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## The Economy of Salvation and Ecclesiastical Tyranny: Issues Relating to Female Episcopacy

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What follows is, with minor corrections, a copy of a submission to the Commission which looked at the possibility of female bishops. The original format has been retained so that readers know precisely what arguments were before the Commission and can therefore evaluate the extent to which these are addressed or answered.

The argument falls broadly into two parts, first, an examination of the economy of salvation, so often urged as a way of de-privileging the texts of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. The conclusion here is that it is exactly the economy of salvation that shows the traditionalist case is right. The second broad area of discussion deals with what lies behind the particular question of female bishops, namely the more general issue of how a denomination copes with a question of this kind. The analysis pursued here explains our denomination's actions using a venerable and powerful, if controversial, analytical tool, that of 'ecclesiastical tyranny' (see 6.2.13-15, 7.2 and 7.3), albeit exercised in our context with a certain genteel *finesse*. It is not easy to feel optimistic that this analysis will be squarely faced. To accept the possibility that one may be behaving tyrannically (see the definition in 6.2.15) is demanding not merely intellectually but even more so emotionally, especially for an institution which so strongly mirrors English social attitudes towards the suave exercise of power.

Nor is it easy to feel optimistic that these arguments will commend themselves to some evangelicals. It is tempting to feel that all is safe in one's own parish, for one's own time, perhaps comforted by the notion that 'A bishop is an estate agent'. Quite apart from undervaluing the biblical material and its concern about preventing false teaching in the

church (see 2.2 and 2.3), this overlooks several facts: the ‘estate agents’ will have an influence in who is appointed to which parish, and in the organisation and grouping of parishes, as well, of course, in the selection of future ordinands and their training. Further, the ecclesiastical tyranny displayed on this issue will be available for use on others. When a denomination adopts the tools of ecclesiastical tyranny, there are no ‘safe’ parishes—not in the long run. The recent treatment of Charles Raven and his congregation in Kidderminster has made examination of this area even more pressing.

## **Submission to the Commission on women in the episcopacy**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The object of this paper is to provide a submission exploring:
  - the theological context of the consecration of women to the episcopate (notably the economy of salvation);
  - the exegesis of relevant texts within that context; and
  - some of the arguments pertaining to justice and Reception (with reference to the tool of ecclesiastical tyranny).

### **2. Episcopacy in the context of the church**

#### ***2.1. The nature of the church as the recreated humanity***

- 2.1.1. Irenaeus of Lyons remarks ‘...the whole economy of salvation regarding man came to pass..., in order that God might not be conquered, nor His wisdom lessened...’.<sup>1</sup> Here Irenaeus paraphrases and extends the thought of Ephesians 3:10 (‘...through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.’) and also provides a theocentric context within which Christian theological reflection, including that on the episcopate, must be set.
- 2.1.2. The context of Ephesians 3:10 shows how the church, the fruit of the economy of salvation, makes God’s manifold wisdom

known. In chapter 2 Paul has dwelt on the human predicament both in terms of rebellious estrangement from God (Eph. 2:1-3, 12) and from one another (Eph. 2:14, where reciprocal human estrangement is typified by the hostility between Jew and Gentile). Such a predicament is a disastrous perversion of the original ordered cosmos of Genesis 1 and 2, in which there was a single human race under the sovereignty of God. The events of Genesis 3 speak of a humanity that rejects the benevolent sovereignty of God as it takes the fruit of the tree of knowledge and whose mutual relations also experience dysfunction, most notably of course in the events of Genesis 4.

2.1.3 This now disordered cosmos casts doubt on the wisdom of the Creator. For the Creator has called into being a cosmos that does not, it seems, reflect His order. He has spoken, and it is, apparently, not so. The church, however, vindicates God for it is one humanity (Eph. 2:15), restored to God (Eph. 2:16) and at peace with itself (Eph. 3:6).<sup>2</sup> The church, then, vindicates God's creative work in two respects:

- (a) She is humanity once more under the headship of the creative Word, the Son of God. This she manifests in her obedience to the commands and laws God has revealed, for here she does what Adam and Eve did not.
- (b) She is a single humanity, whose members are related to each other within the framework of their own relationships with the triune God. She manifests this by her rejection of the barriers between humans that sin has brought—racism, classism, nationalism and sexism.

2.1.4. In this way, then, we rightly speak of redemption as re-creation,<sup>3</sup> as Athanasius observes,<sup>4</sup> for God's original work in creation has been successfully recapitulated, to use the terms of Irenaeus. We are also left with underlying principles which go beyond the difficulties often observed in drawing out a normative form of church government from the New Testament material. A form of church government clearly cannot contradict explicitly,

or even implicitly, the theocentric and eschatological nature of the church as the community of redeemed and recreated humanity. Thus a form of church government must manifest the recreatedness of God's people:

- (a) in its obedience to Christ as Lord and head; and
- (b) in its unitedness as a single humanity under Him.

These are two fundamental parameters within which the question of women of episcopacy must be discussed.

## 2.2 *The Church in her eschatological setting: the Scriptures and false teaching*

2.2.1 However, while the church indeed now vindicates God's manifold wisdom, she does not yet do so perfectly. She is, of course, eschatologically conditioned in that God's work in her has been started but not yet completed. God's work in his people has indeed been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13), but full possession lies in the future. This particular eschatological condition raises two issues amongst others.

2.2.2. *First*, sin and error will persist in the as yet unperfected church. Paul adverts to this in Acts 20:29f and John envisages it in 1 John 1:8. Luther famously observed that a believer was *simul justus et peccator* (at the same time justified yet a sinner) and the church as a body of believers may thus fairly be said to be *simul justa et peccatrix*. This reality is recognised in Article XIX of the XXXIX Articles and underlies the limits on the authority of the church set out in Article XX.

2.2.3. *Second*, the rule of Christ must be realised in this as yet unperfected church. Paul points out in Ephesians 4:7-16 that Christ has indeed made provision for this. He has provided apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers to equip His people. O'Brien aptly comments 'Those listed are ministers of the Word through whom the Gospel is revealed, declared and taught.'<sup>5</sup> Christ rules His people through His Word, and it is this Word which builds them into maturity under Him and which

protects them from ‘every wind of doctrine’ (Eph.4:14). Hence again the position of the XXXIX Articles in their stress on the supremacy of Scripture (Article VI) and the necessity of instruction from ‘the pure Word of God’ in the visible Church (Article XIX). Nor is this an antiquarian position: it was, of course, re-affirmed in the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 (The Scriptures are ‘the rule and ultimate standard of faith’). In terms of the current debate, the 1990 Report *Episcopal Ministry* speaks of Scripture as ‘the normative and primary witness’ (paragraph 26), while the 1998 Lambeth Conference ‘...reaffirms the primary authority of the Scriptures...’ (Resolution III.1.a).

- 2.2.4. This concern with true instruction by a ministry of the Word is a recurrent theme in the New Testament. It is especially noticeable in the Pastoral Epistles and the Johannine correspondence as well as 2 Peter and Jude. Timothy and Titus are to prevent false teaching (*e.g.*, 1 Tim. 1:3) and install those who will give healthy instruction (Titus 1:5-9). Christians are enjoined not to support false teaching (2 John 10, 11).
- 2.2.5. Indeed, the New Testament contains some sobering reflections on false teaching:
- (a) Paul foresees that it will emerge from *within* the body of teaching elders (Acts 20:30). As such institutional succession, even where one has been appointed by an apostle, is no final guarantee of spiritual health.
  - (b) Paul sees clear limits on what even an Apostle may preach and do (Gal. 1:8f; 2:11ff). The most exalted office does not entitle one to alter the tradition.
  - (c) Paul envisages the *success* of false teaching (Acts 20:30, in which false teachers acquire disciples and 2 Timothy 4:3ff where people choose false teachers to ‘suit their own likings’). On this basis, the fact a particular strand of thought is accepted does not reliably indicate its Christian faithfulness.
- 2.2.6. Moreover, the early church reproduced exactly this biblical priority. Thus Ignatius of Antioch,<sup>6</sup> so strongly associated with

an elevated view of the episcopate, stands equally emphatically against false teaching (e.g. *To the Trallians* 6). In fact Ignatius is so insistent on the role of the bishop precisely because that safeguards the people against false teaching (e.g., *To the Trallians* 7, *To the Philadelphians* 2). The bishop's place is no mere hierarchical supremacy but genuinely a servant role in his protection of the people of God. There again *Didache* 11-13 (probably brought into its final form before 150A.D.) lays out the necessity of discretion and testing when it comes to itinerant preachers. Their apparent provenance or reputation is not the issue. Athanasius, of course, insisted that arianising bishops were no true successors to the Apostles, no matter how unimpeachable the institutional transmission might be.

2.2.7. It is against this background of the need to avoid false teaching and the difficulties of doing so that emerging Episcopal responsibilities must be considered.

### 2.3. *The emerging place for episcopal responsibility in New Testament churches*

2.3.1. As stated above, there are difficulties in setting out a normative form of church government from the New Testament. A primary difficulty has been in discerning a position of bishop (*episkopos*) which is clearly differentiated from that of priest/presbyter (*presbuteros*). Titus 1 with its arguably interchangeable terminology in 1:5 and 7 is the *locus classicus*. It would, however, be simplistic to infer from this that the New Testament knows only the orders of presbyter/bishop and apostle. The reason for this is precisely the role played by Timothy and Titus within Paul's apostolic care for churches.

2.3.2. Titus is left (Titus 1:5) to complete what is undone, which is closely linked to the appointment or ordination of presbyters in every town. Responsibility for the appointments is left with Titus himself, but it must be noted that Titus does not have *carte blanche*. His discretion is fettered by the need to choose men of

good conduct and who are personally committed to what they have been taught. These men must be able to refute false teaching and uphold the truth—the characteristic emphasis on the importance of avoiding false teaching that was noted above.

2.3.3. Titus himself is not immune to the charge to give sound teaching (Titus 2:1, 7b) as well as to provide an example of godliness of life (2:7a). His character is to be that of a presbyter, but he appears to have a jurisdiction going beyond that of a local congregation of believers (note the ‘every town’ of 1:5). Paul certainly envisages him as having a real authority (2:15), but this must rest on his providing faithful teaching, since Paul does not accept heterodoxy amongst presbyters. How much less in one who appoints them.

2.3.4. To this extent several features require note:

- (a) the existence of a jurisdiction of appointment going beyond the local congregation;
- (b) the genuine authority adhering to that jurisdiction;
- (c) the necessity of ruling on the orthodoxy or otherwise of someone’s belief and teaching for the sake of ruling on their fitness as a presbyter;
- (d) the overall framework of the necessity of orthodox rather than heterodox instruction;
- (e) the lack of any statement that Titus by virtue of his appointing function is the focus of unity for the churches on Crete—rather unity between the churches is implicitly provided by their faithful holding to a common faith; and
- (f) the requirement of Titus’ own faithfulness.

