

Lance Lambert - a brief introduction

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Lance Lambert (1931-) is known among many as an international speaker and author. After finding out about his Jewish ancestry on his mother's side, Lambert's teachings received a definite emphasis on the role of Israel in God's plan for mankind. Many of Lambert's teaching tapes, books and pamphlets are dedicated to this particular topic. He visited Israel regularly from 1967 on and became an Israeli citizen thirteen years later.

However, Lambert should also be noted for his ecclesiological views, which place him in the tradition of Watchman Nee and T. Austin-Sparks. Despite this stream's impact on several influential neo-Pentecostal groups and individuals, it is hardly touched upon in the *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. In this work, Lambert himself has been totally ignored. However, Lambert does deserve scholarly attention. Hopefully this little article may serve as a catalyst for further studies of the man and the history of the Christian Fellowship in Halford House which he established on Halford Road, London in the early 1950s.

Lambert was converted to Christ as a 12 year old and soon felt called to missionary work.¹ After having served with the RAF from 1950-52 in Egypt, he returned to England. Lambert's plan was to study theology. The China Inland Mission had already accepted him as a missionary candidate to mainland China. After the communist take-

¹ "Bible Teaching Cassettes by Lance Lambert," pamphlet. (Kent: Anchor Recordings Ltd, n.d.).

over, however, the borders were immediately closed to European missionaries.²

Lambert's background was Baptist. After his return from Egypt, he soon showed up at his local church again. "When I got back to the church of which I was a member - a great evangelical center - I was strangely unhappy," he says.³

He finally concluded that his negative feelings towards his home church were somewhat related to the fact that he missed the sense of spiritual fellowship which he had enjoyed during his military service:

In Egypt we had come into an experience of the church without knowing it - in the way we met, the fellowship we had together, the way we worked together and lived together.⁴

The contrast to the local Baptist church in Richmond (London)⁵ became unbearable. Even a spontaneous, informal conversation with the church's members concerning one's devotional life and fellowship with God seemed unthinkable:

² Lance Lambert, "History of Halford House," tape 1 in a series of 2, Christian Fellowship in Richmond. Consider also Lance Lambert, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Richmond, Virginia: Christian Tape Ministry, 1999), 88: "When I was first saved, I believed that the Lord was calling me to China, and therefore, my studies were in that light. I was accepted by a certain mission and put on their books. I remember that in my studies at the university, I had to study about Mongolia and then Tibet and then Korea and then the Manchu people; and I became more and more burdened. I remember, one day, I went to my room and I said to the Lord, 'Lord, I wish I had ten lives because I would give one to Tibet and one to Mongolia and one to the Manchu people and one to Korea and one to this.' Then my health failed, and China went Communist; and I could not understand."

³ Lambert, *ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The church location in Richmond, London must not be confused with Richmond, Virginia in the U.S. which is the location of Christian Tape Ministries, the latter being the publisher of several of Lambert's books.

I mean to talk - for the pastor to talk in the pulpit about the Lord was right, to address the Lord in a prayer meeting was right, and to talk about the Lord when the pastor comes to tea is right. But to talk about the Lord - together - is extremely odd.⁶

Together with several of the young people in the church, Lambert was drawn to people from other church contexts that represented his own age group. These Christian gatherings provided a context for informal fellowship, Bible study, and prayer. Several young people experienced Christian conversion through this. After a while it felt natural for Lambert to break with the local Baptist church, although he characterized many of the remaining members as “devoted and sincere.” The people themselves were not the main reason for the schism:

But the system itself would not permit the Lord Jesus to have the place God had given Him. Even when the pastor loved the Lord with all his heart, he was bound by this committee, by that committee, by this council or that council, this group or that group.⁷

Lambert’s departure was not motivated by theological differences. On the contrary, the immediate cause seemed functionally motivated:

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

When we went out, I can say before God, not one of us knew what to do. We had never made any plans - we had never even in our wildest moments thought of creating a church. And therefore, when the time came, we just did not know what to do. [...] We were as green as green could be.⁸

