

# The Resolutions of the Lambeth Conference

## AN INTERIM CRITIQUE

**A**N article strictly limited in length and written of necessity immediately on the publication of the Lambeth Report, cannot offer a complete or a balanced appreciation of such an important document. There can be no substitute for a careful study of the Report itself ; but I have been asked to record a few first impressions and comments from the point of view of the Evangelical Churchman.

Two or three preliminary remarks :

First, it must be remembered that, even including the Overseas Bishops of the Canterbury Jurisdiction, only one quarter of the Bishops assembled at Lambeth were members of the Church of England : so that while we are of course concerned to study the conclusions of the Conference from our own standpoint, we need not expect that standpoint to be dominant. It is indeed surprising that so much of the Report is relevant to our own conditions ; which goes to show that the problems confronting Christian people are much the same all over the world.

Second, it would be temptingly easy to pick on emphases or omissions which are out of harmony with Evangelical thought, and so to denigrate the whole Report. A better way would be to pick out as much as possible which we could commend and support : best of all (and more difficult) is to register agreement and disagreement dispassionately.

Third, I am asked to comment on the Resolutions, and not on the Report. This is right, because even if I had had time to master the latter in full detail before writing this article, it must be borne in mind that the Conference as a whole is not responsible for them, but they are submitted by the respective Committees for the information of the whole Body. On the other hand, the Resolutions are based on the Reports and must be read in conjunction with them, so that I cannot interpret that assignment with complete strictness.

The Report opens with an Encyclical Letter, followed by a " Message ". The former of these makes the point that the whole thought of the Conference was brought to centre round the idea of Reconciliation ; between God and man, man and man, Church and Church. Evangelicals should welcome this emphasis, for it is the keynote of the Gospel message : we must see to it that we not only preach, but seek, that true reconciliation of all men to God through Jesus Christ which shall also reconcile all men (and especially all Christians) to one another. " The world-wide task of Evangelism is not an ' optional extra ' : it is the high calling of every disciple. " The words " every disciple " are reinforced by another passage in the Encyclical which says, " There is a growing recognition to-day that too sharp a distinction has been made between clergy and laity. All baptized persons have the priestly

vocation." And this admirable sentiment leads to the inevitable corollary that we "must pray and work with a new sense of urgency for unity with the non-episcopal Churches". Evangelicals cannot, any more than other Churchmen, exclude from their ideal of reconciliation "all baptized persons"; so that we are bound to agree with the further quest "for harmony of spirit and unity of doctrine with the Eastern Orthodox Church, and for the healing of the breach between ourselves and the Church of Rome". This last clause, if logical enough, is out of the range of practical politics so long as Rome refuses to reform herself, or to abate her absolute claims, more particularly since the Report stresses, from end to end, the fact that all faith must be based on the Bible. Indeed, nothing is more striking than the way in which "supreme authority is attached to the Bible in the formulation of doctrine"; and coupled with this, the Report recalls us all, over and over again, to every aspect of Bible study: private devotional reading, family prayers with Bible reading (how immensely important!), expository preaching, and group study. "We begin, as the faith of the Church must always begin, with the Bible." Here is the only possible basis of Unity—the Incarnate and Redeeming Son of God revealed in the pages of the Word of God: and it is important to add that Unity means not necessarily Union nor certainly Integration, although in our conversations with the *Methodist Church* "it is to be understood that organic union is definitely accepted as the final goal". Certainly John Wesley would concur in this hope!

Besides the Encyclical Letter and the Message, there is the "Statement on Peace", which was released to the Press before the Report was published. This is rather thin and over-cautious; a criticism which might be applied to a good deal of the Report. It is an unfortunate fact that not only have Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics their special phraseology, which is often only half-understood by the others, but the Church as a whole suffers from the tradition of an ecclesiastical vocabulary (quite apart from the necessarily technical terms of theology) which all too easily wraps up sound sense in cliché, verbosity, or stilted circumlocution. We cannot exonerate the Report completely on this count: but the genuine desire to learn what the Bishops really said, and intended to say, will lead us to look more deeply.

The best that we can do, for the rest, is to consider the Resolutions based on each of the five Reports on the main topics, and see what they propound. But I would add at once that our interest must be more than academic—it must be practical: and Evangelical Churches, Societies, and individuals, must continually be resolving to direct their actions in such a way as to implement all that is good in what the Bishops recommend.

1. *The Bible*. The criticism has been raised that this section involves a circular argument: "The Bible is the Word of God, therefore it is authoritative, therefore its claim to be the Word of God is valid". This may or may not be a fair judgment: it is certainly an incomplete one: but in any case the Report is not an Essay in Apologetics but a statement of faith and a summons to action. Nothing could be more congenial than Resolution 7: "The Conference affirms the im-

portance of preaching, both evangelistic and expository, ministered as a means of grace by men who have experienced the power of the Gospel in their own lives." In this connection, we Evangelicals need at least to consider a recent (perhaps slightly unfair) comment in a widely-circulated Evangelical publication: "A great deal of Evangelical preaching is leaving congregations *doctrinally* illiterate. Much sermon preparation appears to have been spent in the service of alliteration more than plain exegesis." *Doctrinal* preaching is needed, no less than "a special effort . . . to extend the scope and deepen the quality of personal and corporate study of the Bible" (12). The work of scientists and other scholars is gratefully and rightly acknowledged, as are the labours of "the men and women in our universities, colleges and schools who by their teaching and example inspire new generations to love the Scriptures" (4). And there is a warm word of commendation for the work of the Bible Societies, and an appeal for greater support for them.

