

The Reform of the Episcopate and Alternative Episcopal Oversight

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A) BACKGROUND and ASSUMPTIONS

Historical statements

Our forefathers - the Anglican Reformers - did not believe that episcopacy was essential to the being of the Church. Whitgift's thesis, for example, was clear:

it is plain that any one certain form or kind of external government perpetually to be observed is nowhere in the scripture prescribed to the church.

And Article XIX (of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England) says nothing about a particular form of ministry being essential to the Church. True, a "godly" bishop was seen as perfectly acceptable. But he was acceptable and in a proper succession not by virtue of consecration and his being established in a see, but because of his doctrine. So Bishop Jewel can say to one of his opponents:

Succession, you say, is the chief way, for any Christian man to avoid antichrist. I grant you, if you mean the succession of doctrine.

Not unreasonably, therefore, the base unit for our Reformers in practical terms was not the diocese, but the parish congregation. The Church of England was a federation of congregations committed to mere Christianity to use Richard Baxter's phrase (borrowed by C.S.Lewis). Unlike independent congregationalists it was an ordered federation where ordained ministry was validated through a wider connection. Unlike the Roman Catholics it was not theologically rooted in episcopal dioceses and bishops, but as Article XIX says:

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred; so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.

Distinctions

Our forefathers made many fine distinctions when discussing "the Church".

Hooker summarised those distinctions in a much quoted (and brilliant) way when he said this:

For lack of diligent observing the difference, first between the Church of God mystical and visible, then between the visible sound and corrupted, sometimes more, sometimes less, the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed.

We always need to keep in mind the difference between the Church mystical and the Church visible. The Church of England is not the Church mystical. It is part of the Church visible. Bishop J.C.Ryle used to call it (and any denominational church) "the scaffolding" that supported the true Church of Christ - the Church mystical.

These distinctions are important for the question of episcopacy and for the definition of "the Church". And so is Article XIX. Article XIX allows, and encourages, a minimalist definition of the visible Church as the Anglican definition; and it only defines the visible Church and not the Church mystical. That mystical Church is defined in the Book of Common Prayer where it says the "mystical body of thy Son" (in the service of Holy Communion) is "the blessed company of all faithful people."

So Article XIX is defining a "visible sound" Church where "the pure Word of God is preached" and "the Sacraments be duly ministered". However, at the same time it also acknowledges the mixed nature of the visible Church. Serious corruption, it implies, does not mean that an errant Church ceases to be part of the visible Church. "The Church of Rome hath erred" - but it still can be called a "Church". Error does not automatically exclude from the visible Church, even error "in matters of Faith" or morality ("in their living") according to the implication of Article XIX.

Discipline

That leads us on to Article XXVI. This touches on the issues of a mixed Church where there is immorality or heresy, even among senior leaders (i.e. Bishops):

Although in the visible Church the evil [a strong word] be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their Ministry, both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving of the Sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness [another strong word], nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's

institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men.

This article clearly contradicts those who argue that a corrupt visible Church is quite invalid; and that nothing good whatever can come from such a church where "the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments." On the contrary our Reformers argued that it was perfectly possible for an "evil" minister to minister what is true. At the lowest level, the truth of the Bible does not depend on the moral or theological probity of the reader. In Cranmer's day even a heretic could read one of his homilies. Such a person did not automatically make invalid its arguments. (The article, of course, was probably trying to allay succession and independency).

However, the Article is not simply affirming the "validity" of evil ministry, as some seem to suggest. That is just "part one". And part one has credibility only in the light of "part two". Part two is what is relevant for us at the end of the 20th century. For the Article continues like this:

Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil Ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally being found guilty, by just judgement be deposed.

Anglican polity, therefore, presupposes that while the visible Church is both "sound and corrupted, sometimes more, sometimes less", discipline must be exercised in an effort to make it more sound than corrupt. There is no assumption that the Anglican Church is happy with the comprehension together of the sound, the less corrupt and the more corrupt. Far from it. Yes, its ecclesiology is comprehensive but not in comprehending a doctrinal or moral free-for-all. It is comprehensive, first, in that it sees the visible Church not as coterminous with its own church order, but catholic (or universal). Secondly, it is also comprehensive in that it acknowledges that those who are disciplined for heresy or immorality (by excommunication or impairment of communion) are still within (or "comprehended" by) the visible Church. And, thirdly, it is comprehensive in that it knows that some of its senior bishops and clergy may be "evil", and that such "wickedness" does not invalidate all that they do. But - and this is a vital "but" - *it presupposes that disciplinary action will be taken with such people so that the mixed and doctrinally comprehensive visible Church becomes more "sound" and less mixed.*

Indeed, the clergy of the Church of England are duty bound, according to the 1662 Ordinal, "with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word." Even the new Alternative Service Book Ordinal speaks of "upholding the truth against

error." At the revision stage of the new service that phrase was included as short-hand for the 1662 Ordinal's "banish and drive away ... strange doctrines".

The Word of God and the Church

According to the wording of the Ordinal "erroneous and strange doctrines" are those that are "contrary to God's Word." That is the test for orthodoxy for all clergy. So how are we to understand "God's Word" and how are we to use it as such a test?

The supreme Word of the Father is "the Son ... begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father" who "took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance" (Article II) - incidentally ruling out denials of the virginal conception. The articles, however, are mostly referring to "God's word written" (Article XX) - Holy Scripture. And Article VI says:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

Nor does the Old Testament contradict the New. Christ is the one through whom even in the Old Testament "everlasting life is offered". And while the Mosaic rules "as touching Ceremonies and Rites do not bind Christian men" today; nor do you have to follow all the "civil laws"; "yet notwithstanding, *no Christian man whatsoever* is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral [italics added]."

But is the Church "the authority behind the authority"? What is the relationship of the Church to the Bible? Who decides when there are differing interpretations? The Articles say that the Church is like a library - it is "a witness and a keeper of holy Writ" (Article XX). However, while the visible Church obviously can and must order itself and make judgements over doctrinal issues,

yet, it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

An Anglican hermeneutic, therefore, has limits. The assumption is that God's Word written has to be seen whole. The message of an individual author cannot be expounded in such a way as to contradict other authors.

Nor is that obscurantist. Nor does it encourage forced harmonisations. It simply means what it says. If "one place of Scripture" is expounded "that it be repugnant to another" it does not mean that a clearly inadequate but non repugnant explanation is to be accepted. It simply means that more homework needs to be done. As Augustine would say, for the time being it has to be put on the shelf.

