

THOUGHTS AFTER LAMBETH

THE Church of England washes its dirty linen in public. It is convenient and brief to begin with this metaphorical statement. In contrast to some other institutions both civil and ecclesiastical, the linen does get washed. To have linen to wash is something; and to assert that one's linen never needed washing would be a suspicious boast. Without some understanding of these habits of the Church, the reader of the Report of the Lambeth Conference (1930) will find it a difficult and in some directions a misleading document. The Report needs to be read in the light of previous Reports; with some knowledge, and with some sympathy for that oddest of institutions, the Church of England.

The Conference is certainly more important than any report of it can be. I mean that each Conference has its place in the history of Lambeth Conferences, and that directions and tendencies are more significant than the precise formulation of the results obtained at any particular moment. To say that a significant direction can be traced, is not to applaud any aimless flux. But I suspect that many readers of the Report, especially those outside of the Anglican communion, are prepared to find (or prepared to condemn because they know they will not find) the clear hard and fast distinctions and decisions of a Papal Encyclical. Of such is Mr. George Malcolm Thomson, whose lively pamphlet in this series¹ has given me food for thought. Between a Lambeth Conference Report and a Papal Encyclical there is little similarity; there is a fundamental difference of

¹ *The Lambeth Conference*, by George Malcolm Thomson. Criterion Miscellany.

intent. Perhaps the term "encyclical letter" for the archiepiscopal communication heading the Report is itself misleading, because it suggests to many minds the voice of final authority *de fide et moribus*; and to those who hope for the voice of absoluteness and the words of hard precision, the recommendations and pious hopes will be disappointing. Many, like Mr. Thomson, will exclaim that they find only platitudes, commonplaces, tergiversations and ambiguities. The Report of the Conference is not intended to be an absolute decree on questions of faith and morals; for the matter of that, the opinions expressed have no compulsion until ratified by Convocation. The Report, as a whole, is rather the expression of the ways in which the Church is moving, than an instruction to the faithful on belief and conduct.

Another consideration which we must keep in mind, before venturing to criticise the Report, is the manner of its composition. Some of the Report is to me, I admit at once, mere verbiage; some parts seem to me evasive; some parts seem to me to be badly expressed, at least if the ordinary uninstructed reader is acknowledged; one or two recommendations I deplore. But it ought not to be an occasion to us for mirth that three hundred bishops together assembled should, on pooling their views on most momentous matters, come out with a certain proportion of nonsense. I should not enjoy having to commit myself on any subject to any opinion which should also be that of any two hundred and ninety-nine of my acquaintance. Let us consider the quantity of nonsense that some of our most eminent scientists, professors and men of letters are able, each for himself, to turn out during every publishing season. Let us imagine (if we can imagine such persons agreeing to that extent) the fatuity of an encyclical letter produced by the joint efforts of Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. Russell; or Professors Whitehead, Eddington and Jeans; or Dr. Freud, Dr. Jung and Dr. Adler; or Mr. Murry, Mr. Fausset, the Huxley Brothers and the Reverend Dr. Potter of America.

With this comparison in mind, it is, I think, profitable to dispose first of those sections of the Report which are most insipid, and of that which has received most popular notice. I regret

that what seem to me some of the best parts of the Report, such as the section on *The Christian Doctrine of God*, have been neglected in favour of those sections about which readers of the penny press are most ready to excite themselves. But if one is writing about the Report, one must be willing to offer one's own comment on these already over-commented sections. The report on "Youth and its Vocation" suggests that the bishops had been listening to ordinary popular drivel on the subject, or ordinary popular drivel about what the bishops themselves are supposed to believe. They begin with a protest which for any intelligent reader should be unnecessary. "We desire at the outset to protest emphatically against the contention that the Youth of today are, as a whole, less moral or less religious than youth of previous generations." It ought to be obvious that the Youth of today are not "as a whole" more or less anything than the youth of previous generations. The statement, not having much meaning, need not occupy much attention. "There are signs of a great intellectual stirring among the rising generation." One could wish that this journalistic hyperbole had been avoided. There can hardly be a great intellectual stirring among a whole generation, because the number of persons in any generation capable of being greatly stirred intellectually is always and everywhere very, very small. What the bishops might have said, I think, with justice, is this: that one does find here and there among educated young men a respect for the Church springing from a recognition of the intellectual ability which during two thousand years has gone to its formation. The number of persons interested in philosophy is always small; but whereas twenty years ago a young man attracted by metaphysical speculation was usually indifferent to theology, I believe that today a similar young man is more ready to believe that theology is a masculine discipline, than were those of my generation. If the capacity for faith be no greater, the prejudice against it is less; though one must remember to congratulate youth on finding themselves in this situation, before admiring them for taking advantage of it. I hope at this point that of the fifty bishops who committed themselves to the dismal trope that "youth of this generation . . . has admittedly struck its tents

and is on the march," there was a large minority of dissentients. That is one of the troubles of the time: not only Youth but Middle Age is on the march; everybody, at least according to Fleet Street, is on the march; it does not matter what the destination is, the one thing contemptible is to sit still.