2.3.5. In the case of Timothy at Ephesus, there are indications that a presbyterate is already in place (1 Tim. 5:17). However this can scarcely be called a particularly effective presbyterate since Ephesus presents problems of false teaching (1Tim. 1:3, 7 and 6:3ff). Indeed, conceivably members of the local presbyterate were themselves the problem (possibly referred to in 6:3-5, and as Paul had foreseen in Acts 20:30). Since the local presbyterate has



failed in just the kinds of presbyteral tasks Paul outlines in Titus of preserving the people of God from false teaching, it is no surprise to find that Timothy's charge is to supplement the local shortcomings and prevent false teaching (1 Timothy 1:3). This naturally suggests a real authority.

2.2.6. It is perhaps easy to overlook the implications of 1 Timothy 1:3. The Ephesian church and its presbyterate obviously had an excellent institutional heritage (from Paul himself), and in fact have the same institutional pedigree as Timothy himself. To that extent there is no question of its institutional legitimacy. The fact of common institutional bond, though, does not provide a satisfactory basis for unity, in Paul's view. If it did, the final warning of 1 Timothy 6:20f would not be warranted. Yet for Paul that institutional provenance is not enough. He considers that the existence of false teaching not merely excuses but requires intervention.

2.3.7. Similar personal demands are made of Timothy as were of Titus. He is to be of godly teaching and personal life (1 Timothy 4:12 and 16). He stands apart to some extent from local presbyters because he has been sent in with a particular task. In that sense his role carries within in the seeds of a supra-local jurisdiction, and this is especially so if Ephesus contained, as some have argued, by this time a number of local congregations.

2.3.8. This tends to present a similar task profile to that of Titus':

- (a) a jurisdiction which is not purely local, this time of regulation of an existing teaching situation and presbyterate;
- (b) genuine authority;
- (c) the necessity of ruling on some-one's orthodoxy for the sake of regulating what is taught in Ephesus;
- (d) the overall framework of the necessity of orthodox rather than heterodox instruction;
- (e) the lack of any statement that Timothy provides the focus of unity for the Ephesian Christians, rather

common knowledge of the one truth provides that; and  
 (f) the requirement of Timothy's own faithfulness.

2.3.9. In this way, the New Testament provides evidence of an embryonic supra-local jurisdiction, relating to the appointment and regulation of teaching in the local churches. The rationale for this is clear: the need to preserve the people of God from false teaching, at times possibly even from its own presbyterate. In this way, Titus and Timothy minister to local churches without being simply further presbyters of those churches. Our own recent experience of the 'Nine O'Clock Service' in Sheffield illustrates the wisdom of this. For there a local congregation did not find internal regulation possible because of the psychological ascendancy of the leading priest over the congregation.<sup>7</sup> What this requires of the Timothy/Titus figure is a clear and faithful grasp of the message once for all transmitted from the Apostles and the ability to rule on whether or not a particular teacher is orthodox or not.

2.3.10. This is the kind of understanding of the bishop's task that is to be found in the BCP. In the course of the Consecration the bishop-elect or archbishop-elect avers that Scripture contains 'sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ', and that he is '...ready with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word; and both privately and openly to encourage others to the same'. In terms of personal life, one of the closing prayers for the consecrated bishop or archbishop is that he '...may be to such as believe a wholesome example, in word, in conversation, in love, in faith, in chastity, and in purity...'. This reproduces, of course, the pauline thought that Timothy and Titus must watch their lives and doctrine. There may no doubt be more that a bishop may properly do within an Anglican social and cultural context, but there can hardly be less, if New Testament priorities are to be observed.

2.3.11. This kind of understanding continues in the present. Thus the

1990 *Episcopal Ministry* Report is happy to head paragraphs 369-380 with the heading 'The bishop as guardian of faith and order'. The Virginia Report comments in similar vein in paragraph 3.17.

- 2.3.12. This kind of understanding of episcopal responsibility must now be considered in the light of the recreated united humanity and against the texts bearing on the role of women. To this we now turn.

### 3. Galatians 3:28 and the re-created united humanity

#### 3.1. *Galatians 3:28 and the abolition of distinctives*

- 3.1.1. It has been suggested that Galatians 3:28 contains a dominant theme for Christian theology, a seminal insight into the new humanity, and one quite in keeping with the considerations of 2.1.4. above. The racial and social distinctives that separate humans from one another and fracture the original created unity of humanity are overcome in Christ. To insist on continuing distinctives of this type is to deny what Christ has done in renewing humanity. One such distinctive that Galatians 3:28 mentions is that of male and female.
- 3.1.2. On this basis, to deny women ordination to the presbyterate or consecration to the episcopate is obnoxious in the extreme, for it stands on the same theological level as ethnocentrism or classism. It is a denial of the effects of the Gospel.
- 3.1.3. This formidable argument needs careful analysis. First, naturally, it must be examined contextually. Some controversy exists over the precise nature of the Galatian problem.<sup>8</sup> The issue is certainly one of seriousness, for Paul charges the Galatians with turning to a different Gospel (Gal. 1:6) and the critical issue relates to the keeping of the Jewish Law (Gal. 3:2; 5:2), apparently as a condition for being heirs to the Abrahamic promise (Gal. 3:7). Paul has, though, encountered similar issues

elsewhere, and here the incident at Antioch recounted at 2:11-21 proves illuminating.

- 3.1.4. At Antioch, Peter and Barnabas had withdrawn from table fellowship with the Gentiles (2:12). Paul analyses this as failing to act in conformity with the Gospel, because it forces the Gentiles to judaise. The implicit message of Peter's actions is that the Gentiles are not truly of the people of God without judaising. Such enforced judaising, Paul reasons, undercuts the sufficiency and necessity of Christ's work (Gal. 2:21). In this sense Paul's concern is not just over how someone must be saved but also over the place and adequacy of Christ as a saviour.
- 3.1.5. Similar considerations apply to the Galatian problem. In chapter 3 the presenting question is, Who are the children of Abraham (3:7)? That is, Who inherits the Abrahamic promises? Paul's argument is that men and women are made righteous by faith in Christ, not legal observance (3:11ff), as Christ becomes cursed for our sakes (3:13). On this basis the blessing given to Abraham falls on Gentile believers too. The consistent stress is on Christ and the sufficiency of his work. Paul goes on to say that this marks no change in plan on the part of God. The Abrahamic promise, which he has set out as a covenant of grace not law (3:6), is God's first and constant plan for human salvation (3:15-18), and the Law was added as a measure for sin's sake until the coming of Christ. (3:19ff). Thus Paul asserts there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female in the context of who inherits the blessing of Abraham, and on what grounds.
- 3.1.6. This means that one violates the principle of Galatians 3:28 if one asserts a difference between human groups which impliedly undercuts the adequacy and necessity of Christ's work in making us heirs of Abraham. It is very far from obvious that this is the case in the question of consecrating women to the episcopate. To ascertain whether this is in fact so it is necessary to look at other considerations relating to the unity of the new humanity.

### 3.2. *The New humanity: unity and uniformity*

- 3.2.1. The unity of the new humanity is not to be confused with uniformity. Paul's use of the body metaphor for the church in, *inter alia*, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30 shows a body which is united but diverse. In fact Paul seems to speak against uniformity of ministry (vv. 29-30). To that extent, diversity of ministry amongst believers is compatible for Paul with the principles of Galatians 3:28.
- 3.2.2. Furthermore, the diversity of function does not mask a difference of value, for verses 21-26 speak of the due place of each member of the body and in particular verse 25 calls for an equal concern for each part. In this sense Paul endorses diversity of function but demands equality of value. This consideration is re-enforced by the idea that our value or worth is conferred by the price Christ paid for our redemption (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. Compare 1 Peter 1:18, 19). For these reasons it is simplistic to conclude that the allocation of functions to a particular group necessarily speaks of inequality of value.
- 3.2.3. In fact, the Pauline corpus contains material that does speak of gender differences amongst believers. One obvious example is the continued depiction of practising homosexuality as sinful (Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9), which is only intelligible if gender is retained. A further example is the different roles of husband and wife in marriage, in which a husband is commanded to love his wife with a love modelled on the sacrificial love Christ shows the church (Eph. 5:25), while the wife is to obey her husband (Eph. 5:22).
- 3.2.4. This latter example requires development, both because it is dealing specifically with the question of ordered relationships between the sexes and because such strenuous efforts have been made to deny a relationship of authority and submission between husband and wife.

- 3.2.5. Thus, in the case of the Ephesians 5:21-33 passage, it has been suggested that the key verse is verse 21 which introduces the entire section on household relationships (5:21-6:9). This speaks of submission to one another, and accordingly the case is made that Paul has mutual submission in view here, that is to say each submits to the other, each preferring the other's good. This argument seeks further support from an appeal to the Trinitarian nature of God, in which each divine Person looks to the others—for the Trinity is a community of other-person centred Beings.
- 3.2.6. However, the argument for mutual submission suffers from a number of defects. First, it arbitrarily limits the semantic range of the word normally translated 'each other'/'one another' in verse 21 (*allelouis*). The mutual submission argument takes this word as meaning strictly reciprocal submission. In fact, the range of meaning for *allelouis* is wider and does not always entail strict each to each reciprocity, although it may. It covers cases where people are being designated within a group and within that group there are mutual relations. It is thus used (Revelation 6:4) to talk of men killing one another, but it is hardly to be thought that there is perfect symmetry in that each kills the one who kills him. English captures this nuance by the phrase 'one another' (in fact the NIV's translation of Eph. 5:21) rather than 'each other'. On this basis, it must be tested whether 'each other' (strict reciprocity) or 'one another' is the correct translation for *allelouis* in verse 21. Strict reciprocity cannot be simply be assumed.
- 3.2.7. Second, the argument for mutual submission produces eccentric ecclesiological results. For Paul goes on to compare (5:23) the marital relationship with that of Christ and the Church. If there is mutual submission between husband and wife and Christ is a husband, then it follows that he is in a relationship of mutual submission with the church. This is, to put it mildly, at odds with the description of Christ in Ephesians 1:10 and 20-23 which envisages Christ as cosmic king under the appointment of the Father. This, then, suggests that strict reciprocity ('each other') is not the correct translation for verse 21, but 'one another' is.

3.2.8. This consideration is strengthened other factors. Consistent application of the strict mutual submission interpretation would apply to other material in Paul's table of 'house rules' in 5:21-6:9, notably the parent-child relationship. This stands significantly at odds with the biblical understanding elsewhere, which envisages children obeying their parents and being blessed for doing so. To say the least, there are circumstances where it is positively dangerous for a child to have his or her parent submit to him or her. A further point that is often made here is that the idea of strictly reciprocal submission is a logical nonsense. It is different from, say, bearing one another's burdens where reciprocity is possible, for submission involves obeying another person and one does not obey another where that other obeys oneself. The riposte could be made that this is more a paradox than a nonsense. Yet this is open to the further objection that this is merely a rhetorical device to evade the gravity of the objection. Granted that paradox may exist, it does not follow that it should be lightly invoked to justify an interpretation which is, on other grounds, unattractive.

