

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

## REUNION AND REVISION.

BY "ONLOOKER."

IT is characteristic of propagandists to believe they faithfully represent great ideals, when in fact they are not only missing their real lesson but are following entirely different conceptions. It was never easier to go wrong than at a time like the present, when clear thinking is essential. Conflicting ideals held honestly seem to be identical because they have, it would seem, the same end in view. The end may appear to be identical when it is different in all respects. Our contemporary atmosphere is full of, as it were, waves of different length, which can only be separated by receivers tuned to them. All give sound and sense to the hearer, who imagines he is dealing with the only wave that utilizes the ether. The sound and sense he learns, is the exact contradictory of the sound and sense received by another "listener in," whose apparatus is tuned to a different wave length. Both "listen in," both utilize the same ether and both hear something entirely different. So it is with Reunion. Some look upon the word as synonymous with absorption. They have a vision of Home Reunion in which the Church of England, as the National Church, will by its comprehensiveness absorb all Reformed Churches, whereas if there be one thing more certain than another, it is the abandonment of this ideal by the Lambeth Conference. Others look forward to Reunion under a reformed papacy in which the Bishop of Rome will be *primus inter pares* embracing under his world presidency the Churches of the East and the Church of England which have preserved the succession. In the presence of the august greatness of this unity of the Catholic Churches the non-Episcopal Churches will be forced to come in, receive the Catholic Episcopate with its doctrinal accompaniments and take their place under the hierarchal discipline of the Great Church. This ideal is not contemplated by the Lambeth Fathers, whose scheme is very different, and yet it is considered to be the "Reunion" of the Appeal.

Political ideals react on ecclesiastical policy. The late Dr. J. Neville Figgis did more than any of his contemporaries to familiarize Church thinkers with a certain view of the place of the Church

in the State, which remodels the accepted theory "as to recognize fully and frankly not only with regard to the Established Church, but with regard to all other Churches and corporate bodies, that the great unity of the State and its authority can include and recognize a great variety of relatively free corporations exercising in their own spheres authority over their members, while they yield all of recognition and obedience to the State which comprises and in its own general sphere rules them all." These words of Bishop Gore summarize the theory that to a large extent expressed itself in the Enabling Act and lies behind the relation of the Church Assembly to the State. The Lambeth Conference met when the Home Bishops at any rate were familiar with this view of a Sovereign State recognizing and giving freedom to the several corporations within itself, which demands for itself allegiance in all that belongs to Cæsar and permits the several Groups to determine for themselves what they exact from their members with regard to the things of God. When once this is grasped it will be seen that the Lambeth Ideal of the Great Church is very largely conditioned by this new conception of the State.

The Vision which rises before us is that of a Church genuinely catholic, loyal to all Truth and fathering into its fellowship all "who profess and call themselves Christians," within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole Body of Christ. Within this unity Christian communions now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled. The semi-official exposition of the way in which the scheme works out is to be found in "Lambeth and Reunion" by the Bishops of Peterborough, Zanzibar and Hereford. "The suggestion therein made is that within the reunited Catholic Church there would be different Groups each continuing within reasonable limits its own method of worship and devotion and even in some degree its own ways of government." A College of Bishops representing the different Groups would deal only with questions affecting the fellowship as a whole. "About this there must be no misunderstanding. The Anglican Church would continue to govern itself as it does at present. No Bishop from another Group would sit in its

Convocations or its Synods. For the purpose of the whole fellowship a new Synod or College of Bishops would be created on which would sit bishops of all Groups. This new Synod would have no authority to impose its will on any one Group. At the best it could only withdraw its fellowship from a Group that became obstinately forgetful of its neighbours' consciences." It will be seen that absorption is the very last thing outlined by the Lambeth Appeal and that the underlying conception is very similar to that of the political theory of Figgis as expounded, and in our opinion accurately expounded, by Bishop Gore. There is, of course, a great difference between a Church with Churches within it and a State containing Ecclesiastical Groups within it, but the fundamental ideal is the same. All that concerns the units as members of the whole in both cases, is under the control of the central authority. What they enjoy in common as members of the community is regulated by the central authority—all that concerns them as members of the several Groups is regulated by the Group authorities who can act with the utmost freedom so long as they show respect to the consciences of their neighbours.

