

Session III

Bishop Medley's 1877 Charge, Provincial Synod, Lambeth 1878 and the *Election* of a Successor

By the late 1870s John Medley had been Bishop of Fredericton for over three decades. Suspicions within the province that he intended to introduce Tractarian, romanizing practices had somewhat subsided. The diocese was running smoothly with both the DCS and the Synod fulfilling their intended and complimentary functions. Internal diocesan conditions were sufficiently stable for Medley to take his place on the wider canvas of Canadian and international church affairs. This was the case when Medley and delegates joined the Provincial (Canadian) Synod for a second time in September 1877. Medley was asked to give the opening sermon. In 1878 Medley played the role of a respected senior colonial bishop when he traveled to England for the second Lambeth Conference. As we shall see, he was not shy to make his opinions heard at the highest levels of the emerging Anglican Communion. After the Lambeth Conference, Medley visited some of his old haunts which included preaching the annual SPG sermon at Exeter Cathedral. Medley of Fredericton had become a bishop of international standing.

Medley's Charge of 1877

Medley's Charge of July 3, 1877 was given in the immediate aftermath of the calamitous Saint John fire of June 20th. The flames had destroyed 1,600 homes and left 15,000 people homeless. Assistance arrived from overseas and the United States. While Medley acknowledged and praised this generosity, he urged the city's citizens to understand the fire as a visitation of divine displeasure and a judgement on worldliness and materialism. The merchants heard the good bishop's words but just to be sure they rebuilt in brick instead of wood. Most of these edifices still stand as a testimony to the ambivalence of the population towards Medley's admonitions. Times were changing. The worldliness of Saint John's citizens would, with time, morph into the materialism and consumerism of the twentieth century. Matters of the soul and a spiritual perspective on contemporary issues would recede into the background as the next century progressed and relative prosperity returned.

Medley commenced his 1877 address with a statistical review of recent years. In 1874 he confirmed 185 persons, ordained five priests and two deacons and traveled 3,458 miles. Accompanied by clerical and lay delegates, he had attended the Provincial Synod for the first time. The well-known G.A. Selwyn, bishop of Lichfield, who was in North America promoting another Lambeth Conference fulfilled a promise and traveled 1,500 miles to be in Fredericton for a visit. As former Bishop of New Zealand, Selwyn's visit not surprisingly stirred up great interest in foreign missions. The cathedral Sunday school was moved to contribute funds for missions in the South Pacific. In 1875, Medley confirmed 900 people, ordained one priest and three deacons. He traveled 2,373 miles in that year. His experiences that year led him to castigate parents for a "neglect of duty" for adhering to the "foolish notion" to which the "Church gives no sanction, that it is improper to have their children confirmed before they are fifteen or sixteen years old."¹ Medley observed that by that age the young people are "easily led away by wrong impressions; become independent and most

¹ *A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Fredericton in the Cathedral, on Tuesday, July 3, 1877 by John (Medley), Bishop of Fredericton, (Fredericton: H.A. Cropley, 1877), 2.*

difficult to be convinced; and are led to believe that they can receive no benefit from the ordinance, unless they can declare themselves converted, not after the manner of the Bible, but after the manner of human invention.” In 1876, Medley confirmed 403 people, ordained four priests and three deacons and traveled 3,261 miles.

In 1877, Medley highlighted the joy and “satisfaction of receiving into our church ... the whole colony of Danish emigrants, two hundred in number; and of ordaining, after due examination, one of their number ... the Rev N. M. Hansen.” Medley had procured 100 Prayer Books in their language for the use of the settlers.² As for internal diocesan matters, the DCS was able to raise missionary salaries by about \$100.00 on average. Medley however commented, “Our inability to raise the stipend of missionaries to a more reasonable amount is only prevented by the backwardness of a few parishes.” Medley added that “no equitable reason can be given to shew that gentlemen living in quiet country parishes, should refuse to contribute less in proportion to their means than their neighbors, ... and in many cases, the subscriptions to the Church Society ill accord with the known wealth of the donors.” To conclude, Medley observed, “the present visitation (the Saint John fire), which has consumed property by thousands, is doubtless intended to remind many, that what has been irrecoverably lost, might have been laid up in the book of God’s remembrance, where none of it would have perished.”³