Youth, of course, is from one point of view merely a symptom of the results of what the middle-aged have been thinking and saying. I notice that the same fifty bishops refer guardedly to "the published works of certain authors whose recognized ability and position give undue weight to views on the relations of the sexes which are in direct conflict with Christian principles." I wish that they had mentioned names. For unfortunately, the only two authors of "recognized ability and position" officially disapproved in England are Mr. James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence; so that the fifty bishops have missed an opportunity of dissociating themselves from the condemnation of these two extremely serious and improving writers.² If, however, the fifty were thinking of Mr. Bertrand Russell or even of Mr. Aldous Huxley, then they are being apprehensive about what to me is a reason for cheerfulness; for if Youth has the spirit of a tomtit or the brain of a goose, it can hardly rally with enthusiasm to these two depressing life-forcers. (Not that Mr. Huxley, who has no philosophy that I can discover, and who succeeds to some extent in elucidating how sordid a world without any philosophy can be, has much in common with Mr. Russell.) I cannot regret that such views as Mr. Russell's, or what we may call the enervate *gospel of happiness*, are openly expounded and defended. They help to make clear, what the nineteenth century had been largely occupied in obscuring, that there is no such thing as just Morality; but that for any man who thinks clearly, as his Faith is so will his Morals be. Were my religion that of Mr. Russell, my views of conduct would very likely be his also; and I am sure in my own mind that I have not adopted my faith in order to defend my views of

² Some time ago, during the consulship of Lord Brentford, I suggested that if we were to have a Censorship at all, it ought to be at Lambeth Palace; but I suppose that the few persons who read my words thought that I was trying to be witty.

conduct, but have modified my views of conduct to conform with what seem to me the implications of my beliefs. The real conflict is not between one set of moral prejudices and another, but between the theistic and the atheistic faith; and it is all for the best that the division should be sharply drawn. Emancipation had some interest for venturous spirits when I was young, and must have been quite exciting to the previous generation; but the Youth to which the bishops' words apply is grey-haired now. Emancipation loses some of its charm in becoming respectable. Indeed, the gospel of happiness in the form preached by Mr. Russell in middle age is such as I cannot conceive as capable of making any appeal to Mr. Russell in youth, so mediocre and respectable is it. It has nothing to offer to those born into the world which Mr. Russell and others helped to create. The elders have had the satisfaction of throwing off prejudices; that is, of persuading themselves that the way they want to behave is the only moral way to behave; but there is not much in it for those who have no prejudices to reject. Christian morals gain immeasurably in richness and freedom by being seen as the consequence of Christian faith, and not as the imposition of tyrannical and irrational habit. What chiefly remains of the new freedom is its meagre impoverished emotional life; in the end it is the Christian who can have the more varied, refined and intense enjoyment of life; which time will demonstrate.

Before leaving the not very remunerative subject of Youth, I must mention another respect, not unrelated, in which Youth of today has some advantage over an earlier generation. (I dislike the word "generation," which has been a talisman for the last ten years; when I wrote a poem called *The Waste Land* some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed the "disillusionment of a generation," which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of my intention.) One of the most deadening influences upon the Church in the past, ever since the eighteenth century, was its acceptance, by the upper, upper middle and aspiring classes, as a political necessity and as a requirement of respectability. There are signs that the sit-

uation today is quite different. When, for instance, I brought out a small book of essays, several years ago, called *For Lancelot Andrewes*, the anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* made it the occasion for what I can only describe as a flattering obituary notice. In words of great seriousness and manifest sincerity, he pointed out that I had suddenly arrested my progress—whither he had supposed me to be moving I do not know—and that to his distress I was unmistakably making off in the wrong direction. Somehow I had failed, and had admitted my failure; if not a lost leader, at least a lost sheep; what is more, I was a kind of traitor; and those who were to find their way to the promised land beyond the waste, might drop a tear at my absence from the roll-call of the new saints. I suppose that the curiosity of this point of view will be apparent to only a few people. But its appearance in what is not only the best but the most respected and most respectable of our literary periodicals, came home to me as a hopeful sign of the times. For it meant that the orthodox faith of England is at last relieved from its burden of respectability. A new respectability has arisen to assume the burden; and those who would once have been considered intellectual vagrants are now pious pilgrims, cheerfully plodding the road from nowhere to nowhere, trolling their hymns, satisfied so long as they may be "on the march."