Anglican hermeneutics

And the Anglican hermeneutic says that there is a "perspicuity" to Scripture. That is to say, the essential message is clear and capable of being understood. At least that is what our Reformers taught. Cranmer himself was forthright. In his *Prologue or Preface to the Bible* he said this (quoting St John Chrysostom):

Peradventure they will say unto me, "How and if we understand not the deep and profound mysteries of scripture?" Yet can it not be but that much fruit and holiness must come and grow unto thee by the reading. For it cannot be that thou shouldest be ignorant in all things alike. For the Holy Ghost hath so ordered and attempered the scriptures that in them as well publicans, fishers and shepherds may find their edification, as great doctors their erudition. For those books were not made to vain-glory like as were the writing of the Gentile philosophers and rhetoricians, to the intent the makers should be had in admiration for their high styles and obscure manner of writing, whereof nothing can be understand without a master or an expositor. But the apostles and prophets wrote their books so that their special intent and purpose might be understood and perceived of every reader, which was nothing but the edification or amendment of the life of them that readeth or heareth it.

Who is there that reading or hearing read in the gospel, "Blessed are they that been meek, blessed are they that been merciful, blessed are they that been of clean heart," and other like places, can perceive nothing except he have a master to teach him what it meaneth? Likewise the signs and miracles with all other histories of the doings of Christ or his apostles, who is there of so simple wit and capacity but he may not be able to perceive and understand them? These be but excuses and cloaks for the rain and coverings of their own idle slothfulness.

"I cannot understand it." What marvel? How shouldest thou understand, if thou wilt not read nor look upon it? Take the books into thine hands; read the whole story; and that thou understandest, keep it well in memory. That thou understandest not, read it again and again. If thou can neither so come by it, counsel with some other that is better learned. Go to thy curate

and preacher. Shew thyself to be desirous to know and learn. And I doubt not but God, seeing thy diligence and readiness (if no man else teach thee,) will himself vouchsafe with his Holy Spirit to illuminate thee, and to open unto thee that which was locked from thee.

So much, then, for background and assumptions. These provide the ground rules and the context for our thinking about reform of the episcopate and alternative oversight in the Church of England.

B) THE EPISCOPATE

Resolutions

At the REFORM National Conference 1995 (on the 23 March 1995) the Conference passed a resolution requesting ...

the Council to initiate action leading to the reform of the episcopate.

After a considerable number of years and some serious debate there is now widespread conviction that more is needed than discussion. The REFORM council has been mandated to "initiate action". What is the action that is needed?

What have others said about this on other occasions? The Nottingham Statement of 1977 said: "We consider that the current Anglican practice of episcopacy ought to be reformed." At the Anglican Evangelical Assembly of 1990 there was a call for a "reformed and wider episcopate". Stuart Blanch, the former Archbishop of York called for new "patterns of episcopacy". And the Covenant of REFORM speaks of "the need radically to reform the present shape of episcopacy and pastoral discipline."

But why? For two reasons. First, there is now too frequent heresy in the episcopate. Interestingly this was a motivator in Newman's thinking and acting in the last century. For Newman developed his key doctrine of the consensus fidelium on discovering the heretical episcopate of the 4th century. For the record this is what he said: "During the greater part of the 4th century ... the body of Bishops failed in their confession of the faith ... I fairly own, that if I go to writers, since I must adjust the letter of Justin, Clement, and Hippolytus with the Nicene Doctors, I get confused; and what revives and reinstates me, as far as history goes, is the faith of the people." Then, secondly, there are practical problems. The bishops no longer give much support to the clergy. The Gallup Survey of clergy for Faith in the City found that in answer to the question "Who, if anyone, gives you real support in your ministry?" the answer was: wife and family 75%; church wardens 50%; individuals in the parish 48%; the diocesan bishop was only 26%. If the genuine well-being of the clergy is a priority rather than maintaining a partisan ecclesiology, at a time of scarce resources the parishes should be

built up rather than the diocesan centres. It is amazing that since the end of the nineteenth century we have seen an increase in the number of bishops together with a decline in the number of clergy. The bishops have quadrupled while the lower clergy have halved.

Definitions

But we must define our terms. What today do we mean by "a bishop"? - the presbyter-bishops of the NT with apostles in the background or the post-apostolic monarchical bishops of the second and third centuries, distinguished now from presbyters, but still presiding over a single congregation? No! Anglican bishops, through no fault of their own, are *post-Constantinian Prelates* with little to do either with New Testament or essential Catholic order. Surely the time has come for a *deprelatizing* of the Church of England.

The Orthodox bishop, Kallistos Ware, argues that we need to get back to that earlier "catholic" model: "Now we are moving into a 'post-Constantinian' epoch, we have much to learn from the era before Constantine." The Anglican bishop, A.C.Headlam, had earlier said the same thing: "it is not the mediaeval bishop but the catholic bishop of the primitive church that the present time needs." And the 1878 Lambeth Conference declared: "We gladly welcome every effort for reform upon the model of the Primitive Church." In the 17th century Archbishop Ussher wanted such a primitive episcopate. He wanted a 'first among equals' in a local setting.

The problems of the 17th and then the 18th century led, sadly, to an entrenchment of prelaty; and then the 19th century saw not only Tractarianism but also the ex-Unitarian F.D.Maurice. With all the extremism of a "convert" he declared that "the episcopal institution" [which in reality was a prelatical institution] was "one of the appointed and indispensable signs of a spiritual and universal society." After Michael Ramsey validated Maurice, it became very hard to deny the liberal-catholic myth of a "prelatical-episcopate". It has huge plausibility but no substance.

Two orders not three

Classical Anglican doctrine on the episcopate is not prelatical. Classical Anglican doctrine is minimalist. It recognises two orders not three in the Church - a presbyteral and a diaconal order. Bishops (as Jerome, Peter Lombard and the Lateran Council acknowledged) are part of the order of the presbyterate. The Preface, therefore to the 1662 Ordinal does not say there are "three Orders" but "*these* Orders of Ministers ... Bishops, Priests and Deacons."