3.2.9. The overall New Testament context renders the strict reciprocity construction of Ephesians 5:21ff still less viable. Paul has further 'house rules' material in Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Titus 2:3-10. In both cases, the commands to husbands and wives are asymmetrical, with wives being commanded to obey their husbands, but not vice versa, although husbands are commanded to love their wives. A similar pattern is found with 1 Peter 3:1-7—the perspective is not simply pauline. At this point one realises that the strict reciprocity construction starts to read different parts of the New Testament in opposition. This is, of course, forbidden by Article XX of the XXXIX Articles which enjoins Anglicans not to construe different parts of Scripture repugnantly to one another. On this basis, the strict reciprocity construction adopts an unAnglican interpretative strategy.

3.2.10. For all these reasons, then, the strict reciprocity construction of Ephesians 5:21 ('each other') must be adjudged a clear failure

and the appropriate translation of ‘one another’ adopted, in which Paul sets out in 5:21 the general idea of submission in various relationships which he then develops in specific detail in the following verses.

- 3.2.11. It has also been suggested that Paul does not in fact intend obedience in Ephesians 5:22 or Colossians 3:18. This rests on the use of the word *hypotasso* in these verses rather than *hypakouo* as in Ephesians 6:1 (children) or 6:5 (slaves). Accordingly, the apt translation is not ‘obey’ but rather ‘respect’. Here the idea is that there is clear blue water, semantically speaking, between *hypotasso* and *hypakouo*. In fact, such a distinction seems untenable. Thus in Titus 2:5 and 9 *hypotasso* is used in both instances, the former dealing with wives, the latter with slaves, while elsewhere Paul uses *hypotasso* in a sense requiring obedience (e.g., Rom. 8:7 and 10:3). Outside the Pauline corpus, Peter initially uses *hypotasso* of a wife’s attitude to her husband (1 Peter 3:1, 5) but develops this with the example of Sarah who relates to her husband in terms of *hypakouo*. There is, then, clear semantic overlap between the terms, and within the range that these verbs bear, the notion of obedience is to be included because of the comparison drawn in Ephesians 5:22ff between marriage and the relationship of Christ with his church. Obedience is appropriate in that context.
- 3.2.12. In terms of the trinitarian appeal of 3.2.5 above, some care must be exercised here. It is relatively uncontentious that the Persons of the Trinity relate to each other in an ‘other-person centred’ way. It is far more contentious that this implies an egalitarian trinity. A fundamental of trinitarian theology has been that the economic Trinity (the Trinity as it acts in the economy of creation and redemption) reveals the immanent Trinity (the Trinity as it is in eternity). This has been the historic view of the church, forcefully formulated by Tertullian (*Against Praxeas* 23), adopted by Athanasius on the basis of John 14:6-11 (*Against the Arians* passim) and recently re-articulated by K. Rahner.<sup>9</sup>



3.2.13. Yet, as has often been observed, the economy of salvation and creation shows us a Son and Spirit who do the Father's will. Accordingly, applying the principle that the economic Trinity reveals the immanent, the economy shows us a three-personed godhead where the eternally begotten Son and breathed Spirit are in a relationship of order. They are not inferior at the level of being—the explanatory words at the end of the original Nicene Creed<sup>10</sup> make that clear, for they are of one being with the Father. This is confirmed by the way 1 Corinthians 15:28 sees the Son ultimately referring all authority back to the Father, and, indeed, in the view of many, by 1 Corinthians 11:3.<sup>11</sup>

3.2.14. On this basis the Trinitarian appeal of 3.2.5 seems to rest on what remains, to put it no higher, a controversial version of Trinitarian theology. It is therefore a distinctly dubious step simply in terms of method to use this controversial version of trinitarian theology to provide leverage to displace the traditional analysis of marriage as an asymmetrical relationship in which there is not only love but also obedience.

### 3.3. *Is Headship in marriage purely a result of the Fall?*

3.3.1. It is, though, sometimes suggested that this analysis of marriage is one which is purely a result of the Fall, and that it is therefore mistaken to have provisions made because of the Fall perpetuated within the redeemed community. Appeal is sometimes made to Genesis 3:16, with the argument that it is only here that a husband's headship is introduced. This, then, is the question, whether a husband's headship pre-dates the Fall.

3.3.2. This takes us to an examination of Genesis 2 and the creation of woman. It is worth observing that Genesis 2:18 does not necessarily speak of ordered relationship between husband and wife in its use of the term 'helper', for a helper may be a superior (God is the helper of Israel). The term translated 'fit for him' does not necessarily betoken ordered relationship either, although it may well denote both similarity but difference—

complementarity, so to speak, but not woman as an exact doublet of man.

3.3.3. Genesis 2:23 does though recount the man (*ish*) determining that the female be called woman (*issbah*). Now there are reasons for thinking this does involve a relationship of authority or responsibility. Man has earlier named the creatures (Genesis 2:19) and this is apparently linked to the notion of dominion the man has been given. Further, later in the Scriptures, naming is seen to be a significant activity, associated obviously with identity and also lordship—God *names* Abram as Abraham, and Jacob as Israel, both within the context of his relationship with them as their God. Wenham sums it up thus: ‘Though they are equal in nature, that man names woman (*cf.* 3:20) indicates that she is expected to be subordinate to him, an important presupposition of the ensuing narrative (3:17).’<sup>12</sup>

3.3.4. This interpretation has not been without criticism. Thus Atkinson argues that 2:23 does not involve order, because the ‘standard naming formula’ is not used.<sup>13</sup> However, the putative naming formula to which he appeals occurs only three times, and with some variety. This is a slender basis on which to build a ‘standard naming formula’. Moreover, the Greek Old Testament gives little or no indication of difference between the namings of 2:19 and 23, both of which employ simply the verb ‘I call’ (*kaleo*). There is, further, no marked difference between the terms of Genesis 2:23 and 3:20, where the woman (*issbah*) is named Eve after the Fall, a situation where, on the view under discussion, there is headship between husband and wife. Rather, Atkinson obscures a very real parallel between the two in that on both occasions the man names and gives reasons for the name he has given. Lastly, the appeal to a ‘formula’ risks understating the substance of the action: naming is a significant thing, even where varieties of terms are employed. On this basis Atkinson’s objections appear unsubstantiated, and Wenham’s judgement preferred that this is ‘a typical example of a Hebrew naming.’<sup>14</sup>

- 3.3.5. The outcome then is that Genesis 2 does envisage headship between husband and wife, Adam and Eve. This shows Adam's actions in Genesis 3 to be a refusal to accept responsibility and headship, but instead an adoption of submission to one who should have been submitting to him. Hence the criticism of Genesis 3:17.
- 3.3.6. One can thus see Genesis 3 as an inversion of the appropriate orders of creation. The serpent suborns Eve, who overrules her head, who defies his God. Athanasius accordingly rightly depicts the Fall as an undoing of creation. In this context Genesis 3:16, far from being a further punishment on the woman, is a preservation of the original creation order—a sign that marriage authentically continues in a fallen world (as Genesis 2:24 envisages), albeit under the shadow of masculine failures.
- 3.3.7. What this means is that a restored humanity in terms of its husband/wife relationships, would be marked not by *soi-disant* egalitarianism or 'mutual submission'. Rather a re-created marriage would be marked by the original creational marriage contours, namely complementarity and obedience within a loving relationship. It would be precisely the ordinal relationship of headship that marks marriage in the redeemed community before Christ's return.
- 3.3.8. It is therefore unproven that differentiation on the grounds of gender within the restored humanity is *necessarily* a denial of the re-creation. It may be, when the differentiation in question functions to deny the sufficiency and necessity of Christ's re-creating work (as in the Galatian and Antioch cases over the Jewish Law). Yet in another case, that of marriage, the re-creation of humanity positively requires differentiation on grounds of gender, and it is the denial of that differentiation that imperils the prospect of living re-created lives.
- 3.3.9. The next question is therefore whether Scripture requires differentiation on grounds of gender within the church's ministry.

#### 4. Texts bearing on women's ministry

##### 4.1. 1 Corinthians 11

4.1.1. I Corinthians 11:5 clearly contemplates women taking part in corporate acts of worship by praying and prophesying. The fact that men are dealt with at the same time (v. 4) strongly suggests that these are mixed-gender acts of corporate worship. Now it is clear that Paul is endorsing, or encouraging, the participation of women in such circumstances. Yet it is equally clear that men and women are enjoined by the Apostle to do these things in different ways in the Corinthian situation. Fee's analysis at this point is persuasive,<sup>15</sup> that a woman praying or prophesying unveiled is blurring gender distinctions within the Corinthian social context. This means that although the passage is upholding the participation of women in these respects, it is not simply doing so by saying men and women are 'the same'. Sexual distinctions remain, and are to be observed, although what counts as a distinguishing mark may vary culturally. It is therefore unwarranted to infer that this interpretation entails suggesting head coverings remain appropriate in the current English social context. That particular strategy of refutation by *reductio ad absurdum* fails.

4.1.2. Obviously, some have felt some discomfort in reconciling this passage with 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Yet it should be noted that the issues at stake in 1 Corinthians 11:3ff are prayer and prophecy. The gift of prophecy does seem to form a separate category within the New Testament list of ministerial gifts (Separately listed in Eph. 4:11, Rom. 12:6-7; 1 Cor. 12:29) and is not simply to be equated with the ministry of teaching, although both are verbal ministries. This pattern seems to continue outside the New Testament, for example in *Didache* 11 missionaries and charismatists are treated differently.

4.1.3. This separate categorisation of prophecy helps explain an oft-cited conundrum, the place of Deborah and Huldah. Deborah

and Huldah are both prophetesses (Judg. 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14) whose ministries fall within the scope of 1 Corinthians 11:3ff. Deborah is also described as judging Israel (Judg. 4:4, 5). These are sometimes produced as clear exceptions to the traditional interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, and thus as discrediting those interpretations. In fact it is dubious to see them as 'exceptions', for what is at stake in these New Testament passages is the instruction of the mixed assembly of God's people and the decisive determination of the acceptability of particular material (see below), not the question of whether women can prophesy. The cases are thus different.

4.1.4. As for Deborah's function as judge, the material in Judges tends to picture the judges as saviour figures (Judges 2:16) or those who fulfil the literal function of judges, namely determining citizens' disputes (see Samuel's description of his actions in 1 Sam. 12:3-5 where he depicts himself as an honest judge in the modern sense). It is then a bow drawn at a venture to equate the Old Testament judge with the New Testament pastor-teacher or presbyter. The functions are different, and the parallel therefore fails.

#### 4.2. *1 Corinthians 14:33b-36*

4.1.5. Fee aptly notes the absolute nature of the rationale for the prohibition.<sup>16</sup> His preferred method for dealing with the text is to reject its authenticity (in some manuscripts, these verses appear after verse 40), suggesting it is inserted by someone with a background in Jewish Christianity.<sup>17</sup> His principal difficulty apparently lies in making sense of the prohibition given what has been previously allowed to women in 1 Corinthians 11:3ff, and he is surely right to think in terms of the need for consistency in Paul within such a short compass of material.

