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THE MALINES CONVERSATIONS.

BY THE REV. THOS. J. PULVERTAFT, M.A.

“ IF it be argued that Anglican approaches to Rome—of which the ‘Conversations’ at Malines are the latest, and in some respects the most astonishing example—should rather be regarded as evidences of an advancing progress of inner change, which is quickly transforming the Church of England itself, and that submission to Rome is ceasing to be as inconceivable as the standards and traditions of Anglicanism suggest, it must be answered that the National Church no longer reflects the mind of the nation, that the Church itself is deeply divided, and that the Romeward drift, though rapidly gathering force, is still mainly clerical. The Anglo-Catholic movement, which now claims to include at least one-third of the parochial incumbents, can only end, as the Tractarians ended, in Rome” (*Edinburgh Review*, April, 1924). These are the words of the Bishop of Durham, and all who read the authorized Report of *The Conversations at Malines, 1921-25* (Oxford University Press, 2s. 6d.), can see for themselves how far the drift has gone and the dangers to which the Church of England is exposed. This danger is not removed by the condemnation by the Pope in his Encyclical “On the Fostering of True Religious Unity” of future Malines Conferences. *Roma locuta est, causa finita est* is true of Conferences of accommodation. Rome cannot accommodate her doctrine and discipline to meet the needs of Anglicans in a hurry for Reunion on their terms, but Rome can still say, when her Cardinal writes to an Archbishop of Canterbury, “Reunion is not our work and we may be unable to achieve it, but it is within our power, and consequently within our duty, to prepare it and pave the way for it.” The way has been paved by doctrinal concessions and disciplinary explanations that can only end in submission when the “urge to Union” is so strong as it is in many Anglo-Catholic quarters. Let it be noted that in the Conversations, the word Union in French is translated “Reunion” in English, whereas the word Reunion employed in the English document is translated *entente* in the French. This is a small matter in itself, but it is a proof that what may seem, in an English document Reunion, means for the Roman Catholics absorption. Rome even in Malines never met the Anglicans as members of a Church—it met them as a body seeking an *entente* that would end in submission.

It is well to trace the history of the Conversations. Lord Halifax has had as the ruling passion of his long and consistent ecclesiastical life, Reunion with Rome. His position is thus defined: “I hope and believe that I would gladly die rather than any action of mine should cast a doubt upon those Sacraments (of the Church of England), or the purposes of God in regard to the Church of

England. It is because of the absolute security I feel as a member of that Church, that I do not hesitate to advocate the duty of our endeavouring to recognize the need of a visible centre for the Catholic Church throughout the world." In pursuance of this ideal, Lord Halifax made a descent on Archbishop Benson at Canterbury and with Abbé Portal had an interview with His Grace who was much disconcerted by the unwelcome visit. An effort was made to obtain from Rome a formal admission of the validity of Anglican Orders. The project ended in total failure. And the Papacy has refused in the most determined manner to reopen the question. A library has been written on the subject. We have no doubt whatever that we hold the Commission of Christ for the office and work of the ministry. Rome holds that our Clergy are mere laymen, and although her hierarchy pays us the deference, due by contemporary courtesy, of using the titles, she considers that we have usurped without legal or moral right, she has not retreated from her attitude and shows no intention of so doing.

Lord Halifax was not dismayed by this failure. He has the patient expectancy of a man who believes that he has a mission which he must fulfil. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 met with the shadow of a possible disruption of the Anglican Communion. Kikuyu was then a word that had much dynamite in it. A marked cleavage was known to exist among the Bishops on the subject of Protestant Reunion and Intercommunion, and it was believed that the late Bishop of Zanzibar would head a party that would make it impossible for the Anglican Communion to take any step forward in the path of the Reunion of Anglican and non-Episcopal Christendom without creating a split that would make itself evident to the world. By a striking unanimity—not in any way spoiled by the small minority—the Conference envisaged a world Christian Unity—the creation of a Great Church with unity without uniformity. What was chiefly in the minds of the Bishops was Reunion with non-Episcopal Christianity. The presence of Greek Prelates at consultations and Services—other than those of the Holy Communion when all present communicated—made plain the desire for a wider Unity, and the possibility of Rome coming into the new Unity was not absent from some hopeful minds. "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 Lambeth Appeal").