In the rubric of *both* the "Making of Deacons" *and* the "Ordering of Priests" there is the requirement for a sermon "declaring ... how necessary that order is *in the Church of Christ*." There is no such requirement in the Consecration service. Secondly, the headings to the pages in the 1662 Ordinal are respectively, "The Ordering of Deacons", "The Ordering of Priests" but "The Consecration [not "The Ordering"] of Bishops". Similarly in Article XXXVI it speaks only of "the consecration of archbishops and bishops" but "the ordering of priests and deacons". Thirdly, any order a Bishop has (according to the Ordinal) is political rather than ecclesial. A priest is "called ... according to ... the order of this *Church*", while the bishop is "called ... according to ... the order of this *realm*." This is most important. That is why it is fair to say that classical Anglican doctrine recognises two orders, not three, in the Church. In the words of Dean Field (writing in the 17th century): "that wherein a bishop excelleth a presbyter is not a distinct power of order, but an eminence and dignity only."

For our Reformers, therefore, the bishop was a senior presbyter with a jurisdictional role and an ordaining role. Certainly confirmation for them was not essential to episcopacy. So Hooker can say: "I make not confirmation any part of that power which have always belonged only unto bishops, because in some places the custom was that presbyters might also confirm in the absence of a bishop." Our Reformers, following Jerome, saw bishops as "a remedy of schism" (Hooker) or "for the avoiding of schisms and factions" (Field). Both Hooker and Field are clear that bishops are not essential to the existence of the Church; and they both recognised the possibility of presbyteral ordination.

Bishops today

So what about the world of today? It is so different. There is now a decline of "denominationalism" - people choose a church when they move house for the preaching, the music, the pastoral care, or the youth work. The denomination is often low down the list. Denominations and so dioceses are now seen as "para-churches". Interestingly, Hooker only ever viewed the diocese as that. He saw the cathedral as the church "where the bishop is set with his college of presbyters about him"; "the local compass of his *authority* we term a diocese". The diocese never was his "church".

And what about the Bishop today? Today he is more of a deacon than a presbyter. He is, in reality, a para-church officer. Cardinal Villot, the former Vatican Secretary of State, looked at the bishops' files on his desk and exclaimed: "In the best periods of the life of the Church, nobody would have thought such duties were even those of a presbyter, but only a deacon." For

all their protestations about being "missionary bishops", bishops are overwhelmed with synods and committees. The centralism that has grown since the 1970's and the advent of Synodical Government, together with the liberal-Catholic ideology of prelacy, strangles even the best of men and turns episcopal presbyters into deacons.

There must be major reform. As R.A.Norris says: "little energy has been devoted to the examination of the actual workings of episcopacy ... claims are made for episcopacy which are not justified by the practice of the Anglican Church."

In the Ignatian period the bishop was the senior pastor of a larger church. That is why he was a focus of unity with "one eucharist". Everyone went to the same service. The bishop's diocese was one parish. Visiting Jerusalem in the 380s, the pilgrim Egeria found that despite the large number of pilgrims and local Christians, there was still only one eucharist on each Sunday, celebrated by the bishop and attended by everyone.

But our modern prelatical bishops are unrelated to congregations. In the Church of England in South Africa all the bishops are in parishes. This, surely, is the direction we must go in this country. The bishop would then be in touch with the *consensus fidelium*. We must de-prelatize the Church of England.

Cathedrals and their futures are up for discussion. Over 100 years ago it was suggested that the office of bishop and dean/provost should merge. The diocesan bishop would then be the pastor of a large church on the Ignatian model. Indeed, a criterion of being a "bishop" must now surely be the competence to lead and oversee a growing church if our concern is for mission not maintenance. Gone must be the competence to accommodate to an ever increasing bureaucratic synodical machine and the espousal of a "lowest common denominator theology" as the main criteria. Along with this must go the right for all the parochial clergy to confirm. In management terms this would be vital. Roman Catholic clergy, it is reported, have already gone down this road. It is time for us to do the same.

Senior pastors as bishops

In the pluralism of the present Church of England, we must now explore the possibility of senior pastors of larger Anglican churches being given authority (or consecrated) to "ordain" (along with other presbyters, of course). If we are to re-evangelise the nation and see men and women converted to Jesus Christ there must be the training and sending out of competent new leaders. The present system has failed us. Numbers of stipendary clergy are falling. Younger and able evangelicals are getting

disillusioned with the Church of England and are not offering for full-time ministry. Too many report the theological colleges and courses as weak. Already larger churches are developing their own training programmes. The requirements for ordination can, of course, still be those of Canon C7 - "a sufficient knowledge of holy Scripture and of the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church of England as set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal."

Prelacy has confused us. We think of bishops in terms of palaces and purple. No! Clergy given authority to ordain - *new alternative bishops* - can stay with the same stipends, houses and dress. Current episcopal paraphernalia has little to do with Christian theology and much to do with the British Constitution. We need to think the unthinkable. It was Dean Field who said at the beginning of the 17th century: "Neither should it seem so strange to our adversaries that the power of ordination should at some times be yielded unto presbyters, seeing their chorepiscopi, suffragans, or titular bishops, that live in the diocese and Churches of other bishops, and are no bishops according to the old course of discipline, do daily, in the Romish Church, both confirm children and give orders." Surely a bishop like the former Bishop of Chester, Michael Baughen, was more of an Ignatian bishop when he was at All Souls' Langham Place than when in the see of Chester. It is time we explicitly recognised that.

But to talk of reforming the episcopate is to raise huge questions in a number of people's minds. Is it conceivable? Is this not "cloud-cuckoo land"? How on earth can any action be initiated?

C) PROBLEMS

The monarchy

There are a range of reasons behind the doubts over reforming the episcopate. For some there is a false doctrine of the Church that promotes episcopacy by grounding the Church in the episcopate. As we have seen this is not authentic Anglicanism. It captured, however, the high ground in the first half of the 20th century. It therefore has a level of "plausibility" at a sub-rational level.

This is the view with which many have, in effect, been indoctrinated. Until taught otherwise this is felt to be axiomatic - *ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia* ("where there is a bishop, there there is a church"). Our Article XIX says, as we have seen, the church is where or "in the which" there is preaching of "the pure word of God" and where the Sacraments be "duly administered". The whole debate has also been confused by the issue of Prelacy. That problem was surfacing at the 1930 Lambeth Conference. The

assembled Bishops admitted: "It is hard to recognise the successors of the Apostles in the feudal Prelates of the mediaeval Church, or in the 'peers Spiritual' of eighteenth century England". The 'peers Spiritual' of the 20th century, however, are still in that prelatical structure.