4.2.2. However, Fee's handling of the textual question is unsatisfying.<sup>18</sup> For these verses to be an interpolation, they must have been inserted very, very early in the text's history. This is not a question of some manuscripts having the verses and others not

(as with say, the ending of Mark's Gospel). It is a question of where a given manuscript puts these verses. They are there, it seems, in every known manuscript. Moreover, it is far from implausible that they appear after verse 40 in one manuscript tradition as an attempt to alleviate just the kind of difficulty that Fee finds. That is to say they were moved by one copyist because they did not make sense to him in the position following verse 33a. It is therefore important to see whether sense can be made of them.

4.2.3. Carson follows a steady stream of interpretation<sup>19</sup> in seeing the context of chapter 14 as that of regulation of worship and in particular the circumstances under which prophecy should be weighed. This is the thing that is forbidden, the adjudication of the acceptability of a purported prophecy for the congregation. As such there is consistency with 1 Corinthians 11:3ff, for prophecy itself is permitted. It is the other step that is not. There is a further consistency in that 1 Corinthians 11:3ff rests on an understanding of the Creation narrative of Genesis 2, and in Carson's view this is the passage that lies behind Paul's reference to the Law in v 34. Obviously this is part too of Paul's rationale in 1 Timothy 2:13 and 14.

4.2.4. Carson's synthesis is to be preferred here. He deals better with the textual evidence and produces an interpretation that allows consistency between 1 Corinthians 11:3ff, 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and moreover does so on a common theological basis that reflects Paul's abiding concern with Genesis 1-3. To an Anglican committed to the non-repugnant reading of various parts of Scripture, this must be attractive.

#### 4.3. *1 Timothy 2:11-15*

4.3.1. It is, of course, possible to dismiss the text of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 as devoid of the Holy Spirit's inspiration and thus a text that can legitimately be ignored. Anglicans holding both to Article VI and to the first head of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, which both assert the authority of Scripture, cannot happily do this. It should

further be said that if this is indeed the method to be pursued in resolving the present question of women in the episcopacy, then this should first be openly acknowledged, for it raises the most fundamental questions of theological method, as well as issues of Anglican ecclesiological identity. Nor is it sufficient to observe that factually within an Anglican cultural context there are theologians and others who do not endorse the primacy of Scripture. That is merely to confuse description with prescription: the point is the propriety of that theological method within an Anglican context.

4.3.2. For this reason the correct way of proceeding is to pose the question thus: given that 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is part of the canonical Scripture accepted as authoritative, what does it teach us to do? Two broad varieties of construction are discernible:

- (a) the passage contains a purely local or temporary restriction on what women may do that arose from a particular local situation within Ephesus; and
- (b) the passage contains a general restriction.

4.3.3. Within both varieties of interpretation there are different schools of thought. Nevertheless the vital point of difference between the two varieties lies in the place of the local. Now it is certainly true that 1 Timothy, like many other epistles, is occasional in nature: it originates in a particular question at a particular place and time. However, the occasional nature of some New Testament correspondence does not prevent it necessarily from having general application. Paul's 'hymn' on love in 1 Corinthians 13 originates in the factionalism of Corinth. This context of origin does not prevent a more general application, for Paul solves the local problem by an appeal to a general truth, not a truth for the Corinthians alone. On this basis, we need to ascertain whether there was a particular local problem occasioning the passage in question, and if there was, whether Paul solves it by principles which apply purely locally or more generally.

- 4.3.4. The case has sometimes been made that Ephesus was in some sense a ‘feminist’<sup>20</sup> centre (a view finding some support from Markus Barth in his commentary on Ephesians), and especially of note in this regard is the cult of Ephesian Diana.<sup>21</sup> The kind of ‘feminism’ in question has been variously put, but the rationale is that women received the prohibition of chapter 2 because they had taught falsely.
- 4.3.5. This thesis of ‘feminist’ Ephesus needs to be tested against both extrinsic evidence and internal material from the letter. In terms of extrinsic evidence, the patterns of Ephesian life uncovered by archaeology do not disclose a feminist city but a relatively typical one.<sup>22</sup> Thus epigraphic evidence does not disclose female control of the central religious cult of Diana: rather it was controlled by men (as were the municipal affairs of the city) and there were male celebrants in the rites themselves. As for the Diana-theology, it has been suggested that evidence for her as a fertility goddess is in fact lacking. The myths associated with her point rather to the notion of virgin-huntress. As for the multiple breasts in depictions of Diana, these both lack nipples, start below where breasts normally do and are also to be found in Asiatic representations of Zeus. This casts some doubt on the notion of an essentially matriarchal Diana cult based on the female principle as the originator and source of life. As for the role that the city’s culture encouraged for women, again this bears a more typical Greco-Roman stamp, with women eulogised for modesty and other ‘domestic’ virtues. To this extent, extrinsic evidence tells against an Ephesian ‘feminist’ problem rather than for it.
- 4.3.6. Turning then to internal evidence, the following features are discernible. First, the teaching problems at Ephesus are not exclusively female. The use of masculine participles in 1:6-7 of the false teachers indicates that at least some were men. Secondly, if the prohibition in chapter 2 in fact relates to false teaching by women, this has already been covered by 1:3—such a construction makes the 1 Timothy 2:11-15 passage redundant.



Such a view also lies at odds with the terms of vv. 11-12. The obvious remedy for false teaching by women is to prevent them teaching falsely, not to prevent them teaching, which is what verse 12 does. There seems little reason other than *a priori* assumption for taking the *didaskein* of verse 12 in a purely pejorative sense.<sup>23</sup> That is not its normal meaning, and would be especially inept given Paul's earlier use of *heterodidaskalein* in 1:3 to denote false teaching. Third, any reading of the Ephesian problem has to take into account the rationale Paul produces for his command, and to this we turn.

4.3.7. The justification for the prohibition of verse 12 appears in vv. 13-14. These verses are introduced by *gar* (for) and this obviously indicates their significance. They take us back to the events of Genesis 2 (Adam was made first...) and Genesis 3 (Eve was deceived...). Paul cites them as a unit, and it is as a unit that they provide an explanation. It is therefore insufficient to see these verse as relying on female inability (that would not account for v. 13) or allegedly superior male intellect (again, that ignores v. 13). We are, though, taken back to the events of creation and Fall. This in itself tends to dispose of a purely local and temporary understanding of the Ephesian problem with respect to women's roles. If the problem were Ephesian 'feminism', or the poor education of Ephesian women, then the rationale would not be on this grand and generalising scale. To produce a justification from creation and Fall suggests Paul is producing a generally applicable principle.

4.3.8. It is no doubt true that Paul's words are allusive. Even so, a broad principle is visible. Having a woman teach and exercise authority over men in certain circumstances breaches what we learn from the events of Genesis 2 and 3. On the interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3 adopted above, it is possible to see how: Adam, created first, had been placed in a position of responsibility over Eve: he named her and should have been her 'teacher' as to what God had commanded. Instead he listened to his wife's teaching, who had previously been deceived by the

serpent, thereby surrendering his own responsibility.

- 4.3.9. To this extent, having women teach and exercise authority over men symbolically continues the pattern of Genesis 3: it is the pattern of humanity organised in contravention of the original creational order.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, observing Paul's principle whereby men have to assume teaching responsibility symbolically shows men rejecting the sin of Adamic irresponsibility and embracing the original creational order. Paul's principle is, then, that the church manifests the re-creation of humanity by visibly adopting in symbolic form the creational pattern of Adam's headship over Eve.
- 4.3.10. In this way, the prohibition on women teaching and exercising authority does not detract from the unity of the recreated humanity. Rather it shows precisely how it is in contact with the original creation, for what was marred, the inversion of relationship between Adam and Eve, is now set right. Instead, it is the *soi-disant* egalitarian case that faces difficulties over the unity of the new humanity. For it appears to advocate a unity at odds with that contemplated in Genesis 2. Ironically, the unity it creates is that of Genesis 3—not the recreated humanity, but humanity in sin.
- 4.3.11. 1 Timothy 2:15 continues this thrust. The pains of childbirth are *par excellence* a reminder both of the Fall and the sentence Eve as Everywoman received (Gen. 3:16). It would have been easy to imagine that women continued fully under the effects of Genesis 3, or even to think that Paul's remarks of verse 13-14 implied some second-class status for women as believers. This is not the case: he affirms that women too will be saved, even though in childbirth the marks of the Fall remain (taking *dia* as denoting attendant circumstances [cf 2 Corinthians 6:7 and 8]), provided there is faith, hope, holiness and love—similar virtues, of course, to those men should show.
- 4.3.12. This leads on to the scope of the prohibition of 2:12. The context of chapter 2 is what Paul wishes to find in the community

of faith (vv. 1, 8). This is sufficient to dispose of the idea, again often proposed as a *reductio ad absurdum*, that 1 Timothy 2:12 applies to civil government (female prime ministers or presidents, for example, as well as, in our own British context, to the Queen considered in her civil capacity). To that extent, the teaching and authority in question is teaching and authority in the church over adult men, which disposes of the possibility that the verse covers teaching outside the church, acting as business leaders, or within the church teaching adult women or non-adult males.

4.3.13. While teaching and authority may not strictly be a hendiadys in verse 12 (the grammar renders this problematic) there is little doubt that teaching and authority are related concepts, since it is by teaching the Scriptures that authority is exercised in the Church and notably that Christ's headship is realised. Here the correlative material of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 proves illuminating: unacceptable authority is exercised by women in a mixed adult context when they determine what is or is not to be heard by the group in question. The point, then about teaching and exercising authority is determining what is to be heard.

4.3.14. On this basis, whatever else an Anglican bishop does, he does in effect determine just this thing—either through the act of ordination or through his discipline of his clergy. Nor is it sufficient to say that many bishops exercise tolerance over what is heard in their dioceses, for this is determining by passively accepting that a particular position may be heard, determination by inaction rather than action, but determination nonetheless.

4.3.15. For these reasons, then, 1 Timothy 2:11-15 does prohibit women from the episcopate.

4.3.16. The argument is sometimes heard in response that this would also prohibit the Queen being the supreme governor of the Church of England. If one cannot accept women bishops, one should not accept the Queen in one's own ordination promises.

4.3.17. The answer to this is four-fold. First, the Act Establishing the Coronation Oath 1689 does not involve the monarch in vowing to expel false teaching, as a bishop does, but rather to 'maintain the laws of God, the true profession of the gospel and the Protestant reformed religion established by law...'. Similarly the 1662 Accession service does not refer to the monarch expelling false teaching. There are prayers for her salvation and her wise governance, but the latter relate to her civil capacity. Second, this argument mistakes the way that British constitutional law operates, which is that the monarch acts on the advisement of her ministers and not otherwise. In matters of appointment, then, the royal discretion is fettered. Dicey and Bagehot alike stress that British constitutional law cannot be understood adequately without a grasp of these conventions. This includes the maintaining to which the Coronation Oath refers: it should presumably be exercised on ministerial advice. Third, the argument does not in fact provide a refutation of the view under discussion. Rather it is suggesting an inconsistency in the application of the principle. The principle itself, though, might still be true. Even if it were the case that the present queen's position is in breach of 1 Timothy 2, it does not follow that this error should be further compounded by another breach of 1 Timothy 2. It is on a level with saying that if one has committed one sin, one should for consistency's sake admit others. Fourth, if the argument of 4.1.16 above is seriously meant, then steps should be taken immediately to expel those priests and bishops opposed to the ordination of women to the presbyterate or their consecration to the episcopate. This would, naturally, involve an immediate rescission of the Act of Synod, and the church might give serious thought to making public that this is indeed its view.