These changed conditions are so prevalent that any one who has been moving among intellectual circles and comes to the Church, may experience an odd and rather exhilarating feeling of isolation. The new orthodoxy, of course, has many forms, and the sectaries of one form sometimes speak hard words of others, but the outline of respectability is fairly clear. Mr. Middleton Murry, whose highly respectable new religion is continually heard to be "on the march" round the corner, though it has not reached us yet,³ is able to say of his own version: "The words do not matter. If we can recreate the meaning—all the words of all the religions will be free to us, and we shall not want to use them." One is tempted to suggest that Mr. Murry has so many words in his employ already, including some of

³ *I.e.*, in 1931.

his own creation, that he has no need to summon others. A writer still more respectable than Mr. Murry, because he is a Professor at an American University, is Mr. Norman Foerster, the fogleman of Humanism. Mr. Foerster, who has the honest simplicity to admit that he has very little acquaintance with Christianity beyond a narrow Protestantism which he repudiates, offers Humanism because it appeals to those "who can find in themselves no vocation for spiritual humility"! without perceiving at all that this is an exact parallel to saying that Companionate Marriage "appeals to those who can find in themselves no vocation for spiritual continence." It is true that to judge from his next paragraph he has at the back of his mind some foggy distinction between "spiritual humility" and "humility" plain, but the distinction, if present, is not developed. One can now be a distinguished professor, and a professional moralist to boot, without understanding the devotional sense of the word *vocation* or the theological sense of the virtue *humility*; a virtue, indeed, not conspicuous among modern men of letters. We have as many, as solemn, and as splendidly-robed prophets today as in any decade of the last century; and it is now the fashion to rebuke the Christian in the name of some higher "religion"—or more often, in the name of something higher called "religion" plain.

However low an opinion I held of Youth, I could not believe that it can long be deceived by that vacuous word "religion." The Press may continue for a time, for the Press is always behind the times, to organize battues of popular notables, with the religion of a this and of a that; and to excite such persons to talk nonsense about the revival or decay of "religion." Religion can hardly revive, because it cannot decay. To put the matter bluntly on the lowest level, it is not to anybody's interest that religion should disappear. If it did, many compositors would be thrown out of work; the audiences of our best-selling scientists would shrink to almost nothing; and the typewriters of the Huxley Brothers would cease from tapping. Without religion the whole human race would die, as according to W. H. R. Rivers, some Melanesian tribes have died, solely of boredom. Every one would be affected: the man who regularly

has a run in his car and a round of golf on Sunday, quite as much as the punctilious churchgoer. Dr. Sigmund Freud, with characteristic delicacy of feeling, has reminded us that we should "leave Heaven to the angels and the sparrows"; following his hint, we may safely leave "religion" to Mr. Julian Huxley and Dr. Freud.

At this point I may make a transition from Youth to another point in the Report, at which I feel that the bishops also had their eyes on Youth. On page 19 we read:

"Perhaps most noteworthy of all, there is much in the scientific and philosophic thinking of our time which provides a climate more favourable to faith in God than has existed for generations."

I cannot help wishing that the bishops had consulted some of the able theologians and philosophers within the Church (such as Professor A. E. Taylor, who published an excellent article on the God of Whitehead, in *Theology*) before they had bestowed this benediction on our latest popular ramp of best-sellers. I do not disagree with the literal sense of the pronouncement which I have just quoted. Perhaps it is rather the tone of excessive amiability that I deprecate. I feel that the scientists should be received as penitents for the sins of an earlier scientific generation, rather than acclaimed as new friends and allies. And it may be an exceptional austerity or insensitiveness on my part, but I cannot consent to take climatic conditions so seriously as the phrase above seems to allow us to do. I do not wish to disparage the possible usefulness of the views set forth by Whitehead and Eddington and others. But it ought to be made quite clear that these writers cannot confirm any one in the faith; they can merely have the practical value of removing prejudices from the minds of those who have not the faith but who might possibly come to it: the distinction seems to me of capital importance.

One characteristic which increased my suspicion of the scientific paladins of religion is that they are all Englishmen, or at least all Anglo-Saxons. I have seen a few reported remarks on religion and philosophy from the lips of such men as Einstein,

Schroedinger and Planck; but they had the excuse of being interviewed by Mr. Sullivan; and the remarks were chiefly interesting, as I imagine Mr. Sullivan intended them to be, for the light they threw on the minds of these interesting scientists; none of these men has so far written a popular book of peeps into the fairyland of Reality. I suspect that there is some taint of Original H. G. Wells about most of us in English-speaking countries; and that we enjoy drawing general conclusions from particular disciplines, using our accomplishment in one field as the justification for theorizing about the world in general. It is also a weakness of Anglo-Saxons to like to hold personal and private religions and to promulgate them. And when a scientist gets loose into the field of religion, all that he can do is to give us the impression which his scientific knowledge and thought has produced upon his everyday, and usually commonplace, personal and private imagination.⁴

Even, however, in the section on Youth, we may find some wise and true sayings, if we have the patience to look for them. "The best of the younger generation in every section of the community," we are told, "and in every country of the world, are not seeking a religion that is watered down or robbed of the severity of its demands, but a religion that will not only give them a sure basis and an ultimate sanction for morals, but also a power to persevere in reaching out after the ideal which in their heart of hearts they recognize as the finest and best." I wish that this might have been said in fewer words, but the meaning is sound, and cannot be repeated too often. There is

⁴ Under the heading *Nature of Space: Professor Einstein's Change of Mind*, I read in *The Times* of 6th February, 1931, the following news from New York:

"At the close of a 90-minute talk on his unified field theory to a group of physicists and astronomers in the Carnegie Institution at Pasadena yesterday, Professor Einstein startled his hearers by smilingly declaring, 'Space can never be anything similar to the old symmetrical spherical space theory.'

