate idea of what was in the minds of speakers than the laboured and meticulously careful translations of the able official translators. It was plain that a man of many-sided sympathy who entered into the spirit and thought, as well as grasped the meaning of the words, could more efficiently bring home to others what they meant than the mere cold reduction of the words into another tongue. He was absolutely impartial and performed a most difficult task in masterly manner. Then on the floor, with his point of vantage on the outside seat of the first row, sat Bishop Gore. With an intellectual agility remarkable for a man of his years and a pertinacity that knew no limits, he made himself everywhere, and all the time, felt. The Bishop, who has been the strongest personal force in English Church life, because he knows his own mind and has the power accurately to express it, proved himself to be the pivot-man of the Conference. Others might not share his opinions—some eminent Bishops by no means did—but they had to act with him, for if they did not accept his limits, there would have been an Anglican split. He stood between the Greeks and the rest of the Conference. He would heartily endorse the Greek view. “The apostolic doctrine and tradition, with the apostolic succession, are the elements in which the apostolicity of the Church consists. Only that Church can be apostolic which has and retains from the Apostles themselves the true doctrine and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Through the divinely-constituted Hierarchy, and so alone, this Church is connected by unbroken succession with the Apostles, and keeps the deposit committed unto it.” But we question whether the Bishop was quite happy when the Greeks declared their inability to be responsible even for the discussion of any of the Reports with the exception of the Second, “The Church’s Message to the World—the Gospel.” For one of the Anglican Bishops, who followed the Conference most carefully and was a keen member, afterwards said that the Greeks would place outside of the Church Anglicans and non-Episcopalians alike!

Bishop Gore wrote that many to whom Anglicanism was almost a new idea appreciated that, “after all, the Anglican Church was the ‘Brücke-Kirche’—the ‘bridge-Church’—which had a special part to play in bringing Catholicism and Protestantism together.” Reviewing the part he took, we are reminded of the saying of an eminent friend of the Bishop’s: “The difference between me and Dr. Gore lies in this. I believe that an exception strengthens a rule—Dr. Gore believes it breaks the rule.” Others who shared his ideals were inclined to be more flexible; he would not yield anything of his conception of Anglicanism. The Bridge-Church for him became a toll-bridge, on which all who enter must pay the toll of adhesion in practice to the Apostolic Succession and the exclusive ministry that depends on it. The great Conference passed many periods of soul-

communion with God—all humbled themselves before the Throne of Grace, but the members who recognized one another as fellow-servants of the Lord Jesus Christ were unable as one Body to meet round the Lord's Table. The toll-bridge idea blocked the way. The experience of Lambeth with the Non-Episcopal Conference was repeated. As the President of the Federal Council of the Churches in the United States has said: "The greatest fact about the Conference was that it actually met and that official representatives of all the great communions save one, in a spirit of genuine brotherhood and trust and eagerness to understand one another, studied together their agreements and their differences." But they separated without meeting in the Sacrament of Unity. The amount of agreement reached and the striking fact that they could not, even on this great occasion, join at the Table of the Lord, show at once how much we have in common and where we differ. As another American representative wrote: "The actual obstacles to anything like organic union came into full light—so that they could not either be ignored or minimized. We are all more deeply desirous of union than before, and we all realize as never before the arduous path ahead of us."

One section of the Conference was deeply disappointed. The representatives of the Mission Field came full of hope that the path to Reunion might be outlined and accepted. They feel the pressure of the problem in their daily work. They see the yearning of the converts and their leaders for unity, and they know that the difficulties exist at their bases in the Mother Churches. The Conference was expected to ease their way. It did not do so. When it was proposed that the Reports of the various Commissions should only be received for transmission to the Home Churches, it was clear that reception did not set the seal of the Conference upon anything contained in them. The speeches made by the Greeks, some Anglicans and the Quakers proved that reception did not mean acceptance, and when the Greeks refused to have anything to do with the reception of the Reports, with the exception of the second, it was at once clear that the Reports would be differently and freely interpreted. Few will forget the scene when a great Missionary pleaded for the acceptance of the Second Report, and the regretful, but entirely right, ruling of the Chairman, that they could not go back on their resolution. The Conference showed, by its manner, it wished it could have been otherwise, but it could not be. It would be harsh to say, as has been said, "as long as men were determined that words might mean nothing particular all were in agreement, but when precision was given to language, disagreement made itself felt." There was in reality a common spirit in the Conference which was inexpressible in language. But that spirit, in so far as it was the Spirit of God—and who will dare to deny this?—was something that had not conquered the stubborn wills of men who inherit age-long convictions and felt bound that these convictions should not in any way be outraged by an act of the Conference. It was possible to obtain remarkable agreement on

