

**EMBARGOED UNTIL DATE OF PUBLICATION**

**REVIEW OF NOMINATION  
TO THE SEE OF SHEFFIELD  
AND RELATED CONCERNS**

**Report by the Independent Reviewer**

**APPENDICES**

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23 March 2017

Dear Sir Philip Mawer,

**Nomination to the See of Sheffield and concerns raised about the operation of the House of Bishops' declaration under Regulation 27**

We are writing to ask you, in your capacity as Independent Reviewer under the Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (Resolution of Disputes Procedure Regulations) 2014, to address certain concerns that have arisen in the Church following recent events relating to the See of Sheffield.

We do not set out the events in any detail here. You will doubtless be aware of the main elements:

- on 6 July 2016 the See of Sheffield became vacant following the translation of Bishop Steven Croft from Sheffield to Oxford
- on 31 January 2017 HM Government announced that, following the usual process of nomination of candidates by the Crown Nominations Commission to the Prime Minister, HM The Queen had been pleased to approve the nomination of Bishop Philip North, the Bishop of Burnley, to the See of Sheffield
- on 9 March 2017 Bishop Philip North announced that he had withdrawn his acceptance of the nomination.

This sequence of events has prompted some in the Church to question whether the House of Bishops' Declaration of May 2014, and its five Guiding Principles, and the commitment the Church made in it to "mutual flourishing", remain intact.

As Archbishops, Primates and Metropolitans, we reaffirm clearly our commitment, and the commitment of the House of Bishops, to its Declaration, to the principles contained in it, and to the overriding principle of mutual flourishing. The Declaration formed a central element of the settlement by which we were able both to welcome women joyfully into all the orders of ministry in the Church, and also to continue to provide an honoured and permanent place in the Church for those who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable, to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests.

But as Archbishop Sentamu noted in his statement commenting on Bishop Philip's withdrawal, we are conscious that in some of the discussion about the See of Sheffield, we have not always as a Church shown how we can disagree Christianly.

Although we are clear that the House of Bishops' Declaration, and the Guiding Principles embodied in it, remain in full force and effect, we recognise that the recent events have nonetheless raised a number of specific concerns in the Church about its operation. Some of those concerns relate to whether the nomination itself, and the procedure leading up to it, were in accordance with the Declaration. Others are about whether what happened once the nomination had been announced was consistent with the Declaration. Others relate to the degree of understanding of the Declaration in the Church.

Given the significance of these concerns (many of which have been expressed to us directly) from the point of view of the future outworking of the Declaration in the life of the Church, we therefore request you to exercise your power, as the Independent Reviewer under Regulation 27, to consider and report on the operation of the Declaration from the point of view of:

- (a) what has been done in the Church, including in the diocese of Sheffield, to inform and educate clergy and laity about the settlement agreed in 2014, and the effect of the Declaration within that settlement;
- (b) the process leading to the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield;
- (c) the consistency of that nomination with the Declaration;
- (d) the reactions to that nomination in the Church and beyond; and
- (e) the response of the institutional Church to the nomination and to the reactions to it.

We hope that you will be willing to investigate these concerns and that, once you have been able to do so, you will be able to produce your report on them with the minimum of delay."



The Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby  
Archbishop of Canterbury



The Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr John Sentamu  
Archbishop of York





Sir Philip Mawer  
Independent Reviewer  
Church House  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3AZ

13<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Dear Sir Philip,

I am writing on behalf of the National Committee of WATCH to raise concerns about the working of the House of Bishops' Declaration in relation to the appointment of the new Bishop of Sheffield.

The House of Bishops' Declaration agreed on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014 states:

*12. In addition, dioceses are entitled to express a view, in the statement of needs prepared during a vacancy in see, as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women.*

We have concerns that the people of Sheffield diocese were not made aware that they could make a statement requesting an ordaining bishop. We believe that many people naturally assumed that because this had been an "ordaining diocese" for over 20 years it would continue to be so.

The Sheffield Statement of Needs clearly requests that the new Bishop be a focus of unity and the inclusion of a statement referencing the substantial number of women clergy reinforces that continuing need.

We believe that the appointment of a non-ordaining bishop radically alters the relationship that the women clergy have with their Diocesan bishop and it radically alters the sense that the laity have of how the ministry of their incumbent is viewed by the Bishop. This has come as a shock to many in the diocese who are now left wondering how this situation could have arisen.

May we ask you to review whether the appointment secretaries made clear the guidance in s.12 of the House of Bishops' Declaration, both to the Vacancy in See Committee, and to the laity and clergy of the Diocese during the various consultations that took place?

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Rev Canon Dr Emma Percy

Chair of WATCH

Trinity College, Oxford OX1 3BH

## **THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWER’S REPORT: THE PROCESS**

On 23 March 2017 the Archbishops wrote to the Independent Reviewer, Sir Philip Mawer, asking him to address concerns raised by the operation of the House of Bishops’ Declaration under Regulation 27. Sir Philip accepted this request the following day.

Between 28 & 30 March Sir Philip wrote to a number of interested parties seeking their comments on the matters raised by the Archbishops, by 30 April. In a number of cases these were followed up with one-to-one interviews. In addition to this correspondence Sir Philip studied a range of material that was publicly available from newspaper cuttings, blogs etc.

On 3-5 May Sir Philip – accompanied by Jonathan Neil-Smith – met a cross section of people in the Diocese of Sheffield. 27 meetings took place attended by 62 people.

In the period leading up to 5 July Sir Philip conducted a number of one-to-one interviews with others who had played a prominent part in the events (including 5 central members of the Crown Nominations Commission).

By mid-July Sir Philip had received oral and written representations from 106 people.

### **WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS# AND/OR MEETING or PHONE CALL\***

Heidi	Adcock*	Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of Sheffield
April	Alexander#*	Central Member, CNC
Revd Philip	Ansell#	
Prof Peter	Ashworth#	
Revd Lionel	Atherton#	
Revd Dr Paul	Avis#	
Revd Chris	Barley*	Hickleton Chapter
Revd Dr Michael	Bayley#	
Revd Paul	Benfield#	
Canon John	Biggin*	Sheffield Cathedral Chapter
Revd Canon Dr Alan	Billings#	Police & Crime Commissioner, South Yorkshire
Canon Caroline	Boddington#*	Archbishops’ Appointments Secretary
Very Revd Peter	Bradley*	Dean of Sheffield
Revd Andy	Brewerton*	Area Dean, Wath
Ann	Brown*	Elected member of CNC from the Diocese of Sheffield
Debbie	Buggs#	
Revd Canon Chris	Burke*	Vice-Dean & Precentor, Sheffield Cathedral
Dr Mark	Burkill#	Reform
Rt Revd Peter	Burrows#*	Bishop of Doncaster; elected member of CNC from the Diocese of Sheffield
Dr Jackie	Butcher*	Chair of House of Laity; Bishop’s Council, Diocese of Sheffield

Lindsey Jane	Buxton*	Diocesan Communications Officer, Diocese of Sheffield
Ven Michael	Chamberlain*	Archdeacon of Sheffield & Rotherham
Edward	Chaplin#*	Prime Minister's Appointments Secretary
Shaun	Clarkson*	Elected member of CNC from the Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Jeremy	Clines*	Sheffield Action for Ministry Equality; University Chaplain
Imogen	Clout*	Warden of Reader, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Canon Mark	Cockayne*	Director of Parish Support, Diocese of Sheffield
Andrew	Coombe*	Lord Lieutenant, South Yorkshire
Revd Karen	Cribb*	Area Dean, Ecclesall
Right Revd Dr Steven	Croft#	Bishop of Oxford
Revd Howard	Crosswaite*	Hickleton Chapter
Revd Stephen	Dickinson*	Hickleton Chapter
Revd Ali	Dorey#*	Sheffield Action for Ministry Equality; Diocesan Mission Development Co-ordinator
Ian	Downing*	Bishop's Council, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd John	Dunnett#*	Central Member, CNC
Revd Frances	Eccleston#	Bishop's Adviser for Pastoral Care, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Stephen	Edmonds*	Hickleton Chapter
Revd Canon Keith	Farron*	Canon Missioner, Sheffield Cathedral
Revd Stephen	France*	V-Chair, WATCH
Revd David	Franklin#*	Vicar, Askern
Revd Janet	Franklin#	
Right Revd Jonathan	Goodall#	Bishop of Ebbsfleet
Canon Dr Christine	Gore*	Director of Formation for Ministry, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Dave	Gough*	Area Dean, Attercliffe
Revd Canon Fleur	Green#	Adviser for Women's Ministry, Diocese of Blackburn
Revd Canon Dr Malcolm	Grundy#	
Revd Sue	Hammersley#*	Sheffield Action for Ministry Equality; Vicar St Mark Broomhill
Revd Canon Geoffrey	Harbord*	Chaplain to the Bishop of Sheffield; elected member of CNC from the Diocese of Sheffield
Aiden	Hargreaves-Smith*	Central Member, CNC
Ven John	Hawley#	

Rt Revd David	Hawtin*	Chair of 'New Norms, New Beginnings' Group, Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Sheffield
Alan	Heath#	
Right Revd Julian	Henderson#	Bishop of Blackburn
Barbara	Hickman#	
Right Revd Nicholas	Holtam#	Bishop of Salisbury
Revd Andrew	Howard*	Hickleton Chapter
Revd Alan	Isaacson*	Bishop's Council, Diocese of Sheffield; Area Dean of Ecclesfield
Revd Peter	Jackson*	Vicar, Kendray
Revd Michael	Johnson#	
Linda	Langthorne*	Safeguarding Adviser, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd John	Leal*	Hickleton Chapter
Revd Howard	Loxley*	Hickleton Chapter
Dr Julie	MacDonald*	High Sherriff, South Yorkshire
Revd Dr Rosemarie	Mallett#	Affirming Catholicism
Revd Dr Judith	Maltby#*	Central Member, CNC
Revd Julian	Mann*	Vicar, Oughtibridge
Revd Canon Stuart	Matthews#	
Ian	Mayer#	Manna Community
Revd David	Middleton*	Vicar, Gleadless Valley
Sarah	Moore#*	
Janet	Morley#*	
Revd Grant	Naylor#*	Hickleton Chapter
Canon Sandra	Newton#*	
Right Revd Philip	North#*	Bishop of Burnley
William	Nye LVO#*	Secretary General
Dr Jane	Patterson*	Central Member, CNC
Dan	Paul*	Youth Worker
Canon Liz	Paver*	Bishop's Council, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Edward	Pennington*	Christ Church Encliffe
Revd Canon Dr Emma	Percy#*	WATCH
Very Revd Prof Martyn	Percy#*	Dean, Christ Church Oxford
Dr Colin	Podmore#	Forward in Faith (on behalf of its Executive Council)
Canon David	Porter*	Chief of Staff to the Archbishop of Canterbury
David	Price#	
Revd Canon Philip	O'Reilly#	
Canon Peter	Rainford*	Bishop's Council, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Eleanor	Robertshaw*	Bishop's Council, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Dave	Rogerson*	Area Dean, Doncaster

