



FORWARD IN FAITH
DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

Newsletter

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THE THIRD PROVINCE MOVEMENT

In this issue of our Newsletter, I want to focus attention on the Third Province Movement (to which some of our members may belong). Though not having acquired the reputation for publicity that Forward In Faith has over the years, the Movement continues with quiet resolve under the leadership of Mrs. Margaret Brown to advance its beliefs and claims to all who will listen to it.

The membership of the Movement recently received a copy of its thirteenth Newsletter. This is filled with sensible observations on the state of play regarding the tortuous discussions and negotiations in the Revision Committee of General Synod over women bishops and the provision (or denial of it) for traditionalists, be they of catholic or evangelical hue.

What is noteworthy about the Third Province Movement is how it has stuck to its guns in asserting that the only way to resolve the crisis dominating discussion in the Revision Committee is for the C. of E. to establish a ring-fenced province, whereby such an inception would "stop the infighting, and we could all get on with the true mission of the Church which is surely to gain the world for Christ". Amen to that!

Like Forward In Faith with which it shares many objectives, the Movement rejects any idea of a code of practice as a means of catering for those opposed to women bishops and priests. It believes that any code would offer totally inadequate protection.

It is detectable that in Forward In Faith circles at the highest level, within the last year or two there has been a weakening of demand for a third province. Yes, that we should strive for possibly three or four non-geographical dioceses seems to be where the requirement has been going, but not for a province as such. There is a subtle distinction here between asking for a province as opposed to asking for several dioceses. By not insisting on its request for a province, Forward In Faith has

appeared to have signalled to its opponents what it now regards as a lesser requirement. Contrast this with the confident way in which Forward In Faith presented in its book, "Consecrated Women?", its blueprint for an additional province. Within the current negotiations, whether conducted within the confines of the Revision Committee or elsewhere, you do not make voluntary concessions until you have to. You do not concede any ground unless it is part of a quid pro quo.

In this matter the Third Province Movement is to be commended for not shifting its ground. To many readers the solution provided by a third province is the only viable one that will enable traditionalists to remain within the Church of England, faithful to the type of church with which they grew up decades ago.

The Newsletter of the Movement also turns its attention to the workings of that arcane body, the Crown Nominations Commission, in particular to the inadequacy of appointment of orthodox (male) candidates to bishoprics especially of diocesan type. The Movement's members are invited to write to Mrs. Caroline Boddington (the Archbishops' Appointment Secretary at The Wash House, Lambeth Palace, London, SE1 7JU) asking that more diocesan bishops of traditionalists' integrity are appointed. No doubt, we in Forward In Faith should follow suit if we have not yet done so.

And then there is the matter of the coming elections to General Synod, due to be held in the early Autumn of this year. Forward In Faith has strongly commended the need to strive for election of as many traditionalists as possible to what will be a smaller General Synod. It is good to know (from reading the Newsletter) that the Movement feels equally strongly that sound men and women should come forward and stand for election to this important body.

In the diocese of Lincoln, our Administrative Council of Forward In Faith would be pleased to hear of individuals who would be willing to stand as candidates (contacting Fr. Andy Hawes on 01778 591358, Mr. Chris Daubney on 01507 568231 or Mrs. Carol Ticehurst on 01526 342076).

Finally, anyone wishing to find out more about the Third Province Movement or wanting to support it can write to The Third Province Movement, Luckhurst, Mayfield, East Sussex, TN20 6TY, sending a stamped envelope for reply.

May we commend the new website of Forward In Faith Lincoln? It is a real professional job and can be found on forwardinfaithlincs.org.uk. We must thank Fr. Paul Noble for all the work he has done in getting the website up and running.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR FORWARD IN FAITH?

In the fourth quarter of last year three announcements of significance were made, one originating in Rome and two in England. The Rome announcement was made on 20th October 2009 by Cardinal Levada, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and achieved considerable publicity in the press and in church circles. This was to herald the introduction of **personal ordinariates** for disaffected Anglicans. The announcement emphasised that this innovation was a response by Rome to “the many requests that have been submitted to the Holy See from groups of Anglican clergy and faithful in different parts of the world who wish to enter into full visible communion with the Catholic church”.