Closely associated with this plan is the idea that Episcopal jurisdiction is over persons rather than over places—with the jurisdiction limited to those inhabiting certain places. We believe that on the Continent of Europe the Bishops of Gibraltar and Northern Europe have their jurisdiction limited to the congregations in the various centres, and it is well known that a former Bishop of Gibraltar was a strong advocate of what he called the Catholic view of jurisdiction—not over territories but over the Christian individuals in these territories. By the acceptance of this principle many vexed questions of polity are solved, e.g. the claim of the American Church to consecrate Bishops over districts that have had Roman Catholic Bishops for centuries. The whole question of intrusion is settled as far as the Anglican Communion is concerned, whereas Rome holds that all such Bishops are "mere laymen." It is plain that the whole Lambeth scheme demands personal jurisdiction within well defined Groups possessing their own individual characteristics and preserving them as their special contribution to the fullness of the City of God.

An entirely different ideal has taken possession of many minds within the Church, who hold, as the Church of England is Catholic

and reflects Catholicity, it is necessary in the interests of Reunion and Catholicity that it should possess within itself as recognizable those essential qualities that mark off from one another the Groups with which she will be in communion. On one side, as she wills to be in unity with Rome, she must have in her services that which will prove to the Romans her close kinship with them, and on the other hand, as she looks forward to union with the East, she must have special Eastern characteristics. In order to make good the efforts for Home Reunion she must have the *differentia*—to use a logical term—of non-Episcopal Christendom displayed in her worship and organization. Again and again these views have been expressed on platforms. Very often it is asserted—“We all stand for Reunion. Well—when Reunion comes we shall find ourselves in communion with Churches that have much we do not like, why then should we object to the incorporation in our Prayer Book of what our brethren hold?” It is to be noted that the alternative Canons suggested by the Conference of members of the House of Clergy and generally approved by that House are described as “Western” and “Eastern” in type. One of the speakers in the debate said he had in view reunion with the Non-conformists in supporting the change he wished made. It is not too much to say that there is a latent and frequently openly expressed view that the Church of England in her formularies and worship should have all the marks of Catholicity present in all parts of the Reunited Church, and should have expression given to characteristics of Roman, Eastern and non-Episcopal Reformed Christianity. Speakers imagine that by so doing they are advancing the cause of Reunion, and think also not in terms of fellowship with Group Churches but with an eye on the absorption of other Churches in Anglicanism. We have detected the strong survival of the territorial idea of jurisdiction side by side with advocacy of the Lambeth Appeal.

It is clear that two consequences will follow if the present proposals of three consecration prayers with different doctrinal connotations be adopted. In the first place there will be three uses for the administration of Holy Communion—the Cranmer use, that is interpreted by the doctrinal standards of his day and is specially based on Holy Scripture—the Western use, that proclaims its kinship to the Canon of the Mass, and a so-called Eastern use, which

is in reality quite a new use based on a conception of God and Revelation that is considered by many to be Marcionite in its discriminative selection of Scriptural teaching. Round each of these will cluster interpretations that will tend to crystallize and move more and more in the direction of their parent stocks. We shall have definite Groups within the Church hardening as the years pass into practically different schools that will come less in contact with one another, and although we shall not have different Bishops within the same Diocese, yet it is possible to see the creation of new types of suffragans who will be delegated the charge of the Cranmer Group, the Roman Group, and the Modern Group. This is simply a further extension of the Figgis theory within the Church of England, and for our part it is not as far fetched as the acceptance of the theory by Parliament and the Lambeth Conference would have seemed a quarter of a century ago to the average English Churchman. Ruling ideas have a way of asserting themselves in every department of life, and just as the style of an historic building is reflected in every house within miles of its site—so the idea that governs a great conception finds its outlet in every part of the community that accepts it.

Recent proposals cannot but prevent Home Reunion taking place within a reasonable time. The negotiations have broken down on the claims of the Episcopate—not on their local or prelatival character—but on the sacerdotal conception that lies behind them. There is not the least doubt in the minds of Nonconformists that the Green Book Canon means the establishment within the Church of England, as part of its formularies, of doctrine rejected by the Church in common with them for centuries. They see in it the restoration of the Mass with its attendant consequences. They may not be skilled in their tracking of the subtle differences between the "Real Presence" Consubstantiation or Transubstantiation, but they know that by a priestly act changes of an ineffable character are declared to be made, by virtue of his being in the succession, and by this means alone this miracle is effected. They consider the development of the sacrifice of the Mass illegitimate and see it in the words "we do celebrate and make here, before thy divine Majesty, with these thy holy gifts, the memorial which thy Son hath willed us to make." They are convinced of the inevitability of adoration of the reserved elements and say they cannot possibly