In England we had official Conferences with Representatives of the Free Churches. These were held in Lambeth and ended through inability to agree on questions concerning the ministerial "Commission of Christ." The local leaders of the Church of Rome made it plain that they would have nothing to do with Reunion negotiations on the basis of the Lambeth Encyclical. For most men this would have been decisive, but Lord Halifax was not dismayed. He knew of the noble patriotism of Cardinal Mercier, his reputation as

a progressive philosophical thinker and his kindness to Father Tyrrell. He asked on his leaving England for Malines in 1921 a letter of commendation from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been in correspondence with the Cardinal on the subject of Christian Union. Apparently this refers to the forwarding of the Lambeth Encyclical to the Metropolitans of the Roman Church, and his Grace gave him a letter vouching for his position as one interested in English Church life and unlikely to take advantage of any civility the Cardinal might show him. Armed with this letter Lord Halifax called with his old friend the Abbé Portal on the great Cardinal, who received them cordially and proved his keenness for the Unity of Christendom. It may well be that a Belgian ecclesiastic who remembered how Britain came into the Great War on account of the violation of Belgian territory, believed Lord Halifax to be the bearer of a great hope, that the Dowry of Mary might through his agency be restored to the Papacy.

This was the genesis of the famous Conversations. Lord Halifax wrote a memorandum which formed the basis of a Conversation between the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines, Mgr. Van Roey—now Archbishop of Malines—and Abbé Portal, Roman Catholics, and Viscount Halifax, who had persuaded the Dean of Wells (Dr. Armistage Robinson) and the Superior of the Community of the Resurrection (The Rev. W. H. Frere, now Bishop of Truro) to accompany him. The Archbishop of Canterbury says that he had no responsibility for this Conference, which he might have stamped out or at least refused to know anything about it. To act in this fashion would have been "a sin against God." At the second Conference the same six persons met with the friendly cognizance of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Roman Catholics (generally called in the French Version *les catholiques*) with the knowledge of the Holy See. Then it was felt that the number attending the Conferences should be increased, and as the question of Papal Authority as a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church "was about to be handled, his Grace recommended the selection of Bishop Gore and Dr. Kidd as theologians who had given much attention to the subject." He urged the necessity of its "being made clear what is our well-established and coherent Anglican position as set forth by our great divines." In so doing he followed what had been done in the case of the Lambeth discussions with Free Churchmen. At the third and fourth Conferences Mgr. Batiffol and M. Hemmer joined the Roman Catholic group, and the ten conversationalists devoted themselves principally to the question of the Papacy and its relation to the Episcopate and the Church. The Fifth Meeting took place on October 11 and 12, 1926, after the deaths of the Cardinal and the Abbé Portal and in the absence of Bishop Gore and the Dean of Wells. The English members conclude their Report with the wish that similar conferences may be continued in the future. The Roman Catholic members say nothing of future Conferences, which we now know have been definitely forbidden by the Pope, although Cardinal Mercier in October, 1925, looked for-

ward to their resumption in January, 1926. The Report of the Conversations published in January, 1928, is dated July, 1927.

In an Introduction to his *Notes on the Conversations*, dated Feast of the Epiphany, 1928, Lord Halifax wrote that after seeing the Pope in the Autumn (1927) he visited Cardinal Van Roey at Malines, who "expressed his willingness at a suitable date to preside at such future Conversations as might be arranged on similar lines to those held under the presidency of Cardinal Mercier. On my return to England, both the English and the French Reports, which had been for some time in the printer's hands, would have been published had not the Archbishop of Canterbury wished the publication postponed till the Revised Prayer Book had been submitted to Parliament. Another postponement of uncertain length has been occasioned by the rejection of the Prayer Book Measure." Shortly after the appearance of this statement the official Report was published. And in the *Tablet* of February 4 an official statement from the Archiepiscopal Residence in Malines, states that on November 17 he gave Lord Halifax to understand that the resumption of the Conversations was impossible and that in consequence of the state of public opinion in England the Cardinal asked that no account of the Conversations should be published.