With respect to the after effects of the great fire, Medley did admit that “a general reformation, we can hardly, I fear, expect to witness.” He noted that while cries declaring “the City of Saint John may rise from her ashes grander and richer than ever, we would proclaim in men’s ears, ‘Righteousness is the true riches, which never makes to itself wings and flies away.’” Medley’s words as to his hopes for the lessons the young might learn are worthy of repetition. He said, “We wish no longer to find young men and women indulging in expenses far exceeding their income, and in consequence, tempted to rush into wild speculations, or dishonest dealings with their employers ... but free from the kindred vices of gambling, intemperance, fraud and licentiousness.” Medley would hope the youth would develop as Christians “pure in conversation, honest in business” and “full of love.”⁴

Finally, Medley had advice on the subject of parish missions — a phenomenon which one assumes was new to the church in the diocese and a testament to how much circumstances on the ground had altered during his episcopacy. Medley stressed that a missionary had to be an outside and experienced cleric. The success of a mission was to be judged “not by the excitement when the missionary is present, but by the results when the excitement has subsided, and things have returned to their normal state.” Above all, a missionary must not preach “as if the usual congregation were heathens” and “as if no foundation had been laid and simply aim at a great sensation.” The after-effects of such an approach would be to have given the impression during the mission that “Church doctrines and church ordinances” were a matter of indifference” precisely because “they had been so ostentatiously ignored, and it had been taken for granted that they were of no validity whatever.” In short, a missionary had to build on the parish’s pre-existent spiritual life and its strengths. To function properly, a missionary should highlight and reinforce the means of grace already in place and working

² Medley, 1877 Charge, 3.

³ Ibid., 5.

⁴ Ibid., 12.

within the congregation that he sought to stir up and move towards greater devotion and service.⁵

Sermon at Provincial Synod and Lambeth 1878

Bishop Medley of Fredericton delivered the keynote sermon at the 1877 meeting of Provincial Synod held in Montreal's cathedral on September 12. Only sixteen pages in length, the document nonetheless reveals a great deal of the bishop's mind at the time and his views on of the Canadian Church and the emerging Anglican Communion. Medley began by bluntly contrasting the old days of the Church of England's Establishment with what he termed as nothing less than "a second Reformation" which had transpired during his lifetime. He enthused that "the Church has fulfilled her great Master's charge ... extending herself into all lands ... linking together people of all lands in a fellowship of Christian love, and furnishing for an example to mankind .. The self-sacrificing labours of priests, laymen and sisterhoods and the courted martyrdom of a primitive bishop." The bishop Medley referred to was John Coleridge Patteson, missionary and first bishop of Melanesia who was killed by the aboriginals on September 20, 1871. Medley held that the Anglican Church was now in a position to "hand down to coming ages your great Catholic heritage whole, undefiled, unmutilated, unimpaired."⁶

Medley warned that "our great dangers come from within ourselves, not from without."⁷ The first great danger he identified was "want of holiness" by which he meant a certain temptation to spiritual complacency. As he framed the issue, "Do we busy ourselves chiefly with the fussy, superficial activities of the religious world, as if committee meetings, and the formation of new societies would atone for the absence of that holy heart without which no man shall see the Lord?"⁸ The second grave danger was "the want of sound knowledge." By this Medley meant the need for clergy to be better educated instead of simply more attractive speakers. As he framed the matter, "more labour ought to be bestowed on the acquisition of Scriptural knowledge, and that in this discerning and inquisitive age, unless, bishops, priests and laymen see the necessity of gradually raising the standard of knowledge in candidates for the ministry, (and bishops alone cannot enforce this) great danger will accrue to the extension and usefulness of our church."⁹ The most telling danger Medley say however was a "want of love." In this regard Medley wrote, "To agree to differ may be necessary, when disputes are irreconcilable; but we ought to strive for a settlement of them as long as it is possible, without sacrifice of Christian principle."¹⁰ As Medley stressed, "in matters of faith the church is more stringent, knowing from history the subtlety of unbelief," but to Medley's

⁵ Medley, 1877 Charge, 9.