Canon Mark	Russell*	CEO, Church Army; elected member of CNC from the Diocese of Sheffield
Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr John	Sentamu*	Archbishop of York
HHJ Sarah	Singleton#	Chancellor, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Karen	Skidmore*	Vicar, Herringthorpe
Revd Canon Ian	Smith*	Chair of House of Clergy, Diocese of Sheffield, diocesan elected member of the CNC
Revd Justine	Smith#*	Vicar, Marshland Benefice
Rt Revd Rod	Thomas#	Bishop of Maidstone
Revd Abi	Thompson*	Dean of Women's Ministry, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Canon Liz	Turner-Loisel*	Area Dean, Snaith
Revd Canon Julie	Upton*	Team Rector, Sheffield Manor; Sheffield Cathedral Chapter
Revd Dr Jan	Van der Lely#	Modern Church
Andrew	Vidler*	Diocesan Registrar, Diocese of Sheffield
Revd Richard	Watson*	Area Dean of Adwick
Rt Revd Glyn	Webster*	Bishop of Beverley
Ven Steve	Wilcockson*	Archdeacon of Doncaster
Rt Revd Pete	Wilcox#	Bishop of Sheffield
Revd Canon Paul	Williams*	Vicar, Christ Church Fulwood
Prof Linda	Woodhead#	
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**An extract from the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops & Priests [GS Misc 1076, June 2014]<sup>1</sup>**

**“Simplicity, reciprocity and mutuality**

6. The House believes that the outworking of these principles needs to be accompanied by **simplicity, reciprocity and mutuality**.

7. The **simplicity** of the legislation now agreed by the General Synod is reflected in the fact that it makes no changes to the structures of the Church of England, leaves unaltered the position of each diocesan bishop as Ordinary and preserves the historic requirement for canonical obedience to the diocesan bishop ‘in all things lawful and honest’ and for the taking of oaths acknowledging this duty<sup>2</sup>.

8. The practical arrangements to be made for parishes which, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the priestly or episcopal ministry of women need to be made with the same principle of simplicity in mind.

9. **Reciprocity** means that everyone, notwithstanding differences of conviction on this issue, will accept that they can rejoice in each other’s partnership in the Gospel and cooperate to the maximum possible extent in mission and ministry. There will need to be an acknowledgement that the differences of view which persist stem from an underlying divergence of theological conviction.

10. In particular reciprocity will mean that those of differing conviction will do all within their power to avoid giving offence to each other. There will need to be sensitivity to the feelings of vulnerability that some will have that their position within the Church of England will gradually be eroded and that others will have because not everyone will receive their ministry.

11. Now that the Church of England has admitted women to the episcopate there should within each diocese be at least one serving bishop, whether the diocesan or a suffragan, who ordains women to the priesthood. This has a bearing on the considerations that the Crown Nominations Commission and diocesan bishops will need to take into account when considering diocesan and suffragan appointments.

12. In addition, dioceses are entitled to express a view, in the statement of needs prepared during a vacancy in see, as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women. In dioceses where the diocesan bishop does not ordain women he should ensure that a bishop who is fully committed to the ordained ministry of women is given a role across the whole diocese for providing support for female clergy and their ministry.

13. All bishops have a shared responsibility for the welfare of the whole Church of England. It will be important that senior leadership roles within dioceses continue to be filled by people from across the range of traditions.

14. **Mutuality** reflects the Church of England’s wider commitment to sustaining diversity. It means that those of differing conviction will be committed to making it possible for each other to

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<sup>1</sup> The whole text can be found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2011184/gs%20misc%201076%20-%20women%20in%20the%20episcopate%20house%20of%20bishops%20declaration.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Canon C 1.3 provides that “According to the ancient law and usage of this Church and Realm of England, the priests and deacons who have received authority to minister in any diocese owe canonical obedience in all things lawful and honest to the bishop of the same ...”. By way of acknowledgement of that duty, under Canon C 14 clergy are required on various occasions to make or reaffirm the Oath of Canonical Obedience to their diocesan bishop. But we are advised that, in the light of the decision of the Privy Council in *Long v Bishop of Capetown* (1863), the duty of obedience does not require the cleric to comply with any and every direction given by the bishop; rather, it requires the cleric to obey such directions as the diocesan bishop is authorised by law to give.

flourish. All should play a full part in the lives of the deaneries and dioceses and be prepared to engage with the diocesan bishop whoever he or she is.

15. Equal treatment, for example in relation to resource issues and the discerning of vocations to the ordained ministry, is essential irrespective of convictions in relation to gender and ministry. In discerning vocations bishops will continue not to discriminate on the grounds of a candidate's theological conviction on this issue. In addition, ordination services for deacons and priests should be planned and conducted in a way that is consistent with the five guiding principles set out in paragraph 5 above."



## 11. Mutual Flourishing

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In the House of Bishops' Five Guiding Principles, the fourth refers to the flourishing of those unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests, and the fifth speaks of provision for these parishes "in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England". The flourishing of one and the mutual flourishing of all belong together. They shouldn't really be separated, but the latter cannot happen without the former

In the Group's three Consultations, there was ready discussion about "flourishing", since it so clearly linked with the need to feel secure and valued – whether as Conservative Evangelicals, Traditional Catholics or Ordained Women. We were told that much needed to be done in order to ensure that such "flourishing" happened. Some contributions from all three positions spoke of feeling insecure and undervalued. "Flourishing" won't come quickly or easily.

"Mutual flourishing" will not come quickly or easily either. Where people and churches feel insecure, it is very hard for them to look beyond their own concerns – though some did this movingly – but there is no doubt about the expectation of a flourishing which is mutual – where the needs of one are recognized by others, and there is a sense of being creatively united. That's why the Group favours the phrase "diverse fellowship" as an expression of our relating as a Diocese.

There is much more to "flourishing/mutual flourishing" than the reliability and effectiveness of administrative provisions and structures – the call is a spiritual and relational one. Without steady and gracious commitment to this way, people and churches may feel they have a place within particular groupings, but not within the wider fellowship of the Diocese. The House of Bishops' Guiding Principles do not want to settle for that more modest goal.

To take us forward, we offer this "Mutual Flourishing Declaration", as something not to be imposed, enforced, or made a matter of policy, but to be honoured and wrapped in prayer:

- Each of us accepts that now "we see through a glass darkly" and only in eternity will we see clearly. We remain open to the Spirit's guidance of the Church.
- Each of us recognises that we have reached our own position on the issue of gender and ordained ministry, after sustained prayer, Bible Study and, we believe, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We understand that those who hold a view that differs from our own have also reached their position after sustained prayer, Bible Study and, they believe, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- Because we recognise the above, we undertake to do our best to fairly represent the views of those with whom we disagree on the question of gender and ordained ministry, to our congregations, on social media, and in all areas of public life.
- We commit ourselves to be involved in deanery and diocesan structures, which will themselves be open to people of all traditions.
- We will pray regularly with those with whom we disagree.
- We will do all that we can do together to move forward in mission.
- We will engage openly with insights offered from across the Church.

**R.10 We recommend that Bishop's Council considers how this Mutual Flourishing Declaration might be promoted within its own working and elsewhere.**

## 12. Mutual Flourishing – Possible Steps

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We offer some specific suggestions to Bishop's Council as a way of earthing good intent. They are for consideration, and to encourage further ideas and proposals.

We have identified three distinct groupings, each different and each needing attention:

1. Traditional Catholic;
  2. Conservative Evangelical;
  3. Ordained Women as directly affected by provisions restricting their Ministry, and recognising also that some ordained men and lay men and women, who are supportive of women's ordination, may also experience feelings of loss and pain that women's ordained ministry is not universally accepted
- Bishop's Council will need to be proactive in developing inclusion as an expression of mutual flourishing. It is a serious error to think that it will just "happen"
  - Special arrangements for inclusion of those not holding the majority view on "gender and ministry" should exist alongside vigilance for including other special or "missing" groups, such as ethnic minorities.
  - Bishop's Council therefore needs to be vigilant on two fronts – firstly to ensure that "gender and ministry" special constituencies are given a secure voice in diocesan issues and strategies – that they flourish – and secondly to ensure that other constituencies flourish equally. The two strands belong together.
  - A lot of diocesan and parochial life goes on in its own distinctive way, regardless of the "ministry issue" and "strategies" to address it. Despite that, it is important to engage with constituencies that feel excluded, whether or not they have other channels of support within the diocese or beyond. We seek to be a "diverse fellowship". Mutual flourishing does not happen if there is inadequate provision for the flourishing of diverse constituencies.
  - Central diocesan groups will therefore need to be credibly inclusive, through the electoral process and the ability to co-opt. Where a person is co-opted, there should be an expectation that he/she will develop ways of being a representative contributor – in touch with that particular constituency.
  - Bishop's Council should identify which Diocesan Groups/Councils/Strategies are priorities for special vigilance to ensure mutual flourishing and, where necessary, take action to deliver it.
  - Whilst it is true that, under the Church Representation Rules, at Deanery level all parishes and their clergy are directly represented, the challenge is to get proper commitment and participation from all parishes and clergy for Chapter and Synod.
  - The position of Appointed Bishops should be made clear in relation to Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod. Current legislation does not allow them to be members of either body, unless they occupy a see within the Diocese, But they can receive papers, be in attendance, and be invited to speak. Bishop's Council may give permission for an Appointed Bishop to nominate a substitute for occasions when he is not able to be present.

- Opportunities should be sought for Appointed Bishops to contribute to the full range of diocesan life and strategy. They are part of the episcopal team.
- In relation to Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod, equivalent arrangements, should be made for the Dean of Women's Ministry, as the representative of ordained women in the Diocese – if that Dean has not been elected in the usual way to either body.
- Bishop's Council might consider setting up a "monitoring group", which keeps the "Mutual Flourishing" agenda under review.