But "prelacy" has been a factor because of the association, in England, of Episcopacy with the Monarch. It was James I who said, "No bishop, no king." And as we have seen the bishop has an "order" that is political, "an order of *this Realm*". This concept has been more powerful than many of us realise. Hooker, for example, could describe bishops as *the temperature of excesses in all estates, the glue and soder of the public weal, [and] the ligament which tieth and connecteth the limbs of this body politic each to other.*

That, of course, bears no relationship to present reality - constitutional or otherwise. But our Anglican episcopate has been shaped for *that* constitutional reality not for the present day. Hence the need for action.

The association with the Monarch stirs, quite reasonably, deep feelings.

"Touch not the Lord's anointed" means that for many in the Anglican tradition which includes a strong Royalist tradition, Queen and Bishop have a special sacrosanctity. But the present sorry state of the Royal Family means that change in the monarchy is not at all unlikely.

We, therefore, need to be ready for the future by initiating our own changes in the episcopate before a range of panic measures is forced upon us.

Respect for the Queen however, means that no action can be taken unless there are pressing and watertight reasons. There are pressing and watertight reasons. But our remarkable British history will mean that there is a great deal of inertia to overcome before significant change is possible.

Another reason for inaction is the general ignorance among church people - clergy and laity alike - of even the elements of Church of England law. This results in a nervousness in dealing with anything legal.

Church law

Church law was not a primary concern of the Reformation. Indeed, Luther saw ecclesiastical law as so often strangling the gospel, while in England Church Law was a vehicle for papal not royal supremacy. Before the Reformation, Church or Canon Law was determined in Rome, though of course applied locally.

The Reformation cut the knot with Rome. Attempts at legislation relating to the clergy were made during the formative period of the Reformation in the 16th century. Only in the reign of James I were the canons of 1603 (or 1604) passed by the Convocations. The reaction to these canons in

subsequent years became almost a symbol of the English attitude to Church Law. And it still persists. A previous Bishop of Durham, Hensley Henson, wrote this about these canons:

Let any candid and loyal churchman be at the pains of reading through the Canons of 1604 (which form the bulk of our canonical code) and let him consider how he could reasonably and usefully make them his rule of action. He will certainly rise from his study with a feeling of dismay, so remote are they from the circumstances of his life, so harsh their tone, so frankly impracticable are many of their practical requirements.

In part this led to the relatively recent reform of Canon Law. In May 1947 Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher said:

The reform of Canon Law is, I believe the first and most essential step in the whole process of Church reform ... Because we have no body of Canons to turn to, the Church has lost its sense of obedience to its own spiritual ordinances.

The next two decades in the history of the Church of England were taken up with Canon Law revision and the setting up of Synodical Government. Fisher seemed to believe that you could legislate and organise for spiritual life. Some think that his programme of Canon Law revision was a disaster. Sadly, his predecessor, Archbishop William Temple, died prematurely just after setting up the Commission on Evangelism that reported under the title *Towards the Conversion of England*. Fisher ignored this when he became Archbishop. He revised the Canons instead and set up Synodical Government.

The new Canons were completed by 1969 when they came into force. The General Synod now has the power to modify these Canons, which in general are only binding on clergy. The laity, since the passing of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963, are generally no longer subject to Church Law. This, of course, is a matter of the greatest significance in terms of reform. The laity have unrestricted freedom.

Canonical obedience

The clergy swear "canonical obedience" to their bishop, as do bishops to the archbishop. This does not mean the bishop (or archbishop) has *carte blanche* to order the clergyman (or bishop) to do anything he may wish. Not at all. The clergyman only swears obedience in all things "lawful and honest". The bishop, therefore, can only ask a clergyman to act "according to the canons". A refusal would then justify the church courts in disciplinary action. However, if the clergyman denied that the Bishop was being "lawful" either party could only decide the dispute by recourse to the courts. Also

the Bishop is only entitled to request compliance in things that are "honest". With so much manipulative politics taking place at deanery, diocesan and central levels, it would be surprising if even good bishops were not being forced to request much that is "dishonest". This certainly seems to be the case with respect to the suspension of livings in some dioceses.

And very little can be done even if you go to court. The distinguished Canon Lawyer, Garth Moore, said this on the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963:

when [you] turn to this Measure, designed very largely to simplify an outdated and complicated system, [you] will find, in place of the old system, a new one in many respects so cumbersome and unpractical that it is doubtful whether, in some of its aspects, any attempt will be made to use it more than the one time necessary to convince even its authors of its unserviceability for many of the purposes for which it was designed.

But it is under this measure that any discipline against distortions of doctrine or immoral behaviour has to be carried out. For example the former Bishop of Durham was in clear contravention of Canon C18:

Every Bishop is to uphold sound and wholesome doctrine and to banish away all erroneous and strange opinions.

Under the Canon, "wholesome doctrine" is defined by Canon A5. That says: *The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures.*

In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal.

The virginal conception and the empty tomb of Jesus are positively affirmed in the authorities cited in Canon A5. The former Bishop of Durham was, therefore, clearly teaching contrary to the canons and so in that respect being "unlawful".

But the only way of ensuring his "canonical obedience" which he himself swore, was by recourse to this Measure of 1963. Those at the time involved and concerned decided, quite reasonably, that this was not a way to go. So not only the action of the former Bishop of Durham but the reasonable inaction of his opponents brought the Church Law process into further disrepute; or rather it proved that it was not the way to solve real problems or reform the church. As a guide-line and standard for those who want to keep to historic Anglicanism, the canons have been helpful. But beyond that, they are ineffective.

Another way

With many bishops and clergy not necessarily defying but tacitly rejecting the implications of the doctrinal Canons, orthodox parochial clergy are in a difficult, if not impossible, position. Another way forward needs to be discovered. It is not that the juridical way has been tried and found wanting. It has not even been tried, because it cannot be. There are fatal flaws; and it is hugely expensive.

Many are now sympathising with Luther. He found strictly "legal" reform impossible. Luther was facing a similar situation to ourselves. In his view the visible Church was corrupt and collapsing. This was vigorously denied by his opponents. So Luther wanted to confront these opponents, and in particular the Pope, head on. He said this:

When the pope acts contrary to the Scriptures, it is our duty to stand by the Scriptures, to reprove him and to constrain him, according to the word of Christ, Matthew 18: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell it to him, between you and him alone; if he does not listen to you, then take one or two others with you; if he does not listen to them, tell it to the church; if he does not listen to the church, consider him a heathen." Here every member is commanded to care for every other. How much more should we do this when the member that does evil is responsible for the government of the church, and by his evil-doing is the cause of much harm and offence to the rest! But if I am to accuse him before the church, I must naturally call the church together.

