



## A SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING GROUP

Forward in Faith was founded in November, 1992, in the wake of the decision that month by the General Synod to proceed to the ordination of women to the priesthood. Our clear object from the outset was to *'seek a guaranteed ecclesial structure in which we can pass the Faith on to our children and grandchildren'*. We affirmed in our Mission Statement that we understood that Faith to have been *'revealed in Scripture and Tradition'* and proclaimed *'through the Creeds, the Sacraments and the apostolic ministry of bishops and priests of the Universal Church'*. Our opposition to the ordination of women as priests or bishops remains as firmly and utterly rooted in theology today as it was in 1992, as we have set out in detail on numerous occasions and, in particular, in Part One of *Consecrated Women?*

We have emphatically never sought – and do not seek now - division for its own sake. We would wish to echo the words of Cardinal Walter Kasper, speaking in June last year:

‘if . . . the consecration of a bishop becomes the cause of a schism or blocks the way to full unity, then what occurs is something intrinsically contradictory. It should then not take place, or should be postponed until a broader consensus can be reached.’

However, in the event that the Church of England were resolved to embrace this development, we would recall the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury, writing in July, 2003:

‘ . . . there is an obvious problem in the consecration of a bishop whose ministry will not be readily received by a significant proportion of Christians in England and elsewhere’

and submit that we have a theologically, ecclesiological and legally coherent proposal which would assist the Church of England in her resolution of this problem.

Our proposals for a new province were designed to permit all in the Church of England to flourish, and represent the only solution thus far suggested which would enable women bishops to exercise their ministry without hindrance in their own dioceses, thus fulfilling the aspiration lying behind Canon Jane Sinclair’s amendment to the motion passed by General Synod on 10 July, 2006. The proposals were, of course, set out in forensic detail in 2004 in Part Two of *Consecrated Women?*; we would respectfully submit to the Legislative Drafting Group that, two and a half years on, they would repay careful re-reading.

In particular, we would ask the Group to note the following key features of the solution which we proposed:

- a province which would be an integral part of the Church of England
- a province which would provide a stable and secure solution to the problem
- a province the bishops of which would have ordinary jurisdiction
- a province the boundaries of which would be entirely permeable
- a province in which only male priests and bishops would minister sacramentally
- a province in which orders would derive from the historic episcopate as traditionally understood
- a province which would thus provide the necessary sacramental assurance
- a province which would enable renewal in mission and evangelism
- a province which would bring peace to the Church of England

We are conscious that the detail of our proposals has, in some places, been characterised as our ‘final demands’. Nothing could be further from the truth. Much of the detail is of course entirely negotiable. For example, at clause 14 of our draft Measure, we made provision for a Board of Education; it seemed to our Legal Working Party that the most efficacious means of maintaining the ethos of a voluntary-aided or controlled school intimately related to a parish in our proposed province was by means of such a provision. Clearly, if there was a better way of achieving the same object, we would wish to explore it.

Or again: at clause 6 of the draft Measure, an arrangement was envisaged whereby a synod would govern the proposed province, having power ‘to adopt by canon any Measure or other enactment passed by the General Synod’ following the precedents for such legislation being modified for use in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Diocese in Europe. We have heard arguments that the General Synod would be the poorer if it contained no traditionalist Catholic voice and are grateful for such generosity. Alternative proposals for governance whereby, for example, the new province formed a discrete electoral entity within the General Synod would seem to us to be a possible way of addressing this dilemma.

We are conscious too that in some minds the word ‘province’ is problematical. We would wish to remind members of the Group that, within Anglican ecclesiology, it bears a number of different definitions. There are provinces overseen by a member of the Primates’ Meeting (the Church of England, The Episcopal Church, the Church of the Province of Central Africa); there are provinces within such provinces overseen by an archbishop (the Archbishop of York, the Archbishop of Sydney, the Archbishop of Athabasca); and there are similar provinces presided over by a president who may be lay or ordained (Provinces I – IX of The Episcopal Church). It is of course important that our proposal for a new province in the Church of England is not invested in people’s minds with a status above and beyond that intended. For example, nowhere in our draft Measure did we suggest that it would be overseen by an archbishop.

The very able team of lawyers comprising Forward in Faith’s Legal Working Party began its work five years ago, in March 2002. Prior to the publication of *Consecrated Women?* in October, 2004, it met on eleven occasions, communicating between such meetings by email. It has continued to meet and correspond on a regular basis since 2004 and its members (whose names are set out on pp.211-12 of *Consecrated Women?*) are more than ready to work with the officers of the General Synod and Archbishops’ Council in order to assist in the resolution of this issue. We submit that provisions acceptable to those for whom they are intended should now be drafted; such provisions will of course have to form an integral part of the legislation which will permit the ordination of women as bishops and will need to incorporate each of the key features identified above.

Such a course of action would naturally result (dependent of course upon the good will of the House of Bishops and of the General Synod) in the successful early passage of the legislation necessary to restore the peace of the Church. Resources currently devoted to this debate would thus be freed for the Church’s primary tasks of mission and evangelism, the Church of England would set a prophetic example to the rest of the Anglican Communion and the lack of confidence which has so dogged the ministries of so many would be replaced throughout our Church with a new and exciting zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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