

LAMBETH PAMPHLETS

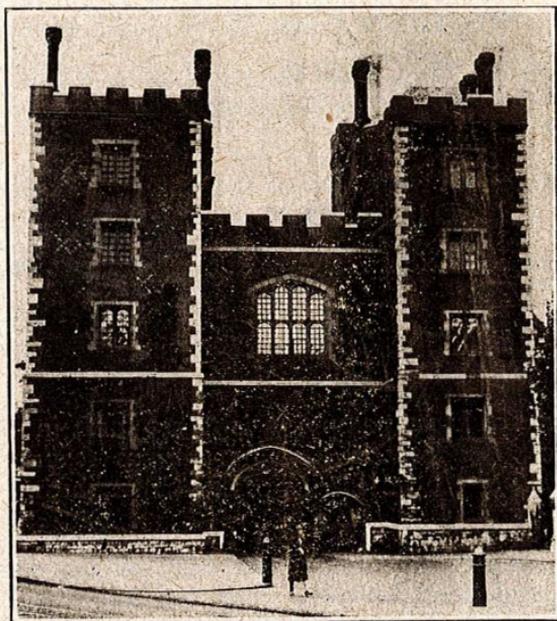
No. 1

LAMBETH ON

“The Church and The Modern World”

HUMAN RIGHTS — WAR

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Introductory Note

At the Annual Meeting of the General Board of Religious Education, in joint session with the Executive Council of the General Synod, the following resolution was passed:

"That the G.B.R.E. be requested to consider (in collaboration with the C.S.S.) the publication, in attractive form, of a series of 'Lambeth Pamphlets', as part of a wide educational programme."

In harmony with this resolution, the G.B.R.E. has produced a series of five pamphlets as follows:

1. Lambeth on "The Church and the Modern World"—Human Rights—War, by Rev. Canon W. W. Judd, M.A., D.D., D.C.L.
2. Lambeth on "The Church and the Modern World"—the Modern State—Communism, by Rev. Canon W. W. Judd, M.A., D.D., D.C.L.
3. Lambeth and "The Unity of the Church", by Rev. F. H. Cosgrave, M.A., D.D., LL.D.
4. Lambeth and "Education", by Rev. Canon R. A. Hiltz, M.A., D.D., D.C.L.
5. Lambeth and "The Church's Discipline in Marriage", by Rev. Canon W. H. Davison, M.A.

The purpose of these pamphlets is to set forth in brief form the main points of view contained in the various reports presented to Lambeth, as well as the resolutions passed by Lambeth.

It should be kept in mind that the statements taken from the reports carry with them only the authority of the committees concerned. The resolutions, however, carry the full weight of the conference itself.

It is hoped that these pamphlets may be widely circulated throughout the Church of England in Canada.



THE CHURCH AND THE MODERN WORLD

Human Rights War

This Section of the Lambeth Report deals with the Church's life and message as they apply in the modern world of affairs. The ideologies of the day therefore had to be dealt with in order to reveal the basic difference between the Christian conception of life and society and the evil interpretations extant. These evil interpretations are not new, but in this generation they have sprung into the public consciousness with fresh and disturbing power. This is due to the gradually decreasing acceptance of religious sanctions during the past half century, or, in other words, to the more secular way of viewing life. They impress themselves upon us the more forcibly because of the closer inter-relationships of all parts of the world and because of the dire use being made of many modern scientific discoveries and inventions.

Facing such a situation, if Lambeth intended to produce a report of any real value, it would certainly have to give a distinct colour to its findings. This the bishops have given. While it deals with the upsurging movements of our generation, notably Communism, it also reveals at many points a prophetic criticism of the conditions from which those movements have sprung. For this we can be thankful. It sounds the traditional prophetic note of our Judaeo-Christian heritage. Always, when the Church has been true to its calling as the agent of the Kingdom of God, it has condemned injustices and pointed the way to righteousness and brotherhood, placing all temporal movements over against the background of the eternal moral law of God as revealed in Christ. There is a challenging realism in the Lambeth 1948 Report.

In attempting any interpretation of this Section, one can do no better than follow its four sub-divisions—Human Rights, the Church and War, the Church and the Modern State, and Communism.

This is a statement by Christian leaders. As such it is naturally prefaced by an assertion and summary of the Christian doctrine of man. The bishops affirm that man has a spiritual as well as a material nature. They postulate his ultimate moral responsibility. While they recognize

each person's responsibility to God, they assert that personality must be developed in a community of free persons.