### **Appointed Bishops – and their inclusion in Diocesan Occasions**

Whilst this is not directly an issue for Bishop's Council, we offer three comments:

- The work load of any "Appointed Bishop" serving "Resolution Parishes" is likely to be great, and involving more than one Diocese. A balance has to be struck between that reality and the need for visibility within the life of this Diocese.
- It is important that, whenever possible, Appointed Bishops are present at significant diocesan occasions, so that the Bishops are seen together as one group ministering in the Diocese. Walking together in procession is a visible witness to shared ministry. On occasions a suitable deputy might be appointed.
- Visible presence is more creative than visible absence

**R.11 We recommend that Bishop's Council, in consultation with the Bishop, sets up a working group to consider the Report's particular suggestions for promoting mutual flourishing.**

Earlier recommendations are relevant to the work of Bishop's Council:

**R.1a We recommend that the Five Guiding Principles be kept visible, studied and promoted in all parishes, and through the Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council.**

**R.1b We recommend that the Bishop's Presidential Address (July 2014), in a form that he approves, accompanies the Five Guiding Principles in any programme promoting the House of Bishops' Declaration.**

### **The Church of England's Decision**

The Church of England has decided that women can be priests and bishops and also that provision be made for those who cannot receive that ministry. Neither the ordained or consecrated women nor those unable to receive their ministry should be regarded as "the problem". The call is to be together in "the highest possible degree of communion".

In that spirit, we make this recommendation:

**R.12 We recommend that Bishop's Council engage with this Report and its Recommendations, as advised by the Bishop.**

**SHEFFIELD: A TIMELINE**

12 April 2016	Announcement that Rt Rev Dr Steven Croft to be Bishop of Oxford
6 July 2016	Vacancy begins with Confirmation of Election of the Bishop of Oxford
6 Sept 2016	Appointments Secretaries meet Vacancy in See Committee
1 November 2016	1 <sup>st</sup> Sheffield CNC Meeting
28-29 Nov 2016	Final Sheffield CNC Meeting
31 January 2017	Announcement that Rt Revd Philip North to be Bishop of Sheffield
7 February 2017	Bishop Philip North meets female clergy at Doncaster Minster
13 February 2017	WATCH registers concern with the IR about the Vacancy-in-See process
24 February 2017	Modern Church publishes Prof Percy's article calling for Bishop North to consider his position; The Guardian draws attention to Prof Percy's article
25 February 2017	Formation of 'Sheffield Action for Ministry Equality' [SAME]
25 February 2017	Archbishop of York's article in The Yorkshire Post defending Bishop North's appointment
27 February 2017	Prof Percy's response to the Archbishop in The Yorkshire Post
28 February 2017	CofE blog published '5 Guiding Principles on Women and the Episcopate – A User Guide'
28 February 2017	Society of SS Wilfrid & Hilda affirms its support for the appointment and 'expresses regret at offence' caused by its ID cards
1 March 2017	Bishop of Doncaster issues a Pastoral Letter to all diocesan clergy
3 March 2017	Church Times publishes letter from 32 Blackburn female clergy supportive of Bishop North
4 March 2017	Arun Arora comment in The Yorkshire Post critical of Prof Percy's piece of 27/2/17
8 March 2017	International Women's Day Protest at 'Women of Steel' statue in Sheffield
9 March 2017	Downing Street announces that Bishop Philip North has withdrawn his acceptance of the nomination for the See of Sheffield
23 March 2017	Archbishops write to the Independent Reviewer asking him to review the operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration in relation to this episcopal nomination
7 April 2017	Very Revd Pete Wilcox's appointment as Bishop of Sheffield announced

Sir Philip Mawer  
c/o Jonathan Neil-Smith  
Central Secretariat  
Church House  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3AZ

7 April 2017

Dear Sir Philip,

**Nomination to the See of Sheffield and Concerns raised about the Operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration under Regulation 27**

Thank you for your copied letter to Jan van der Lely of March 29<sup>th</sup>, and also for your letter of April 3<sup>rd</sup> which I appreciated very much. I will of course be very glad to meet. I am most grateful for this opportunity to set out some of the concerns and issues on the nomination to the See of Sheffield in reply to your letters. In so doing, I am most conscious of your remit as the Independent Adjudicator, and at the same time the complexity and breadth of all the issues - process, ecclesial and theological - that this case has now raised for all of us in the Church of England.

I will keep this letter as brief as I can. I have included with this submission a portfolio of relevant documents. This includes a copy of the Forward in Faith *Commentary* on the 'Five Guiding Principles', and a copy of the article written by Dr. Colin Podmore for the 2016 National Assembly of 'The Society', and now reprinted in *New Directions* (February 2017), both of which are material to some of my writings - copies of which are enclosed for your perusal (see Appendices A and B).

Before responding to your letter, I think there are several things that do require brief noting, if I may.

*The Very Reverend Professor Martyn Percy, Dean of Christ Church*

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Email: dean@chch.ox.ac.uk

*Registered Charity Number: 1143423*

First, as a theologian who has been writing and teaching as an academic in the field of contemporary ecclesiology for more than twenty-five years, I have penned a number of articles (i.e., scholarly, popular, etc.) that have engaged with gender-related issues within churches and other Christian movements. Some of this work has engaged with fundamentalism, revivalism and evangelicalism. Some of it has engaged with Anglo-Catholicism. For example, I was one of the first speakers at the GRAS Meeting - the movement to rescind the Act of Synod. I wrote for the *Daily Telegraph* (see Appendix C) when the original proposals for women bishops faltered in General Synod in 2013. I do not see myself as a campaigner on these issues, but rather as a commentator, writing for both the academy and the churches. Indeed, in the case of the churches, trying, where at all possible, to responsibly raise questions of ecclesial polity, theology and protocol.

Second, it is therefore wholly unsurprising that I would write and comment on the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield. Especially as I would see such a nomination as - potentially, at the very least - highly problematic in terms of ecclesiology and theology (see Appendices D-I).

Third, no-one at any point either suggested or asked me to write these articles. I am not commissioned to do so by any campaigning or lobbying group, or by individuals. I write as a concerned Anglican and academic. I need no other incentive or prompt to write as I do. I can state unequivocally that I was *not* asked by WATCH or the MCU to write these pieces. I have a long-standing commitment to equality and human rights issues in relation to theology and ecclesiology, and to our churches modelling good practice in these spheres. (See, for example, my earlier interventions on equality and human rights and the churches, and which date from 1997: cited in Appendix J, and taken from my *Salt of the Earth: Religious Resilience in a Secular Age*, T&T Clark with Sheffield Academic Press 2002, and recently reprinted in the Bloomsbury "Classic Collection" on 'Religion and Society', 2016).

Fourth, I made no personal attack on Bishop North. My first essay explicitly affirms him as minister and bishop. I had no issues with him being known as a good and valued Suffragan Bishop of Burnley. I made it clear in a subsequent essay that Bishop North's personal qualities were not in doubt or under any kind of scrutiny, and did not form part of this debate. Therefore, those writing in to support Bishop North personally, as a contribution to this debate, misunderstood the nature of the issues being discussed. This was a debate that was fundamentally about the *theological* views held by key members of 'The Society', and the extent to which any person holding such views, could ever, as a matter of ecclesial and theological integrity, have

oversight over so many priests and parishes in a See such as Sheffield. Where, manifestly, they as Diocesan Bishop, have stated through their membership of 'The Society', could not be in 'full communion' with the vast majority of the people and parishes that they were seeking to exercise their episcopal oversight among.

Fifth, I wish to register my profound dis-ease with the conduct of the Church of England Communications Department, and especially Mr. Arun Arora. They re-narrated the debate as a *personal* matter - when I had clearly stated I had no personal issues with Bishop North.

Sixth, I wrote my first article as someone who had lived and worked in Sheffield Diocese for some seven years (1997-2004) - as an academic, and also as a Cathedral Canon (including being Canon Theologian). I know the Diocese reasonably well. I know the city of Sheffield and the culture of South Yorkshire too. They will not easily accept a Bishop who refuses the sacramental ministry of their own local clergy. They will most likely see this through a lens that is akin to being 'classist'. That is to say, the laity will reason "if my Sunday sacrament is *good enough* for me and good enough for our congregation (and parishes) - why is not also good enough for my Bishop?". They would have clearly experienced his discrimination against women clergy and their sacramental ministry as a personal slight against *themselves*, as the laity. This was not a position that the CNC should have placed any of these parties in - Bishop Philip North, the Diocese, the region, or its clergy.

Seventh, the Forward in Faith *Commentary* on the 'Five Guiding Principles' (Appendix B) clearly reads the principles in such a way as to breach the spirit and letter of the Code/Declaration (as presumably intended to be read and understood?), and so evacuates it of any significant content and meaning, as a document. Leaving aside my view that this reading of the 'Five Guiding Principles' is contemptuous and dishonest (if allowed to stand as a *valid* interpretation by you, as Independent Adjudicator), it leads the Church of England into some very strange waters. It means, for example, that Forward in Faith/The Society effectively regard women priests as *Lay Rectors* (i.e., they are understood as "lawful office holders", but not actually ordained or 'true' clergy). This means that every week, in parishes all over the country, women are (merely?) dressing up as clergy, and then presiding at services of "Holy Communion", which are not in fact Eucharists at all. It means that Forward in Faith/The Society are effectively *condoning* a form of Lay Presidency at the altar - but doing nothing to stop this. And by *not* stopping this practice - and as a simple matter of ecclesial and theological coherence - it suggests to me an element of moral cowardice, as well as a lack of clarity, on their part. Are Forward in Faith/The Society

*not* going to campaign against Lay Presidency at these services, which must be by their definition, invalid Eucharists? Any 'traditionalist' Diocesan Bishop would surely be duty-bound to put a stop to these services at once, in line with their publicly-declared theological proclivities. Presumably none of those people baptised or confirmed by women priests/bishops 'count' as valid either. Are these sacramental rites now to be repeated?