⁶ *A Sermon preached before the Provincial Synod of Canada, in Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal by John (Medley), Lord Bishop of Fredericton on September 12, 1877,* (Montreal: Lovell Printing and Publishing, 1877), 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰ Medley, Provincial Synod Sermon, 1877, 10.

mind this was not what was at issue within the church in England at that time. Medley felt strongly that the Church at home was not showing tolerant love towards a small group of clergy and parishes who practiced advanced ritual and ceremonies. This group was known collectively as the Ritualists.

Medley asked why, if evangelicals, high churchmen and “those who suppose themselves to be men of broader sympathies than their brethren, can work together in the same church for the common weal, in synods, in conferences, in congresses, at consecrations and Holy Communion, why should the Ritualists be excluded?”¹¹ In reference to the situation in England, Medley objected to a law passed by Parliament to control such practices, (The Public Worship Regulation Bill). He stated;

I make great allowance for the feelings of men, who, thoroughly in earnest in themselves, devoted to hard and often ill-paid work, seek to attract and to christianize rude and half-heathen populations, and having succeeded in this arduous task, and made up congregations of most unpromising materials ... find themselves prosecuted by people who send in hired spies to watch, not to worship, in their churches, and are brought under the lash of the law which scarcely any of the bishops themselves perfectly obey, and notoriously, those bishops who put the law in operation, obey in the least.¹²

Medley stressed that among the Ritualists were “some of the most holy and self-denying of our priests, some of the most learned of our liturgists, some of the most liberal, loyal and spiritual of our laymen.” He urged that they be tolerated and loved as fellow Christians. In the end, Medley expressed his thanks that no bishop or diocese of the Canadian church had resorted to such persecution as had arisen in England.

Bishop Medley at the Lambeth Conference of 1878

A Year after his Provincial Synod sermon, Medley attended the second Lambeth Conference of world-wide Anglican bishops assembled at London. Perhaps the hottest issue at the Conference was the matter of ritual and attempts by English bishops to control the ritualists. The English Archbishops had striven to arrange matters such that the Conference would issue a strong statement on the matter.¹³ When a report touching ritual came before the assembly, it became apparent that those present viewed the issue from significantly different perspectives. The Canadian bishops took exception to the interpretation of obedience to episcopal authority which was promulgated by the English Archbishops. With respect to changes in services, Bishop Binney of Nova Scotia noted, “I could not really agree ... that all such changes should require the sanction of the bishop beforehand.”¹⁴ He concurred that the clergy were clearly bound to observe episcopal injunctions “but I cannot assent to the principle that the clergy should be placed in the position merely of assistant curates of the bishop, and should be required to consult the bishop, as to every little thing

¹¹ Ibid., 12.

¹² Ibid., 12-13.

¹³ Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, 69.

¹⁴ Lambeth Conference Proceedings IX: 164, Lambeth Palace Library, London.

they should do in their church beforehand.”¹⁵ For his part, Medley of Fredericton challenged the Archbishop of York’s assertion that “the clergyman should do nothing without the consent of the bishop.”¹⁶ He noted that, “a clergyman, on his ordination, promises to give true and faithful obedience to the bishop – canonical obedience – it must be in all things, ‘just, lawful and honest.’ No man promises absolute obedience.”¹⁷ At this juncture the Archbishop of Canterbury interjected, suggesting that such obedience was precisely what was being requested. Medley demurred, “canonical obedience, not the sort of obedience that every bishop shall have unlimited command over the clergy, but in that which is laid down in the canons of the church.”¹⁸ Medley pressed the point adding, “I conceive that when you take these subjects which are subjects for description and decision and then tell men that they must obey the bishop on these matters because they have taken an oath of obedience to him you appear to me to be straining the oath beyond what it can bear.”¹⁹ By this point, the tone of the debate had become quite heated. Medley nonetheless continued, asserting that if the Archbishops persisted in pushing the draft report upon the Conference, it would “most unhappily introduce a note of discord among persons which does not now exist.”²⁰ As for complying with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s desire for American advice stated earlier, Medley proceeded to give his, namely, that the Archbishop “do away with the Public Worship Regulation Bill” – advice which produced cries of “order, order.”²¹ from many of those assembled. Unfazed, Medley proceeded to “implore” the English bishops, then all the American bishops present and finally the

¹⁵ LC IX:164..