## 5. Other considerations relating to the Episcopate

5.1. The discussion above has centred on an understanding of the episcopacy drawn from the New Testament material with its concern for the encouragement of true teaching and the prevention of false teaching, a perspective eminently present in

the post-apostolic church. It is a view that classic evangelicals do find attractive, although, of course, others do too. Nevertheless, it is not an exhaustive account of contemporary understandings of the episcopate by any means, as evidenced by the list quoted in paragraph 270 of the 1990 *Episcopal Ministry* Report. Some of these further understandings also merit attention.

- 5.2. Prominent here is the notion of the bishop as a focus of unity. The material leading in this direction from Ignatius of Antioch has already been mentioned, but in particular one notes here the work of the martyr Cyprian of Carthage, especially the treatise *On Unity* and the *Epistle to Pupianus*.<sup>25</sup> In both works Cyprian derives the unity of the church from the single person of Peter, appointed by Christ, writing ‘...yet, that He [sc. Christ] might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one [sc. Peter].’<sup>26</sup> In consequence relations to the bishop are crucial for identification with the church. Cyprian writes: ‘...[You] ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church...’<sup>27</sup>
- 5.3. While by no means exclusively relying on Cyprian, this view that the bishop is the focus of unity, indeed constitutive of unity in some respects, provides significant influence on the 1990 *Episcopal Ministry* Report. That notion of unity is developed in three planes:<sup>28</sup>
  - unity within the local community;
  - unity between worshipping communities; and
  - unity between generations.
- 5.4. In fact, the consecration of women to the episcopate provides disruption at every level the 1990 Report describes.
- 5.5. In terms of unity within the local worshipping community, for the reasons given in sections 2-4 above, some will feel in all conscience that a female bishop does not unite, because by reason of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 she does not

manifest the new recreated humanity in its creationally ordered unity and its submission to God. Rather she will incarnate division.

- 5.6. Several responses are possible to this. First, it may be said that this is a purely temporary problem. People will come round or leave. However, this has not happened over the ordination to the presbyterate. Certainly at the scholarly level, the arguments of advocates such as C. Clark Kroeger have in fact come under intensified criticism since the early 1990s.<sup>29</sup> For the argument to work, constructions such as the one outlined above have to disappear permanently from the field. This seems problematic.
- 5.7. Second, perhaps more consistently, if Galatians 3:28 really does apply in the way outlined above and rejected, then the consecration of women to the episcopate is really about the scope of the gospel, and a denial of female episcopacy is a denial of the gospel. If so, such people should be under the discipline of the church with a view to excommunication. There is simply no place for such people within the church. This would, of course, be at odds with Resolution III.2.c. of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, and some would see it as an issue of simple justice that if the dissentients are viewed in this way, then they should be informed of this, not least on the basis of Matthew 18:15ff.
- 5.8. Third, it may be said that the numbers with such consciences are insignificant and can safely be ignored. This is, of course, to concede defeat on the issue of unity. Unity is not on this basis all of the Anglican churches within a given diocese or area, but simply most of them. It also raises issues of what de Tocqueville felicitously calls the 'tyranny of the majority',<sup>30</sup> a theme that will be developed further below.
- 5.9. Fourth, one may rehearse the argument found within chapter 13 of the 1990 *Episcopal Ministry* Report that there is equally disruption to unity if women are not consecrated to the episcopacy. A male episcopate is said to incarnate division between humans. It is important to examine the scope of this argument.

- (a) It does not in fact provide a refutation of the point that female bishops do not act as foci of unity. It observes instead that there are unity problems with a male episcopacy. As such it does not lead to the conclusion that there should be female bishops, but rather to the thought that episcopal oversight should be exercised by those whom those ministered to can see as foci of unity. In the present context, that takes us toward differential episcopal oversight.
- (b) It does not deal with the possibility that a failure to see a male episcopacy as a focus of unity is, quite simply, wrong. In other words, a critical question here is what kind of unity is actually involved, a point to be raised later.

5.10. For these reasons, the objection that a female episcopacy will not act as a focus of unity within a diocese is well taken.

5.11. In terms of unity between worshipping communities, this too is fraught with difficulty, not only in terms of internal relations within the Anglican Communion, but also ecumenically. It is true that female episcopacy may well serve to cement relations in other directions, notably with ECUSA. The question then arises on what basis relations with one group are judged preferable to pursue rather than relations with another group. Why should proximity to ECUSA and like-minded Provinces be the apparent goal of Church of England policy within and without the Communion?

5.12. In terms of unity across the generations, this too is problematic. It has been said that radical rupture from what went before is necessary, and the Reformation has been cited in this connection. In fact this is a superficial judgement. The quest of many of the Reformers was to recover the tradition of Augustine in his controversy with Pelagianism and to return to the Scriptures that stood at the head of the Church's tradition. In part they were reacting to the *Via Moderna* and the *ordo salutis* that this involved, precisely in order to recover their roots, not to depart

wantonly from them. Accordingly, the Reformation parallel needs to be invoked with care.

5.13. In fact it is just the presence in the biblical sources of material differentiating men and women within the redeemed humanity that presents the problem. Notwithstanding our indebtedness to the Fathers and the Reformers, *inter alios*, it is continuity with the generation of the apostolic church that is particularly telling. And it is just that continuity that the consecration of women to the episcopate seems to lose.

5.14. Furthermore, this discussion of unity needs to bear in mind further material about Cyprian's conception of unity. Cyprian is often thought of as a bishop who stressed collegiality amongst the episcopacy. Certainly there is material in *On Unity* that can point in this direction. However, this judgement requires significant nuancing in the light of Cyprian's overall work. For Cyprian also deals with the problem of bishops who have apostasised. This is set out in the letter to the bishops and clergy of Spain about Basilides and Martial, two Spanish bishops who had obtained certificates of sacrifice in the Decian persecution.<sup>31</sup>

5.15. Cyprian's words are worth setting out at length:

Nor let the people flatter themselves that they can be free from the contagion of sin, while communicating with a priest who is a sinner, and yielding their consent to the unjust and unlawful episcopacy of their overseer, when the divine reproof by Hosea the prophet threatens, and says, "Their sacrifices shall be as the bread of mourning; all that eat thereof shall be polluted;" teaching manifestly and showing that all are absolutely bound to the sin who have been contaminated by the sacrifice of a profane and unrighteous priest. On which account a people obedient to the Lord's precepts, and fearing God, ought to separate themselves from a sinful prelate, and not to associate themselves with the sacrifices of a



sacrilegious priest, especially since they themselves have the power either of choosing worthy priests, or of rejecting unworthy ones.<sup>32</sup>

5.16. This letter receives curiously little attention, even from those keenest to invoke Cyprian's authority. Cyprian indicates both that the laity of a diocese have an obligation not to consent to an unjust and unlawful episcopacy, and that bishops in other dioceses can intervene to point out this obligation - collegiality does not extend to tolerating apostasy amongst episcopal colleagues. Let it be stressed: Cyprian envisages the refusal of consent to unjust and unlawful episcopacy as a duty, not a mere option. The relevance here is that the interpretation of the Scriptural material above moves one towards precisely the view that female episcopacy could be characterised as unjust and unlawful.

5.17. Nor is Cyprian out of step with other Fathers here. Origen in *Dialogue with Heraclides* is involved in the potential deposition of a bishop for heretical views (probably a species of monarchianism), while Athanasius in *De Synodis* is insistent that arianising bishops be removed,<sup>33</sup> as was his great fellow-Nicene in the West, Hilary of Poitiers.<sup>34</sup> The Christological controversy of the 5<sup>th</sup> century likewise involves bishops commenting and adjudicating on the activities and beliefs of their peers.

5.18. Further, this attitude is indeed to be found still within contemporary Anglicanism. Thus the archbishops of Rwanda and Singapore write to the archbishop of Canterbury:

Since we believe that it is the Apostolic Faith that is the central bond of our unity in Christ, we believe that, in supporting the Anglican Mission in America [AMiA] and challenging the ongoing disobedience of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America [ECUSA] to the resolutions of Lambeth dealing with the essentials of the Faith regarding the Authority of

Scripture, mission and even human sexuality, we are acting to strengthen our communion with one another.<sup>35</sup>

- 5.19. To that extent it is highly pertinent that some regard unity under a perceivedly orthodox bishop and no other as morally obligatory, and that there are bishops in the Communion who share this view and are concerned to provide means by which this moral duty can be met.
- 5.20. It is of course true that other contemporary Anglican bishops do not share this Cyprianic/Patristic conception of the unity a bishop provides. Thus the letter of the archbishop of Canterbury to the archbishops of Rwanda and Singapore does not apparently advert to the thought of Cyprian's epistle 67, nor to the confessional values espoused by the bishops of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries as they dealt with the monarchian, Arian and Nestorian controversies. What this underlines is at the very least that more careful thought needs to be given to the nature of the unity that a bishop provides.
- 5.21. Related to the question of unity on Cyprianic principles is another patristic *theologoumenon*, this time from Ignatius of Antioch. He suggests that the bishop is a type or icon of the Father.<sup>36</sup> While one might dissent from this judgement, one also must recognise its influence. It is to some extent problematic to see a female bishop as an icon of the Father. Symbolically she would tend to convey maternal rather than paternal associations. Yet the patristic thought with regard to the First Person of the Trinity is that he is essentially Father (by virtue of his eternal relationship with the Son). Maternal associations might well be thought to obscure this and to depart both from the economic revelation of Fatherhood/Sonship as well as the tradition of the church.
- 5.22. It would certainly be appropriate to consider directly the particular species of relationship given in Scripture and the

Creeds rather than amend fundamental trinitarian conceptions by the side door. It is in this respect a source of real disappointment that the relevant Reports spend so little time on the precise contours of trinitarian theology.

5.23. Naturally, one possible answer to the consideration outlined above is that we must consider the First Person as parent (gender neutral) and that the bishop is then an icon of the Parent of the Son (or Child). However, there is some discomfort here too. The economy of salvation in the Incarnation is an entry into particular space and time and uses the forms of that particularity. While the language of Parent does not give rise to exclusively maternal associations, it nevertheless loses the specifically paternal associations (especially the father/son associations). In terms of the development of the tradition, a notable possible casualty here could be the monarchy of the Father, for within the framework of a biblical theology of the family, father necessarily connotes the loving and final authoritative head of the family. Parent may well denote loving authority, but not necessarily its finality.

5.24. Of course, some (*e.g.*, the followers of J. Moltmann) would not see the loss of the Fatherhood of God in this monarchical sense as any great loss. Others, following for example the early Latin tradition of Tertullian,<sup>37</sup> the later Latin tradition of Hilary of Poitiers,<sup>38</sup> or the Cappadocian tradition of Gregory of Nazianzen,<sup>39</sup> very definitely would. They would see the substitution of 'Parent' (in the Moltmann sense) for 'Father' as imperilling not just the monarchy of God, but the very principle that the economy of Incarnation gives access to the immanent Trinity. At that point it is not just the content but the very method of trinitarian theology that is under discussion. This illustrates why the comparative paucity of discussion of this aspect in the relevant Reports necessarily handicaps present investigations to a very significant extent. This is not a question to *præ*-judge.