matters of belief—it was impossible to harmonize ideals of Order. The Conference was more united than many expected on the great fundamental beliefs; it became divided when Organization was discussed. Lausanne was in most respects the repetition of Lambeth. The *impasse* was the same in both Conferences—is the Church founded by our Lord the creation of the free Spirit of God developing organization in accordance with the New Testament norm, or is it an ecclesiastical institution dependent for its existence in accordance with the mind of Christ on the transmitted Episcopate, which is alone able to guarantee the commission of Christ and the validity of the Sacraments? The issue has become clear and for our part we believe that the Holy Ghost Who enlightens the hearts and minds of men, guiding them into all Truth, will lead His servants and give us the blessing of unity in Him, co-operation in work for Him, and a deeper sense of our common membership of Christ's Body.

The Bishop of Gloucester took a prominent part in the discussion of the Unity of Christendom and the relation thereto of existing Churches. His Bampton Lectures had made him familiar as an advocate of Reunion to most of the delegates. He adopted a line that commended itself to practically all the Conference, except the Greeks and some Anglicans who held that he surrendered what he had no right to give away. He holds that the acceptance of Episcopacy and of Episcopal ordination are a necessary prelude to union. He is convinced that no orders are wholly valid, for validity depends on the giving of orders by a united Church to men who can minister everywhere throughout the whole Catholic Church. No orders are therefore full and complete. "The only full and complete Orders would be those given in a united Church, and because the Church is divided, therefore all Orders are irregular and no succession is perfect. The unity of two branches of the Christian Church must come by each giving what it can to the other in the ordination of its clergy." That which can be utilized by the whole must be given by the whole is his ideal, and as the whole is now separated into different Churches all orders are *ipso facto* incomplete and irregular. This conception seemed a novelty to many. He applied his theory to England, where the Roman Catholics would exist as a Uniat Church observing the Latin rite, the Non-Episcopalians might or might not wish to have Bishops of their own, and would tend to become "religious societies organized on a somewhat democratic basis, supplementing the religious life of the National Church and correcting its deficiencies. Only in the future they would do this in union with the National Church and not in opposition to it, and that would mean that the ministries of these Churches would be episcopally ordained, that they would assist in Ordinations as Presbyters of the Church, that they would meet in Synods and Councils, and that they would communicate with one another." A fundamental postulate of a united Christianity must be freedom and toleration. This is a slowly learnt lesson. All require to learn it. And it applies to all departments of religious life. "I am shocked at the way in which modern liberalism has failed to realize that educational

freedom means freedom to teach your children your faith as well as freedom from a State or Church imposing its creed upon your children." To some it seemed a pity that Dr. Headlam should have inevitably roused opposition by bringing political quarrels into the discussion. His influence, great as it undoubtedly was, suffered some weakening among the British Nonconformist section. But his ideal was well received and the plea for freedom and toleration found an echo in many hearts. It is easy to be a lover of freedom and toleration in debate; it is by no means so easy to apply it in practice.

We pass to a brief description of the Reports received and amended by the Conference. These were drafted by strong Committees who sat separately and submitted their work to the Conference as a whole. All were received or recommended for transmission to the Churches with the exception of the Seventh, dealing with the Unity of Christendom in relation to existing Churches, which at the close of the Conference would have evoked so much discussion that it could not be treated as the other Reports, but was sent to the Continuation Committee. This was a great disappointment and seems to leave the work of the Conference truncated—without having its head placed in its proper position. With the exception of the Report on "The Gospel," no Report received even reception at the hands of the Greeks; and as regards the others, there was not unanimity. They were received *nem. con.*, which meant that they contained nothing so violently opposed to reception in courtesy that necessitated men voting against them. They were so good in parts that the portions held to be bad were not so worded as to make them incapable of discussion by the parent Churches of the delegates. When it is remembered that the Quakers received the Report on "The Sacraments," some idea may be formed of the amount of dissent or assent that the representatives feel bound to give them in their own lands. But it may be concluded that they will not oppose the main current of opinion, and it is to be hoped that there are no such seeds of dissension as were found in the Lambeth Encyclical and Resolutions, which were, however, adopted and not merely received. The real danger of the influence of Lausanne waning is to be found in the environments to which the men who were comrades in Lausanne return. Their pressure is permanent, whereas the experience of Lausanne was merely episodal.