But, as with many in REFORM, Luther had a problem. He was not entitled to call the Church together. But that did not stop him. He asked this question, which indicates his thinking:

Would it not be unnatural if a fire broke out in a city and everybody were to stand by and let it burn on and on and consume everything that could burn because nobody had the authority of the mayor, or because, perhaps, the fire broke out in the mayor's house? In such a situation is it not the duty of every citizen to arouse and summon the rest? How much more should this be done in the spiritual city of Christ if a fire of offence breaks out, whether in the papal government, or anywhere else! The same argument holds if an enemy were to attack a city. The man who first roused the others deserves honour and gratitude. Why, then, should he not deserve honour who makes known the presence of the enemy from hell and rouses Christian people and calls them together?

There is the equivalent of Luther's fire and enemy as far as the Church of England is concerned. Something must be done.

D) KOINONIA

Eames and “impaired communion”

Anglicanism is now moving away from the juridical way of dealing with conflict and problems to a new way. Or at least it is trying to look at conflict and problems in a different light. This has been forced on us by the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (the Anglican Church in the US). This Church has defied rules and restraints in its insistence not only on securing women a place in the episcopate, but also in some bishops openly ordaining homosexual clergy. What then is this new "way". It concentrates on the category of communion not jurisdiction. The watchword is koinonia (the Greek for “communion”). In short it argues that we may all have to live with our profound disagreements. All this will result in *impairments* of communion. There will be, because there already is, "impaired", "restricted" or "incomplete communion". And given the fact that no juridical authority now can command universal agreement, the disputes will have to be settled not immediately but after a period of time by the *consensus fidelium*.

These conclusions and this language is that of the Eames' Commission (the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate). This Commission first met in 1988. All three of its reports were published in 1994 under the signature of the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey. Importantly, the new Archbishop of York was a member of this Commission and so party to its proposals. The first report dealt with koinonia. Its thesis was that:

The basis of the Christian Church is that spiritual reality of koinonia which is a sharing in the life of God the Holy Trinity. In the Anglican Communion, this mystery manifests itself in visible elements of the Church's life many of which Anglicans already share with other ecclesial bodies. There is the common confession of the apostolic faith expressed in the living Tradition of the Church in continuity with the normative record of Holy scripture, the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and eucharist, a single interchangeable ministry which is apostolic both in terms of fidelity to apostolic teaching and in terms of apostolic succession. The fellowship of Anglicans is expressed in a commitment to pray for one another, in mutual responsibility and care, in a sharing of resources and goods and a commitment to mission. Such elements are common to the 29 Provinces of the Communion, all of which are in communion with the See of Canterbury and recognise the Archbishop of Canterbury as the focus of unity in the Communion.

“Freedom and space”

The report goes on to argue that theological disagreements are resulting in reduced "opportunities to participate in each other's ministry" and "interdependence and communion thereby suffer some restriction." This of course first came about by Anglo-Catholics simply saying that they do not recognise, nor will they receive, women priests or bishops.

The report goes on to say the following, however:

as in the wider ecumenical debate Anglicans ought not to suggest that such restrictions result in their being "out of communion" with one another. Much more unites them within the one Anglican fellowship than divides ... To take the step of declaring that communion is broken, or to describe the position as no longer being "in communion", would be to do less than justice to the concept of communion as we now understand and experience it.

So how do you solve problems? You don't. *You let the people decide:*

it has always been recognised that councils not only may, but have, erred. Conciliar and synodical decisions would still have to be received and owned by the whole people of God as consonant with the faith of the Church throughout the ages professed and lived today.

In the continuing and dynamic process of reception, freedom and space [italics mine] must be available until a consensus of opinion one way or other has been achieved. The Lambeth Conference, 1948, indicated "... the authority of doctrinal formulations by General Councils or otherwise, rests at least in part on their acceptance by the whole body of the faithful, though the weight of this 'consensus' does not depend on mere numbers or on the extension of a belief at any one time, but on continuance through the ages, and the extent to which the consensus is genuinely free." (Report of the Committee on the Anglican Communion, III, Lambeth Conference, 1948).

The model of the Church assumed here is not totally different to that of Hooker. Hooker had this clear concept of the visible Church sound and corrupt, sometimes more, sometimes less. And he knew that "error and fault, heresies and crimes" corrupted the Church. Indeed, "they also make a separation from the visible sound Church of Christ." But even "the act of excommunication, it neither shutteth out from the mystical, nor clean from the visible, but only from fellowship with the visible in holy duties."

Hooker does not see sacramental communion - sharing in Holy Communion - as the defining mark of the Church's communion. Someone may be "excommunicated" but they are not shut out "clean from the visible church"; they simply are excluded from certain "holy duties".

Never “out of communion”

In a similar way Eames says:

In our discussion about the nature of communion, it is clear that a juridical notion of simply being "in communion" or "out of communion" with another church has been shown to be insufficient. In our discussions with other churches within the ecumenical movement we are learning that a real communion has never been entirely destroyed, even though this cannot yet be expressed in the shared eucharist which gives visible sacramental expression to communion. This has been officially recognised between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox. This is also a common understanding amongst other churches which allow mutual eucharistic hospitality as the appropriate expression of partial communion. A real degree of authentic communion is entailed from the common recognition of baptism among separated churches. It follows that no Province or individual bishop still less priest or lay person, can meaningfully declare themselves to be categorically out of communion with another Province or bishop.

According to Eames no baptised believing Anglican can really be "out of communion" with Canterbury whatever they did, for "no individual ... priest or lay person can meaningfully declare themselves to be categorically out of communion with another Province or bishop." So whatever REFORM (or another group) decides to do - say, in securing the consecration of a parallel episcopate, - they cannot be declared by the Anglican authorities as "out of communion" with Canterbury or with existing Bishops. However, Eames then goes on to concede "impaired" communion.

At the same time, integrity prompts the recognition that, at the level of ecclesial communion, which has always included the mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries, there is an actual diminishment of the degree of communion [italics mine] amongst the Provinces of the Anglican Communion. The Lambeth Conference terminology of "impairment" may be used or other language such as "restricted" or "incomplete" may be preferred. In either case, communion is less full than it was.

That, of course, is true at a diocesan as well as at a Provincial level.