I do not wish to weary readers by summarising the details of the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* which details the structure of the new personal ordinariates as this has been exhaustively done elsewhere. All that needs to be said here is that each will have the form of a non-territorial quasi-diocese situated within the confines of the territorial boundaries of a particular Conference of Bishops (e.g. that of England and Wales). It therefore seems that there will not be a single ordinariate covering the whole, say, of the membership of a worldwide church (such as the Traditional Anglican Communion) applying to join the new setup, but one ordinariate for each Conference of Bishops where that worldwide church has existing members within a Conference’s territory.

The other two announcements came from the Revision Committee of the General Synod which is currently seeking to fashion a response in accordance with the decision taken in July 2008 by the Synod to introduce women bishops into the C. of E. As most readers will be aware, Synod instructed the Revision Committee to flesh out a scheme involving the provision of a **code of practice** within the draft measure which would, it was hoped, meet the needs of traditionalists who could not and would not accept women bishops.

Forward In Faith led the reaction of traditionalists to this proposal, saying that a code of practice would not do, for the simple reason that a woman diocesan bishop could not be forced to delegate episcopal responsibilities to a complementary bishop under the terms of a code if she chose not to. It seems that the strength of this argument prevailed on members of the Revision Committee, for on 8th October 2009 the Committee issued its first statement indicating that the code of practice proposal was not to be proceeded with.

Instead, the Revision Committee decided to work on a scheme involving **statutory transfer of functions**. This would write into the draft measure legalising women bishops a form of words whereby pastoral and other powers would automatically be devolved on a complementary bishop. Under this new scheme a female diocesan bishop would not have any choice over whether or not any such powers could be transferred elsewhere by her.

From a Forward In Faith perspective, the notion of statutory transfer was at first sight better than a code of practice. Thus in a response issued on 9th October 2009, it conceded that the “proposal to make provision for the statutory transfer ... to complementary bishops *could* be the basis for the way forward” (my italics).

However leaving aside many other grave difficulties associated with statutory transfer, it had earlier been admitted in FIF circles that to treat women bishops in this way might break the sex-discrimination law in the UK. Having said that, though statutory transfer could deal with and sharpen the requirement of defining and activating the powers of the complementary bishop, it would leave untouched a whole host of other matters (for instance, the ongoing juridical relationship between the complementary and woman diocesan bishop; another would be the problem of episcopal collegiality).

It is clear that the proposal for statutory transfer ran into strong opposition from many different quarters in the wider church immediately after 8th October. Notably, Watch, the organisation led by Christina Rees

campaigning for women bishops, did not like the notion of statutory transfer one little bit. The majority on the Revision Committee were clearly frightened at what they were now proposing, a notion that conflicted with the terms of reference given to the Committee by General Synod.

So it was not really surprising that the Committee backtracked, deciding not to continue with developing a workable statutory transfer scheme. In its second statement dated 14th November 2009, the Committee said that all attempts by members to proceed with “proposals for vesting particular functions by statute were defeated”.

So what did the Revision Committee decide to do next? The answer is found in the fourth paragraph of the five-paragraph press release of 14th November. This stated that at forthcoming meetings it had to be decided either to return to considering a code of practice or to “adopt the simplest possible legislation”. Ominously for some traditionalists, this last alternative may be taken as meaning that the draft Measure would consist of one clause enabling women to become bishops without any inbuilt protection for traditionalists.

As of now there has been no considered public reaction from Forward In Faith to this about turn. However, Watch were quick off the mark in responding barely a few hours after the Revision Committee’s latest press release. In reply to the Committee’s decision, Christina Rees stated, “This is a real breakthrough. I am delighted that now we can look forward to having women as bishops on the same terms that men are bishops”. She went on to urge that the Committee should “adopt the simplest possible legislation”.

So where do the three announcements – from the Vatican and from the General Synod Revision Committee – leave Forward in Faith and the other traditionalists? Some might say, “Up a creek and without a paddle”!