The Reports are prefaced by a thoughtful statement by Bishop Brent, who thanks God and rejoices over agreements reached. "Upon the agreements we build. Where the Reports record differences, we call upon the Christian world to an earnest reconsideration of the conflicting opinions now held, and a strenuous endeavour to reach the truth as it is in God's mind, which should be the foundation of the Church's unity."

The First Report, on "The Call to Unity," is short. It states that God called the Conference, which was daring, and God had justified the daring. "We can never be the same again." Half the world waits for the Gospel and the witness of the Church suffers

loss through its corporate feebleness. "Our missions count that a necessity which we are inclined to look upon as a luxury." The Mission Field impatiently revolts from the divisions of Western Christianity and the Churches cannot allow their spiritual children to outpace them. Therefore all must labour side by side until the goal is reached. The task of working for unity must be undertaken by women as well as by men. "It was God's clear call that gathered us." The second subject was "The Church's Message to the World—the Gospel." The Committee that dealt with this had as Chairman Dr. Deissmann, whose influence was felt in the Conference and the Committee was exceptionally strong. Those familiar with his great book, *Fresh Light from the East*, will recognize familiar phrases in the Report. "The Gospel is the joyful message of redemption, both here and hereafter, the gift of God to sinful man in Jesus Christ." "The world was prepared for the Gospel by the working of the Divine Spirit in humanity, and especially in the revelation of God as given in the Old Testament." "In the fullness of time the eternal Word of God became incarnate, and was made man, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man and the Son of God, full of grace and truth." "Through His life and teaching, His call to repentance, His proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God and of judgment, His suffering and death, His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father, and by the mission of the Holy Spirit, He has brought to us forgiveness of sins, and has revealed the fullness of the living God, and His boundless love toward us. By the appeal of that love, shown in its completeness on the Cross, He summons us to the new life of faith, self-sacrifice, and devotion to His service and the service of men." "Jesus Christ, as the crucified and the living One, as Saviour and Lord, is also the centre of the world-wide Gospel of the Apostles and the Church, because He Himself is the Gospel. The Gospel is the message of the Church to the world. It is more than a philosophical theory; more than a theological system; more than a programme for material betterment. The Gospel is rather the gift of a new world from God to this old world of sin and death; still more it is the victory over sin and death, the revelation of eternal life in Him, Who has knit together the whole family in Heaven and on earth in the communion of saints, united in the fellowship of service, of prayer and of praise." "The Gospel is the prophetic call to sinful man to turn to God, the joyful tidings of justification and sanctification to those who believe in Christ. It is the comfort of those who suffer; to those who are bound it is the assurance of the glorious liberty of the sons of God." The power of the Gospel in social and national life is set forth and its call to men to escape from class and race hatred is emphasized. The Church in the eternal Gospel meets the needs and fulfils the God-given aspirations of the modern world. "Consequently, as in the past, so also in the present, the Gospel is the only way of salvation." The discussion showed that some would have wished greater emphasis to be placed on the Atonement, but the Conference as a whole rejoiced in being unanimous in its acceptance of the statement

which we have condensed. Where differences might have been expected, this was the high-water mark of unity.