It is by reference to this doctrine that every social, economic and political system must be judged. If, in reading any part of the Lambeth Report dealing with human affairs, this is forgotten, the whole point of the bishops' appeal and challenge is lost.

THE CHURCH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Conference recognized the attempts being made to write into the documents of many countries Bills of Human Rights and in particular the proposal to formulate a Covenant of the United Nations covering them.

Nothing can be clearer than Lambeth's own resolution setting forth basic human rights.

"7. The Conference declares that among such rights are security of life and person; the right to work, to bring up a family, and to possess personal property; the right to freedom of speech, of discussion and association, and to accurate information; and to full freedom of religious life and practice, and that these rights belong to all men irrespective of race or colour."

If this were accepted and followed by national and international leaders, and acted upon by men and women everywhere, it would have an accelerating influence for righteousness, that is, to secure justice and the effects of brotherhood to all mankind. Let it be seen at once that this hits hard at discrimination and all injustices within every nation. It condemns every totalitarian state, but it also challenges the "overprivileged" nations to repent of their exploitations of less privileged people everywhere and to view their own "way of life" (so often hypocritically maintained) over against the needs of all. In particular, at this moment of history, it should have a wholesome effect upon the "white man's" assumption of superiority and should give a more balanced conception of the place which other races and colours will undoubtedly occupy in world affairs.

Since Lambeth was a gathering of religious leaders it was natural that they should stress the right of freedom of religion for all men. That means the right to freedom of conscience, and freedom for the practice of religion, and, by implication, freedom to all to give religious instruction and training to all ready to receive it. This, asserts Lambeth, must only be limited by the protection of public order, morals and the rights and freedoms of others as internationally recognized.

While we write, it is significantly announced that India, now a free nation, is writing into its constitution a clause to give equal rights to all religions to propagate their teachings and way of life, and also a clause which wipes out completely the caste system, with its practice of "untouchability", which heretofore has been upheld by religious sanctions.

Lambeth recognizes the difficulty of writing these high ideals into laws and covenants, but recognizes the high educational value of any such laws and covenants. Indeed, the greatest by-product of law (and of laws) is to educate. Also, such laws and covenants would "set a standard by which nations would be judged". If written into international law, and ratified by actual covenant, the nations accepting such a covenant would bind themselves to observe these rights and would place themselves under the judgment of all other nations if they ceased to honour their signatures.

While we write, on December 11th, 1948, the press of the world carries the report that the General Assembly of the United Nations, by a vote of 48 to 0, with eight abstentions, on December 10th, adopted a Declaration of Human Rights. This is the result of three years of earnest labour, significantly under the chairmanship of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt whose late husband inaugurated the "New Deal" for his own people, and adumbrated in the Atlantic Charter and elsewhere the fundamental needs, as well as the rights, of people in his own and less privileged lands.

We can add but one word. While it is trite today to say that rights involve also responsibilities, it is necessary to re-assert it. It is also necessary to add that, human nature being prone to selfishness, these fundamental rights and freedoms will only be extended to underprivileged people, groups and nations, by the sacrificial action of those who have great possessions. This is the way pointed out by Christ. To this the privileged nations are called.

THE CHURCH AND WAR

When considering the Church's relation to war, Lambeth obviously took account of the modern methods, conditions, and results of waging war. The bishops cite the potential evil effects of the atom bomb and bacteriological poisons. These, they said, threaten the very existence of civilization. The committee report says, "We are faced with a choice between the avoidance of war and race suicide." "Peace is . . . an absolute necessity."

For this reason, among others, the first resolution of the Lambeth Conference on war, and the opening words of this section of the committee report are among the strongest in the whole book. Reading them, one would believe that the bishops could have only one view about war and the use of arms. They reaffirmed the 1930 resolution in these terms, "That war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of Jesus Christ."

How, then, if this be true, should the Church act today? How, too, we are forced to ask, can a Christian conscientiously bear arms for his country and fight?

Perhaps the most philosophic statement of this committee report is this:

"Force is never a final solution, since all conflicts are ultimately in the realm of ideas and one cannot kill ideas with bombs. In the long run moral and spiritual forces are the strongest and we must give them a chance to prevail."