entertain the idea of Reunion with a Church that has deliberately altered its formularies so as to bring them into correspondence with what they conceive to be the worst errors of Rome. They are fully alive to the misinterpretation of the Lambeth Appeal, and looking back over the past see the certainty of the demand on the part of those who have been responsible for the acceptance of the mediæval conceptions which have been generally approved by the House of Clergy, that their views must prevail throughout the Church. An object lesson of the very worst type has been given to our Nonconformist brethren and, if the changes be adopted by the Church Assembly, Home Reunion will fall to the ground and the hopes that have been cherished will perish.

Two proofs of this among many published opinions may be quoted. Dr. W. B. Selbie was convener of the Mansfield Conferences which did much to clear the ground for the consideration of Reunion. In *The Lambeth Joint Report on Church Unity: A Discussion*, he says, "Another thing troubling the minds of Free Churchmen is as to whether the future Church is to be really Protestant or to be Catholic. Now here I am treading on very delicate ground. But we as outsiders cannot help seeing a great deal of what is going on in the Anglican Church at present. We realize the tremendous struggle that is going on between Anglo-Catholicism, on the one hand, and Protestant Anglicanism, whether of the Evangelical or the Liberal type, on the other, and we are wondering very much which party is going to win, because that is going to make an immense difference to our attitude to any future reunion. If the Anglo-Catholic view of Church tradition and of orders and of episcopacy is to prevail, it is quite unthinkable that either we, or indeed the Liberals or Evangelicals within the Church, will ever be able to come to anything like an agreement. There will have to be a definite understanding, and I am bound to say that so far matters of that kind have been avoided and slurred over; and before we can get very much further there must be frank understanding on questions of that sort." Prof. W. M. Clow, one of the ablest of non-Episcopal writers, speaking of the "Grey Book" proposals says that if they are recognized "few can hope for either union or fellowship between the Churches." And if this be true of what is called the "Grey Book," what must be said about the mediæval ritual of the "Green Book"?

In an age when it is above all things necessary to maintain truth and drive out pragmatic expediency from the Churches, it is a plain duty to examine very carefully the truth and justice of all claims made. It is not sufficient to contend that because men cannot be happy in worshipping God unless they revert to mediævalism, mediævalism should be restored. We are inheritors of a great tradition. Purity is preferable to peace—for without purity there cannot be permanent peace. We dare not sacrifice the faith of the Gospel for what is deemed necessary for the "happy worship" of men. There has been a great deal too much of "what will satisfy and cause least trouble"—supported by a theory wrongly applied within the National Church—with the implication that no responsibility rests on members of one Group for the actions of another Group. Such a view cannot be held when we are members one of another and are bound to grow up into Christ our living Head. Unity is the will of God, but it must be inward unity expressing itself in outward union. Prayer Book Revision on the lines that have recently developed will retard instead of promoting union, for they show a desire to abandon truth for peace, an entrenchment of error within our Service Book, a hardening into Groups of those who will use the various uses, and an acceptance of an ecclesiastical theory as well as theological principles that will deter non-Episcopalians from seeing and feeling the drawing-power of the Lambeth Appeal.

---

The Addresses delivered at the 1923 Conference of the World's Evangelical Alliance and contained in the volume *Christian Unity and the Gospel* (Hodder & Stoughton, 5s.) are of varied character. They are spoken from the hearts of men who have a message to deliver, and when we say that they contain an Article on "The Gospels" by Dean Wace, the last platform speech by Dr. Watts-Ditchfield on "The Modernist Error," a speech by Dr. Carnegie Simpson on "The Revelation in Christ" and "The Imperative Appeal for Christian Unity" by Bishop Welldon, we have given an idea of the variety of its contents. The sermons by Dean Burroughs and the Rev. F. C. Spurr are well worthy of close study, and the book as a whole is a reminder that essential unity can exist in spite of varying emphasis on parts of revealed truth and a different approach to the study of grave problems. We thoroughly endorse the words of the Preface: "The Congress was remarkable as a demonstration of Christian Unity, and this volume is offered to the public as an interpretation of true Unity, and of the Gospel of Christ on which it depends."