The Third Report deals with the nature of the Church, and this Report has appended to it a series of notes which prove how Christian men differ in their interpretation of crucial points. God has appointed His Church to witness to the redeeming power of the Gospel. It is constituted by the will of God, Who uses the will of men as His instrument. Christ is its Head and the Holy Spirit its continuing life. The Church is the communion of believers in Christ Jesus, is the Body of Christ and the Temple of God built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. The Church is God's chosen instrument for reconciling men to God through faith, bringing their wills into subjection to His sovereignty, sanctifying them through the means of grace, and uniting them to be His witnesses and fellow-workers in the extension of His rule on earth, until His Kingdom come in glory. The Church is one, and since the Apostles' days has the following characteristics: the Scriptures, Faith in Christ as God incarnate, world-wide Evangelization with Christ's Commission, observance of the Sacraments, the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and Fellowship. Then follow the usual notes marking differences of interpretation. It is clear that on the nature of the Church and Ministry the Conference was of many minds!

The Report on the Church's Common Confession of Faith is brief, but it has also three notes showing divergent opinions. The Common Christian Creed is contained in the Nicene and in the Apostles' Creed. The Holy Spirit will enable the Church, while adhering to the Creeds, to restate belief as knowledge widens, and in the opinion of the Report "no external and written standards can suffice without an inward and personal experience of union with God in Christ."

In the Report on the Ministry of the Church we have, as usual, a long number of statements in which all substantially agree and then a long series of assertions of differences. Nothing that is not familiar to the average Churchman is said, and it is hard to see how the discussion in Lausanne has in any way cleared the air. The final paragraph expresses "thankfulness to Almighty God for the great progress which has been made in recent years in the mutual approach of the Churches to one another, and our conviction that we must go forward with faith and courage, confident that with the blessing of God we shall be able to solve the problems that lie before us." Again we come face to face with the problems that wrecked the Lambeth Conferences with Free Churchmen. On the question of the Ministry the two sides speak in languages that are not understood by one another. What one side considers essential, the other looks upon as by no means necessary. As long as this remains unchanged hopes of reunion are vain.

The Report on the Sacraments acknowledges that "Sacraments are of divine appointment, and that the Church ought thankfully to observe them as divine gifts." "We believe that in the Holy Communion our Lord is present, that we have fellowship with God our

Father in Jesus Christ our Lord, Who is our one Bread, given for the life of the world, sustaining the life of all His people, and that we are in fellowship with all others who are united to Him. We agree that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the Church's most solemn act of worship, in which the Lord's atoning death is commemorated and proclaimed, and that it is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and an act of solemn self-oblation." Once more the differences are described and the Report ends "with the prayer that the differences which prevent full communion at the present time may be removed."

It is unnecessary to outline the last Report, which has no authority, for it has not been referred to the Churches for consideration and raises questions that had not been discussed by the Conference. It has been sent to the Continuation Committee "for such consideration as that Committee is able to give it, without sending it to the Churches for their consideration." It is passing strange that the Conference could not have arranged for the discussion of this Report. To disperse without so doing meant that the main object of the Conference, the discovery of the path to unity, was left incomplete. We know that the work placed on the representatives was very heavy and that the Report reception stage was rushed, and time was occupied in personal explanations that should have been given to the Reports. What has been done cannot be undone, and we can only look forward to greater intensity of conviction as to the need of unity driving the Churches closer together.

From the Anglican standpoint one important fact came under the notice of many representatives, who were greatly impressed by it. The section of Anglicans led by Bishop Gore set the pace of the entire Anglican section, which, however, showed at times that it by no means shared Dr. Gore's views. What he said settled how much might be done. All else had to be left undone to avoid a "split." As the Conference proceeded, the swing of the Anglican pendulum more and more inclined to the Greek presentation of Church, Ministry and Sacraments, and went from the presentation of the Non-Episcopal section. Many believed that Reunion with the Greek Churches was a far greater preoccupation with the Anglicans than Home Reunion. Whether this be so or not the writer is not sufficiently behind the scenes to state positively, but from many conversations with representatives of different types he found a general agreement with the belief that the present tendency of the Anglican Churches is towards attaining corporate reunion with the Greeks, which is by no means a good preparation for Home Reunion. The Bishop of Rhode Island said "The understanding between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Anglicans is complete. They stand together in the interpretation of the creeds and in their conception of the ministry." If this be the fruit of Lausanne, it is our conviction that the Conference, with its high ideals and hard work, has ended in driving the wedge deeper between the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Anglican Communion, and this will be a great calamity.