



FORWARD IN FAITH
DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

Newsletter

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BE FAITHFUL

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This was the title for the meeting of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (FCA) in the Central Hall, Westminster on Monday 6th July 2009, a follow up conference to GAFCON. These are my thoughts; they do not have any official status; others who were there may have entirely different interpretations. In spite of the media slant before the event, it was not an “anti-gay” event. It could be described as a day of two halves.

The morning was quite encouraging for those looking for a way to remain Anglican, whether as Evangelical or Anglo-Catholic. Bishop John Hind spoke first and delivered a balanced speech that dealt with real issues. He dealt with the ways in which Anglicanism has become increasingly heterodox by drift and salami slicing of doctrine. Fairly frequent reference was made to Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics as partners in FCA.

Bishop Keith Ackerman SSC was a keynote speaker who stressed that we are entrusted with the Gospel and must find a way to work together. In the USA the traditionalists have gone from a tolerated minority to a persecuted minority. The burden of proof is now on those who want to maintain the faith. If you dissent and speak against the institution then you are deposed, with litigation being used to pull people into line.

Baroness Cox, of the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, made a very moving presentation on the plight of Christians in the Southern Sudan. This put into perspective our easy use of “persecution” for being on the losing side in Synod or in liberal Dioceses. Perhaps we should be doing more to help these Christians on the front line. The lack of aid makes them ask “Doesn’t the Church want us anymore?”

The Bishop of Fulham interviewed Archbishop Robert Duncan of the newly formed Anglican Church in North America (ACNA).

Also in the morning, we had a video-interview from Dr. Packer (a leading Evangelical) who spoke of upholding the 39 Articles as a Confessional Statement (I do not think they are) and a very dubious reading of the history of the English Reformation – the Church in England withdrew from Roman jurisdiction under the wise counsel of Archbishop Cranmer. We also

had Archbishop Peter Jensen who focused on sex and gender, relegating the ordination of women to a side issue. He did not mention lay presidency, a topic which he supports.

During the course of the afternoon it became clear that Evangelicals see Catholic issues as second order, and are more concerned with penal substitution as the only theory of the Atonement. At times the views expressed were barely Anglican, more like those of Baptists. The afternoon was all about Evangelical witness of “good practice” and bad Evangelical experience of Episcopal oversight. Anglo-Catholics were sidelined. There was the Evangelical ordinand who did not know what Confirmation is – this admission being greeted, not with a sharp intake of breath, but with knowing laughter. There were stories of resistance to Gospel ministry, church plants across parish boundaries; buildings bought or leased and the incumbent of the Anglican parish sidelined. This may be alright, for there are many parishes where the teaching is heterodox at best. But you do not have to set up your own show rather than try to work with the existing parish. Or should we go and do likewise? All the examples of Church growth were Evangelical. The PEVs were not involved. If they had been asked they could and would have provided many examples of good practice and growth.

The final session was on what is needed for Alternative Episcopal Oversight. Here, there was no reference to the experience of Extended Episcopal Oversight under the PEVs. This was a missed opportunity if part of the day’s objective was to get Anglo-Catholics into FCA or to get the Evangelicals on board by passing Resolutions AB and C.

I came away thinking that as Anglo-Catholics we have fought to live the Catholic Faith since the Reformation. Why do we have to overlook our history and go back to the event which in many ways stands against our beliefs? We may make a short term political alliance to gain an edge in Synod, but I see no long term future for us in this arrangement. This seemed to be the consensus listening to other Anglo-Catholics over coffee and in the corridors. At best we have a work in progress.

What is the Ecumenical vision for this alliance? It was far from clear to me. There was certainly not any Roman Catholic or Orthodox dimension. Bishop Edwin Barnes commented: “After all this I cannot see how there can be a common cause between Catholics and Evangelicals. We are looking to going home to the Universal Church, in Communion with the Holy Father and half Christendom. They seem to want to perpetuate a sixteenth century accident”. For them honouring the presence of Christ in the Eucharist (rather than pouring the wine back in the bottle) looked like a fourth order issue, if an issue at all.

I believe that we have a place in the Church of England and we should remain as long as needs be, as witnesses to the Catholic Faith. When this becomes impossible, not through any fault of ours, as Anglo-Catholics now are facing difficulties in Wales, then we will have to find a new home.



THE RICHBOROUGH FESTIVAL

On a day in mid July we descended on Norwich to take part in a memorable and uplifting occasion which was helped by good weather. It was wonderful to see the cathedral church filled almost to bursting point with traditionalists, most of whom no doubt were members of Forward in Faith. We came from dioceses in all parts of the Richborough area, intent in showing our support for Bishop Keith as well as in taking part in a great religious festival. The Solemn Mass of the Holy Spirit commenced in the great Norman nave of the church at twelve Noon, the Bishop, the principal celebrant, supported by at least one hundred robed clergy. The service which was sung by St. Alban's Choir, Leicester, concluded after an hour and thirty five minutes with the joyful recessional hymn, "Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne".

After what turned out to be a brief interval for lunch when we either brought sandwiches or visited local eating houses, we assembled for Choral Evensong and Benediction at 3.00 o'clock. Surprisingly enough, the church was filled with almost as many people as in the morning. This time the singing was led by the choir, "Quorum", who treated us with the Anthem, "Laudibus in Sanctis", by Byrd. The recently appointed new Administrator of the Shrine at Walsingham, Bishop Lindsay Urwin gave us a sermon which had as its theme the subject of Resurrection. We were dispersing to return to our homes not long before 4.30 p.m., encouraged greatly to continue in our service to the Lord. Why is it, we reflect, that Forward in Faith, holds such memorable great occasions, so infrequently?