It was necessary to set forth the above facts in order to remove many misunderstandings that exist. Whatever hopes of future Conferences may have been cherished, they have been killed by the Papal Encyclical which bluntly condemns them and makes the following statement: "All who are truly Christ's believe the Conception of the Mother of God without stain of original sin with the same faith as they believe the mystery of the August Trinity, and the Incarnation of our Lord just as they do the infallible teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, according to the sense in which it was defined by the Œcumenical Council of the Vatican." Men in a more humble and less well-informed position than the Archbishop of Canterbury knew that this was and is the attitude of Rome. Is it strange that they regret the temporary loss of astuteness shown by the Archbishop of Canterbury when His Grace permitted himself to be influenced by Lord Halifax? The discussions with the Non-conformists took place with Englishmen in their own land. The Lambeth Appeal had been sent to Cardinal Bourne and it was left to Lord Halifax to win the cognizance of the Archbishop for his conversations with foreign Roman Catholics. Making all allowances for the internationalism of Romanism the proceedings *ab initio* were doomed to failure. We have in other matters seen how ill informed Roman Catholics of one country are of the practices of other lands and the readiness with which they submit themselves to the authority of their superiors who have the power to command. It has always been a mystery to us how one so versed in diplomacy as Dr. Davidson could have construed refusal to converse into a sin! Conversation with a view to Reunion means paving the way to Submission with the intention of Union. On this point no instructed Protestant, much less an instructed Roman Catholic, has any doubt.

And the Pope's Encyclical has shown the opinion of the Curia as well as his own conviction on the whole matter. It is quite true that the Lambeth Conference of 1920 repeated the view of the Conference of 1908 that Reunion must ultimately include Rome, "with which our history has been so closely associated in the past, and to which we are bound by many ties of common faith and tradition. But . . . any advance in this direction is at present barred by obstacles which we have not ourselves created, and which we cannot of ourselves remove." Knowing what these obstacles are, knowing the kind of *rapprochement* for which Lord Halifax stood, we believe that His Grace made a grave mistake. Until the rise of Tractarianism the English Church regarded the Protestant Churches of the Continent as Sister Churches and looked upon Rome as in a different category. Our theologians agreed in believing that the *semper eadem* policy of Rome forbade our considering Union with her. And they were not mistaken.

It is remarkable that the discussions of the First Meeting, which largely concerned doctrine, are not disclosed in the Anglican Report, that is devoted to the elucidation of the meaning of the Lambeth Appeal and the supposed readiness of the Anglican Bishops and Clergy to submit to Roman Ordination if agreement had first been reached upon the large questions which at present separate the Churches. Elsewhere the Anglican Report, referring to the questions concerning the doctrine of the sacraments handled briefly in the First Conversation, states, "we say no more here because they are sufficiently treated in the French Report with which we are in substantial agreement, and also because there is an opening for further discussion which, we think, would be profitable, and would lead not only to a better understanding but also to a greater measure of general agreement upon the matters in question." The importance of this paragraph will be seen when the terms of the French Report are considered. They are in our opinion by far the most important passages in the book, for doctrine determines the entire outlook. We do not accept the confident assertion that "the real obstacle is clearly revealed; it is the jurisdiction of the Pope." The break in the reign of Henry VIII was caused by this "obstacle," but the doctrinal development due to the acceptance of Reformation and Scriptural teaching made the breach much deeper and wider. It has been the custom of a school of Anglo-Catholics to rest the whole case against Rome on this aspect of the divergence between the Churches, and most of the discussion at Malines centred on Papal Supremacy and all it involved. Even here the Conversation-ists made concessions that are opposed to our history. A primacy of honour and a primacy of responsibility are said to be the prerogative of Rome. It is suggested that Papal control should be limited to dealing directly with Metropolitans, and it is characteristic of the whole tendency of the Report that the well-known passage in the Article, "The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England," is watered down to "the well-known axiom, 'No foreign Potentate hath any jurisdiction in this realm of Eng-