Eighth, unless the kind of interpretation of the 'Five Guiding Principles' is renounced or rescinded by Forward in Faith/The Society, all future nominations of (so-called) 'traditionalist' candidates for Diocesan Bishops would and should, as a matter of conscience and good sense, have to be challenged. It cannot be a tenable position for a male bishop to be placed in a position of such putative oversight, where they do not recognise the ministry of a substantial number of their own clergy, and the views and values of the laity and parishes in respect of this. Moreover, by not being in 'full communion' with a large number of those parishes and priests, it is hard to imagine anything other than considerable on-going ecclesial tensions and theological strains in any such diocese. The theological position that has been adopted by Forward in Faith/The Society is one of 'internalised ecumenism'. Our own ministers have no more recognition than Baptists or Methodists. The ordained status of Anglican women is no better than this - indeed, arguably worse. You cannot, in conscience, or as a matter of integrity, be a Diocesan Bishop and regard the vast majority of your colleagues as an 'ecumenical matter'. This would mean the concept of 'communion' - full, or partial - was rendered a nonsense. Forward in Faith/The Society are actively using the 'Five Guiding Principles' - as a tool to create an 'internalised ecumenism' in the Church of England, that is separatist in character, and mocks the very idea of 'sacramental bonds in communion'. I do not think that any amount of pastoral and personal warmth in a candidate could ever compensate for such a chasm. I think it is unwise - in terms of grounded ecclesiology - to even attempt this. Especially when members of the Forward in Faith/The Society are so clearly and publicly committed to the eventual extinction of all women priests/bishops in the Church of England - something that they openly declare they are praying and hoping for (see on this Appendix B, and the commentary on principles 2 and 3 of the 'Five Guiding Principles'). I can only ask here, in what possible sense could articulating such an aspiration be said to honour the idea and spirit of our 'mutual flourishing'?



If I may now turn to the specifics of your letter, I will deal with them point-by-point:

- a. *What has the Church of England done, including within the Diocese of Sheffield, to inform and educate clergy and laity about the settlement agreed in 2014?* Not much, I would have thought. My sense is that when you try to inform clergy and laity about this 'settlement', they (i) are rather alarmed that General Synod ever agreed to this; (ii) don't see why this in any way binds them, as clergy, laity and parishes to what Synod might have agreed (indeed, why should it?); and (iii) question the nature and coherence of that agreed 'settlement', and its ecclesial efficacy..
- b. *The process leading to the nomination of Bishop North to the See of Sheffield.* I would comment that (i) the parishes, clergy and stakeholders - universities, local government, MP's, NHS, etc - should always be explicitly asked, for every single vacancy for any diocesan bishop, if they would welcome a Bishop who does *not* ordain women, because (ii) these roles are public and high-profile, and this has a significant impact on local mission and public ministry; and (iii) there is considerable reputational harm to the church if such nominations then, only later, emerge as *publicly unacceptable* - which is exactly what happened in Bishop North's case, with a local MP, and many others, raising significant questions.
- c. *Consistency of nomination.* I think the current reading of the 'Five Guiding Principles' by Forward in Faith/The Society renders this, and all future nominations to a Diocesan See unwise for any diocese, and for the wider ministry and public reputation of the Church of England. All future nominations will now need to be closely questioned unless the current readings of 'Five Guiding Principles' are formally rescinded by Forward in Faith/The Society.
- d. *The reactions to that nomination in the Church and beyond.* I am more concerned about the 'beyond' here. (i) Can the Church of England really justify the imposition a Diocesan Bishop who holds views that are clearly a form of gender-based discrimination, and then expect these to be applied putatively, across a range of communities, parishes and priests, who would never request or welcome such? To even attempt this as a feat is bound to be an inherently divisive and discriminatory act internally; and also externally, a source of public embarrassment in terms of mission and ministry. (ii) I do

recognise that in the Church of England, there are congregations that seek this kind of episcopal oversight - and they are provided for through PEV's and some suffragan/area bishops. But there is simply no ecclesial argument for extending this form of ecclesiology and theology to other parishes/priests (and they are the vast majority), who did not ask for a bishop who holds to such beliefs, and will only experience and receive such theological views as painful and alienating. [See my additional note on 'Power, Inequality and Consent in Ecclesial Contexts', attached]. (iii) The reactions manifestly show that the 'Five Guiding Principles' do not address the deeply-held, conflictual and irreconcilable theological views that continue to underpin this debate. The nomination of Bishop North - and any other nominations of this kind, for the foreseeable future - potentially converts a fragile 'truce' or 'cease fire' into an overt conflict.

I am conscious of how difficult and demanding this review will be for you to conduct. Please do be assured of my prayers and thoughts as you work through these issues. If I can be of help with any further documentation or clarifications, please do be in touch with me. And I am very happy to come and meet in London too, or here - which might be helpful for us, and the wider issues this debate now touches on.

With warmest good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael', followed by a long horizontal line and a shorter horizontal line below it.

## Power, Inequality and Consent in Ecclesial Contexts: A Brief Commentary

How are we to understand the relationship of power, inequality and consent in this debate? To conceive of analogous situations is one way forward. It is often said by Forward in Faith/The Society that their membership and congregations include significant numbers of women who are against ordained women. I don't doubt that. In the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, there were also women who opposed Suffragettes. (Indeed, a significant but small number of Anglican women were leading opponents of women's suffrage). However, in terms of power and parity, this does not mean that the opponents of equality today should still, somehow, expect to be met halfway in the debate. Equality is either equality, or it is nothing.

A commitment to equality often demands the sacrifice and self-denial of *some* for the wider common good of all. All too often, it is *not* reciprocal. Indeed, the establishment of equality sometimes requires one group to sacrifice a great deal (even all their power, privilege, etc), whilst the beneficiaries may sacrifice little or nothing in return (e.g., in ending apartheid). For example, a minority of people still like to smoke cigarettes. But the ban on smoking in enclosed public spaces is legislation that establishes equality in public spaces. Smokers still remain free to light-up in private; but are no longer free to share (or inflict) their habit with the wider public. Smokers lose their rights in order that the wider public gains equality of experience in public, shared spaces. There is no halfway compromise (e.g., 'designated smoking zones' *inside* restaurants; or new alternative public spaces opened up for smokers to compensate for the loss of most other public spaces; let alone suggesting that smokers can come and light up in *your* private space, which has hitherto been smoke-free).

Similarly, some Christian churches - I am thinking here only of fundamentalist groups - may argue for 'discipline' to be exercised by husbands on their wives, on biblical grounds. Women in such communities, churches and marriages may very well sanction such treatment as legitimate, and see the discipline meted out to them as part of their sacred theological construction of reality, and even a Christian duty. (On this, see for example <https://biblicalgenderroles.com/2015/10/03/7-ways-to-discipline-your-wife/> - and the argument that marriage is not a 'partnership', which is deemed to be a modern-liberal term, but is rather a 'male-led patriarchy' if understood 'biblically'). Those Christians holding such views - granted, small in number - believe this to be a 'Godly pattern and practice' for marriage (much like the physical disciplining of children), and therefore something that would work in *all* marriages, as we should all live by the commands of God.

In terms of the analogical framework, what is at stake in the church in gender-relations is equality in power *and* consent. Consent on its own is not enough, because consent can be engineered coercively. Moreover, it should be obvious that even if consent and equality was established in 'private' relationships - say between a husband and a wife in a certain kind of fundamentalist religious community/church - such practices cannot and should not be

*exported* into the public realm, and thought to be equally valid, normal and welcome to wider society. They would not be.

Thus, the mere fact that there are women who are against equal opportunities and status (i.e., ordained women) does not contribute *any* moral force to an argument that legitimizes the wider imposition of a male bishop (opposed to the ordination of women) on other women clergy. Such impositions would be in an analogically-comparable moral orbit to claiming that because *some* women believe in being disciplined by their husbands within their own marriages, that there can be no argument against *all* women experiencing the gain of living like this - at least to test out the spiritual and marital benefits that are deemed to flow from living out of a 'biblical pattern' of marital fidelity.

In wider ecclesial terms, however, if there is no reciprocal consent from the other parties involved, then the imposition of such hegemonic power would be rightly refused. Indeed, unless there is clear and unequivocal equality in the church, any such consent should not even be sought. To try and engineer such an arrangement would require women to collude in their own subjugation, in order to enable the preferment and power of others, and for the sake of a (male-dominated and male-defined) holistic polity.

Therefore, in the church, it is the case that only when equality and non-coercive consent are fully established, could power-differentials be appropriately entertained. The guidance from the secular world is that the culture only begins to shift in organisations, corporations and institutions when the leaders or board of executives/directors exceeds around 35% in terms of female representation. (On this, see: <http://perspectives.ahima.org/breaking-the-glass-ceiling-structural-cultural-and-organizational-barriers-preventing-women-from-achieving-senior-and-executive-positions/>; and McKinsey & Company. *Women Matter 2012: Making the Breakthrough*, July 2012). Women bishops are currently less than 10% of our total number. In fact, the number of women bishops is comparable to the number of bishops who oppose women in the episcopate.

If the CofE could get to a place where there were at least 15 female diocesan bishops, and at least 20 area/suffragan women bishops, there might be less resistance across the church if 'traditionalists' occupied some diocesan sees. But currently, the imbalance against women is too significant, and the CofE has a very poor track record of preferment. The CNC process seems to be weighted against women being preferred, for example recording 'abstentions' in CNC voting as a vote cast against a candidate. It just needs four people on a CNC (comprising six national and six local representatives) to abstain in respect of any female candidate, to make it almost impossible for that woman candidate to be selected with two-thirds of the votes. If the culture of the Church of England was changed to one that fully unequivocally and embraced equality, and the pragmatics for women were changed, we might find that the "Five P's" were principles that we could all indeed affirm once again. But at present, the "Five P's" primarily favour the only group that actually publishes them - namely The Society/Forward in Faith. That in itself is telling.

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- B. Forward in Faith *Commentary* on the 'Five Guiding Principles'
- C. MP: *Daily Telegraph* article, 2013
- D. MP: 'Questions of Integrity' essay, February 2017
- E. Response from the Archbishop of York, *Yorkshire Post*, March 2017
- F. MP's reply to Archbishop, *Yorkshire Post*
- G. Arun Arora's *Yorkshire Post* article
- H. MP: Guest Blog Reflection (Lenten) on 'Abstinence'
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## National Assembly 2016

### Director's Address

Dr Colin Podmore

A Catholic Christian needs to be part of a local church that is led by a bishop with whom he or she is in full communion. In their statements on catholicity and communion, and the leaflet that goes with them, our bishops have reminded us that all the baptized are part of the communion of saints – the fellowship of all the holy ones of God. In that sense we are in communion with all bishops of the Church of England. But full communion with a bishop involves being able to receive the sacramental ministry of all whom he ordains, so we are not in full communion with those who ordain women as priests. Recognizing this, the Church of England has enabled parishes to be placed under a bishop with whom all in the parish will be in full communion.