In one response to these announcements, the Editor of Forward Plus (the tabloid journal of Forward In Faith) got it spot on. The Winter number carries on its front page the apt headline, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place”. Below, appears a copy of a Vatican press release introducing the Apostolic Constitution, and at the side of it a copy of the announcement of the Revision Committee of 14th November. In stark contrast, these two statements display the generous provision of the Roman Catholic Church and the mean lack of intent to provide for traditionalists by the General Synod Revision Committee. As has been pointed out elsewhere, there is indeed an irony in the fact that the Vatican has offered traditionalist Anglicans quasi-dioceses, while the C. of E. has repeatedly refused to grant them free-standing non-territorial dioceses within the existing church structure.

In a single sentence, this whole episode leaves Forward In Faith in a quandary. What should it do? If we consider the offer from Rome of personal ordinariates, we can see that the FIF membership is presently in danger of being fragmented into three groups. There are those who are attracted by the Roman offer, see it as representing the best way ahead, and are waiting for an ordinariate to materialise. The attraction is undoubtedly that it will permit “transferees” to bring with them a considerable portion of their Anglican patrimony (liturgy, musical tradition etc.). Moreover, it will enable them to enter the Roman Catholic Church without having to undergo what is usually called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), a parish based scheme for individual baptised adults.

At this time it does not seem that this group is very large, though it does appear that as many as twelve bishops (some in Forward In Faith) have been chafing at the recent lack of progress in getting a settlement for traditionalists in the C. of E. and (if reports are true) have virtually decided to “swim the Tiber”.

Then there are those who want to wait and see how things turn out within the next few months. These members of Forward In Faith are probably quite large in number and do not want to commit themselves until they see how the land lies. And then there is a third group of members – probably also quite large - who do not really want to become Roman Catholics and would prefer to continue the fight for a just settlement within the C. of E.

The period of uncertainty and indecision has been extended by an announcement made since Christmas by William Fittall, the General Synod's Secretary General, that the Revision Committee will not now be producing draft legislation in time for the scheduled February 2010 meeting of General Synod. In consequence, there will be a postponement of the debate which will now be held at the Summer meeting (perilously close to the end of this Synod). Again it would appear that the number of submissions on women bishops and provision for traditionalists has choked the work of the Committee, and agreement is as wide as ever.

But I want to reserve my most critical remarks in respect of the Revision Committee's announcement of 14th November. You do not have to be a fortune teller to guess what has been going on in that body where the great majority of its members are opposed to making any real concessions to those opposed to women bishops, have never intended to make any real concessions and will vote down anything of substance.

It has been obvious from July 2008 when the Revision Committee's work started, that Forward In Faith's representatives on that body were not going to achieve anything of substance. The problem with Forward In Faith was that it believed that it was worth striving for an equitable settlement, and that a negotiated one was possible. It wasn't. The inbuilt liberal majority encouraged by Christina Rees and her supporters was always going to do what it wanted and vote down any demands of the traditionalists.

Had General Synod intended to arrive at a settlement, it could have established a revision committee comprising equal numbers of those "for" and those "against", so that a *negotiated* agreement could be reached. As it was, the decisions taken by the majority of the actual Revision Committee were always going to be characterised as those taken by victors at an end-of-the-war conference. I am afraid to say that Forward In Faith (and the Catholic group) have been thoroughly out-manoeuvred in ever agreeing to take part in committee proceedings continually dominated by the liberal majority.

And so we have arrived at what Bruce Forsyth of "Strictly Come Dancing" calls "the moment of truth". Forward In Faith and the other catholic-minded representatives on the Revision Committee have been boxed into a narrow area of action, and it is difficult to see how they can realise anything of significance. They could, for instance, continue to strive for some concessions, such as a reinstated code of practice, which in reality would be valueless. Alternatively, they could agree as a group *not* to vote against a single clause measure for women bishops (more on this later).

Outside the Revision Committee, what can Forward In Faith hope to achieve? In some FIF quarters attention has been focusing on the forthcoming elections to General Synod which will occur in September 2010. Will the election of a few more traditionalists to a new General Synod make much difference? I really don't think so. At the most, a larger representation of catholics and evangelicals might deny two thirds majorities in one or more of the three houses when the final votes are cast on the future draft measure. Such votes could be several years away. Another five years uncertainty and wrangling would indisputably help to consolidate the downward trajectory of the C. of E.