"That theory, he said, was not possible under the new equations. Thus he swept aside both his own former hypothesis that the universe and the space it occupied were both static and uniform, and the concept of his friend the Dutch astronomer, De Sitter, that though the universe was static it was non-uniform, which De Sitter had based upon the hypothesis that instead of

no good in making Christianity easy and pleasant; "Youth," or the better part of it, is more likely to come to a difficult religion than to an easy one. For some, the intellectual way of approach must be emphasized; there is need of a more intellectual laity. For them and for others, the way of discipline and asceticism must be emphasized; for even the humblest Christian layman can and must live what, in the modern world, is comparatively an ascetic life. Discipline of the emotions is even rarer, and in the modern world still more difficult, than discipline of the mind; some eminent lay preachers of "discipline" are men who know only the latter. Thought, study, mortification, sacrifice: it is such notions as these that should be impressed upon the young—who differ from the young of other times merely in having a different middle-aged generation behind them. You will never attract the young by making Christianity easy; but a good many can be attracted by finding it difficult: difficult both to the disorderly mind and to the unruly passions.

I refer with some reluctance, but with positive conviction, to the much-discussed Resolution 15 on marriage and birth control. On one part of the problem there is an admirable analytical study by the Master of Corpus in *Theology* for December, 1930. I can only add one suggestion to that statement, without attempting the problems of casuistry which the Master of Corpus discusses with great skill. I feel that the Conference was not only right and courageous to express a view on the subject of procreation radically different from that of Rome; but that the attitude adopted is more important than this particular ques-

matter determining space it was space that determined matter, and hence also the size of the universe.

"Astronomers who heard Professor Einstein make his declaration said it was an indication that he had accepted the work of two American scientists, Dr. Edwin P. Hubble, an astronomer in the Mount Wilson Observatory, and Dr. Richard C. Haze Tollman, a physicist of the California Institute of Technology, who hold that the universe is non-static, although uniformly distributed in space. In the belief of Dr. Hubble and Dr. Tollman the universe is constantly expanding and matter is constantly being converted into energy."

Our next revelation about the attitude of Science to Religion will issue, I trust, from Dr. Hubble and Dr. Tollman.

tion, important as it may be, and indicates a radical difference between the Anglican and the Roman views on other matters. I regret, however, that the bishops have placed so much reliance upon the Individual Conscience; and by so doing jeopardized the benefits of their independence. Certainly, any one who is wholly sincere and pure in heart may seek for guidance from the Holy Spirit; but who of us is always wholly sincere, especially where the most imperative of instincts may be strong enough to simulate to perfection the voice of the Holy Spirit?

The Resolution shows pretty clearly both the strength and the weakness of the Report, and the strength and weakness of the Anglican Church. The recognition of contraception is, I feel sure, something quite different from a concession to "modern" opinion. It was a courageous facing of facts of life; and was the only way of dealing with the question possible within the Anglican organization. But before asserting the distinct character of the Anglican Church in this way, the bishops must have taken a good deal of thought about it; all the more astonishing that they did not take a little more thought, and not proceed to a statement which seems to me almost suicidal. For to allow that "each couple" should take counsel only *if perplexed in mind* is almost to surrender the whole citadel of the Church. It is ten to one, considering the extreme disingenuity of humanity, which ought to be patent to all after so many thousand years, that only a very small minority will be "perplexed"; and in view of the words of the bishops it is ten to one that the honest minority which takes "competent advice" (and I observe that the order of words is "*medical* and spiritual") will have to appeal to a clergy just as perplexed as itself, or else stung into an obstinacy greater than that of any Roman clergy, by the futility of this sentence.

In short, the whole resolution shows the admirable English devotion to commonsense, but also the deplorable Anglican habit of standing things on their heads in the name of commonsense. It is exactly this matter of "spiritual advice" which should have been examined and analysed if necessary for years, before making any pronouncement. But the principle is simple, though the successful application might require time. I do not suggest

that the full Sacrament of Confession and Penance should be imposed upon every communicant of the Church; but the Church ought to be able to enjoin upon all its communicants that they should take spiritual advice upon specified problems of life; and both clergy and parishioners should recognize the full seriousness and responsibility of such consultation. I am not unaware that as opinions and theories vary at present, those seeking direction can always find the direction they seek, if they know where to apply; but that is inevitable. But here, if anywhere, is definitely a matter upon which the Individual Conscience is no reliable guide; spiritual guidance should be imperative; and it should be clearly placed above medical advice—where also, opinions and theories vary indefinitely. In short, a general principle of the greatest importance, exceeding the application to this particular issue alone, might have been laid down; and its enunciation was evaded.