The Traditional Anglican Church of Great Britain LATEST NEWS

The refurbished Church of St. Katherine, Lincoln, has now been opened for worship. However, its consecration as a cathedral has been put back until early May (Whitsuntide) next year. This is because two main jobs have yet to be completed. One is the organ which has to be installed; the other is the east window. When the reconstruction of the church was being done, remnants of the medieval priory were discovered under the nave floor. These are now illuminated for display under a glass screen at foot level.

Forward In Faith friends are cordially invited to attend mass which starts at 10.00 a.m. every Sunday. You can now park on site near the church.

THE INTERIM REPORT OF THE REVISION COMMITTEE OF GENERAL SYNOD

Recently the Revision Committee published a brief report on what its members had decided so far, the product of seven meetings that had taken place during the last few months. The report also stated what further ground the Committee intended to cover between now and Christmas.

The report's main announcement concerned the statutory code of practice, a proposal that the General Synod had remitted to the Committee

for consideration and development in July 2008. The report stated that having considered nearly 300 submissions on the subject (including more than 100 from members of General Synod) the Committee was not going to proceed with this proposal, a scheme which would have necessitated delegation of authority and power from the diocesan bishop (a woman) to a complementary bishop (a man).

Instead, the report stated that the Committee would develop a scheme whereby "certain functions" would "be vested in bishops by statute rather than by delegation, the precise term for this being "statutory transfer". In other words the proposed code of practice was now generally recognised as unworkable.

Insofar as this goes, the Revision Committee has clearly moved in the right direction, allowing commonsense for once to triumph. In a statement issued the following day, Forward In Faith UK cautiously welcomed the Committee's change of approach. It believed that to transfer jurisdiction statutorily from diocesan to complementary bishops "could be the basis for a way forward", although it regretted the Committee's decision not to proceed with creation of dioceses for those of orthodox persuasion.

It has been pointed out in Forward In Faith circles that the concept of statutory transfer if implemented could infringe the sex discrimination laws. It might not be possible therefore for the

Revision Committee to proceed with this proposal.

The evangelical and traditionalist organisation Reform also noted the change of direction taken by the Revision Committee. A spokesman of this group, Paul Dawson, welcomed the move and thought it could help to avert a split between people who differ on the issue. Many other observers, it must be said, take a different view about this as the Committee has not yet come to grips with the main problem, namely the source of episcopal authority in the Church of England for traditionalist congregations.

But how far forward does this abandonment of a code of practice in fact take us? Not very far would be the verdict of many traditionalists for several reasons. If we cast our minds back to the time when complementary bishops were proposed by the Legislative Drafting Group under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Manchester, it was also proposed that the Act of Synod which brought Provincial Episcopal Visitors (PEVs) and Resolution C parishes into English dioceses, should be rescinded.

Under the Act, the PEVs exercised an extended and largely restricted ministry in C parishes, a ministry of a pastoral type which derived from the diocesan bishops who were all men. Although many of the diocesan bishops had ordained women and were therefore thought of in some

traditionalist quarters as being "tainted", on the whole the system worked because the participants did not push to the limits what had been agreed in Synod as a compromise.

Were future complementary bishops to receive their mandate from diocesan bishops by delegation, as the PEVs had done by extended ministry, the system could not have worked since some of the female diocesan bishops might have been tempted to ignore the provisions of a code of practice, with little room for compromise between the two sides. To overcome this problem, the Revision Committee appears to have decided that complementary bishops should receive their mandate of jurisdiction by statute, that is by means of church law which diocesan bishops could not circumvent.

Would a complementary bishop equipped with statutory powers be a PEV writ large, i.e. a subordinate bishop, but still of suffragan rank? Quite possibly this could be so, since it was envisaged even under the code of practice that his powers would have to be more than simply pastoral (but more on this later)

The big problem of the complementary bishop has always been to determine where his authority and powers would come from, a problem now changed since he would no longer get his authority to act from the diocesan bishop in whose diocese he would be ministering. From where would it

come? From the archbishop of the province? But what would happen if the archbishop were a woman? What then? And even more importantly, who would consecrate him in the first place? Male bishops only? Or an unacceptable mixture of men and women bishops?

The Legislative Drafting Group in its December 2008 report identified a long list of powers that a complementary bishop could receive, by negotiation, under the now defunct code of practice from the diocesan bishop in respect of a petitioning parish, demonstrating how complex the relationship almost always is (and would be) between the parish and diocese. I do not think there is the slightest chance of the Revision Committee coming up with a formula that would be acceptable to a) the diocese, and b) the petitioning parish, and at the same time retain the parish's loyalty and involvement within the diocese in a scheme involving complementary bishops.

There is little doubt that both proponents and opponents of women bishops will be dissatisfied with what may next emerge from deliberations of the Revision Committee (as undoubtedly many of them are with this interim report). The Committee and its parent General Synod, as well as the Church of England at large, must grasp the nettle that the only way forward to satisfy traditionalists, both catholic and evangelical, is by providing ring-fenced dioceses, not just for those who are quaintly described