When one considers this statement in the light of recent Christian thought, two facts at least are revealed. First, this truth has become the common property of a growing number of people in all countries—Christians and others—since the First World War. For this we can be thankful. It holds within it the germ of hope. Second, it has helped to create an increasing number of pacifists, particularly in those countries which approximate more nearly to democratic ways of government and to Christian ideals. This presents a difficult problem for the Christian Church. At the same time, however, it has created a great and increasing company of conscientious people in every country who cannot be pacifists, but who have transcended mere national desires for their own country's aggrandizement and alleged "rights".

This latter view is distinctively a Christian view. Lambeth must have had it in mind when it said that:

"Christians must also endeavour to remove the causes of war by striving for greater economic well-being throughout the world, greater emphasis on social welfare, better observance of human rights in every sphere, and more constant use of international negotiation and conversation."

To the bishops mere patriotism is not enough. They say forthrightly, "The sentiment, 'my country right or wrong', is not one to which the Christian can subscribe. No nation can be a law unto itself, since all are under God."

The committee report calls upon all Christian people to strive against panic fears and to combat the easily aroused "war mentality". It says, "We urge all Christian people to combat the present disastrous trend towards another world war. the growing fatalism on this subject is itself a danger. The causes that lead to war are man-made and can be removed by man."

In the resolutions, the Conference urges governments to work for the general reduction and control of armaments of every kind and for their final elimination, except those necessary for police protection. It urges that "the use of atomic energy be brought under such effective international inspection and control as to prevent its use as a weapon of war".

There is another great hope. As we noted when discussing Lambeth and Human Rights, racial discrimination and intolerance flowing from a sense of superiority of one people or race over others is indeed being recognized as both un-Christian and, in actuality, false. Pray God (as Lambeth calls upon the world to do) that these evil things may die, giving place to the Christian realization that "God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth".

For these reasons, and also because we know that "God is still in control of His world", the bishops at Lambeth conclude with this challenging picture:

"Our twentieth-century civilization is in no way to be identified with the Kingdom of God. We are aware of its need for change and purging, and humbly confess our share in its imperfections. Moreover, it is not the first concern of the Church to preserve a particular civilization but to proclaim the righteous will of a holy God which is over all men and nations. Today the nations are under the judgment of God. We cannot assume that He will intervene to save our civilization from the consequences of our reckless and sinful folly. But God is a God of mercy and we can be sure that He will turn and forgive and show us new ways of life if we turn unto Him with broken and contrite hearts."

While the committee report has not dealt directly with our second question, that of pacifism, the comprehensive Resolutions Nos. 9-15 open the way for a consideration of it. As noted earlier, Lambeth affirms that it is the duty of governments to work for the general reduction and control of armaments of every kind, including atomic energy, and for their final elimination as instruments of war. But it

also says that "until such time as this is achieved, it recognizes that there are occasions when both nations and individuals are obliged to resort to war as the lesser of two evils".

Hence it will be seen that the bishops have left unsolved the dilemma between participation in war and the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ with which, they say, war is incompatible. Unhappy though this may leave many, on both sides of that question, we believe it was the only reasonable (and religious) course for the bishops to pursue. Though the Church is not of this world, it is in this world, where the ideal and the actual must be in constant conflict. The Encyclical Letter of the bishops, addressed to the Faithful in Jesus Christ, says, "For Christians even the destruction of civilization can never appear as the greatest of evils, since men are the heirs of an eternal world, and nothing, not even the atomic bomb, can separate them from the love of God."

It is interesting to note that the First Assembly of the World Council, meeting at Amsterdam a few days after the Lambeth Conference, has also left unresolved this same dilemma. Amsterdam acknowledged that in the absence of impartial supra-national institutions some Christians hold that military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law, but that other Christians, convinced of the necessity for an absolute witness against war, under any circumstances, refuse military service of all kinds.

This dilemma is implicit in the Lambeth committee report which says "that modern war is incompatible with the welfare, and possibly with the continued existence, of man", and again, "Against this death-dealing force (the atom bomb) there is no known defence. All that could be done would be to kill an equal or greater number of the enemy, and still-existing armies could fight like scavengers over the remains."

So in strong words Lambeth condemns war as contrary to the teaching and example of Christ but is forced to acknowledge still that there are occasions when nations and men are obliged to resort to war as the lesser to two evils.

But the real challenge of the bishops stands out clearly—for the Church and Christians to seek justice at all costs, secure an impartial body for international police protection, to have regard to others' needs as we would our own, and to pray for a fuller knowledge and realization of God's will and His world so that out of His perfect will peace may come.