Given the strong possibility that one or more ordinariates will be up and running by then, it seems unlikely that Forward In Faith can hold together the bulk of its membership to await the outcome of protracted discussion and voting in General Synod. It is more likely that we will see a steady haemorrhaging of the membership as many "swim the Tiber", lose faith in the ability of Forward In Faith to achieve a just settlement, or eventually decide to strive no longer and make a go of it in the decatholicised C.of E.

Assuming that Forward In Faith is not going to pin its hopes on overcoming further inexpedient wrangling in General Synod and its committees, what can the traditionalist organisation now do? One course of action could be to accept candidly that the battle to win a settlement for traditionalists has been lost. Whether the time scale is shorter or longer than five years, women bishops are coming. To be fair to Forward In Faith, for several years this is the reality that many of its members have steeled themselves for.

What traditionalists must now face up to is to accept is that there is not going to be any form of episcopal provision – that is, in the form of bishops (be they called complementary or otherwise) with ring-fenced statutory powers – for them in the foreseeable future. To continue to exercise membership of the Revision Committee might have merit if only to observe what is going on. But to continue to attempt to fashion the Committee’s eventual final report seems to be a wasteful use of the traditionalists’ time and energy. Better by far to adopt a realistic approach, it would serve everyone’s interest on the Committee for Forward In Faith’s members not to oppose a one-clause measure any more, if that is likely to be the product of its work.

Having been critical for some time of the leadership of Forward In Faith, it comes as no surprise to this observer that the strategy that it has been pursuing for some years, that is to work for a settlement for traditionalists by using the existing machinery of the C. of E., has failed, and has failed them badly.

The example of what can be done by Anglicans wanting to stay as Anglicans, is demonstrated in the USA and Canada with the formation of the new province, the ACNA, under the leadership of Archbishop Robert Duncan. Observers understand perfectly well that in England and Wales where the C. of E. is established by law, there are severe legal constraints on what could be accomplished were Forward In Faith to take direct action in setting up its own organisation, that is as a continuing church within a church. But I am not aware that Forward in Faith has ever carried out a feasibility study with this in mind.

It is true that a study was done by a FIF legal working party to prepare the ground for an additional province within the C. of E., a study that was reported in 2004 in “Consecrated Women”. But the contribution made there was intended to form part of a general settlement framed within General Synod to which Forward In Faith and other traditionalists could participate willingly as loyal Anglicans.

Over the last sixteen years, Forward In Faith has played a major role in making the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod (1993) operate effectively within the two provinces of Canterbury and York. We now have three area-groupings under the pastoral leadership of the PEVs (four if Fulham’s is included) which function as quasi-dioceses, if you like as a church within a church. Many would agree that they have met the spiritual needs of traditionalists extremely well. Is Forward In Faith prepared to let them be eliminated without a fight? If it does, it will be deserting traditionalists who in their hour of need wish to retain a foothold in the church of their baptism.

It gives no-one who is concerned with the direction in which events in General Synod and the Revision Committee are moving, to realise that for some time the leadership of Forward In Faith has been failing its members. It lacks a Press Officer who has the remit to comment with authority on events as they unfold as Christina Rees is able to do. She is to be commended for suggesting that the cloak of secrecy surrounding the Committee discussions should be ended. Moreover the dearth of information on FIF’s own website is remarkable for its absence. Neither are its written publications much better. How often do we hear rank-and-file members say that they do not know what is happening. What for example are Forward In Faith’s contingency plans (if any) if Synod decides to pass a one-clause measure authorising women bishops? If the leadership of Forward In Faith has concocted up a Plan A or Plan B, will they tell us what it is?

In particular, if Forward In Faith fails to adopt a strategy of direct action in order to consolidate the PEV areas (as seems to have happened in Wales after the retirement of Bishop David Thomas) I see no future whatever for traditionalists in the Church. They will have been pushed out or neutralised, and the decatholicisation of the C. of E. will be complete.

Compiler of this Newsletter

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