land''! We leave the subject of jurisdiction with another quotation: "In accordance with the teaching common to both Churches, the hierarchy must derive in the direct line of the Apostles, by an uninterrupted succession of Bishops, their heirs and successors. The institution of Bishops is of divine right." Here is a full-blown theory of Apostolical Succession shared in the opinion of the Conversationalists by the two Churches. It certainly is the view of the Anglo-Catholics, but we have yet to discover where it is set forth as the teaching of the Church of England, which is founded on the teaching of Holy Scripture, and Scripture is silent on the subject.

Before dealing with the Sacramental concord set forth in the French Report, it is well to bear in mind that the Church of Rome in keeping with Uniat precedents would be ready to sanction the retention of certain characteristic Anglican customs; as for example: "(a) The use of the vernacular of the English rite; (b) Communion in both kinds; (c) Permission of marriage of the clergy." These are said—as others have informed us—to be questions of discipline, although it seems hard to conceive how discipline can have any power to reverse, as it has done in the Church of Rome, the command of our Lord, "Drink ye all of it," and the uniform practice of the Primitive Church. The French Report says, "Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree that Holy Scripture needs to be interpreted, and that it belongs to the Church alone to give an authoritative interpretation of it in matters affecting faith and morals. For guidance in this task the Church has recourse to the works of the Fathers of the Church." We presume that it is under this assumption that the Church of Rome justifies the withholding of the Cup from the laity and the Anglicans consider this not to be a matter of doctrine. The doctrine of concomitance, which lays down that the whole Christ is to be found under each particle of either species when consecrated, explains the entrance of discipline as superior to a command of Christ. A man-defined doctrine overthrows what the Gospel definitely commands.

It is necessary to quote at length (with our own brief comments) the remarkable passages dealing with the XXXIX Articles. The French Report reads: "From explanations given to us it is clear that the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion are not the insurmountable obstacle in the way of an understanding between the two Churches which the Roman Catholics had feared might be the case. In fact, some Anglican theologians believe that those articles are susceptible of an interpretation which would reconcile them with the teaching of the Council of Trent. Dr. Pusey, for example, was of this opinion, and Dr. Forbes, late Bishop of Brechin. Furthermore, the Anglican clergy in assenting to these Articles are no longer bound, as formerly, to accept all and each of the propositions which they contain. In fact, many Anglicans and more particularly the members of the Episcopal Church of America, consider the Articles as practically obsolete." Lord Halifax had made a similar statement in Paris in 1896—*Further Considerations on behalf of Reunion*

(p. 41), but he placed in the list of English Theologians Cardinal Newman and Tract 90! This passage disappears from the French Report. It was quite proper in their opinion for Anglicans to accuse the framers of the Articles of saying one thing and meaning the reverse, but the reference to Tract 90 would imply that such reasoning was a *tour de force*, for it would awaken memories of the consequences of that Tract. In Paris Lord Halifax was frank on one point. He said that the chief difficulties in the way of Reunion with Rome lay in the serious divisions that prevailed in the Church of England. To-day, as thirty-two years ago, the Church of England believes its formularies to have been the work of honest men and holds that it is impossible to make them teach the very doctrines they were written to condemn.

The Conversationalists reached an agreement on the following points :

1. "Baptism constitutes the means of entry into the Church, and the initiation which baptism inaugurates ought to develop within an organized social life." This has been rightly held to acknowledge the validity of Anglican Baptism, but it has to be remembered that adult Anglicans who do not communicate with the Church of Rome, are, in its opinion, outside the organized social life of the Church.