## 6. The issues of Justice

### 6.1. *Introductory*

6.1.1. It has been said that the consecration of women to the episcopate is a simple issue of justice. Since justice is such a fundamental biblical value, it is necessary to devote some time to considering it.

6.1.2. In fact, the issue of justice may be put in two ways:

(a) first, having decided for the ordination of women to the presbyterate, it logically follows that women should also be consecrated to the episcopate. *Like cases should be decided alike*; and

(b) secondly, the concept of fair treatment for equal individuals requires that there be *equality of opportunity*.

### 6.2. *Like cases should be decided alike*

6.2.1. This argument invokes the principle that justice requires that essentially similar questions should receive essentially similar answers. It is to be noted that this is, so to speak, a question of the form rather than the substance of a particular decision. A legal system that, say, favoured the rich but did so with rigorous consistency would be open to criticism on other grounds of justice, but not this one.<sup>40</sup> Thus this principle does not claim to be a complete account of justice, but it is nevertheless an important one. In the English jurisprudential system it is reflected in the maxim *stare decisis* (stand by the way things have previously been decided), and is an aspect of what Dicey, following Voltaire, summed up as the Rule of Law: one may gloss it as the need in all fairness to ensure predictability and certainty within a system of rules, be they simply legal or more informal.

6.2.2. For this principle to apply in the present case, clearly one must decide that the cases of women presbyters and women bishops are essentially similar. That there is substantial overlap between the cases seems clear (as the 1990 *Episcopal Ministry Report*

noted at paragraph 548), but there are grounds for seeing important differences in the case of women bishops (as the 1990 Report also observed: it declined to say that there were no differences between the cases).

6.2.3. The case for essential similarity is that bishops and presbyters are engaged in fundamentally similar tasks, notably teaching the truth, refuting error and pastoring the people of God. The most obvious difference is that priests do this within a fundamentally local context, bishops supra-locally.

6.2.4. Nevertheless this difference of jurisdiction does constitute an essential dissimilarity within an English context. The task of the bishop has sometimes been glossed as the pastor of the pastors, providing pastoral care and discipline and where necessary adjudicating on the acceptability of someone's teaching. The scope of this jurisdiction is a difference. The priest who dissented from the 1992 vote does not, on the view adopted here, necessarily find himself compromised by the presence of a woman priest in the next door parish. Within an Anglican polity he is not called on to exercise discipline over her. However, a woman bishop would necessarily be exercising the kind of jurisdiction over him that would be unacceptable for reasons of conscience. A woman bishop would be coercive in a way a woman priest is not.

6.2.5. Several responses might be made to this. One is that a sensitive woman bishop would not 'interfere' in this way. No doubt efforts would be made in this regard by a woman bishop, but it is still an unsatisfactory solution, for the New Testament evidence (as well as our own observation) suggests precisely the need for a supra-local jurisdiction such as Timothy's or Titus' in order to protect the people of God from false instruction. This value is sacrificed if a woman bishop, from the best of motives, pursues a policy of restraint. It is perfectly possible to have a tender conscience on the woman bishop issue and still need correction.

- 6.2.6. A second response is that this problem of coercion also existed over the decision with regard to women priests. Some might find themselves in a church where the vast majority were thoroughly happy with women priests and appointed one as incumbent. Is this not coercive, the argument runs. The answer to this seems to be, yes.
- 6.2.7. However, the scale of coercion in an English context is considerably greater. Given the geographical scale of England, it is a relatively simple matter to seek another church more attuned to one's own beliefs on this issue. This was the advice recently proffered in one parish to friends of the present writer who are dissentients from the 1992 vote. Emotionally, such a change can well be hard, but it is often physically straightforward. Indeed, it is a striking feature of current Anglicanism that congregations are not by any means simply the population of the local parish. Many Anglicans do now select an Anglican church on the basis of its churchmanship rather than simply its place as the parish church. Yet the geographical extent of a diocese renders such a choice far more problematic and changing dioceses for a priest is a far more difficult proposition than a member of a laity changing their regular church. The priest has to find another job. The prospective coercion is thus on a significantly higher scale.
- 6.2.8. A third response suggests that a female diocesan bishop could delegate oversight to a male suffragan or area bishop. No doubt the bishops of a diocese exercise in some ways a conjoint ministry, but the episcopal ministry in question would still turn on the decision of the diocesan not to intervene or be consulted. That too is an exercise of judgement, and the female diocesan remains the ultimate port of call for the diocese in terms of episcopal oversight. Thus, this in itself would not be enough. What would be enough would be a permanent delegation from the relevant diocesan, but on this view the male suffragan or area bishop would in reality be another diocesan, or something like it. There may well be much to be said for this approach, which amounts to an alternative oversight of a diocesan nature.

- 6.2.9. A fourth response would be that a female suffragan or area bishop would be answerable to a male diocesan. This too seems unsatisfactory, for in the present practice suffragans do have a genuine episcopal role, delegated as it may be. The objection applies to female diocesans and other bishops.
- 6.2.10. On this basis, the appeal to essential similarity fails: the extra degree of coercion involved over women bishops introduces a genuine difference between the 1992 decision and the present case.
- 6.2.11. Nevertheless, some may still insist on essential similarity between ordination of women to the presbyterate and consecration of women to the episcopate. If so, then consistency requires that similar policies be adopted for the dissentients over consecration of women to the episcopate as were taken over dissentients regarding the ordination of women to the presbyterate. In fact, the measures for protection should be more stringent, given that the degrees of potential coercion involved are, as stated above, greater. If such protection is refused in the present case, then clearly this needs justification, if the appearance of oppression is to be avoided.
- 6.2.12. However, the question of the Rule of Law can be invoked in the present case in other ways too. A feature of the Rule of Law is its antipathy to retrospective measures. Some Anglican priests have been ordained and made their promises on the understanding of a particular kind of episcopacy, and the scope of their promises of canonical obedience now threatens to be extended in a way they did not intend.
- 6.2.13. Further, on any view consecration of women to the episcopacy involves very considerable change. What is not immediately clear is precisely the method on which this change relies. In particular the proposed change seems to rest on a different weighting of the relative authorities of Scripture and our present cultural setting. If, as some say, there is a decisive tilting to the latter in the present instance, and our cultural setting continues

to change radically, then it becomes increasingly difficult to envisage stability and predictability in the church's life.

6.2.14. To that extent, the very way the proposed change is argued for introduces principles at variance with the idea of the Rule of Law. For stability and predictability will have been eroded. Instead, the voice of the current majority will necessarily prevail, which again raises the topic of the 'tyranny of the majority' (de Tocqueville) and goes to the question of what properly constitutes Reception (see below).

6.2.15 The ecclesiological risks in creating a primacy of the current majority are in fact grave. They were of course adverted to in Tract 90 where Newman commented 'Religious changes, to be beneficial, should be the act of the whole body; they are worth little if they are the mere act of a majority.' Perhaps more significant is the work of John of Salisbury who noted the danger of ecclesiastical tyranny<sup>41</sup> in his seminal and influential work *Policraticus*.<sup>42</sup> A hallmark of tyranny in John of Salisbury's view is precisely the failure to accept one's position under law with a limited jurisdiction granted by God.<sup>43</sup> To the extent that majoritarianism can create the impression of *vox populi, vox dei*, John of Salisbury would see this as ecclesiastical tyranny. Put practically, John of Salisbury postulates an authority is not tyrannical when it accepts some external constraint - if God can tell it not to act in some way. In the present case the fear is that this is not possible since the voice of God has been absorbed into the voice of the majority.

6.2.16. Aside from Rule of Law considerations, one need hardly say that majoritarianism sits but unhappily with passages such as 2 Timothy 4:3ff.

6.2.17. For these reasons, the appeal to justice on this heading, far from simply endorsing the consecration of women bishops, if anything goes the other way.



*Equality of Opportunity*

- 6.3.1. The point here is that persons of equal value should have tasks equally available to them, and that failure to make those tasks equally available is a denial of equality of value.
- 6.3.2. However, this argument needs to be significantly nuanced. As noted above, a Christian's value derives from the price Christ has put on them by his death. The same salvation for men and women does imply equal value.
- 6.3.3. Nor does value within the church become attached to the office or ministry performed (see above on 1 Corinthians 12). It is a secular conception of value that attaches value to the task performed.
- 6.3.4. Further, we do see differential allocation of roles, notably over marriage, without any suggestion that one role gives one party more value. Within this differentiation, some roles are closed. A female is not permitted to enjoy the relationship of being a husband with a wife, unless of course one repudiates the teaching of Scripture and the resolutions of the 1998 Lambeth Conference. Nor is a male given the privilege of being a wife who has a husband.
- 6.3.5. Even outside the specific question of gender, equality of opportunity is not straightforward. Men who do not have the gift of teaching or who are recent converts do not fall within the specifications of 1 Timothy 3. Men who, whatever their other virtues, do not have the ability to refute false teaching do not fall within the admissible scope of Titus 1. Nor is this confined to religious opportunity. Natural qualities may rule out particular tasks. A strongly empathetic and trusting person, given to strong exercises of individual discretion is not ideal material for a traffic warden—nor are they devalued by not being apt for that particular task.

- 6.3.6. Nor do we find this particular version of egalitarianism obviously enshrined in the Trinity. To assert that it is found there and build from this a case for a female episcopacy on egalitarian grounds is surreptitiously to smuggle in one version of trinitarian theology at the expense of others. Once again it is necessary to note with regret that the relevant Reports do not tackle this fundamental question. Observations about the mutuality or perichoretic nature of the trinity are welcome, but serve as a start for discussion, not an end-point. For mutuality and perichoresis have been explained in different ways: what kind of mutuality? What kind of perichoresis? Moltmann's? Or John of Damascus'?
- 6.3.7. For these reasons then, the appeal to justice on the grounds of equality of opportunity is unsubstantiated, and the appeal to justice fails under its second head also.

## 7. Reception

### 7.1. *Introductory*

7.1.1. The previous fifteen years or so have seen immense effort spent over the question of Reception, notably with the work of the Eames Commission. However, in spite of the detailed nature of these earlier considerations, exploration of fundamental aspects of the question is still required. This will be done under the following headings:

- (a) the nature and place of Reception;
- (b) the conditions for Reception; and
- (c) whether or not Reception has taken place.

### 7.2. *The nature and place of Reception*

7.2.1. Appeal has often been made to the Council of Jerusalem of Acts 15 as a precedent for Reception. This is far from being on all fours with the present question. There, the issue related to additional conditions for salvation, over and above the work of

Christ, in other words an essentially similar issue to that faced in Galatia. In one sense the events of Acts 15 recall those of Acts 11:1-18 where Peter defended his actions with respect to the gentiles. In both Acts 11 and 15 the church was faced with what to do when God's Spirit was clearly and demonstrably present in gentiles without observation of the Law of Moses. In that sense Acts 15 relates to the evaluation of an existing fact, not the proposal to start doing something different.