2. *Church Unity and the Church Universal.* In this section, the Resolutions show a greater boldness than was apparent at the last Lambeth Conference; and this is to be welcomed. Evangelicals are (rightly) concerned to emphasize that Reunion must not mean either submission or absorption; the existence and liberty of minorities is essential to health. But in countries such as India, where Christians of all Churches form an infinitesimal element in the population, or Japan (which is the happy hunting-ground of innumerable insignificant, disparate and competing sects) the need for "getting together" is as essential on pragmatic grounds as on theological. Here perhaps more than elsewhere, we who live in the favoured Provinces of Canterbury and York must remember that the Church of England is a tiny minority in the Anglican Communion, that the latter comprises an incredibly small percentage of Christendom, and that Christianity itself touches only a fraction of the population of the world. Realism must come into our outlook: and this Report will help.

Resolution 24 warmly commends the Plan for Reunion in North India and Pakistan, and the preceding Resolution advises all Churches of the Anglican Communion to accept "full communion" with the Church of Lanka (Ceylon) on its inauguration. This is quite admirable; and should give encouragement to other areas (e.g., West Africa) in which plans for some form of Reunion are under consideration.

3. *Progress in the Anglican Communion.* This topic falls into three Sections, viz., Missionary Appeal and Strategy, The Book of Common Prayer, and Ministries and Manpower.

(a) There is an interesting phrase in Resolution 64 which calls for "sacrificial, planned and systematic giving to the end that the souls of the people may be enriched", as well as "that the needs of the Church may be met". This aspect of New Testament teaching is sometimes forgotten. We should have welcomed a clearer call to renewed missionary effort among non-Christian races; but it is well to be reminded again that "each generation needs to be evangelized" (58); this applies to Canterbury and York no less than to Central Africa. Our Mission "has no frontiers between 'Home' and 'Foreign', but is concerned to present Christ to people everywhere". Obviously

for the Bishops of, e.g., India and Pakistan and Africa this is immediately true, and we at home must recognize it. It is to be hoped that many more of our Churches will use the most valuable Cycle of Prayer prepared by the Overseas Council of the Church Assembly, referred to in Resolution 69.

(b) *The Book of Common Prayer*. Of course we all revise it in greater or lesser degree, by addition or omission: and of course some of its phrasing is not apt to the Church beyond the shores of these Islands. The difficulty is to keep the various official Revisions, such as Canadian, Indian and so forth, in step with one another: and this is particularly apparent in any suggested variations in the 1662 Order of Holy Communion. One hopes indeed—though not without some anxiety—that such Revisions, whether in England or elsewhere, will “conserve the doctrinal balance of the Anglican tradition” (76).

(c) *Ministries and Manpower*. Evangelicals ought to think out very carefully their position with regard to the Diaconate (88)—should we welcome the restoration of “the Office of Deacon as a distinctive Order in the Church instead of being regarded as a probationary period for the Priesthood”? And what about “a suitable man being ordained priest while continuing in his lay occupation”? (89). One rather regrets the severe limitation placed on the “authorization of a Reader to assist in the Administration of the Holy Communion” (91); and yet if such authorization were general and unrestricted, would there be any real difference remaining between the functions of a Reader and those of a Deacon? The greater use of “trained and qualified women” (93) and the call to all the Laity to take a fuller share in the work of the Church, are both to be welcomed; though this latter “call” is left rather vague and undefined, presumably because conditions vary so greatly in different parts of the world. Anyway, it is for us to turn general admonition into specific example.

4. *The Reconciling of Conflicts between and within Nations*. There is legitimate, if unhappy, difference of opinion on the part of Christians at large as to the rightfulness of the use of nuclear weapons: but no doubt as to the need for persistent prayer “for those in nations which oppose us as well as those friendly to us” (100b). But the whole of this section, with the exception of a strong condemnation of racial discrimination, illustrates the quite extraordinary difficulty of deciding which, in a sinful world, may be “the lesser of two evils”; and the Conference is right in calling all Christians “to subject to intense prayer and study their attitudes to the issues involved in modern warfare” (107). Let us hope that Evangelicals will not be behindhand in giving such guidance as they themselves are led to give in a matter which so profoundly affects the very existence of the human race, as well as the progress of the Kingdom of God.