E) REFORM

The “reality”

So there is a distinction between viewing these matters juridically and viewing them from the point of view of reality. Eames tried to do the latter. The Eames Commission has decided that the only way forward is to start, so to speak, from “reality”, and then work up towards the theory of the law. Surely that is worth trying.

What is the reality at the moment in the Church of England? Many parishes and many people are already in impaired communion with a number in senior positions. In Newcastle (to speak of just one local situation) Jesmond Parish Church is; so is St Oswald's, Walkergate and St Stephen's, Elswick. REFORM certainly is. At a simple level many are already in impaired communion with certain Bishops following the reports *The Nature of Christian Belief and Issues in Human Sexuality*.

Nor do we have "interchangeability of ministries". *De iure*, of course, there is "interchangeability" but there is no *de facto* or "true" fellowship or *koinonia* with many in the Church of England. I would not allow the former Bishop of Durham to preach in Jesmond Parish Church. There was nothing personal. We simply judged him (now an assistant bishop in Ripon) to be in grave error.

There are other diocesan, suffragan or assistant bishops (including Scottish bishops) who REFORM members would not invite to preach in their churches for doctrinal reasons. There is another assistant bishop of Ripon, Bishop Rawcliffe. We have directly had to oppose him for openly advocating homosexual relationships. I know of the great distress he caused to people in the diocese of Ripon. Nor are they exhibiting an irrational "homophobia" but a *rational* fear. They believe he is in error and is thus an inappropriate person to "confirm" the faith of new Christians. The same goes with a number of dignitaries and, of course, many of the other clergy. In the words of Eames, "integrity prompts the recognition that, at the level of ecclesial communion, which has always included the mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries, there is an actual diminishment of the degree of communion" amongst the parishes and people in the Church of England.

And we must be committed to increasing that distance until there is change. That goes back to Article XXVI. The last part says that discipline is required. We cannot bring that discipline about juridically. Therefore there have to be more informal ways.

We now have to go beyond recognising the facts. It appears the time has come to make provision for the realities of the impaired *koinonia* that is being experienced by many in the Church of England. Nor is it relevant how many are experiencing this impairment. It would be important even if it were only a few. Thousands, if the laity are taken into consideration will be involved. But there are a few dioceses where the problems are pressing. Nor is it envisaged that all REFORM parishes and clergy will need help, but only where it is necessary and desirable.

Parallel networks

The concerns of Hooker were for the establishment of a "sound visible Church". That surely must be our concern. It is not our concern to establish the Church mystical here on earth. But we need to develop, *without initiating public secession*, parallel networks of congregations and ministries that are not "out of communion" but with "restricted communion". This will, of course, be in respect not of all but only of some other parts of the Church of England. Situations will vary. Nor is this a "a church within a church". Nor are such parallel networks new.

On the one hand there is the ecumenical experience. We cannot continue to live as though the Act of Uniformity of 1662 is still relevant; that was a very long time ago. Since then acts of toleration have meant that the visible Church in England is made up of "assemblies" or "congregations" that have parallel jurisdictions. There are Methodist, Catholic and Anglicans ministering in the same geographical areas. Then on the other hand, and more importantly, there are in reality parallel Anglican churches already ministering in the same geographical areas. That is certainly true in Newcastle upon Tyne. The advent of the motor car and urban mobility have made the parish, in many areas, very insignificant in terms of community. The modern urban community is pluralistic. There are many communities overlapping in one place. And these communities depend not on where someone sleeps but on their various "networks of communication." Anglican ministry takes place accordingly. And theological differences and convictions help shape some of these networks.

We are not arguing that parallel jurisdictions (parallel parishes, parallel episcopates) should necessarily last *in parallel* for ever, although were some parallelism beneficial for evangelism, it should be encouraged. A reform of the whole Church is our prayer and our hope. However, for the immediate future we are just saying that to follow this way of solving problems is, in the words of the Eames Commission, "a necessary and strictly extraordinary anomaly" but it would be "in preference to schism." Nor is parallel jurisdiction necessarily "schism". There is no schism on Continental Europe where there are Church of England and ECUSA overlapping episcopal jurisdictions. Some may wish this was otherwise. But they are not speaking for the bulk of the faithful who would reckon that if there are lively US episcopal churches on the Continent and lively English churches, that is good. There is certainly no evidence of schism (if words mean anything) on Continental Europe.

Of course there will be those who disapprove of these initiatives. Conflict is inevitable. But reforming the Church will never be easy. The *status quo* is

always an easier option. As in previous history, those in the visible corrupt Church will never be pleased with either the views or the proposals of those wanting a more "sound Church" - (not a perfect church but merely a less corrupt church). Therefore, I submit that the Anglican way forward, in the words of Eames, is for some of us to have "freedom and space" to develop new ways of doing ministry in England and to see if God is leading. The words of Gamaliel are relevant to our proposals:

Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.

Again to quote Eames, there needs to be a "continuing and dynamic process of reception" where there is "freedom and space ... available until a consensus of opinion one way or other has been achieved."

This is not to say that everyone else who cannot follow this course of action is wrong. No one should judge others. It is just that many now in the Church of England in conscience have to take some action.

The proposals

But what then are we proposing?

The starting point is Canon C17.2. This imposes a duty on the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to "supply the defects of other bishops".

At present there are "other bishops" that are defective doctrinally and so in their pastoral oversight. Many bishops, of course, are hard working and well meaning. But given modern synodical centralism, even REFORM members appointed as diocesan bishops might be hard pressed to provide what is needed. And at best they would only benefit their own diocese; at worst they too could be defective. The current episcopal structure and system is calculated to destroy or undermine even the best of people. That is why the reports on the *Nature of Christian Belief and Issues of Human Sexuality* are only what we must expect - both ambiguous, all-embracing statements that by definition validate heretical positions. We should not be surprised. But they mean that for a number there is impaired communion with the "House of Bishops" as such, if it is viewed as an abstract "college". Hence the need for fundamental reform.

A remark was made about *Something to Celebrate*, the report from the General Synod that appeared to bless "alternative families" (which also was under an episcopal signature). It was this: when most of a cup consists of 95 percent good coffee but there is a teaspoonful of strychnine added, the whole cup has to be thrown away. That illustration can be applied to the current episcopate viewed in a juridical way and as a synodical entity. Not

everything or indeed most of what our episcopal leaders as *individuals* do is wrong or bad; far from it. But there are now elements of "strychnine" that are poisoning the body of Christ. We can no longer risk the hazards. We submit that there are "defects" that the Archbishops, under Canon, must supply.