- 7.2.2. Further, the discussions of Acts 11 and 15 relate to the Law of Moses and its fulfilment in Christ. The present question relates not to the fulfilment of the Law, but to the observation of New Testament commands, given at a different stage in salvation-history. From a biblical theological point of view it is problematic to equate the reception of the Law of Moses in the New Testament era with our reception of New Testament commands.
- 7.2.3. It should also be noted that the circumstances of Acts 15 demanded unanimity, for it went to the heart of the one Gospel by which the one God saves men and women. The present proposal has not always been presented as a 'Gospel issue'. If it is not, but a matter of conscience, then the appropriate analogy is Romans 14 and 15 which deals with the respect of conscience and where unanimity of practice is not thought necessary by Paul for the unity of the church. Applied here, that suggests differential episcopal oversight to which priests could in good conscience submit.
- 7.2.4. If, by contrast, the current proposal is to be treated as a 'Gospel issue' then it should be clearly stated that opposition to the proposal is heretical and requires the excommunication of dissentients. For this appears to be the apostolic practice of Galatians 1 and 2.
- 7.2.5. Nor does it avail to appeal to the example of Gamaliel in Acts 5:33-40. First, it is not clear that Gamaliel is being commended

as an example, rather, in contrast to the apostles and church of Acts 11 and 15, he seems unable to discern the action of God's Spirit. Secondly, Gamaliel is not a recipe for initiating action, but for standing aside and seeing whether a given state of affairs prospers. To that extent, if Gamaliel is applicable at all on the consecration of women bishops, his example suggests continuation of the *status quo*, not its amendment.

7.2.6. It is sometimes said in this regard that Reception is seen in the case of the Arian Controversy of the Fourth Century. This, however, is to impose twentieth and twenty-First century categories onto that debate. Athanasius and his allies did not see themselves as arguing for the Reception of the Nicene Creed in the modern sense of Reception. Rather their point was that they were preserving through the Nicene Creed (and its derivative of 381 in Constantinople) what they had received through the Scriptures and the tradition. Only on these terms is the structure of argument of *Contra Arianos*, *De Synodis*, *De Decretis* etc. intelligible. In other words they saw themselves as bound by and under that authority, not able to choose whether or not to adopt it, as Reception so readily implies.

7.2.7. The foregoing paragraphs go to the central question of quite why it is that consecration of women to the episcopacy has been adjudged a receivable question. For clearly on the rationale of 1 Corinthians 14:33b and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 adopted above it is not a receivable question. This underlines the central importance not simply of the doctrine of Reception, but of what issues are receivable. There are two broad possibilities:

- (a) all issues are receivable, including, for example, the deity of Christ. In this case, it is then hard to see in what sense the present generation is under the authority of either Scripture or tradition, a position significantly at odds with the view of Scripture, the Articles and the Lambeth Quadrilateral, as well as the church's self-understanding in earlier times; or

(b) some issues are receivable. The paramount question is then the basis on which this categorisation of receivable or not is made.

7.2.8. Reception has not apparently been publicly argued simply in terms of option (a) of 7.2.7. above. Rather Reception has implicitly adopted (b) above. And the basis on which an issue is adjudged receivable seems largely that a majority at the relevant assemblies deem it so. It is a decision of the majority.

7.2.9. It is at this point that some further careful reflection on the nature of majoritarian government would not be amiss. Earlier, mention was made of de Tocqueville's category of the tyranny of the majority. In a celebrated passage he writes:<sup>44</sup>

In my opinion, the main evil of the present democratic institutions of the United States does not arise, as is often asserted in Europe, from their weakness, but from their irresistible strength. I am not so much alarmed at the excessive liberty which reigns in that country as at the inadequate securities which one finds there against tyranny. When an individual or a party is wronged in the United States, to whom can he apply for redress? If to public opinion, public opinion constitutes the majority; if to the legislature, it represents the majority and implicitly obeys it; if to the executive power, it is appointed by the majority and serves as a passive tool in its hands. The public force consists of the majority under arms; the jury is the majority invested with the right of hearing judicial cases; and in certain states even the judges are elected by the majority. However iniquitous or absurd the measure of which you complain, you must submit to it as well as you can.

7.2.10. De Tocqueville's point is that straightforward majoritarianism leaves the individual quite without recourse, for all remedies have been controlled by the majority.<sup>45</sup> This creates the appearance of observance of due process and the forms of law. Yet as De Tocqueville comments of the era in which he wrote, the United

States had successfully indulged in ethnic cleansing of native Americans precisely under the cover of legality and proper form. The point is the legalities and forms, the rights and remedies were controlled by the majority. In this sense De Tocqueville anticipates and instantiates the critiques of Nietzsche and Foucault. The latter perceptively comments:<sup>46</sup>

As soon as one endeavours to detach power with its techniques and procedures from the form of law within which it has been theoretically confined up until now, one is driven to ask this basic question: isn't power simply a form of warlike domination? Shouldn't one therefore conceive all problems of power in terms of relations of war? Isn't power a sort of generalised war which assumes at particular moments the forms of peace and the State?

7.2.11. *Mutatis mutandis*, Foucault here forces us to confront the question whether the apparently majoritarian decision to render this issue receivable is not simply a legal form behind which majoritarian power is in fact being pursued, but under the guise of legitimacy and fairness and democracy. It has to be said that a spirit of self-examination and self-criticism has not been conspicuous amongst the majoritarians. Yet the Scriptural lesson of 2 Timothy 4:3ff suggests this is highly desirable.

7.2.12. Nor is it an adequate answer to riposte that the dissentients likewise need to examine themselves. That is no doubt true, but in the nature of holding a minority position, one is constantly confronted by the need to justify both one's substantive position and even one's integrity in remaining within the church.

7.2.13. This will, of course, be dismissed by some as unduly cynical and uncharitable. Nevertheless, this perception is genuinely held, and it is almost always bad pastoral practice to dismiss the perception on the grounds that one does not agree with it. In this particular instance such a response merely heightens the hermeneutic of suspicion that Foucault advocates.

7.2.14 A more appropriate response is to seek to demonstrate that the suspicion is unfounded, and this relates to the question of whether the conditions for Reception are in place, to which we now turn.

### 7.3. *The Conditions for Reception*

7.3.1. Resolution III.2.b of the 1998 Lambeth Conference enjoins 'Open Reception'. This picks up the language of the Grindrod Report (quoted with apparent approval by the 1990 *Episcopal Ministry* Report paragraphs 551-554). The Grindrod Report spoke in the context of 'open reception' of open-ness to the acceptance or rejection of the proposal to consecrate women bishops.

7.3.2. In the present context this presents an immediate problem, for, as observed above, some simply feel on the basis of the relevant parts of Scripture, or their understanding of tradition, that they cannot be open to acceptance.

7.3.3. Not unnaturally, this is likely to provoke strong reaction amongst those advocating the change. The feeling is that those disagreeing are acting in bad faith. This is not necessarily so, again for the reasons outlined above in relation to majoritarianism. It is not bad faith to refuse to play a game whose outcome is perceived to be pre-determined against one.

7.3.4. For, if there is a question about one party to the debate not being open to acceptance, there is also a question about the other party not being open to rejection. There are several factors which contribute to some suspicion about there being open-ness on the part of those proposing change on this issue.

7.3.5. First, if there is open-ness on questions of Reception, one sees it demonstrated where a party accepts a decision by the wider church with which it disagrees. In the present context of the Church of England's life, the reaction to the 1998 Lambeth

Conference is scarcely encouraging. For the perception is that English bishops have either refused to act on Resolution I.10 dealing with practising homosexuality or have positively repudiated it, as the bishops of Worcester and Newcastle are perceived by some to have done. The thought that arises is that if English bishops and others were sincere about the mind of the wider church, they would have acted differently in the wake of the 1998 Conference. Instead, they have created, perhaps unwittingly, the impression amongst some of appealing to the wider church where they have its agreement, but of disregarding it where they disagree. In other words, the doctrine of Reception is invoked opportunistically and not out of consistent principle. [This impression has merely been heightened, since the foregoing was written, by the painful experiences of Charles Raven and his congregation at Kidderminster.]

- 7.3.6. Again, one suspects that the reaction to this account will be wounded outrage. This would be a mistake. While it may successfully dramatise the current episcopacy as the victims of misunderstanding and malice, a not unenticing card to play in today's therapeutic culture, it fails to address the issue of the reality of the perception and the reasons which underlie it, but rather it will serve to re-inforce the original perception.
- 7.3.7. The perception is in any event further fuelled by the thought that there seems to have been but little attention paid to the Reception of women ordained to the priesthood amongst those who originally opposed the 1992 Measure. The fact that there is debate now about consecration before adequate investigation of the reception of the previous Measure further undermines the credibility of proponents as being genuinely open to the rejection of their views.
- 7.3.8. The present writer is well aware that the reflections of paragraphs 7.3.1-7 above will be unpleasant to read. However, it is submitted that the unpalatable truth must be faced that genuine open-ness does not exist on this issue on either side. The



conditions for Reception are therefore not in place. Reception is thus a fallacious category for resolving this dispute, not least because it is open to the charge of providing spurious legitimation (see 7.2. above).

7.3.9. If Reception is to be adopted as the appropriate category, then the preliminary work that needs to be done is—

- (a) to persuade opponents that reception is at least a possibility, and not merely to out-vote opponents by a majority that it is; and
- (b) to demonstrate good faith over the possibility of rejection. The most obvious way of doing this in the present instance is to establish alternative episcopal jurisdiction. For, not to do this runs the risk of suggesting that the aim is to create facts on the ground which would prove ‘irreversible’: unfortunately this has the aroma of *realpolitik* rather than real principle.

In other words, unless the present damaging perceptions are addressed, the credibility of episcopal government more generally will suffer.

#### 7.4. *Whether or not Reception has taken or will take place*

7.4.1. It is no doubt singularly difficult to establish that Reception of women’s ordination to the priesthood has taken place or not. A number of routes suggest themselves:

- (a) Has women’s presbyteral ministry been disproportionately blessed, for example by highly successful evangelisation?
- (b) Has the perception of the church markedly improved as a result of the ordination of women?
- (c) Has the life of the church been enriched over and above what would have happened given the exercise of other ministries by women?

(d) Have opponents of the original Measure found themselves persuaded?

7.4.2. On questions (a) and (b), the present writer is not aware of findings showing positive answers. This is not, of course, to say either that these things have not happened: the evidence may simply be unrecovered, or the positive answers may be masked by other factors. Thus one legitimate response to a survey which tended superficially to show that churches with women leaders did not prosper was that the women in question were having to run 'ill' churches in any case. They might have done exceptionally well in difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, success in terms of (a) or (b) does not apparently seem to have been demonstrated.

7.4.3. In terms of question (c), in the nature of things this is extremely difficult to answer. That the ministry of some women in the priesthood has been greatly appreciated may well be difficult to deny. That some women have been less well-received is equally difficult to deny, and in the latter case might be attributable more to personality than to gender. In this sense, while the observation of the worth of women's ministry is well taken, it is more difficult to see this as establishing an otherwise unattainable success with respect to the presbyteral ministry. On this basis answers to question (c) would necessarily of uncertain probative value.