So far; so good. But how are that bishop's parishes linked with the parishes of other catholic bishops? First and foremost, through the bishop and the full communion that he shares with his fellow bishops. But the catholic bishops formed The Society to make those links more visible and more structural, to link what I call the "full resolution" parishes across the Church of England in a visible structure. Parishes are invited to affiliate to The Society and, so to speak, "fly the flag" of this family, this fellowship, this communion. They receive a porch card. It explains how we seek to grow in holiness, how we are committed to proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord, and what The Society does; and then it proclaims that "This parish is affiliated to The Society."

If you affiliate to The Society, there is no extra charge for staying or becoming registered with Forward in Faith. So if you worship in a parish that is under one of our bishops and your church isn't on the map, please speak to your priest or churchwardens. Passing the resolution is not enough: parishes do need to decide to affiliate, fill in the form, and send it in.

The Society is a structure of full communion, and in that sense it is what we call an "ecclesial structure." It is like a



church; but it is not a church in an exclusive sense. We are not saying that we're alright, because we're in full communion with each other, so we have no need of the wider Church of England: quite the contrary. The Society has been formed to support us in remaining in the Church of England with integrity. What would be the point of remaining in the Church of England and then having as little as possible to do with it? This involves a sort of "double belonging." We belong with most intensity, most deeply, to those with whom we are in full communion in The Society. But we also belong to the wider fellowship of the deanery, the diocese, and the Church of England. We need to maintain – or rebuild – relationships with the rest of the Church of England, both because it is in our own interest and because we have a great deal to offer to our church. We need to break the barriers down. We need to open the doors so that people who get the point can actually come in and join us. It is perfectly possible to do that while maintaining our integrity and our principles.

What are the structures of The Society? Most important is the Council of Bishops. Also important is the role of the Bishop's Representative. In most dioceses the Society bishop has a representative on the ground, relating to the

diocesan bishop and the diocesan structures, but also to the parishes and their clergy – and representing the clergy to their Society bishop.

"The Society", it says on the porch card, "guarantees a ministry in the historic, apostolic succession." Until last year, you could tell by looking who was a priest whose ministry we could receive, and who was not. But now we have male priests ordained by women bishops. We can't receive their ministry, but how can you tell who ordained whom, for example, when you're a churchwarden arranging cover in a vacancy? One of the reasons why the Bishops invite priests to register as Priests of The Society is to help answer that question. Deacons and ordinands can register as well. They sign a Declaration that commits them to what The Society stands for. Priests and deacons submit their letters of orders to prove they were ordained by a bishop whose orders we can recognize. The relevant Society bishop sends them a Welcome Letter, so they can prove that they are clergy of The Society; and we have begun to issue identity cards to priests.

Clergy who are not incumbents also have to submit their licence or permission to officiate. By issuing a Welcome Letter, and in due course a card, our bishops are saying that you can receive the ministry of these clergy. If they are not allowed to officiate in the Church of England, you cannot receive their ministry; so the Council of Bishops cannot commend it and they cannot be Priests or Deacons of The Society. They are still members of The Society, however, just as we all are: the laity aren't registered either. The clergy are not members in any greater sense than laypeople are.

That leads me to a point that I need to underline as strongly as I can. The word "Society" can be a bit misleading. It is not a clerical society like the Society of the Holy Cross; nor is it a devotional society like the Society of King Charles the Martyr. It is not the sort of society that you join by paying a membership fee, which you expels you if you fail to pay up. The Second Vatican Council speaks of the Church as "a divine society": the Society is a society in that sort



of sense. Everyone who is gathered round a Society bishop in a church that is under his oversight, everyone who receives the sacraments from a priest who has made the Priest's Declaration – all those people are members of The Society, without signing anything or paying anything.

In your parish church the members are all the baptized people who receive the sacraments there – not just those who are on the electoral roll, not only those who have a standing order or belong to an envelope scheme. You become a member by baptism, confirmation, and receiving communion, not by filling in a form or paying money. The same is true of The Society, because it is like a church. The Society is not a membership organization. We cannot have The Society reduced to a members' club: it must be like a church, based not on forms and money but on the sacraments.

Now I come to Forward in Faith's role, under four headings. The first three I will call "political" and mention only briefly. First: campaigning. This is no longer our main focus; but if any of the sacraments come under threat – baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, and confession have all been under threat either in our church or in other Anglican churches – we will campaign to defend them. Second: supporting the Catholic Group in General Synod – financially, with advice, and in the synodical elections – as we did to great effect last year. Third: monitoring implementation of the House of Bishops' Declaration, and supporting parishes in submitting grievances as necessary. We need our Forward in Faith identity as the flag under which this political work is done both nationally and locally.

But perhaps Forward in Faith's most important role will be supporting The Society. We sought "an ecclesial structure which will continue the orders of bishop and priest as the Church has received them and which can guarantee a true sacramental life"; in the end, with our bishops, we created it ourselves. Now our Constitution gives us power to support The Society. Forward in Faith, is, among other things, the support structure for The Society. How does it work locally? Sometimes the Bishop's Representative is also the Forward in Faith

clerical chairman. In others that is another priest (though in every diocese the Bishop's representative is an *ex officio* member of the branch committee). Where they are not the same person, that can work very well as a way of sharing the burden – as long as long as the two priests work together as closely as possible. Whether you brand local activities as Society activities or Forward in Faith activities depends on what they are. If it is liturgical or devotional, it is probably a Society event. If it is raising money, or making a complaint to the Independent Reviewer, it is Forward in Faith. Forward in Faith is a charity with bank accounts locally and nationally and can claim gift aid, and has a "political" role. The Society is not that sort of structure.

Forward in Faith has one other important role in relation to The Society. Like a church, The Society is led by bishops. It is not a democracy. Forward in Faith is a democratically-structured membership organization. The Council of Bishops need to consult representative clergy and laity from time to time; and they do that through the Forward in Faith Council. There is no need to duplicate Forward in Faith structures by creating parallel Society structures for consultation; but we do need to reinvigorate our branch structures, and that will be one of the priorities for next year.

### Homily at Mass

*The Bishop of Chichester*

*It has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.*

This is a statement I find myself making in public worship with a fair degree of regularity. Most people just look a bit blank at this point, thinking, "What are the Articles of Religion?" The Thirty-Nine Articles form a kind of summary of Christian faith as we have received it. They speak of God, the Bible, being sinful and being saved, the Church, Christian tradition, sacraments, and society. They can be found at the back of the Book of Common Prayer and are slightly easier to read than the Table of Kindred

and Affinity that follows them, but not always as interesting.

Among the more strongly worded Articles is no. 22, of *Purgatory*. This includes a denunciation of devotion to the saints as belonging to "Romish doctrine" that is "repugnant to scripture". Well, looking around, you might think that the arrangement of this splendid church, or indeed of many of our cathedrals today, isn't exactly what the author of that Article was hoping to achieve when it was written. However, we should be more careful before making a hasty judgement. Some of you will know Blessed John Henry Newman's astute observation on this Article, in which he points out that "far from condemning" devotion to the saints, Article 22 "does by anticipation approve" the necessary reforms of the Council of Trent, which declared in December 1563 that it strongly desired the utter extinction of abuses of holy observances and practice, and that all superstition in invocation of saints be "put away".

Newman is making an important point here which is about more than simply Article 22 on purgatory. He is drawing attention to the never-ending task of reformation, which is the loving work of the Holy Spirit in drawing us back, constantly, to the decisive and demanding call to holiness, to the worship and service of our Creator, and to the threads of Christian living from which the garment of eternal life is woven. And it is in this spirit of seeking to recognise the converging patterns of reformation in the history of apostolic life that we experience as Anglicans and Roman Catholics, that I want to consider two ways to encounter and proclaim the Word of God, Jesus Christ, in whom we see the mercy and the glory of the Father.

The first way of encountering and proclaiming the Word of God is through the Bible. The Articles state that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation"; that 'the Old Testament is not contrary to the New'; and that "no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral." This is a huge and breath-taking sweep of time and eternity, and we should retain the sense of awe that this vision holds before us.



## Appendix B: Forward in Faith Commentary on the 'Five Guiding Principles'

### 1 Respect for lawful office-holders

Now that legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are the true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience;

The Church of England is committed to admitting women to all orders of ministry, but this does not require its members to agree with the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate.

The distinction between office (diocesan bishop, archdeacon, incumbent) and order (bishop, priest, deacon) is important. If someone has been appointed to an office by due legal process, that office is not vacant. It is possible in good conscience to recognize the holder of that office as holding the legal responsibilities that belong to it. Such recognition does not necessarily involve recognizing him or her as a bishop or priest in the sacramental sense, or receiving his or her sacramental ministry.

Similarly, canonical obedience to an office-holder does not imply anything about the office-holder's sacramental status. Clergy owe canonical obedience to the holder of the office of diocesan bishop, whether or not he or she has been ordained to the order of bishop. (A diocesan bishop has episcopal jurisdiction, and is owed canonical obedience, from the point when his or her election is confirmed. His or her ordination as a bishop may occur days or even weeks later.)

All office-holders in the Church of England should be treated with due respect and courtesy. People cannot expect to be treated with respect and courtesy if they do not themselves show respect and courtesy.

### 2 A clear decision

Anyone who ministers within the Church of England must be prepared to acknowledge that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter;

That the Church of England 'has reached a clear decision on the matter' is plainly the case.

A clear decision may not necessarily stand for all time, however. Acknowledgement of the decision may be coupled with hope and prayer that, in the fullness of time, the Church of England will come to recognize it to have been wrong.

This principle needs to be read in the light of Principle 3.

'Equal treatment, for example in relation to resource issues and the discerning of vocations to the ordained ministry, is essential irrespective of convictions in relation to gender and ministry. In discerning vocations bishops will continue not to discriminate on the grounds of a candidate's theological conviction on this issue. In addition, ordination services for deacons and priests should be planned and conducted in a way that is consistent with the five guiding principles.'