On that basis under Canon C17.4 we need to ask the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to "confirm the election" to the episcopate of appropriately elected men committed to Canon A5, interpreted in a common sense way as outlined in the REFORM covenant. This would result in a situation not unlike that currently existing with religious orders where there is already alternative oversight. The jurisdiction of these "bishops" should extend throughout England where congregations opted for them. There would thus be "opted out" parishes. These would be those REFORM parishes and clergy (and perhaps some others not committed to REFORM) that saw alternative oversight as necessary and desirable.

In practical terms something like the following would probably be necessary. There would need to be a light-touch management structure, which possibly could be exercised by a body like the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS) or a new REFORM charity. Churches and clergy requesting alternative pastoral oversight from such a bishop from then on would not receive their current diocese's augmentation for stipend or, if the clergy were not incumbents, the current stipend from the diocese. Annual contributions to the Church Commissioners' pension fund would have to be paid by the parishes at the pro rata rate for charities. However, equity would suggest that a contribution, by some mechanism, should be received from the Church Commissioners towards the stipends of "opted out" clergy. This would be pro rata with the diocesan or national stipend augmentation - that is, while regular dioceses still received Church Commissioners' subsidies. The functions of the local diocesan parsonage board in respect of "opted out" parsonage houses could be transferred (in time) to another competent body acting as "a REFORM parsonage board". Local congregations would be encouraged to be more responsible for their own parsonage houses, but subject to proper standards and quinquennials. In time, legal arrangements also could be in place for any necessary transfer of properties and the inspection of Churches. If necessary, local planning law probably could be used instead of the Faculty Jurisdiction Measure to ensure responsible building alteration and development during interim arrangements. (The Hindu temple in Neasden and the Regent's Park Mosque do not come under the Faculty Jurisdiction Measure.) It is not supposed that such new arrangements would be agreed or legislated for easily. But with goodwill,

some from REFORM, together with a law officer of the General Synod, could suggest draft proposals.

Any training initiated under these new arrangements would be funded independently of the finances of ABM or its successor; naturally those subsequently ordained would not qualify for diocesan augmentation unless they were licensed or instituted by a "regular diocesan" bishop to "regular" parishes. Existing patronage would remain, except that where the diocesan bishop was patron of an "opted out" church, the alternative bishop should act in his place (patrons of non-opted out parishes would of course still be free to invite clergy from "opted out" parishes to consider their livings). There would be some loose ends. But with the diocese having no financial responsibility for the parish, parson or parsonage, responsibility for institution and induction surely could be transferred. New churches would be planted where appropriate. It goes without saying, that there would be no further "diocesan quotas" to pay. Local congregations would be encouraged to be self-supporting. There would need to be a REFORM "pastoral aid" charity to receive gifts to help genuinely needy churches and for training purposes.

However, all such practical arrangements are secondary. Christian common sense can solve practical problems. The principles are what matter. Once principles are established, then the church's law needs to ensure its "true function" which in the words of Sir John Owen, the Dean of the Arches and Auditor of the Chancery Court of York, "is to provide the oil" for the efficient running of the church, "rather than the grit which will inevitably produce concern and may even cause a breakdown."

A "dual" system

What is envisaged is a "dual" element in the Church of England with the new "alternative" element still, of course, in communion with Canterbury (and York). It would parallel in many ways the recent arrangement of "opting out" for schools to be grant maintained in our educational system. This was to enable schools, among other things, themselves to control their own budgets, be their own employers and determine matters with regard to their own ethos and property, subject to standards set by the Department for Education and Science. It was to free them from the bureaucracy and sometimes ideology of Local Education Authorities. (Interestingly at the same time there has been a profound effect on the entire system, generating a structural reform in education such that all schools now, even under New Labour arrangements, are more in control of their fate and fortune and so more responsible, and more responsive to needs.) But grant

maintained schools (now "foundation" schools) are not independent of the whole system. They are not "independent" schools. They are still part of the whole and have benefited the whole by the challenge they have presented. If the Archbishop of Canterbury or York "confirmed the elections", the appropriate Archbishop should then be invited to consecrate the candidate in the parish church with which the candidate was associated. If the Archbishop could not confirm the elections, consecration should be sought abroad in other Anglican Provinces.

It would be entirely possible for the new bishops to be missionary bishops from those Provinces or Dioceses. No doubt there are other possibilities. Subsequent ordinations by such men in England would be regular or irregular depending on the good will of the local English bishop. These new "alternative" bishops could relate to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York as overseas bishops already relate to them. Yes, it would no doubt be anomalous, but not impossible. These would then be bishops of the Anglican Communion. They would be in communion with Canterbury through their overseas Province.

Since the 1998 Lambeth Conference there are already new moves afoot. In the diocese of Pittsburgh the Anglican Bishop, Bishop Robert Duncan, has given his blessing to a congregation in Pittsburgh to come under the oversight of a Ugandan Anglican bishop, Bishop Turumanya of the diocese of Bunyaro-Kitara. This is described as a "missionary relationship". The African Bishop has written: "I am sure that we can establish a history-making arrangement between Christ Church and Bunyaro-Kitara, one that may point the way for other churches to remain within the worldwide Anglican fellowship without compromising their biblical beliefs." The Bishop of Pittsburgh does not believe this is without precedent. He noted that when the Episcopal Church abolished parish boundaries 60 years ago, many people predicted chaos. But today, he said, "people seem to be better served by being in the congregation that better feeds them spiritually, not just the church that happens to be in their neighbourhood." He added that jets may do to diocesan boundaries what automobiles did to parish boundaries. "There are dangers in it. But what we have chosen to do here is to attempt to be kingdom builders and not to be as concerned about which bishop is in charge. If I can't support a congregation, but there is another bishop who can, why wouldn't I give them a bishop who can bless them?" Once there are a number of congregations "under" African oversight, it is a short and reasonable step for there to be an extra-territorial bishop (or missionary bishop) helping those congregations residing not in Africa but the USA.

And there are already parallel "cultural" jurisdictions in the Anglican Communion, for example, in the diocese of Aotearoa in New Zealand, the Order of Ethiopia in Southern Africa, and the Navajo Land Area Mission in the USA. In Europe the two Iberian Churches are extra provincial to Canterbury, while the [English] diocese in Europe is organised quite separately as a diocese "within" the Province of Canterbury.

