

The Lambeth Proposal for the Union of Christendom.

*The presentation last year by Bishop Doull to the Presbyterian Synod of British Columbia of the Lambeth Manifesto in regard to the re-union of Christendom was all that could be desired in fulness and frankness, coupled with the most genuine courtesy.

The Bishop brought to the Synod, not simply the decisions and appeal of the Lambeth Conference, but also the very atmosphere of devotion and emotion in which the whole question was considered. The Synod's response to this was evident in the deep hush of rapt attention. The challenge to penitence, humility and prayer was accepted. The occasion was one of solemnity and sweetness.

It may seem ungracious, if not presumptuous, to suggest that the final stage in the consideration of the matter has not been reached; and yet the positive statement by the Bishop that in the decision and appeal of the Lambeth Conference is set forth consensus of opinion and attitude of all sections of the Episcopal Group throughout the world, seems to warrant, if it does not invite, expression of estimate as to fairness, fulness, and finality.

If we understand it aright, the proposal of the Lambeth Conference in reference to Orders, is that the fact and form of ordination in any of the uniting groups shall be held valid and operative within the bounds of that group; but that to secure right and recognition throughout the Universal Church would involve and require repetition of ordination or additional authorization as many times as the number of groups claiming anything special or distinctive in their view of the matter.

This proposal, at first sight, may seem very simple, and the offer or acceptance of such an understanding by those who have been episcopally ordained may appear to be very generous on their part, and to place the whole burden of responsibility or blame upon non-episcopal groups which might demur or decline. But the fact must be as definitely stated, as it is absolutely true, that there is neither rejection nor restriction of Episcopal ordination in the thought or practice of other branches of the Protestant Church.

The door stands wide open to the Episcopally ordained Minister for preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments, and exercising every function of the Christian ministry. Neglect or refusal to enter is determined by himself alone. On the other hand there is sealed exclusion as to Episcopal churches and pulpits against any and all who have been set apart to the Ministry and authorized by any other form of ordination.

All this being true, the proposal of the Lambeth Conference seems to require that in order to full recognition and unrestricted commission as a minister of the re-united Church, Episcopal ordination must be imposed and accepted in addition to any and every other form.

Both conviction and conscience on the part of other groups must bar the way to their acceptance of such a proposal.

What then? Must the whole idea of a re-union of Christendom be abandoned? We do not think so, and would humbly suggest that there is a great fundamental principle vital to every form of Christian Church government, the full and candid consideration of which might lead to a solution of the whole problem. This principle is that right and power to ordain or consecrate to any office or dignity in the Church belong to and inhere in the body which elects, selects or approves.

It is matter of history that Episcopacy grew out of Presbytery by election and elevation, and not that Presby-

tery fell from Episcopacy by separation or degradation.

There can be no denial that in the early days of the Christian Church the terms *episcopos* and *presbuteros* were interchangeable in application to the Minister as such, and did not refer to any difference of rank or office.

Only in the third century was the one term elevated above the other and reserved to the Moderator who by the votes of his brethren came to hold a practically life-tenure of office.

Episcopacy in name, as well as in essence, grew out of Presbytery. It came into existence and recognition not by assumption or self-assertion on the part of the Moderator, but by election and consent of the body of Presbyters.

The participation by Presbyters through a representative in the consecration of a Bishop in the Episcopal Church today evidences that the fundamental principle to which we have referred is operative.

In the Roman Catholic Church the consecration of a new Pope pertains to the College of Cardinals out of whose ranks and by whose votes he was elected.

The recognition of this same fundamental principle is common to all branches of the Church which hold to and practice the Presbyterian form of ordination.

Thus the way to the re-union of Christendom in the matter of Orders seems to lead through conservation rather than compromise, and through confluence rather than conflict of convictions.

The existence and elevation of Bishops themselves depend upon election, concurrence and consecration on the part of the great body of Presbyters. Why bar and ban the ordination of Presbyters by one another?

Our suggestion is that, in the re-union of the Church, there be **first of all** acceptance and recognition without limitation, modification, or restriction, of all existing Ministers who have been set apart to the Christian Ministry and are in good standing in all the uniting groups; and that, for the future, there be adopted form and standard of Ordination to the Christian Ministry which will unite all that is essential to both Episcopal and Presbyterian tradition and practice.

We have no thought of controversy or conflict in writing this article, but simply ask for a consideration which may stretch out a little wider and go a little deeper down.

—X.

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