*House of Bishops' Declaration, para. 15*

### 3 A process of discernment within the universal Church

Since it continues to share the historic episcopate with other Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and those provinces of the Anglican Communion which continue to ordain only men as priests or bishops, the Church of England acknowledges that its own clear decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God;

The reference to 'a process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God' embodies the concept of 'reception' – the idea that a doctrine enunciated by a council or synod may in the end come to be 'received' by the whole Church or to be rejected by the whole Church.<sup>†</sup>

The Church of England's decision regarding women's ordination may be clear, but it cannot be regarded as absolute because, as the Preface to the Declaration of Assent says, the Church of England is only 'part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'. Orders belong to the whole Church, and it is the whole Church that must ultimately decide on changes to them. Only the whole Church knows the whole truth.

<sup>†</sup>For further reading on 'reception', see: *Being in Communion* (GS Misc 418) (London: General Synod, 1993); P. Avis (ed.), *Seeking the Truth of Change in the Church: Reception, Communion and the Ordination of Women* (London: T & T Clark, 2004); R. T. Greenacre (ed. C. J. Podmore), *Part of the One Church? The Ordination of Women and Anglican Identity* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2015).

### 4 Those unable to receive the ministry of women as bishops or priests are within the spectrum of Anglican teaching and tradition and will be enabled to flourish

Since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures;

Recognition of this position as one of 'theological conviction', that continues to be within the spectrum of Anglican teaching and tradition, complies with Resolution III.2 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference. This called on the Anglican Communion's churches 'to affirm that those who dissent from, as well as those who assent to, the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate are both loyal Anglicans'.

It is because this is a legitimate theological conviction (in fact, of course, the classical Anglican position) that the Church of England is committed to enabling those who hold it 'to flourish within its life and structures'.

Those in authority will need to be able to demonstrate (if necessary to the Independent Reviewer) that their actions are directed towards enabling those who hold this conviction not merely to exist but to flourish.

### 5 Pastoral and sacramental provision without limit of time; mutual flourishing

Pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England.

Bishops ministering under the Declaration will exercise a pastoral ministry of 'oversight' (Declaration, para. 22) and a sacramental ministry (presiding at the Eucharist, Christian Initiation and Ordination).

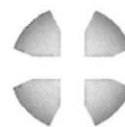
Provision is made 'without specifying a limit of time': it is not a transitional provision to allow the minority time to change their minds.

Provision is to contribute to 'mutual flourishing': our participation in the Church of England's life will contribute to the flourishing of our church and all its members.

By calling on us to live in 'the highest possible degree of communion', this principle implicitly recognizes that full communion will not be possible, and that communion will be diminished (because the Church of England no longer has an episcopate or a priesthood that enjoys full mutual recognition). It challenges us to identify the highest degree of communion that will be possible.<sup>‡</sup>

<sup>‡</sup> See 'Communion and Catholicity in the Church of England: A Statement of Principles by the Council of Bishops of The Society' (2015), section 3: [www.sswsh.com/statements.php](http://www.sswsh.com/statements.php)

## The Five Guiding Principles: A Commentary



FORWARDINFAITH

The Five Guiding Principles appear in para. 5 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (which consists of 43 paragraphs in all).

They are introduced thus:

*The House reaffirms the five guiding principles which it first commended in May 2013 when submitting legislative proposals to the General Synod for the consecration of women to the episcopate and which the Synod welcomed in its resolution of 20 November 2013. They need to be read one with the other and held together in tension, rather than being applied selectively.*

A fuller commentary is available at [www.forwardinfaith.com/Resources.php](http://www.forwardinfaith.com/Resources.php)

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**Article Thirty: On Women Bishops**

*Waiting in hope*

The failure of the Church of England's General Synod to pass the Measure enabling women bishops in 2012 came as a heavy blow to many inside the Church - but also many outside the Church who will find the decision hard to fathom. Yet I remain sure that it is only a question of time before the Church of England will take this next step; it is just not now.

A concern for order and unity in the Church is undoubtedly what drives many of those opposing the ordination of women to the episcopate. But a concern for order and unity in all creation - a no less Godly yearning - is just as vital for our Church and world. The Church, meanwhile, must continue to wait prayerfully and hopefully, and in a spirit of charity.

The Church lives constantly in the tension between patience and faithful reform. On the one hand, it is bound to remain true to its given nature. On the other hand, it is bound to reform and change in each generation, as the Holy Spirit continually renews the Church. In a famous if rather overlooked essay written over 60 years ago, Yves Congar, the renowned French theologian addressed the subject of true and false reform in the Church. Congar, a Roman Catholic, was attempting to reach out to the Protestant denominations, and reengage with the spirit that had given birth to the Reformation. Like all Christians, Congar believed in unity. But he was also realistic about the differences, diversity and disagreements that caused division. In his essay (1950; translated in 1962), Congar starts with the virtue of patience. He moves on to explore how impatient reform can lead to the reformers believing themselves to be persecuted. And although the essay ends with a plea for unity, and for continued patience and dialogue, Congar's revolutionary insight was that church leaders ultimately have a responsibility to *not* be too patient. In other words, a moment comes when a decision must be made. Hopeful patience may prove to be wise for some time. But pointless waiting is merely prevarication posturing as discernment.

The Church knows a great deal about waiting. It waits for the coming of the Kingdom. In Advent, it waits for the coming of Christ. In Lent the Church waits for the radical transformation of Easter. Each of these periods of waiting is hard, yet anticipative, but is neither pointless nor endless.

The Church waits in hope. Because it believes that through waiting, wisdom, discernment and new insight will enable a purer and clearer leading of the Holy Spirit. All Christians know this can be difficult and demanding; but that for a flourishing Church and the mature spiritual life of individuals, it is essential.

In respect of the ordination of women, there has already been much waiting. The earliest campaigners for women's ordination- those on the fringes of the suffragette movement, such as Maude Royden - could barely have imagined that it would have taken more than a century for women to receive equal treatment in the Church of England.

It was 1912 when Royden began editing *Common Cause*, the journal of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. Five years later she became assistant preacher at the City Temple in London - the first woman to occupy this office. After the Great War ended she founded the Society for the Ministry of Women, campaigning and speaking for the ordination of women well into the 1940s.

Royden did not live to see General Synod passing a motion in 1975 stating 'this Synod considers that there are no fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood'. And then General Synod, in 1978, asking the Church to 'prepare and bring forward legislation to remove the barriers to the ordination of women to the priesthood and their consecration to the episcopate'.

The first women were ordained to the diaconate in England in 1987. The first women ordained to the priesthood followed soon after in November 1994, with 38 of the Church of England's 44 diocesan synods voting in favour. And for the more recent debates on women in the episcopate, the numbers were even better, with 42 out of 44 dioceses voting in favour of women bishops. Maude Royden, you might think, would be rejoicing in heaven. She will have seen the celebrations of her American cousins taking place many years earlier. The Episcopal Church has had the pleasure and privilege of women bishops for many years.

But some will never move, and it is because of this that the duty of our church leaders not to be too patient now comes more sharply into focus. To place this in context, I have only to recall a conversation with a diocesan bishop opposed to the ordination of women. I asked him about the wider implications of already having women bishops in the Anglican Communion.

What would he do, say, with a male priest who had been faith-fully offering priestly ministry overseas for many years, but was ordained by a woman bishop? And if that same priest now asked him for permission to officiate in his diocese when he returned home? Would he grant the licence? No, he said. Would he insist on some sort of conditional re-ordination? No, he said. Then what, I asked? He replied, simply, that he would ordain. There was no question about this: the man was not a priest, and he never had been.

Herein lies the rub. The legislation before Synod was already a 'compromise', in the original sense of that word. That is to say, it was a co-promise: an agreement that together we would move forward mutually, not severally. It was this that the Synod had set its mind to. That the Church lost sight, so early, of a simple one-clause measure, is a real tragedy. And it was this failure of leadership, ultimately, that led the Church inexorably and slowly to the vote's result.

How can the Church of England move forward? As a body, we seem to have been quite slow in learning that diversity, disagreement and difference cannot simply be managed into consensus. The political, synodical or managerial solutions that have been proffered so far

have singularly failed to inspire and galvanize most of the debaters. And the public, understandably, have largely switched off in droves.

There needs to be greater trust in the processes of Synod - for God meets us in meetings; and here we find truth too. But what is also needed is better and inspiring theological leadership (not just clearer or louder) that will lift the debate into a different dimension. This was lacking on the floor of the Synod debate. And its more general absence from the Church quickly leads to a rather pedestrian debate about the rights of groups and individuals, how they compete and conflict, and how to find compromise.

The only sure result here is that everyone loses. Indeed, that was the result of the debate: nobody won. The Church lost; the campaigners for women bishops lost; and the apparent victors lost too - but by a margin that gave them the strangest of pyrrhic victories. And the public lost too. They have lost confidence in a church that is supposed to serve the whole nation, and not just the qualms and proclivities of small squabbling interest groups.

What is not needed, I am sure, is for the debate to speedily descend and degenerate into a left-right divisiveness. Some quickly and eagerly talked about the Equality Act and relished the prospect of political interference. Others inferred that the principal problem is falling attendance, with further inferences and accusations of being out of touch with modern values. None of this will work, I fear.

At present, and in our attempts to organize the Church and manage its diversity, we are often guilty of trying to 'give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give' to ourselves. But it is a gift of the Spirit, grafted through conversation, conflict and slow consensus that gradually builds us into communion. The genius of Christianity lies in its contestability; therein lies its richness too.

If diversity could have been easily managed, the New Testament would perhaps have given us some pointers; and the apostles and early church Fathers might then have led the way. But alas, it is something of a conceit of modern times to suppose that the Church is an organization in which diversity can be ironed out, difficulties managed, and the Church homogenized into a discourse of uniform clarity for the media and the public at large. The Church is a body that seeks unity in the midst of diversity; it does not aspire to being an ecology of managed uniformity.

Munir Fasheh (1992), the feminist Palestinian theologian, offers a telling insight into how the debate on women in the episcopate is now beginning to feel for all the women (and many men) who long and pray for women bishops in our Church. Fasheh tells of how a woman in Beit Sahour (near Bethlehem) behaved when Israeli taxation officers came to town. When the army had already taken nearly everything from her house, she finally protested at the removal of her fridge - the last thing left in her kitchen. She said to the officer: 'Why don't you leave the fridge - I need it to feed my hungry children, and the food and milk will rot outside.' Trying to tempt her, the officer said, 'OK-but pay \$25, and you can have it.'