7.4.4. On question (d), again evidence on this is not forthcoming in the requisite detail to make a responsible judgement. Anecdotally, some originally in favour of the 1992 Measure are now against, and no doubt the reverse.

7.4.5. On this basis it is extremely hard to say favourable Reception of the 1992 Measure has definitely taken place.

7.4.6. It is therefore problematic to build a further question requiring Reception on another issue still requiring demonstrable

Reception. Again, this is something that casts doubt on the attitude in which Reception is being proposed.

7.4.7. Finally, two questions about the possible Reception of women bishops need to be faced:

- (a) First, if Reception is proposed, what would count as the criteria of success? These obviously need to be framed in terms of criteria in which failure is possible, otherwise Reception is not a genuine process for it has an assured result. What would or should count as failure for a specifically female episcopacy?
- (b) Second, if there were failure, how would the consecration of women to the episcopacy be undone? What would happen to the women in post at the moment such a decision was reached? If it is unthinkable that the proposal be undone, then again, this is not real Reception, for it has an assured result.

## 8. Concluding reflections and Summary

### 8.1. *Concluding Reflections*

8.1.1. The present writer suspects that the lines of argument outlined above will not persuade the Commission. As such the Commission faces the task of considering the place of dissentients within the Church of England. It seems quite clear that without protective provisions, certain classes of churchmanship, at least in terms of presbyteral ministry, will start to disappear from certain dioceses.

8.1.2. This process can be envisaged happening in at least two ways. First as certain dioceses acquire women bishops, these will tend to become no-go areas for priests who feel in all conscience that they should not submit to female oversight. Secondly, such priests will be less attractive to train because they will be more inflexible in terms of location after training, an argument with primary

application to those contemplating stipendiary ministry.

- 8.1.3. This process will be more, not less, significant ultimately for the laity of the Church of England. After the 1992 Measure, dissentients could no doubt often find some church in the vicinity that reflected their own views on the issue. This will be less possible when an entire diocese or episcopal area is under female oversight.
- 8.1.4. To this extent the effect in terms of churchmanship will be to eliminate progressively strong anglo-catholics and conservative evangelicals from various areas. This effect is not difficult to predict. It is perhaps true that some do not foresee this result, but such people should be acutely aware that this is widely perceived as the likely result in those constituencies mentioned. Some in them feel that they are facing not just marginalisation, but elimination, albeit over a period. Faced with that, some will perhaps simply leave, as happened in 1992. Others perhaps will feel that they cannot faithfully accept female oversight, and will accordingly look for male oversight from bishops in the Communion who feel able, or even obliged, to provide it.
- 8.1.5. Naturally, the progressive elimination of strong anglo-catholicism and conservative evangelicalism might actually appear to be an incentive in some minds. If so, that agenda needs to be honestly and openly stated, and the church must weigh quite how pluriform it is prepared to be.
- 8.1.6. If, on the other hand, such elimination is not an intentional result of the present proposal, then the majority needs to give extremely careful thought as to how it can dispel the suspicions that currently exist. The Act of Synod at least points the way here. Suspicions might be dispelled by a process of differential oversight, which is not designed to phase out, although even here there would need to be an ability not just to ordain and discipline, but also to consider and adopt ordinands for training, as would happen with a geographically defined bishop.

8.1.7. The objection to the foregoing is that this would represent a significant rupture in Anglican church polity. The answer is that the current proposal will produce this in any event. The question facing us is what kind of rupture is least damaging. This at least has the merit of maintaining episcopal oversight within the overall frameworks of the Provinces of Canterbury and York, rather than the oddity of an Anglican Missionary Province to Britain.

8.1.8. Such a suggestion also has the advantage that it may preserve the reality of episcopal oversight. It is difficult in the extreme to envisage a female bishop establishing sufficient relations of trust with dissentients to be able to discharge episcopal duties. Apart from anything else, she also will be put in an impossible position.

## 8.2. *Summary*

8.2.1. The church must be considered in the context of God's economy of recreating and redeeming fallen humanity. It manifests that economy, albeit now only in part. That manifestation fails under two conditions: if the church does not display Christ as her lord, and if she denies his work in recreating a single humanity.

8.2.2. It is male episcopacy that manifests Christ as head of the church and his work in recreating and redeeming fallen humanity. Male episcopacy affirms the re-creative work of the Gospel. For the Scriptural and traditional position of a male episcopate does not violate the conditions of Christ's lordship or his work in recreating a single humanity. Rather it abides by what the Scriptures say, and is in keeping with the following vital principles: that human value is found in redemption by Christ not function or 'status' in the church; that the church is a diversely-gifted yet united body; that gender differentiation is introduced in creation and preserved in New Testament teaching on marriage and sexuality.

8.2.3. The proposal for the consecration of women to the episcopate

tends to violate both conditions of 8.2.1. above, for it sanctions what God through his Scriptures has forbidden, the exercise of decisive control of the teaching function by women in the context of a local congregation of believers which includes adult males. It is then female episcopacy which manifests not redeemed and recreated humanity, but fallen humanity. It is thus female episcopacy which denies the re-creative work of the Gospel.

- 8.2.4. The proposal is doubly serious for a primary concern in the episcopal office is the preservation of true teaching and obedience to it, whereas a female bishop will be a visible symbol of a church's disobedience.
- 8.2.5. The traditional view offers a better exegesis of the relevant passages individually and a better and less oppositional synthesis of the material. It is preferable on this ground too.
- 8.2.6. If the episcopate is considered as a focus of unity, the proposal to consecrate women bishops will significantly hinder this.
- 8.2.7. The claims of justice in terms of the need to treat like cases alike or to ensure equality of opportunity are both misplaced in the present discussion.
- 8.2.8. The appeals to the applicability of Reception in the present discussion are flawed by the oppressive use of majoritarian principles, in circumstances where neither side is genuinely amenable to Open Reception, and where in any event Reception has not been demonstrated to have taken place, except again by majoritarian appeals. Reception is not the right tool with which to address our current differences.
- 8.2.9. The present proposal raises issues of both trinitarian theology and theological method that have not yet been fully aired. It would therefore be ill-advised to rule out theological options when the ramifications of this have not been fully disclosed and discussed.

8.2.10. If, then, the proposal to consecrate women to the episcopate proceeds, it should only do so after giving adequate safeguards for dissentients, which would permit them to have access to full episcopal ministry to which they can in good conscience submit, and which do not carry a built-in obsolescence.

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- 1 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III.23.1.
- 2 On this see O' Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 246.
- 3 Note 2 Cor 4:1-6; 5:17ff. See too Rom 8:19-23.
- 4 *De Incarnatione* 6 & 7.
- 5 O'Brien, 1999:298.
- 6 Traditionally held to have been martyred in 107 A.D. His letters seem largely to have been written *en route*.
- 7 Detailed in *The Rise and Fall of the Nine O'Clock Service* R. Howard. London: Continuum.1996.
- 8 Notably over the validity of the so-called New Perspective on Pauline studies associated with E.P. Sanders.
- 9 *The Trinity* London: Continuum ET 1970:21ff under the heading 'The axiomatic unity of the "Economic" and "Immanent" Trinity'.
- 10 The relevant words which explain 'of one being' (*homoousios*) read: 'And whosoever shall say that there was a time when the Son of God was not or that before he was begotten he was not, or that he was made of things that were not, or that he is of a different substance or essence [from the Father] or that he is a creature, or subject to change or conversion — all that so say, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them.'
- 11 The controversy over 1 Cor 11:3 is whether the headship language applies to the immanent relation. It is difficult to see why it does not, without either severing the economic-immanent link, or adopting a kenotic or nestorianising christology. The former Athanasius sees as ruled out by John 14:6-11, the latter has been prohibited by the Chalcedonian Formula of 451. G. Fee takes a different view *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) 1987:505 but without adverting to the christological difficulties his view creates.

- 12 G. Wenham *Genesis 1-15* Dallas: Word. 1991:70.
- 13 D. Atkinson *The Message of Genesis 1-11* Leicester:IVP.1990:71.
- 14 Wenham 1991:70.
- 15 Fee 1987:511, 512.
- 16 Fee 1987:705, 706.
- 17 Fee 1987:707.
- 18 For detailed argument see Carson pp. 141-144 in Piper and Grudem *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway)1991.
- 19 Carson: 151 in Piper and Grudem 1991. He cites M.E.Thrall *I and II Corinthians* (1965. Cambridge: CUP); J.B. Hurley *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (1981. Grand Rapids: Zondervan) and W. Grudem *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (1982. Washington: University Press of America).
- 20 The term is used for convenience. There are obvious dangers of anachronism and over-generalisation - it is currently perhaps better to speak of 'feminisms' rather than simply 'feminism'.
- 21 An example is R and K Clark Kroeger *I Suffer Not a Woman* 1992 (Grand Rapids: Baker).
- 22 The subsequent argument follows the persuasive work of S.M. Baugh 'A Foreign World : Ephesus in the First Century' pp 13-52 in *Women in the Church* eds. A.J. Kostenburger, T.R. Schreiner and H. Scott Baldwin 1995 (Grand Rapids: Baker).
- 23 It is not sufficient to appeal to *authentēin* as introducing a pejorative note, for it is not clear that the word necessarily carries such a tone.
- 24 It is occasionally thought that 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is dealing simply with husband-wife relations. The absence of any possessive terms (*idios, beoutou*) tells against this.
- 25 Epistle 68 in the ANF collection Vol. 5.
- 26 *On Unity* 4.
- 27 *To Pappianus* 8.
- 28 See e.g. paras. 47-49.
- 29 See e.g. the review of *I Suffer not a woman* by A. Wolters in *CTJ* 1993 28:208, where at p 213 Wolters comments of the book 'its argumentation is a travesty of sound scholarship.' More recently, W. Grudem 'The meaning of κεφαλή ("Head")': an Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged' *JETS* 2001. 44.1:25-65.
- 30 De Tocqueville *Democracy in America* I.xv
- 31 Epistle 67 in the ANF collection
- 32 Ep.67.3.



- 33 Compare his de-legitimising of such bishops in *Ad Afros* 7.
- 34 See *Adversus Ursacium et Valentem* and *Contra Auxentius*.
- 35 Open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 36 To the Trallians 3.
- 37 *Against Praxeas*
- 38 *De Synodis* 51.
- 39 Note here the Third 'Theological' Oration ii.
- 40 Note the seminal observations of Professor J. Raz in this connection.
- 41 *Policraticus* VIII.17. He sees three kinds of tyranny: political, domestic and ecclesiastical.
- 42 Completed 1159.
- 43 *Policraticus* IV.1.
- 44 *Democracy in America* I.xv.
- 45 For this reason it is anticipated that the Commission will not receive many submissions of dissent from the proposal. Dissenters may, sadly, feel that the process is guaranteed to produce a majoritarian result.
- 46 122, 123 in 'Truth and Power' pp 109-133 in *Power/Knowledge* New York: Pantheon 1980 ed. C. Gordon.