To put it frankly, but I hope not offensively, the Roman view in general seems to me to be that a principle must be affirmed without exception; and that thereafter exceptions can be dealt with, without modifying the principle. The view natural to the English mind, I believe, is rather that a principle must be framed in such a way as to include all allowable exceptions. It follows inevitably that the Roman Church must profess to be fixed, while the Anglican Church must profess to take account of changed conditions. I hope that it is unnecessary to give the assurance that I do not consider the Roman way of thought dishonest, and that I would not endorse any cheap and facile gibes about the duplicity and dissimulation of that Church; it is another conception of human nature and of the means by which, on the whole, the greatest number of souls can be saved; but the difference goes deep. *Prudenti dissimulatione uti*⁵ is not a precept which appeals to Anglo-Saxon theology; and here again, the Anglican Church can admit national (I do not mean nationalistic) differences in theory and practice

⁵ See *Theology*, December, 1930, p. 307. It has been pointed out to me that here *dissimulatio* should perhaps be translated as "tactfulness" rather than "dissimulation"; but a tactfulness which consists primarily in not asking awkward questions seems to me to be pretty close to simulation and dissimulation.

which the more formal organization of Rome cannot recognize. What in England is the right balance between individual liberty and discipline?—between individual responsibility and obedience?—active co-operation and passive reception? And to what extremity are divergences of belief and practice permissible? These are questions which the English mind must always ask; and the answers can only be found, if with hesitation and difficulty, through the English Church. The admission of inconsistencies, sometimes ridiculed as indifference to logic and coherence, of which the English mind is often accused, may be largely the admission of inconsistencies inherent in life itself, and of the impossibility of overcoming them by the imposition of a uniformity greater than life will bear.

Even, however, if the Anglican Church affirmed, as I think it should affirm, the necessity for spiritual direction in admitting the exceptions, the Episcopate still has the responsibility of giving direction to the directors. I cannot but suspect that here the Roman doctrine, so far as I have seen it expounded, leaves us uncertain as does the Anglican. For example: according to the Roman doctrine, which is more commendable—prudent continence in marriage, or unlimited procreation up to the limit of the mother's strength? If the latter, the Church seems to me obliged to offer some solution to the economic questions raised by such a practice: for surely, if you lay down a moral law which leads, in practice, to unfortunate social consequences—such as over-population or destitution—you make yourself responsible for providing some resolution of these consequences. If the former, what motives are right motives? The latest Papal Encyclical appears to be completely decisive about the question of Resolution 15—at the cost of solving no individual's problems. And the Resolution is equally, though perhaps no more, unsatisfactory. The Roman statement leaves unanswered the questions: When is it right to limit the family? and: When is it wrong not to limit it? And the Anglican statement leaves unanswered the questions: When is it right to limit the family and right to limit it only by continence? and: When is it right to limit the family by contraception?

On the other hand, the fact that Resolution 15, as I take it,

is wrong *primarily* in isolating and treating as independent a question which should be considered as a detail subsumed under the more general question which should have been treated first—that of Spiritual Direction and Authority; this fact does I think indicate one recurrent cause of weakness. When the episcopal mind sees that something is self-evidently desirable in itself, it seems inclined to turn first to consider the means for bringing it into being, rather than to find the theological grounds upon which it can be justified; and there are traces of this zeal here and there in the suggestions towards Reunion and fraternization. For instance (p. 117 of the Report), it is suggested that a bishop might authorize and encourage baptised communicant members of churches not in communion with our own, to communicate in his diocese with Anglicans “when the ministrations of their own Church are not available.” It is true that this is to be done only under special and temporary local conditions; and it does not form part of my purpose to doubt that under the conditions which the bishops must have had in mind, such intercommunion is most desirable. But what does the suggestion imply? Surely, *if* dissenters should never communicate in Anglican churches, or *if* in certain circumstances they should be encouraged to do so, two very different theories of the Sacrament of the Altar are implied. For the innovation proposed, theological justification is required. What is required is some theory of degrees of reception of the Blessed Sacrament, as well as the validity of the ministration of a celebrant not episcopally ordained. My objection therefore is not to the admission of dissenters to the Altar—and I do not wish to attack what has not yet been defended—but to the propagation of this practice before theological justification has been expounded. Possibly theology is what Bradley said philosophy was: “the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct”; I think it may be the finding of good reasons for what we believe upon instinct; but if the Church of England cannot find these reasons, and make them intelligible to the more philosophically trained among the faithful, what can it do?

A similar danger seems to me to inhere in the statement about the Historic Episcopate. Mr. Malcolm Thomson, looking, as I

suspect, for the Roman view, or for one of the tenable Roman views (as an outsider naturally would), and not finding it, extracts and exaggerates one possible perversion; on the other hand he does point to a danger of which we should be aware. He quotes the words of the Report:

"While we thus stand for the Historic Episcopate as a necessary element in any union in which the Anglican Church can take part . . . we do not require of others acceptance of those reasons, or of any particular theory or interpretation of the Episcopate as a condition of reunion."