2. "The social life of Christians is organized round an episcopal hierarchy." This excludes all non-Episcopalian Christians from the Church, and as the Pope, according to the Roman Catholic view, is *jure divino* head of this hierarchy, those who do not acknowledge his position are also excluded from the Church.

3. "This social and organized life finds expression within the Church in the existence and the use of the sacraments." But as the sacraments depend for their validity on the validity of the Orders of those who administer them and Anglican Orders are not valid, the social life of the Church cannot find expression in the Anglican Communion.

4. "In the Eucharist the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are verily given, taken and received by the faithful. By consecration the Bread and Wine become the Body and Blood of Christ." Lord Halifax, in his *Call to Reunion* (p. 9), writes that these "the actual words of the Catechism supplemented by the 28th Article excited no comment beyond that, if the members of the Church of England accept as true that, by reason of consecration, a change whereby the Bread and Wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, this, in the view of Roman Catholics, is the meaning of Transubstantiation." But Lord Halifax and the French Report fail to quote the words of the Article which state, "The Body of Christ is given, taken and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith."

5. "The Sacrifice of the Eucharist is the same sacrifice as that of the cross, but offered in a mystical and sacramental manner. On the subject of eucharistic doctrine the Anglicans made particular

reference to the letter published by the English Archbishops in reply to the Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII on Anglican Orders." This is the doctrine of the Mass and the Archbishops founded their argument on the Prayer of Oblation, which is presumed to be said before, not after, Communion.

6. "Communion in both kinds was once the practice of the whole Church, but in the West, communion came to be limited in one kind for practical reasons dependent on circumstances. Consequently in our view, communion in both kinds is not a matter of doctrine, but one of ecclesiastical discipline." We have already commented on this statement (p. 111).

7. "In both Churches provision exists for a ministry and a discipline of penitence, whereby the sinner is reconciled to God through the sacramental absolution which the priest pronounces upon the sinner. Although the use of the Sacrament of penance and of sacramental absolution is much more widespread in the Roman Catholic Church" (the French here and elsewhere has *catholique*), "yet the formula given in the Prayer Book for the Order of Communion and for the Visitation of the Sick leave no doubt as to the belief of the Anglican Church in this respect, or as to the opportunity given to its members to have recourse to sacramental absolution for the purpose of their reconciliation with God, if they have fallen into any grave sin." The document here again does not quote the words of the Article. "These five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony and Extreme Unction are not, to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not the nature of sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God."

8. "In regard to the anointing of the sick, it is true that there is less agreement; but it is to be noticed that there is a tendency among Anglicans to revive the ancient custom of anointing the sick." The silence on the words of the above-quoted Article is noticeable.

No wonder that after reaching this agreement the French Report writes: "Further meetings between Anglicans and Roman Catholics" (again *catholiques* in the French Report) "are much to be desired in order to elucidate further these general statements, and to secure that there should be no ambiguity or misunderstanding with regard to their deepest significance. In any case the result of this interchange of explanations is a very hopeful impression that a satisfactory accommodation may be reached with regard to the doctrine of the sacraments regarded as means of grace and spiritual life." How much easier this would have been for the Anglicans had they had before them the Text of the Deposited Book!

On one other point comment is needed. The re-Ordination of Priests and Bishops by the Roman Catholics is a *sine qua non*, for the "Catholic Church" (here the word is *catholique* in French) "always

takes the line of greatest security in regard to the sacraments." "Such prudent precautions do not imply any mistrust of the persons concerned, but are simply a measure of security adopted for the sake of the laity. The Anglican Bishops have opened a way for the practical solution of a very thorny question, and the Roman Catholics (*catholiques*) recognize the lofty spirit which has inspired the Anglican Episcopate in this matter, and their readiness to make sacrifices on behalf of reunion" (*son esprit de sacrifier en vue de l'union*). The French document always speaks of union, and the reference is to the Anglican pronouncement "supposing always that all matters relating to doctrine and discipline had been already settled, and an agreement had been reached upon a system of discipline, no difficulty would be made by the Anglican Bishops about consenting to such an adjustment in regard to Ordination as might seem necessary to the Roman Church in order to place beyond doubt in the eyes of all the validity of their ministry."