¹⁶ Ibid., 134.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Scottish bishops, to vote against the report as it stood. At this point the Archbishop of York rose and hastily moved adjournment. Canterbury pronounced the benediction and the Conference adjourned until the following day. The flurry of Canadian advice to the English Archbishops on matters connected to ritual thus came to an abrupt end.

The Synod Motion of 1879 and the “Election” of a Successor to Medley

The decade of the 1870s did not end without one matter of contention within the Diocese of Fredericton. At the synod of July 1879 Medley had introduced a motion for “The Appointment and Election of a Bishop Coadjutor.” Medley’s motion differed in several ways from the original 1871 canon for “The Election of a Bishop.” First, it was a motion for him to appoint an assistant that the Synod would be asked to elect. Secondly, this assistant would be his successor — no further election being required. Needless to say, this new canon generated comment. An anonymous pamphlet published, and, one assumes originating in Saint John, appeared later in 1879 questioning the wisdom of the proposed canon. The writer correctly pointed out that the proposed canon effectively removed the existing right of nomination from the Synod’s clerical and lay delegates and “vested it solely in the Bishop.” It was also observed that “the canon in reality provides for the election of the next bishop.”²²

The pamphlet listed five reasons put forward by Medley in defense of the proposed canon. First, that as diocesan for 34 years he was in the best possible position to judge who would be the most suitable assistant and successor. Secondly, the person selected would be by definition his assistant and his alone. The pamphlet writer thought that neither of these reasons were sufficient to disenfranchise the Synod of its existing right of nomination. Thirdly, that Medley’s proposal included his offer to contribute a significant portion of his income towards the support of his assistant. Fourthly, that as a rector had the say in a curate, so too the diocesan bishop should have the say in his assistant. The pamphlet author objected, noting that a curate served in one mission only, while Medley’s assistant would be assistant bishop to the entire diocese and then diocesan bishop upon Medley’s death. Finally, Medley advanced the proposition that his sole right of nomination would help avoid “the party strife and bad feeling which, judging from the experience of elections elsewhere, would probably ensure if the right of nomination were left with the Synod.”²³ The pamphlet objected that Medley’s retention of the sole right of nomination would rather tend to stir up party strife rather than to cool such sentiments. Furthermore, would not any diocesan bishop be inclined to nominate a candidate who thought like him and who belonged to the same ‘party’ within the church? Finally, the pamphlet objected that the skills requisite in an assistant were not identical to those of a diocesan and an individual who performed well as an assistant might well not serve the diocese well as a Diocesan bishop.²⁴ There was also the matter of

²² *A Bishop Coadjutor, Remarks on a Canon Proposed by the Most Reverend, the Lord Bishop of Fredericton, in the month of June, A.D. 1879*, (Saint John: J & A McMillan, Steambook and Job Printers, 1879), 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

finances; if Medley saw the necessity of financing the position himself was this not proof positive that the diocese would be moving in a direction opposite to the self-sufficiency Medley, the DCS and the Synod had been striving towards for decades?²⁵

In spite of the reasoned arguments of the pamphlet, Bishop Medley got his way. In 1881 the Synod 'elected' Hollingworth Tully Kingdon coadjutor bishop of Fredericton. Kingdon was the only nominee put forward by Medley. Kingdon would serve as Medley's assistant for the following eleven years and succeeded him upon the latter's death in 1892. Kingdon would serve as the second Bishop of Fredericton until his death in 1907.

²⁵ Ibid., 12.