What the bishops had in mind in committing themselves to this serious statement, I am sure, is the fact that the Church has never held one rigid theory of the nature of the Episcopate. Even in the Roman Church I understand that there are still at least two theories tenable. But such theological subtleties pass beyond the ordinary lay mind; and the greatest value of Mr. Thomson's interesting pamphlet, to me, is its exposure of the possibilities of misunderstanding in the wording of some of the Report. And I agree with him to this extent, that the words *we do not require of others acceptance of those reasons* might be taken to mean "we do not require of others acceptance of *any* reasons except expediency": in other words, we beg that Nonconformists should accept the Episcopate as a harmless formality, for the sake of a phantom unity.

I do not imagine for a moment that the "conversations" of the Church of England with the Free Churches will bear any fruit whatever in our time; and I rather hope they will not; for any fruit of this harvest would be unripe and bitter fruit, untimely nipped. But at the same time I cannot cat-call with those who accuse the Church of facing-both-ways, and making one profession to the innocent Levantines and Swedes, and another to the implacable Methodists. It would be very poor statesmanship indeed to envisage any reunion which should not fall ultimately within a scheme for complete reunion; and in spite of mirth, "reunion all round" is the only ideal tenable. To the Methodists, certainly, the Church of England owes a heavy responsibility, somewhat similar to that of the Church of Rome

towards ourselves; and it would be almost effrontery for Anglican bishops to seek an alliance with Upsala and Constantinople without seeking some way of repatriating those descended from men who would (I am sure) never have left the Church of England had it been in the eighteenth century what it is now in the second quarter of the twentieth. In such difficult negotiations the Church is quite properly and conscientiously facing-both-ways: which only goes to show that the Church of England is at the present juncture the one church upon which the duty of working towards reunion most devolves. There are possible risks, which have been seized upon as actualities when they have been merely potentialities; the risk of feeling more orthodox when transacting with the Eastern and Baltic Churches, and more Evangelical when transacting with the Nonconformists. But I do not believe that the bishops have, according to the Report, conceded to the Nonconformists in England anything that the Eastern authorities could reasonably abhor. On the contrary, the attitude of eminent dissenters, in their objections still more than in their approval, seems to me to indicate that the bishops have stopped at the right point. The points of difference with the other orthodox churches are simple and direct, and in a near way of being settled. It is easier to agree with a man who differs from you in blood but less in faith, than to agree with one who is of your own blood but has different ideas: because the irrelevant differences between those of the same blood are less superable than the relevant differences between those of different blood. The problems of dissent between Anglicans and Free Churchmen are (we might just as well admit it) much more complicated than the problems between the Anglicans and the Swedish. Our doctrinal difficulties with Free Churchmen are complicated by divisions social, local and political; by traditions of prejudice on both sides; and it is likely that several generations must pass before the problems of theology and hierarchy can be fairly detached and faced. The Lambeth Conference of 1930 has accomplished in this direction this much: that it has determined the limits beyond which the Church cannot go in commending itself to Free Churchmen; further concession would be abandonment of the

Church itself, and mere incorporation, as possibly the most important member, in a loose federation of autonomous sects without stability and without significance.

The actuality of the approximation towards intercommunion with the Eastern Churches, however, has very much more than picturesque value. It brings with it the hope of a greater stability, instead of the old stability, real or apparent, which seemed to characterize an Establishment. On matters of doctrine, the summary of discussions between Anglican bishops and orthodox representatives (p. 138 ff.) is of great importance, especially paragraph 11:

"It was stated by the Anglican bishops that in the Sacrament of the Eucharist 'the Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper,' and that 'the Body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the Supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner,' and that after Communion the consecrated elements remaining are regarded sacramentally as the Body and Blood of Christ; further, that the Anglican Church teaches the doctrine of Eucharistic sacrifice as explained in the Answer of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to Pope Leo XIII on Anglican Ordinations; and also that in the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice the Anglican Church prays that 'by the merits and death of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in His blood, we and all Thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His passion,' as including the whole company of faithful people, living and departed."

Reunion with the East is of the greatest significance for a Church the position of which in the national life is inevitably changing. We still think, and rightly, of the Church of England as the "National Church"; but the word *national* in this context can no longer mean what it once meant. I entirely sympathize with Mr. Malcolm Thomson, and with any other Scot, Irishman or Methodist, in his objection to the vapid phrase about St. Paul's, "the parish church of the British Empire." An "imperial" Church, perhaps under the patronage of the four evangelists of imperialism, Lords Rothermere, Beaver-

brook, Riddell and Camrose, would be something more odious, because far more vulgar, than the Erastian Church of the eighteenth century. I prefer to think of the Church as what I believe it is more and more coming to be, not the "English Church," but national as "the Catholic Church in England."