She said, 'I am not bargaining with you; I am appealing to you as a human being who probably has children.' He said, 'All right, pay \$5.' She said, 'You don't seem to understand.' He said, 'OK, pay Just \$1'. She said, 'Take the fridge - it's yours.'

From the outset, this debate has always been between those charged with a duty to compromise and another group, who, we are told, simply cannot move. But this dynamic has reduced the debate to some kind of plea-bargaining for women bishops. It is humiliating to have to barter and beg. Love, integrity and dignity become diminished when having to bargain for something offered so begrudgingly.

This story from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is, of course, not a comparable analogy for the debates that currently divide our Church. Our saga is not about the oppressed and the oppressor. Yet the story from Beit Sahour more than does its job in conveying a deep and underlying disease: that visceral sense of bewilderment and betrayal that many women now feel within the Church. After all, pay a dollar, and you get the fridge: a bargain, surely? But as many have discovered before, power gained 'at any price' (whether high or seemingly very low), usually translates into ashes, not riches. So, that proverbial million-dollar question hangs in the balance: can the women bishops' legislation now get through? But Synod is not actually facing a million-dollar question at all. This is a simple one-dollar question, straight from Beit Sahour. Should any gift that is not offered to the Church- fully, freely and graciously- really be bargained for?

The only way forward is for the Church to be, as the apostle once remarked, 'transformed by the renewal of our minds' (Romans 12.2). Here, the word 'renewal' can be taken in at least three senses: a recovery of something lost; improvement of what is in the present; or a complete exchange of the past and present for a new future. Just what kind of renewal the Church of England both seeks and needs is the key to the future of this debate. For this we need outstanding theological leadership, not a mere suite of managed compromises. And yes, more waiting: but perhaps in hope?

Martyn Percy, 2013

(Published in the *Daily Telegraph*)

### Questions of Ambiguity and Integrity?

*The Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford*

"Until last year you could tell by looking who was a priest whose ministry we could receive, and who was not. But now we have male priests ordained by women bishops. We can't receive their ministry; but how can you tell who ordained whom, for example, when you're a churchwarden arranging cover in a vacancy? One of the reasons why the Bishops invite priests to register as Priests of The Society is to help answer that question. Deacons and ordinands can register as well. They sign a Declaration that commits them to what The Society stands for. Priests and deacons submit their letters of orders to prove they were ordained by a bishop whose orders we can recognize. The relevant Society bishop sends them a Welcome Letter, so they can prove that they are clergy of The Society; and we have begun to issue identity cards to priests..."

Colin Podmore, *New Directions*, Vol. 20, No. 257, February 2017, p. 14

What does it mean to have integrity? *Someone* who has integrity acts with honour, probity, good character, principles, virtues, decency, fairness; they are sincere and truthful. *Something* that has integrity is whole, undivided, coherent and together. The very word in the English language, and from the Old French *intégrité*, connotes blamelessness and purity. And more directly from the Latin word *integritatem*, the word connotes soundness, wholeness and completeness.

There is a problem then, for any church that wants to talk about 'two integrities' co-existing within its life - especially when they are opposed to one another. The Church of England took a decision in 1992 to adopt precisely this position in relation to gender (the infamous Act of Synod), enshrining the rights and affirming those who conscientiously object to women being ordained. In some ways, the situation of the Church of England is analogous to that of the Labour Party's election manifesto of 1983, with its bifurcated policies on nuclear weapons. 'The longest suicide note in history' was how Gerald Kaufman MP described that manifesto, with its inconsistencies and unresolved internal arguments. The Church of England can now match that manifesto on gender and sexuality, pound for pound.

Moreover, the Church of England now has an additional problem in relation to men who are ordained by female bishops. Because some groups - Forward in Faith and *The Society* (as it is

simply know, but under the patronage of St. Wilfrid and St. Hilda), and who have a recognised 'integrity' in the Church of England - *cannot* recognise the other integrity that affirms the ordination of women as priests and bishops. The result is that neither side *has* integrity (i.e., as a noun: wholeness and completeness, etc.). But both sides believe that they are *acting* with integrity (i.e., as a verb: decently, and on the basis of sincerely held convictions, etc.).

On the basis of this, I will simply state the following. That the Bishop of Sheffield-designate (the Rt. Revd. Philip North) should voluntarily withdraw himself from nomination to the See of Sheffield. And that this act would be an act of integrity, consistent with his beliefs, and with his wider concerns for the catholicity of the church, and for the flourishing of pastoral relationships. I do not call for him to do so. Rather, I invite him to reflect on his position, and work through his theological convictions with honesty and sincerity. In other words, act with integrity.

To the best of my knowledge, I have never met Bishop Philip North. So this brief article is not in any way, shape or form personal. I hear excellent things about the quality of his ministry, and the gifts and passions he brings to ordained ministry - as a deacon, priest, and more recently, as Bishop of Burnley. There can be no question that Philip North has gifts that make him suited for episcopal ministry.

But there is a world of difference between being an Area or Suffragan Bishop, and a Diocesan. Not least, because as the Diocesan Bishop, the Cure of Souls is legally and sacramentally shared with *all* clergy-colleagues. So, the Bishop needs to be *fully confident* that the priests they share in this ministry with are pastorally competent, theologically sound, and crucially, that their ordination is valid and affirmed, such that their sacramental ministry (again, shared), is efficacious.

As a Bishop of The Society, Philp North cannot and does not believe this to be true of two categories of clergy: first, women; and second, any man ordained by a female bishop. The statement from the Director of The Society could not be clearer: 'we *can't* receive their ministry'. Moreover, this is not a careless slip of the pen or tongue from a Director who is a layperson. As Colin Podmore helpfully states in the same article, that, 'like a church, The Society is led by bishops. It is not a democracy...'. Philip North is one of those bishops, and so co-leads The Society.

A concern for order and unity in the church is undoubtedly what drives many opposing the ordination of women. But a concern for order and unity in all creation – no less Godly – is as vital for our church and world. The church lives constantly in the tension between the glacial patience of catholicity, and that of proactive, faithful reform. On the one hand, it is bound to remain true to its given nature. On the other hand, it is bound to reform and change in each generation, as the Holy Spirit renews the church.

The question of integrity then, is this. Should anyone accept a nomination to be a Diocesan Bishop, when this same person cannot recognise and affirm the sacramental validity of a significant percentage of their own clergy who would be in their care, and with whom they will have to share in the Cure of Souls? I think the answer to this must be 'no', and unequivocally so. Any position of integrity would refuse such an invitation and nomination.

It is a matter of integrity, because, by definition, the Diocesan Bishop has to be able to affirm the wholeness, undivided coherence and togetherness of the ministry of the clergy in their own Diocese. But then why could you be an Area or Suffragan Bishop, and hold views such as those held by The Society? Because, I think, you can, as a matter of integrity, be a Bishop who ministers to those congregations and clergy that hold such views, offering your ministry as *part* of a whole. That would not compromise their sense of catholicity. And it's precisely for this reason that Philip North did, in good conscience, acting with integrity, request to be consecrated by male bishops alone.

Bishop Philip recently met the women clergy of Sheffield, and it was by all accounts a cordial gathering. While he is unable in conscience to ordain women, Bishop Philip made it clear that he was not opposed women's leadership. Indeed he has stated that he is in favour of it and would actively promote it. (This is also interesting, because it places him at odds with some of the Conservative Evangelicals who lobbied for his nomination). Bishop Philip was clear that the women are, if so ordained, legally and canonically priests or bishops.

But the crucial question is, what does Bishop Philip think is happening at the altar, when a woman is presiding at the Eucharist? I don't know. And so far, Bishop Philip has tended to be ambiguous in his statements on this matter. But this issue cannot now be fudged. Any answer that sidestepped the question as to whether such a sacramental offering is valid or efficacious would be pastorally and personally undermining of women clergy. And to repeat, the position of The Society is that 'we can't receive [this] ministry'.

Bishop Philip faces a clear choice here. He can distance himself from and essentially disown the official view of The Society - that the sacramental ministry of women, and men ordained by female bishops - cannot be received. This would presumably mean him leaving The Society. Or, he can fully own the official position of The Society, in which case his clergy are in a most difficult place, with a Diocesan Bishop effectively not recognising many of their sacramental ministries. What you can't have is both a fudge *and* integrity.

In all this, no-one has yet cottoned-on that male clergy ordained by a female bishop also pose significant problems and impediments to The Society, as Colin Podmore so clearly articulates. And The Society is episcopally-led, as Colin Podmore so helpfully clarifies. Women are not recognised as 'real' priests or bishops; men ordained by female bishops are therefore not to be regarded as 'proper' priests either. To place this in context, I recall a conversation fifteen years ago with a Diocesan Bishop who was implacably opposed to the ordination of women.



(The conversation resonates with the quotation from Colin Podmore). I asked the diocesan bishop about the wider implications of having women bishops in the Anglican Communion.

What would he do, say, with a male priest who had been faithfully offering priestly ministry overseas for many years, but was ordained by a woman bishop? And if that same priest now asked him for permission to officiate in his diocese when he returned home to England? Would he grant them a licence? No, he said. Would he insist on some sort of conditional reordination? No, he said. Then what, I asked, would he do? He replied, simply, that he would ordain them. That there was no question about this. The man was not a priest: and he never had been. No women could be ordained; and no woman could ordain a man or a woman. Women could not be priests, and they could not be bishops. End of story.

There is a further problem here. A priest ordained by a woman bishop in one diocese in the Church of England can't now easily move across to another diocese, if that diocesan bishop, as a matter of their 'integrity', holds that women cannot ordain. At this point, integrity breaks down: the very *integration* of the Church of England unravels, as two theologically viewpoints, now diametrically opposed, will not be able to agree on the ordained-sacramental status of such a clergyman.

And there is a further problem, clearly alluded to in Colin Podmore's earlier quote: identity cards and registration. Priests will need to 'prove' they were ordained by a male bishop. And presumably in more extreme cases, establish that their ordaining bishop has never ordained a woman. But travel forward, if you will, a century from now. Those identity cards will eventually need to become lengthy records of 'ontological genealogy'. To be a priest in The Society, you'll need to show that the bishop who ordained you, was, in turn, ordained by someone pure and efficacious, and in turn, was ordained likewise - stretching all the way back to our present time. The 'ontological genealogy' will have to demonstrate an unbroken chain of purity, and be a 'taint free' litany of bishops. This is sacralised sexism.

