

THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE

THROUGHOUT the month of July, and until August 8th, the Bishops in communion with the Sees of Canterbury and York will sit in conference at Lambeth. The War which has given the English-speaking peoples, for good or evil, a paramount influence in international politics will therefore add a more than transient spiritual weight to a conference of Bishops discussing world problems in the English tongue.

Even without the gravity which comes to it from the world's greatest war this Lambeth Conference has a significance almost unique. It is no mere local council. Its Bishops are from all parts of the world. His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury in asking Dr. F. B. Meyer, the President of the Free Church Council, for the prayers and sympathy of the Free Churches, could say :

“ The Lambeth Conference will, so far as we can at present tell, include 107 Bishops from the Dioceses in the Dominions, and the Mission Field, 72 Bishops from the United States of America and about 100 Bishops whose work lies in the British Isles.”

Thus the Council of English-speaking Bishops who will foregather amidst the historic memories of Lambeth will number about three hundred.

It would be idle and perhaps sinful to ignore this unique event. Indeed we can ask, when since primitive times has there been held such a provincial council speaking a modern language. Only some three hundred Bishops assembled in Ecumenical Council at Nicea to define the *ομολόγιος* ; only some two hundred Bishops

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assembled in Ecumenical Council at Ephesus to define the Θεοτόκος.

Moreover, although these Bishops of the Lambeth Conference are to some extent of the same race, yet in this they are not unlike the Fathers of the first four Ecumenical Councils. But if, on the one hand, they are racially a little more of one kindred than these Fathers of the first four Ecumenical Council, on the other hand they come from dioceses comparable in ecumenical extent only with the Vatican Council, which for the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, drew its members from all the quarters of the earth. In numbers and in ecclesiastical influence, therefore, the Lambeth Conference of 1920 will be equalled by few if any of the non-ecumenical councils, either in the Eastern or the Western Church.

This phenomenon is all the more impressive because it is less than a century ago since the *Ecclesia Anglicana* seemed dead or dying, even to the eyes of its own children. With the passing of the Reform Bill of 1830, and the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1833, such acute minds as Hurrell Froude, Keble and Newman, thought that the Church of England was doomed to death. It was almost in a forlorn hope of raising their Mother from death to life that these men in an Oxford common-room began a movement worthy of the Home of lost causes.

The cause of the English Church seemed to some still more hopeless when Newman, who was the philosopher of the Tractarian movement, left the Church of his baptism, as a seaman leaves a foundering ship. Until Newman's genius and subtlety had written the *Via Media* the Church of England had lacked a philosophy of life; yet the thinker who had begotten this philosophy came to look upon it not as vital thinking but as paper logic, doomed to sterility and death. He was, therefore, speaking not only his own

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thoughts but the thoughts of many of his brethren of the English Church, when in his last Anglican sermon, at Littlemore, he thus apostrophised their common mother: "O my mother, whence is this unto thee, that thou hast good things poured out upon thee and canst not keep them, and barest children, yet darest not own them? Why hast thou not the skill to use their services nor the heart to rejoice in their love? How is it that whatever is generous in purpose and tender or deep in devotion thy flower and thy promise falls from thy bosom and finds no place within thine arms? Who hath put this note upon thee, to have *a miscarrying womb and dry breasts*. . . . And what wilt thou do in the end thereof?"

Nine years later when he preached at the First Provincial Synod of Westminster, the group of prelates gathered together in the little College Chapel at Oscott were touched to enthusiasm by this fugitive from the other camp who spoke to them of a Second Spring. He had the dramatic instinct to see what he had the artistic power to express in words of almost magic eloquence. "And so that high company moves on into the holy place, and there with august rite and awful sacrifice, inaugurates the great act which brought it hither. What is that act? It is the first Synod of a new Hierarchy. It is the resurrection of the Church" (The Second Spring).

The course of events has, for the moment, somewhat dramatically belied both these dramatic forecasts. Contrary to the expectations of even the wise, the Church of England has not met an early death. Indeed it may even be said to have risen from death to life. Largely through the influence of the genius and seer who prophesied its dissolution it has gone on to a fuller life than it has had since the struggles of the sixteenth century. Not even the men who did not follow Newman Romewards in 1845, would have

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prophesied that in less than four score years some three hundred Bishops in full communion with Canterbury and York would meet at Lambeth to discuss the spiritual destinies of the two great States who now control not only London and Washington, but Alexandria, Jerusalem, Constantinople !

Indeed the very words which Newman used in Oscott College Chapel to hearten the First Provincial Synod of Westminster may well find an application in the present state of those in communion with the Sees of Canterbury and York : " It is the resurrection of the Church."