5. *The Family in Contemporary Society*. The complex and difficult issues raised under this heading can be properly understood only by first reading the preliminary report of the Warren Committee; and by continually remembering that the Lambeth Conference was concerned equally with the vast empty spaces of Australia and Canada, and the appallingly over-crowded areas of Japan and Hong Kong. “Family Planning,” which may mean either increasing or limiting the number

of children, is a responsibility to be faced ; and the problems consequent on " the introduction of monogamy into societies that practise polygamy " (120b) are seen to be " as yet not solved ". It is disappointing—and regrettable—that while the Conference " utters a warning against the dangers implicit in gambling, drunkenness, and the use of drugs " (126) there is no Resolution roundly condemning A.I.D. On the other hand, the seven marks of a Christian family listed in Resolution 121 could hardly be bettered : they are (in summary), (i) living the Christ life, (ii) Sunday family churchgoing, (iii) family prayers, Bible reading and saying grace, (iv) mutual forgiveness and responsibility, (v) sharing duties and pleasures, (vi) family responsibility to Society, (vii) neighbourliness. Lastly, I would most warmly commend Resolution 122, stating the belief that " a most important answer to the crushing impact of secularism on family life lies in a return to the discipline of family prayer, and in a faithful Christian life in the household ". Members of the Clergy are urged in the same Resolution to make this a cardinal point in their pastoral instruction : who better than Evangelicals could more capably, or should more enthusiastically, respond ?

The space at my disposal does not allow further comment ; and those who are already conversant with the Report will be no less aware than I am myself of the inadequacy of what has been written. But I would close with one or two practical suggestions ; for nothing could be more deplorable than that the Report should be issued, summarized, pigeonholed, and forgotten.

The first essential is to obtain, and study, as many as possible of the preparatory Reports published by S.P.C.K.: particularly *The Family in Contemporary Society*, *Prayer Book Revision in the Church of England* and *Relations between Anglican and Presbyterian Churches*. These should be read privately, and discussed in groups : it would be a good thing to have them summarized for discussion in Ruri-Decanal Chapters and similar gatherings : all will provoke a good deal of disagreement, though all have some important things to say.

Next, of course, read very carefully the Report itself. First, each Committee Report in turn, and the Resolutions depending thereon ; remembering continually that the whole Conference is responsible only for the latter, and for the Encyclical Letter that attempts the briefest possible digest of what was discussed and recommended.

In all these reports there will be plenty to commend, and no little to criticize ; but they will all make us think : and this thinking should lead to further action. I therefore end by urging again that all Diocesan Evangelical Unions, and the Councils and Committees of such Societies as F.E.C., Church Society, and others, should for the next year or two reduce all their routine business to a minimum, and concentrate on formulating a positive policy for making known, and carrying out, the Resolutions of Lambeth in so far as they are applicable to the Church of England and consonant with our Evangelical principles. There are 131 Resolutions : if Evangelicals, as a united body, took action even on (say) 40 or 50 of them (and it would not be difficult to find that number on which we agree) what an immense revitaliza-

tion would accrue to our Church! I do beg our Evangelical leaders, Chairmen of Committees, and Secretaries, to take this plea with the utmost seriousness as a matter of urgency and incalculable opportunity: lay aside routine, get down to study, draw up policy, back it all first by prayer and then by "pushing" the Resolutions in publications, bulletins, speeches, sermons, conferences, and all other means; and let us see a great forward movement, all based (as the whole Report is based)—on the Bible, and all guided, controlled, and—we may be sure—blessed by the Holy Spirit of God. DOUGLAS F. HORSEFIELD.

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## The Defence and Confirmation of the Gospel

BY THE REV. J. A. MOTYER, M.A.

Some Comments on a new I.V.F. Series

**S**ERIES? The word is taken from a notice which appears without fail on the back of five recently published books: "Other Titles in this Series." It is an act of faith in the publisher to incorporate it in the sub-title. If they are a series, what principle unites them? The answer is not too evident. The binding is uniform, but in content the books range from a workmanlike statement of elementary Christian truths (*Basic Christianity*, by J. R. W. Stott, 3/6) to some conference addresses which retain every mark of their oral origin (*Authority*, by D. M. Lloyd-Jones, 3/-); from a welcome but largely unaltered reprint of mixed apologetic and evangelism (*Why Believe?*, by A. Rendle Short, 3/-) to a hop-skip-and-jump history of the Church up to the time of Billy Graham (*The Story of the Church*, by A. M. Renwick, 4/6); and amongst these—a strange companion, for it dwarfs them all by its stature and significance—a classic statement of the Evangelical Doctrine of Holy Scripture ("*Fundamentalism*" and *the Word of God*, by J. L. Packer, 4/6). Certainly the more modest claim, "Uniform with this book," would be more appropriate than "Other Titles in this Series". However, the writer of a composite review is bound to do his best, and a reference to Lightfoot's comment on Philippians i. 7 justifies the application of St. Paul's words, in one respect or another to the titles before us.

"I am not sure that apologetics has not been the curse of evangelical Christianity for the last twenty or thirty years," writes Dr. Lloyd-Jones (p. 14) in the course of making the valuable point that it is so easy for the Church to mistake pre-evangelism for evangelism, and to spend so much time showing how reasonable a thing Christianity is that it forgets to proclaim "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified". Without doubt, the two books of the series which verge towards apologetics have escaped this just censure. Neither J. R. W. Stott nor Rendle Short has any interest in apologetics except in order to prepare men