The 21st century

We must be ready under God for the 21st century. The role of the denominations (world-wide and in England) is diminishing. Current leaders of denominations often were "formed" in their thinking at the time when denominations were at their most influential (the 50s and 60s). Such leaders' mind-set is, therefore, too frequently conditioned by what the denominations "used to be like". Then they were great, significant and supportive of the life and work of the churches. Now they have changed into merely regulatory agencies organising pensions and telling the churches what they can and cannot do.

Mature adults, especially mature younger adults, do not take kindly to bureaucrats from a distance giving them orders at the same time as they ask for their money. Since the church, in organisational terms, is a voluntary non-profit organisation and since the laity are not under legal obligations, the omens for the survival of the bureaucratic centre of the visible Church are not good. That is why, to the younger generation, denominations are more and more irrelevant.

And that is why we need to be prepared and as flexible as possible to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We need to encourage the setting up of larger biblical churches in all our metropolitan areas that are truly regional churches. We need to encourage the growth of middle sized and small churches. The goal is that our nation, so desperately in need of spiritual direction, should hear the good news of Jesus Christ in fresh ways without altering the fundamental message. But we are not wanting to be "independents". We are wanting to be in full fellowship or *koinonia* with others committed to the faith of our Anglican forefathers - the great Reformers, the Evangelical leaders of the 18th century, Simeon, Ryle and many who are faithfully working away in the parishes of England today. And that is the reformed Western Catholic tradition. It is not Gnostic. It is not sectarian. We are committed to this tradition as we believe it reflects more faithfully than others the teaching of the Bible and therefore of Jesus himself. Where it is shown to be unfaithful, we seek to reform it. A light-touch alternative episcopal oversight with an appropriate network would be

a focus for us of that fellowship and mutual dependency. At the same time it might, under God, be a prophetic challenge to some outside that network in the wider church. Also, we submit, in this way the parishes would be taking back real responsibility for the Church of England.

Much of this may seem radical; but it is simply a trade-off. It is a trade-off from the decision, endorsed in the Church of England for 30 years by the House of Bishops and the church at large, that undisciplined doctrinal and moral comprehensiveness is a primary value.

Every thing has its price.

Appendix

The above paper, in a first draft, went out at the 1996 REFORM Conference. After two years consideration many members were asking for action. The following is the speech and proposal from David Holloway at the 1998 REFORM Conference. The proposal was endorsed by the Conference at the Open Session on Thursday 15 October 1998.

"The Reform covenant refers in clause e) to:

the need radically to reform the present shape of episcopacy.

At the March 1996 conference, now two and a half years ago, we passed a motion that:

The council should continue to ask both Archbishops to secure at least 3 evangelical bishops who will minister to our whole constituency in accordance with biblical and reformed standards.

We had another motion that referred to, I quote:

the process of our commitment to the reform of the episcopate.

Nothing happened in terms of the Archbishops appointing at least 3 evangelical bishops to minister to our whole constituency.

At Christmas - December 1996 - the issue was taken up in the light of the fact that nothing seemed possible from the Archbishops - who to be fair on them have to act not as George Carey and David Hope but in their Archiepiscopal office.

After much discussion and a thrashing out of views and very careful attention to the precise wording, a statement was agreed by the Council that covered many issues - as a mid-term statement - but especially in response to the motion of the March national conference. All Reform members received this statement. Let me remind you of what was said: [At one point it referred to the gay celebration at Southwark and then said] *Along with other serious issues of faith and morality this has led to an increasing loss of confidence in some of the bishops.*

And it then went on:

Our national conference mandated us to secure the reform of the episcopate. This also relates to the recruitment and training of men for the ministry. In our tradition bishops are involved in selection, training and deployment.

And after some other comments it then went on to say - and this is important:

That is why we now see the need for an episcopal oversight that holds to historic biblical faith and morality. And that is why the following three strategies are being planned to help where necessary and when requested [not everywhere but "where necessary" and not always but only "when requested" by parishes] ... [so - the following three strategies are being planned to help where necessary and when requested]:

- 1. the employment where necessary, desirable and possible, of retired or other godly bishops in good standing with the church.*
- 2. the employment where necessary, desirable and possible, of the PEV's ("flying bishops") already consecrated or a future evangelical PEV, as already requested.*
- 3. [and this is now important - and this was decided two years ago] the election and consecration, after due process, of bishops from the Reform constituency who can be employed where necessary and desirable.*

All three of these strategies are our brief. In Newcastle we have employed strategy 1 over the past year. But that, as Ed Moll explained this afternoon, has only solved one problem. It hasn't resolved the problem of alternative oversight. At best strategy 1 is ambulance action.

Strategy 2 can be used for those parishes that vote Resolution C; but it cannot be used by a parish that while against the ordination of women will not go "ballistic" at that point, but draws the line at a bishop endorsing gay sex. That is why Strategy 3 is necessary.

I believe that the Steering Committee now needs to bring forward specific proposals in respect of "the election and consecration, after due process, of bishops from the Reform constituency who can be employed where necessary and desirable" - which is what the Council have told the constituency it is already planning. It is planning that - but so far it has just been talk. If Reform is to have credibility with its membership and especially the younger membership something now must be done. And so the steering committee should bring forward proposals to the December Residential Council.

No, it won't happen over night. Clearly there has to be an electoral process. But it would be perfectly possible for someone like a retired clergyman who

had time on his hands and who was widely respected and thus was a focus of unity but had great teaching gifts as evidenced on the platforms of all sorts of conventions - I am not going to mention any specific names - but such a man could, for example, be proposed for consecration by three bishops in the historic succession. This would be irregular, but it would be pastorally helpful for those of us who need alternative oversight. Others would not need his ministrations. Of course, it would be perfectly possible that while this course of action was being pursued, the Church of England's episcopate might prefer to seek to find a way of "regularizing" what was planned. That decision would be theirs not ours. As T S Eliot said:

For us there is only the trying: the rest is not our business.

Eames said this in his report:

in the continuing and dynamic process of reception freedom and space must be available until a consensus of opinion one way or other has been achieved.

All we need is that *freedom and space*.

We do not choose to leave the Church of England as by law established. But once bishops break the law by defying Canon C 18.1, and once we have decided that we are not going to engage in court action over doctrinal matters - something else must be done."

[This proposal had the assent of a clear majority of the meeting. On that basis it was followed up at the Steering Committee on 3 November 1998. The Steering Committee now has specific proposals for the residential Council meeting on 10-11 December 1998]

7 March 1996 (revised 23 November 1998) David Holloway