This resurrection has sprung from such resolve, has encountered such opposition, has been fraught with such surprises, and we may truly say, has been crowned with such success that it is one of the chief phenomena of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That a movement beginning in the common-room of one of the lesser Oxford Colleges should have taken less than a century to become almost a world-wide force is a spiritual fact of first importance even to those who are not glad of the fact. Its importance to us, Roman Catholics, is not merely that it has given us two Cardinals, many Bishops, thousands of converts, and a spiritual impulse which can be found even in the vestments the priest wears at the altar, and the hymns our people sing in their homes. The things it has done within our fold though so great, and indeed unique, are almost unimportant when compared with the things it has done at home in its own fold. In towns like X——, where Nonconformity was supreme, the High Church (or as it now calls itself, the Catholic) party have, by years of hard work, succeeded in capturing the first position amongst the citizens. Nor is it true to think that this position of influence is found merely amongst the well-to-do. The Church of England has bred and reared hundreds of Dollings,

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men who have lived amongst the poor as poor men themselves. Again, their restoration of liturgical worship has examples even for us within the fold of St. Peter. Their churches are often models of liturgical exactness. To the present writer the history of their Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament is characteristic and challenging. Long before the *Codex Juris Canonici* (Can. 711. §) ordered local Ordinaries to erect the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament in every parish, the Catholic party within the Church of England had established their Confraternity throughout the length and breadth of the land. Indeed even now, three years after the publication of the *Codex Juris Canonici*, the Confraternities established by our separated brethren far outstrip ours in number and organization. In hundreds of churches these Confraternities meet at least once a month to say as their office the Matins, Lauds and Vespers for the feast of Corpus Christi !

It may, therefore, be said that since the day when J. H. Newman, in parting with his friends at Littlemore, forecast the approaching death of the Church of England, death has been at least delayed. Indeed all or almost all the official steps taken since that day have been towards that full catholic life which we, in the fold of St. Peter, have as our birth-right. This has been said by the Rev. Spencer Jones in his book *The Counter-Reformation* : " So it has come to pass that ~~the~~ movement has realized for itself a constitutional course, beginning where all wholesome movements for reform should begin with the witness of individuals among the inferior clergy who had to suffer persecution, and in many instances imprisonment for the truth's sake, and finding its way gradually to a seat of authority and centre. And thus, unlike the heretical teaching under Elizabeth and Edward VI, the Catholic doctrine, which may have to be tolerated for a time before it

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can triumph, has won its way so far in spite of force and not by means of it " (p. 114).

Over and against this resurrection of the Church of England from the dead, we have to set the undeniable life, if not growth of the Catholic body in communion with the See of Rome. This life we would be the last to deny ; and this growth we are willing and even anxious to believe. But are the facts on the side of this belief ? We are not sure that they are.

Certainly, if we take a general view of the present position of Catholics in England and Wales, we find that in a population of 36,203,253 (A.D. 1911), there are 1,898,843 (A.D. 1920) Catholics. Catholics are therefore one in every twenty of the population. Again, to take a concrete example suggested by "The Second Spring," in the great city which now contains the Chapel of the First Provincial Synod of Westminster, the estimated Catholic population is less than 35,000 out of a population of a million ; or one in every twenty-eight of the citizens of Birmingham. Yet it would be difficult to find a centre of Catholicity more effectively organized than Birmingham. It has been led by most efficient and apostolic Bishops. John Henry Cardinal Newman lived and worked in it for years. It boasts of a Diocesan Seminary, perhaps the most historic in England. It has had a band of diocesan clergy second to none. Yet it would be impossible to say whether its growth has been greater than that section of the Church of England which calls itself Catholic.

All these facts we must face as facts if we are to base conclusions and policy on the rock of truth. Moreover, they give to the Lambeth Conference an importance which is not to be dismissed by mere controversial acerbities.

But our readers may ask, " What is the significance of these facts ? Are they signs of victory or of defeat ?

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Are they towards hope or despair ? ” We know not. God knows.

Let us set down the grounds of hope :

1. It is evident that the forward movement amongst those in communion with the Sees of Canterbury and York is a Romeward Movement. Or if that word Rome is still too pungent to be borne, the movement is towards regaining, under a sense of continuity, all those truths, all that sacramental life, all that ecclesiastical communion and fellowship with Christian churches, which in the words of Rev. Spencer Jones, were torn from the Church of England “ by an organized conspiracy of fraud and force ” (*ibid.*, p. 17).

2. This movement has left its marks even in the official statements of the Lambeth Conferences. There have been spoken on both sides of our separation only too many words which it is well to forget ; and only too few which it is well to remember. Even if previous Lambeth Conferences have not always said the word which heals, the last Lambeth Conference (1908) has said a word which at least cannot rankle. In the Report presented to the full Conference by the Committee on Reunion and Intercommunion these wise words found a place : “ They (the Committee) desire to place upon record their conviction that no projects of union can ever be regarded as satisfactory which deliberately leave out the Churches of the Latin Communion ” (*The Five Lambeth Conferences*, compiled under the direction of the Most Rev. Randall T. Davidson, D.D., Archbishop of Canterbury, S.P.C.K., p. 426). This pronouncement is in the spirit of the wise words written by Prof. E. A. Freeman (*Ency. Britt.*, Vol. VIII, p. 278). “ The Church of England is the daughter of the Church of Rome. She is so perhaps more than any other Church in Europe.”