In November 1952, Lambert and the circle surrounding him chose to seek God for specific ‘guidance’. In accordance with their previous Baptist leanings, they soon reached a common consensus to appoint deacons and elders. Although these appointments were preceded by intensive prayer, two years later it was concluded that they had all erred:

What we felt now, was that [...] those who were elders, *were* elders. You didn't really have to appoint them, they emerged. It says in the Book of Proverbs that a man's gift shall make room for him. We began to understand that if a man *is* an elder, it becomes apparent that he is an elder and sooner or later everyone recognizes it. It's a natural thing. How could we get rid of what we'd got? That was our biggest problem?⁹

After some time of ‘wilderness walking’, where the newly established youth church had to hold their meetings in rented locations, they accidentally stumbled across a 300 year old ramshackle house (eventually being named Halford House) located on Halford Road, London. The house had neither water supply nor electricity. Substantial repair work was needed. Nonetheless, they felt God's leading. The church offered £ 450 and it was accepted.

⁸ *Ibid.* Even if Lambert in hindsight characterizes himself as ‘green’, he was still not quite without stimulus from more experienced Christian leaders. Already back in 1950, he had been introduced to T. Austin-Sparks book *The Battle of Life*, and the very next year he participated in a conference where Austin-Sparks was the main speaker. Lambert refers to Austin-Sparks in a letter to the author, dated July 27 1996: “I consider T. Austin-Sparks one of the genuine prophetic voices of his generation, almost one would say like a ‘voice in the wilderness.’ Today many of the truths he taught are common knowledge, although I fear, not truly understood. I had a deep relationship to him, even though he was by temperament a difficult man. He always said that the fellowship at Halford House, Richmond, Surrey, was the true fruit of his ministry and when he came to die, it was in Richmond that he died.”

⁹ *Ibid.*

During the next couple of years, “God began to provide not only the things that were necessary to us, but He began to provide all kinds of furniture in the period and style of the house.”¹⁰

At first, the church was subject to severe criticism from other believers. How could the luxurious ornaments of the location be defended from a Christian view of the individual believer’s responsibility of stewardship? Lambert was also troubled, but finally reached the conclusion that Halford House was destined from God to be a *sign*.¹¹ Lambert was convinced that the dry fig tree in Mark 11 and also some of the New Testament miracles of healing served as signs. But what specifically was Halford House a symbolic expression *for*? Lambert finally concluded that the building was destined to express the *Church of God*.¹² Even the chronological sequence which the reparation of the house on Halford Road required seemed prophetically destined. Here Lambert saw an analogy to God’s progressive revelation to the ‘Body of Christ’:

He started with the foundation and the roof. Those two things went together. The light and the water came in together. Those four things - as if they were the fundamental essential things in the recovery of the church. And then He started on the actual furnishing of room after room so that it should become a home and a place for rest and a place where we could relax.¹³

The fact that Lambert interprets the restoration of the church building as a prophetic sign of the true restoration of the ‘Body of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Lambert’s at random determination of modern ‘prophetic signs’ is in no way exclusively connected to the church building on Halford Road. At one time he even referred to the suicidal state of a specific charismatic minister as being a ‘prophetic sign’. (Johannes Facius, *God can do it without me* [Chichester: Sovereign World Limited, 1990], 73.)

¹² The basis for Lambert’s spontaneous ‘insight’ was probably his interpretation of the Old Testament books Ezra and Nehemiah. He saw both books as prophetic writings which, in a unique manner, pointed forward to the progressive restoration of the church of God after alleged Medieval decay.

¹³ Lance Lambert, “History of Halford House,” tape 2 in a series of 2.

Christ' – the latter being a metaphor for the Church of God – is also reflected in the following quotation:

God is not interested in merely an edifice. God is interested in a home. [...] But He wants to furnish it so it becomes [...] a place of fellowship... a place that's home, a place of rest, a place of intimate activity. [...] I sometimes have wondered whether in the end when this House [Halford House] is finished, the Lord will return.¹⁴

Several Norwegian people have visited Halford House and claim to have received personal edification through this contact.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*