For the last three hundred years the relation of Church to State has been constantly undergoing change. I do not propose in this essay to enter upon the difficult question of Disestablishment. I am not here concerned with the practical difficulties and anomalies which have made the problem of Church and State more acute in the last few years; I am not concerned with prognosticating their future relations, or with offering any facile solution for so complex a problem, or with discussing the future discipline within the Church itself. I wish to say nothing about Disestablishment, first because I have not made up my own mind, and second because it does not seem to me fitting at this time that one layman, with no special erudition in that subject, should publicly express his views. I am considering only the political and social changes within the last three hundred years. A National Church in the early Caroline sense depended upon the precarious harmony of the King, a strong Archbishop and a strong First Minister; and perhaps the Laudian Church came just too late to be more for us than the type of one form of order. The political-social Erastianism of the eighteenth century has gone its way too; there can be no more Hoadleys; there is not much financial or social advantage in holy orders; nowadays the smaller folk, who seek security, find their way if they can into the Civil Service, and the larger and more predatory seek success in the City. Less and less is there any reason for taking orders, but just vocation. I suspect that the rule by Prime Ministers is dwindling, too: no possible Prime Minister (except perhaps Lord Rothermere's sometime nominee, Lord Brentford, which God forbid) would now, I trust, venture to impose his own choice upon the Church in the way of episcopal preferment, or would do anything except consult the safest authorities. And the House of Commons, which has seemed to cling to the Church as the last reality in England over which it has any control, must eventually relinquish that tardy shadow

of power too. The only powers left are those with which we must all reckon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Bank of England.

Whether established or disestablished, the Church of England can never be reduced to the condition of a Sect, unless by some irrational act of suicide; even in the sense in which, with all due respect, the Roman Church is in England a sect. It is easier for the Church of England to become Catholic, than for the Church of Rome in England to become English; and if the Church of England was mutilated by separation from Rome, the Church of Rome was mutilated by separation from England. If England is ever to be in any appreciable degree converted to Christianity, it can only be through the Church of England.

To revert to the sense of the first paragraph of this essay, the Church of England may easily be made to appear in a better way, or in a worse way, than she is. The sudden heat of the Prayer Book controversy, the vivaciousness of Lord Brentford and Lord Cushendun, the "brawl" at St. Paul's, the unpleasantness in the diocese of Birmingham, the awareness of the Press that there is sometimes good copy in ecclesiastical affairs, the journalism of Dean Inge, and the large sales of popular theological literature; all these things together would seem to suggest that never was there such a lively interest in the Church as today. And the same dissensions, when interpreted to mean that opinion in the Church is divided to the point of disruption; the lack of ordinands and lack of funds, the anomalous and often humiliating relation of Church to State, the insurrection of what is popularly called the new morality, and the patent fact that the majority of Englishmen and women are wholly indifferent to the obligations of their faith, even when they have not quite repudiated it: such signs may seem to point towards collapse or superannuation.

I take such phenomena to be, for the most part, merely symptoms of the changing place, not only of the Anglican Church in the State, but of the Universal Church in the World. As I have said already, the Church of England can no longer be, and must no longer be, a National Church in the old nationalistic or in the

old Erastian way. The high power it may seem to have lost was either a bad power, or an obsolete power, or the shadow of a power. The political pressure from without, a force of cohesion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, no longer exists except as the spectral dread of Popery; the fear of the social consequences of disruption within no longer exists, for the disruption and secession have long since taken place, and the dread has been succeeded by the faint hope of reconstruction. The problem of the relation of Church and State—and I am not thinking here only of the Anglican Church, but of any body of believers in any country, and of the manifold and perplexing problems of the Holy See—is as acute as ever it was; but it takes ever new forms. I believe that in spite of the apparently insoluble problems with which it has to deal, the Church of England is strengthening its position as a branch of the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church in England. I am not thinking of the deliberate struggles of one party within the Church, but of an inevitable course of events which has not been directed by human hands.

At this point I must turn aside for a moment to protest against certain assumptions of Mr. Malcolm Thomson which are not peculiar to himself, but are probably shared by most of those who are only interested in church affairs as they read of them in the newspapers. When Mr. Thomson wrote his spirited pamphlet *Will the Scottish Church Survive?*⁶ he was full of praise for the animation manifested in the English Church in the dissensions of Catholics, Evangelicals and Modernists. He may have slightly caricatured these differences for the sake of picturesqueness, if only as a stick to beat his Presbyterian victim. I think that his chief error in treating the Lambeth Conference is that he discusses the Report without reference to the history and development of the English Church, and treats it as if it were the creation of one individual intelligence, instead of considering what must be the composite production of three hundred minds. But on some matters he not only lacks perspective, but is definitely misleading. Mr. Thomson is a metaphor-addict,

⁶ The Porpoise Press, Edinburgh.

and his mind is ridden by images of underground passages (very short ones), ferries, wherries, and other figures of easy transport from Canterbury to Rome. He remarks for instance:

"And the careers of several prominent Anglo-Catholics served to strengthen the general suspicion. For they had a habit of using the Church of England as a junction and not as a terminus."