But the Lambeth Conference of 1908 had to look

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beyond the mere events of the previous twelve years in order to forget the Bull *Apostolicæ Curæ* under the hunger and thirst for Reunion. Such generosity of forgetfulness does not make for despair.

3. If this last Lambeth Conference was generous in its admissions towards its Mother Church, it has been met by admissions no less generous.

When events made it necessary to set an organized Hierarchy over the Roman Catholics of this country, the Church of Rome with singular delicacy, did not set its Bishops and Archbishops in the historic sees of Canterbury, York and the rest. The significance of this delicacy of the successors of St. Gregory cannot at once fully be seen. But if ever a day of reconciliation comes about, this act of the Popes in leaving unchallenged the Sees first created by St. Gregory the Great, may allow us to see a Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury singing High Mass in Westminster Cathedral.

4. The *Ecclesia Anglicana* may well expect that its desires for reunion will be met by Rome's traditional breadth of toleration. Of this toleration we have a new proof in the *Codex Juris Canonici*. Though this body of laws has been the elaboration of centuries and is of more importance than Magna Charta, yet its opening canon is, "Licet in Codice juris canonici *Ecclesiæ quoque Orientalis disciplina saepe referatur, ipse tamen unam respicit Latinam Ecclesiam, neque Orientalem obligat*" (although in the Code of Canon Law the discipline of the Eastern Church is often mentioned, yet it regards only the Latin Church, and does not oblige the Eastern Church). Now this Eastern Church, which is of such concern to Rome that it exempts it from the normal legislation, hardly numbers one hundred Bishops, whose Sees are amongst nations of little international importance. On the other hand the Bishops in communion with Canterbury and York number over three hundred ;

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and belong for the moment to the two most powerful nations left by the War.

5. Again, it is often felt that the supremacy of the See of Rome has dwarfed the authority of Bishops. But it is the See of Rome, at Trent and Vatican and in the *Codex* which officially exalts Bishops by calling them successors of the Apostles. Pope Leo XIII, in the Encyclical *Satis Cognitum*, officially denies that these successors of the Apostles are merely vicars of the Roman Pontiff. In doctrine no other Church has so exalted the Bishops; and in fact, the Bishops in communion with the Apostolic See, are given more honour and authority than any other Bishops in the world.

6. As the Churches in communion with Rome, and those in communion with Canterbury and York are being slowly emancipated from secular and royal pressure, they begin to feel that the separation between them has not been mainly of their own making. The issues, at least in this country, have been obscured by our forefathers politically identifying the Crown rights of Christ with the royal pretension of a dynasty. The faith of England has been largely lost in a dynastic quarrel between the House of Tudors and the House of Stuart. The recognition of this fact may be the first step towards its undoing.

7. Much of the spirit that animates the successors of St. Peter is to be found in the noble words uttered by the Right Rev. W. R. Brownlow, D.D., Bishop of Clifton (1896). "Of one thing our Anglican friends may be assured. No jealousy or selfish feeling of personal dignity on the part of the Catholic Hierarchy will ever stand in the way of Reunion. Speaking for myself, I can say from my heart that I should be too thankful to petition the Holy Father for permission to resign my See, to take down my canopy and throne from the Pro-Cathedral and to lay my episcopal crozier

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at the feet of a Catholic Bishop of Bristol" (*The Reunion of England with Rome*, 2nd Edition).

We may be asked, "What will be the outcome of the present relation between the Mother-See of Rome and her beloved child Canterbury?" Again we say, a little sadly, "We do not know." No quarrels are more enduring or more deadly than those between next-of-kin. The issues between mother and child depends wholly upon human wills. But when human wills are set resolutely upon God's truth and God's Will it is hard to find therein any other signs than those that look towards hope.

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

THE BEAST'S SOLILOQUY

IF one should ask what is the greatest beauty
Among the store I of my lady boast,
I should not name those which all eyes can see,
But one unseen of all, and by her most
Utterly unsuspected. It is sweet
To hear the praise my friends give to her graces;
Sweeter to see her vain of her discreet,
Importunate, petulant and alluring laces;
But most to mark the sovereign charm of charms
In ostentatious hiding 'mong them all,
As the hid Point of Rest in art disarms
The eye which has all other points at call.
Then, Lord, I will rejoice and not despair
Because I guess not where Thou find'st me fair.

OSBERT BURDETT.