We have quoted at length the crucial passages in the Conversations as disclosed, which it must be understood give only the points of agreement, not the points of disagreement, for in the words of Cardinal Mercier, "Negative conclusions, whatever they may be, would necessarily provoke polemics in the Press, awaken ancient animosities and accentuate divisions, thus harming the cause to which we have resolved to devote ourselves." The positive conclusions are sufficiently startling to all who have believed themselves bound by the teaching of the Church which has always been considered Protestant until the growth of Anglo-Catholicism founded upon the excesses of the Tractarians.

We conclude by giving the view of one of the ablest and most learned Bishops of the Anglican Communion—the Primate of All Ireland, who always weighs his words.

Having read and pondered the summaries of the report of the Malines Conversations which have appeared in the public Press, I feel compelled to give some expression to the conclusions to which I have been led. It is startlingly clear that a successful outcome of the Malines movement would destroy the Protestant character of the Church of England. It would also completely alter the position of all the Churches in communion with that Church. Such Churches are specially mentioned in the report, and are within its purview. The Malines movement is, therefore, no mere domestic affair of the Church of England.

Now, consider what this means. Protestantism is no mere negation. It is the positive affirmation of the two most precious possessions of the human race. These are—the message of Divine Love and Salvation given directly by Christ to all who will hear His voice; and, secondly, the right of every man to the free exercise of his own mind and will. Protestantism stands for Christian liberty.

Now, as I read the report of the Malines Conversations, I find that the choice, as regards authority, lies between the Pope and the Bishops conjointly on the one hand, and the Pope as

sole supreme dictator on the other. The people, apparently, are to be so much "dumb driven cattle," with no voice, no independent mind and will of their own. The one modifying idea which entered the minds of these learned theologians was that the Archbishop of Canterbury might become a sort of buffer between the Roman authority and the Anglican Bishops. How strangely these learned men forgot that in the early Church the decisions of the Councils of Bishops had no validity until they were accepted by the acquiescence of the whole body of the laity!

Now, I am quite sure that the Church of Ireland, an essentially Protestant Church, will have nothing to do with negotiations of the Malines type. I am also confident that the people of England will recognize that the Anglican representatives at Malines were ready to give away those liberties which men of the British race prize more dearly than life itself. If history has any lesson to teach, it is surely this, that the people of England, while very tolerant and slow to move, will never surrender their freedom and bend their necks beneath a spiritual despotism.

Have the English Primates no advice to give their people at a time like the present? Is it to be said once more *Episcopi Anglicani semper pavidi* in the presence of an aggressive faction that has claimed to be the voice of the Church? A crisis has arisen and the Church of England wishes to know whether its leaders look to Protestant Christendom to give expression to true catholicity or strive for a reconciliation which means submission by them to and absorption of their people in the Church of Rome? We need to know whether Malines Anglicanism or the historic Anglicanism of our Church represents the Faith held and taught by the Church of England.

On the Continent, England is considered the leading Protestant State and her Church the great bulwark against Roman advance. The Malines Conversations have had their repercussions in many lands. There the conversion of England to Romanism is now considered by Roman Catholics to be merely a matter of time, and Protestant Minorities that are known to have friendly relations with English Protestants have been subjected to fresh attacks and bitter reproaches. In the modern world steps that are conceived by many as merely local are looked upon as of world importance, and the fact that English Ecclesiastics entered into Conversations with Continental Roman Catholics is considered as at once the acknowledgment of the solidarity and unity of the Roman Church—*Securus judicat Orbis Terrarum*—and the desire of the Church of England for absorption by submission. There the claims of Rome have never been watered to the extent that they are believed to be minimized in England. The whole transaction, however creditable it may seem to the hearts of some, has had disastrous consequences that cannot easily be estimated.