I cannot see how *several* can form a habit; unless Mr. Thomson wishes to suggest that Father Knox and Father Vernon have formed the "habit" of leaving the English Church. I should like to know the names of the "few well-known authors" who have been converted: I doubt whether Mr. Thomson's list would contain many names that I do not know—one or two of his converts may even have started life as Presbyterians; and by the sum of the names which I know, I am not greatly impressed. And here again, I suspect that more capital is made of the transit of an Anglo-Catholic to Rome, than of that of a plain Low Churchman. For some souls, I admit, there is no satisfaction outside of Rome; and if Anglo-Catholicism has helped a few such to find their way to where they belong, I am very glad; but if Anglo-Catholicism has assisted a few persons to leave the Church of England who could never have rested in that uneasy bed anyway, on the other hand it has helped many more, I believe—one cannot quote statistics in the negative—to remain within the Anglican Church. Why, for instance, has Lord Halifax not saved himself a deal of trouble, of generous toil and disappointment, by becoming a convert out of hand? And why are not Lord Brentford and Lord Cushendun taken by the neck and dropped respectively into Methodism and Presbyterianism? The Anglican Church is supposed to be divided, by newspaper verdict, either into Catholics and Modernists, or into Catholics and Evangelicals, or sometimes into Catholics, Modernists *and* Evangelicals. If the divisions were so clear as all that, there might be something to be said for a voluntary liquidation. To those for whom the English Church means Lord Brentford, the Bishop of Birmingham and *The Church Times*, it may well seem that nothing keeps it together but

inertia, and the unwillingness, for various motives, to scrap an extensive plant of machinery.

To detached observers like Mr. Malcolm Thomson, entering England from the comparative calm of Edinburgh, Lhassa or Rome, the disorder of the Church of England may seem fatal. When clergymen hasten to reply with severity if a Bishop writes a letter to *The Times*⁷ and when even plain people like myself can make use of such eminences as Lord Brentford and the Bishop of Birmingham for comic relief,⁸ there is at least the opportunity for misunderstanding. For such freedom of speech and such diversity of opinion there is, however, something to be said: within limits—which, I grant, have been transgressed; but what matters is not so much uniformity of liturgy as fixity of dogma. There are, of course, differences of opinion which are fundamental and permanent; but I am not at all sure that it is not a very good thing for the intellectual life of the Church that there should be. When they come to light in the public press, they usually appear to be the clear and irreconcilable views of two or more well-regimented and hostile forces. But in practice, each division is itself divided, and the lines of sectional division are far from clear. You cannot point to one group of "Modernists": there are Catholics who may be called modernist, and Evangelicals who may call themselves modernist, as well as a few persons in whom Modernism seems to signify merely confused thinking. I have known Evangelicals to whom the name of Dr. Barnes was more displeasing than that of Lord Halifax. There are persons who do not *always* agree with the Editor of *The Church Times*; and I sometimes am moved to admire an article in *The Modern Churchman*. To a large degree accordingly the differences within the Church are healthy differences within a living body, and to the same degree their existence qualifies the Church of England for assuming the initiative toward Reunion.

And the Conference of 1930 has marked an important stage in that direction. It has affirmed, beyond previous conferences,

⁷ See a remarkable letter from the Bishop of Durham in *The Times* of 2nd December, 1930, and the poverty of the replies.

⁸ When I say "comic," I am considering their *essence*, not their *operation*.

the Catholicity of the Church; and in spite of defects and dubious statements in detail, the Report will have strengthened the Church both within and without. It has made clearer the limits beyond which the Church cannot go towards meeting Non-conformity, and the extent to which it is prepared to go to meet the Eastern and Baltic Churches. This advance is of no small importance in a world which will obviously divide itself more and more sharply into Christians and non-Christians. The Universal Church is today, it seems to me, more definitely set against the World than at any time since pagan Rome. I do not mean that our times are particularly corrupt; all times are corrupt. I mean that Christianity, in spite of certain local appearances, is not, and cannot be within measurable time, "official." The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide.

RELIGION AND LITERATURE

WHAT I have to say is largely in support of the following propositions: Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint. In so far as in any age there is common agreement on ethical and theological matters, so far can literary criticism be substantive. In ages like our own, in which there is no such common agreement, it is the more necessary for Christian readers to scrutinize their reading, especially of works of imagination, with explicit ethical and theological standards. The "greatness" of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards.¹

We have tacitly assumed, for some centuries past, that there is *no* relation between literature and theology. This is not to deny that literature—I mean, again, primarily works of imagination—has been, is, and probably always will be judged by some moral standards. But moral judgements of literary works are made only according to the moral code accepted by each generation, whether it lives according to that code or not. In an age which accepts some precise Christian theology, the common code may be fairly orthodox: though even in such periods the common code may exalt such concepts as "honour," "glory" or "revenge" to a position quite intolerable to Christianity. The dramatic ethics of the Elizabethan Age offers an interesting study. But when the common code is detached from its theological background, and is consequently more and more merely a

¹ As an example of literary criticism given greater significance by theological interests, I would call attention to Theodor Haecker: *Virgil* (Sheed and Ward).