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## *Orthodox Statements on Anglican Orders*

### **ALEXANDRIA, 1930**

*After the Lambeth Conference of 1930, the Synod of the Patriarchate of Alexandria found itself able to join in the recognition of Anglican Orders. The decision was announced in a letter from the Patriarch to the Archbishop of Canterbury as follows:*

To the Most Reverend Dr. Cosmo Lang, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England,

Greetings in the New Born Christ

The Feast of the Nativity, according to the Flesh, of the Redeemer of our Souls being a most suitable occasion for us, as it were, to visit your Beatitude, our friend, by means of a letter, we come to you hereby with a heart that is filled alike with joy, that "unto us is born a Savior, which is Christ the Lord," and with fervent prayers both for your health and for the peace and stability of the holy Churches of God over which you preside.

At the same time, together with our greetings for the Feast, we send you as our gift the news, which we are sure will be good news, to you, that having derived the greatest gratification from the accounts which it has received, both of the marks of honor which were rendered in London, alike by your Grace and by the general body of your Church, to the office which is ours, and also of the happy results which by the favouring breath of the Holy Spirit have emerged from the contact of the Orthodox Delegation with the Lambeth Conference, our Holy Synod of the Metropolitans of the Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of Alexandria has proceeded to adopt a resolution recognizing the validity, as from the Orthodox point of view, of the Anglican Ministry.

The text of that resolution is as follows: "The Holy Synod recognizes that the declarations of the Orthodox, quoted in the Summary, were made according to the spirit of Orthodox teaching. Inasmuch as the Lambeth Conference approved the declarations of the Anglican Bishops as a genuine account [1] of the teaching and practice of the Church of England and the Churches in communion with it, it welcomes them as a notable step towards the Union of the two Churches. And since in these declarations, which were endorsed by the Lambeth Conference, complete

and satisfying assurance is found as to the Apostolic Succession, as to a real reception of the Lord's Body and blood, as to the Eucharist being *thusia hilasterios* [2] (Sacrifice), and as to Ordination being a Mystery, the Church of Alexandria withdraws its precautionary negative to the acceptance of the validity of Anglican Ordinations, and, adhering to the decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, of July 28, 1922, pronounces that if priests, ordained by Anglican Bishops, accede to Orthodoxy, they should not be re-ordained, as persons baptized by Anglicans are not rebaptized."

We rejoice to see the middle wall of partition being thrown down more and more, and we congratulate your Beatitude that under God you have had the felicity of taking the initiative in furthering that work. May the Lord Who was born in Bethlehem give to you and to us the happiness of its completion.

In Alexandria upon the Feast of Christ's Nativity, 1930

Your Beatitude's Beloved Brother in Christ

Meletios of Alexandria

*In reporting this decision to the Oecumenical Patriarch Meletios emphasized that his Synod was acting on the basis that the statements made at Lambeth had removed their former hesitation "as to the teaching of the Anglican Church upon the mysteries and Apostolic succession," and could be held to have met the desire expressed by the Romanian Patriarch in replying to Constantinople in 1925, when he wrote,*

But in order to make a definite pronouncement, we desire especially that the Anglican Church herself should precise her doctrine concerning the holy mysteries and particularly concerning orders: does she hold it to be a mystery or not?

*Since that requirement had now been satisfied, wrote Meletios,*

It is proper that the validity of Anglican Orders should now be recognized by all Orthodox Churches. For that which, according to the same letter, was "one of the most serious obstacles in the way of the Union of the two Churches," has been "removed."

Letter published in *The Christian East*, vol. XII, 1931, pp. 1-6, with notes as above; the quotation in Note 2 is from No. 11 in the *Resume* of the Lambeth Discussions, reprinted below, p. 22.

## FOOTNOTES

[1] The words in the Resolution of the Lambeth Conference are "sufficient account."

[2] We transliterate the term, *thusia hilasterios*, and do not translate it by propitiatory sacrifice, or expiatory sacrifice, because, as generally used, these terms present conceptions which are not attached by the Orthodox to *thusia hilasterios*. The words used by the Anglican Bishops in their discussions with the Orthodox Delegation, as recorded in the *Resume*, and endorsed by the Lambeth Conference are:

"... 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."

*Lambeth Conference Report*, 1930, p. 139.