Thus, the current 'system' - effectively an attempt at a political compromise that is manifestly out of its depth within a complex theological dichotomy - actually makes it impossible for any diocesan bishop who holds such views on women priests and women bishops to act with any real integrity. Such bishops cannot regard such men or women who are ordained by a woman bishop as 'real' priests. So how can the Church of England move forward here?

Yves Congar, the renowned French Roman Catholic theologian, addressed the subject of true and false reform in the church (1950; translated in 1962).<sup>1</sup> Congar believed in unity. But he was also realistic about the differences, diversity and disagreements that caused divisions. Congar discusses the virtue of patience. He understood that hopeful patience may prove to be wise for some while to achieve unity. But pointless waiting is merely prevarication posturing as discernment.

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<sup>1</sup> Yves Congar, *Vraie et Fausse Réforme dans L'Eglise*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1950).

I am conscious that at the heart of this lies a deep dynamic of Anglo-Catholic identity, and one perceptively excavated and explained in the sociological writings of W.S.F. Pickering: namely, ambiguity.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, multiple ambiguities: on Roman Catholicism; culture and aesthetics; and a tendency be sectarian-like in organisation. In more recent times, sexuality and gender have also placed this investment in ambiguity under severe stress. The nettle that needs grasping here is that ambiguity, whilst it may have an inner ecclesial logic within AngloCatholicism, means others pay the price for this, as their identities and roles are left uncertain and unresolved by such proclivities. This is pastorally demoralising for them, to say the least.

As a national church, we seem to have been quite slow in learning that diversity, disagreement and differences cannot simply be managed into consensus. The political, synodical or managerial solutions that have been proffered so far have singularly failed to inspire and galvanise most of the debaters. In our attempts to organize the church and manage its diversity, we are often guilty of trying to 'give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give' to ourselves. But it is a gift of the Spirit, grafted through conversation, conflict and slow consensus that gradually build us into the communion God intends us to be.

If diversity could have been easily managed, the New Testament would perhaps have given us some pointers; and the Apostles and Early Church Fathers might then have led the way. But alas, it is something of a conceit of modern times to suppose that the church is an organization in which diversity can be ironed out; difficulties managed; and the church homogenized into a discourse of uniform clarity for the media and the public at large. The church is a body that seeks unity in the midst of diversity; it does not aspire to being an ecology of managed uniformity.

Then there is the other question of integrity. Can a Diocesan Bishop who does not believe his women clergy are really priests, actually support and affirm them in their ministry? It depends, I think, on the nature of the diocese. Area bishops can ensure such support is in place, if the Diocesan Bishop cannot provide it. But in a smaller diocese, where the Diocesan Bishop may only have a Suffragan, the position of the women clergy becomes more tentative, and even perilous.

And this, alas, is the position that the clergywomen and clergymen of Sheffield now find themselves in. Namely, with a Bishop as focus of unity, but who cannot in his own conscience affirm the whole. So he cannot minister with integrity; because he does not believe his own clergy share this integrity. This is why the only way forward is, alas, for Philip North to decline his nomination. It is the price for his integrity that only he can pay. If your own Diocesan

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<sup>2</sup> W. S. F. Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism: A Study in Religious Ambiguity* (London: SPCK, 1989).

Bishop doesn't think your sacramental ministry as a woman and a priest is actually efficacious, then your everyone's integrity comes under real pressure.

Clearly, major theological differences have to be resolved if priests and bishops are to be in true communion. So if these differences can't be resolved, then the virtue and practice of integrity suggests some new paths: acquiescence or withdrawal. Either the bishop has to step aside and step down from exercising episcopal ministry at this level and in this context. Or, the women have to resign, as their own bishop does not recognise and affirm their sacramental efficacy.

In the recent and excellent WATCH *Report on the Developments in Women's Ministry in 2016*, the authors point out how much of the progress of the 1990's and early years of the twentyfirst century is now being reversed. Few women under the age of 40 are offering for ordination. Women are increasingly to be found in NSM roles. In London, Chichester, Winchester and Blackburn, 15% or less of the Incumbents are female. Thirteen dioceses report no women on their senior staff; twenty-two report only one woman on their senior staff team. Small wonder the number of women under the age offering for ordination of 40 is declining.

The only way forward out of this binary is for the church to be, as the Apostle once opined, 'transformed by the renewal of our minds' (Romans 12:2). The word 'renewal' can be taken in at least three senses: a recovery of something lost; improvement of what is in the present; or a complete exchange of the past and present for a new future.

The renewal that the Church of England both seeks and needs is the urgent task here. For this, we need outstanding theological leadership, and not a mere suite of fudged and managed compromises. But above all else, we need to both act with integrity, and preserve our integrity. Diocesan Bishops need to enable this, offering their faithful, full and flourishing ministry, unequivocally, and without reserve, to the *whole* church, to *all* its ministers, and to the wider world.

To be authentically 'catholic' in the Church of England is to fully committed to its' validity. To be a member of The Society is, by definition, to be *conditionally* and only *partially* committed to the validity of this same church. For that reason, you cannot have Diocesan Bishops who are, for reasons of their own conscience, unable to recognise and receive the ordination of clergy within their own Diocese.

The next step for the See of Sheffield is an issue of profound integrity. And for the Church of England, there is the dawning realisation that trying to contain 'two integrities' in one body is a near-impossible feat. Far from being a clever oxymoron (i.e., juxtaposing elements that appear to be contradictory, but which contain some deeper, unifying point), or being mutually gracious and respectful across divisions, or pointing to some deeper spiritual paradox, 'two

integrities' is neither credible nor desirable. As the Church of England has begun to discover in our debates on sexuality, if you truly want to be one church, you can only really afford one integrity.

## **Appendix E: Response from the Archbishop of York, Yorkshire Post, March 2017**

### **John Sentamu: You have my word – female clergy will not be undermined by new Bishop of Sheffield**

*Yorkshire Post, Saturday 25 February 2017*

THE nomination of the Right Reverend Philip North to be Bishop of Sheffield has created quite a stir, but it will not surprise those who have followed the process by which the Church of England agreed to the ordination of women as bishops.

A report in the Guardian yesterday noted that Dr Martyn Percy, the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, has objected to Bishop North's nomination because of his opposition, as a traditional catholic Anglican, to the CoE's decision to embrace women priests and bishops.

These arguments were raised and presented during and before the General Synod debates on this issue in 2014. In supporting the ordination of women as bishops, the Synod did not accept these arguments and favoured a position of mutual flourishing for all in the Church.

Back in 1998 the Lambeth Conference – a gathering of Anglican Bishops from around the world – noted that in relation to the unity of dioceses the Conference "in particular calls upon the provinces of the Communion to affirm that those who dissent from, as well as those who assent to, the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate are both loyal Anglicans".

Is the Church wrong to affirm this? No! Bishop Philip has assured women clergy in the diocese that he is in favour of women's leadership and would actively promote it. I know he will do so. Women clergy in the Diocese of Sheffield will not only be accepted, but will be encouraged, inspired, and furthered in their ministry by their new Diocesan Bishop. However, there remain those who question the integrity both of the agreement reached by the Church of England, and of Philip North himself. And that simply won't do.

Bishop Philip's nomination is a moment of opportunity for the Diocese of Sheffield, and for the Church of England as we participate in the mission of God, acknowledging and welcoming our diversity as a community held together in Christ. Philip brings tremendous

energy for mission and ministry. He is a disciple of Christ, full of the Holy Spirit, grace and insight. We look forward to welcoming him to our North East region group of bishops.

This debate matters not just because of Philip's own integrity – which remains unimpeached in the midst of debate – but also because of the nature of the Church of England itself, which reached a resolution in 2014 that enabled people who disagree on fundamental issues to continue to remain together as members of one Church bound together in Jesus Christ. This is not a “winner takes all” approach but rather one that seeks – as the Lambeth resolution said – to recognise that those who dissent as well as those who assent to particular propositions are both treated as loyal members of the Church.

It's a lesson that we need to hear in times where fractious disagreement can threaten to boil over into unwise actions.

Essential to the Church of England's 2014 decision to proceed with the ordination of women as bishops was the House of Bishops Declaration made in May that year, pointing to five guiding principles, affirming the Church's commitment both to the ordination of women as bishops, and to the flourishing within the Church of England of those who on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests. There is no contradiction here – this is about people of different traditions called to put Christ first, for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Bishop Philip North's nomination is entirely consistent with these guiding principles. For those reasons, and after much thought and prayer, the Crown Nominations Commission nominated the Rt Rev Philip North to be Bishop of Sheffield, and the Queen has accepted their nomination. I look forward to his ministry in Sheffield.

Dr John Sentamu is the Archbishop of York.

## **Appendix F: MP's reply to Archbishop, Yorkshire Post**

### **Finding the Wisdom of Solomon**

It may come as a surprise to readers of the *Yorkshire Post* that I agree with most of what the Archbishop of York said in his article (Saturday 25/02/17). The Bishop of Burnley is a fine person.

But he should decline to be the next Bishop of Sheffield, and here is why. He cannot, in his conscience recognize, value and affirm the sacramental integrity of one third of his clergy.

Such a position has no integrity. He will be the cause of division, and cannot bring unity. His views on women clergy mean that he is instrument of partition and pain. He cannot bring healing.

On the one hand, Bishop Philip says he is committed to women in leadership. But on the other hand, he clearly believes that these same women - his own clergy - are not true priests. And so he undermines them. His apparent affirmation does not compensate for his subversion.

My essay in *Modern Church* did not call for Bishop North to resign. It asked him to either fully and unequivocally affirm **all** his clergy - and so distance himself from the position of the Society he helps to lead. And if he can't or won't do this, he is not the right person to lead and unite the Diocese of Sheffield. Simple.

Philip North's commitment to a society that does not accept female clergy as true, full and equal alongside male clergy is a form of gender-based discrimination. It has no other name.

I don't think we can trust Bishop North's affirmation of women in leadership either. He is part of a catholic society that believes only men can truly be priests and bishops, and that this same society is to be led by bishops, who in turn lead the church. What leadership roles, exactly, are left for the women, in a church run by such men?

At this, there have been some howls of protest from conservative catholic groups in the Church of England. The logic is very odd. Namely, they should be allowed to be intolerant of women. But it is apparently intolerant of me to object to this. I would simply argue that tolerating intolerance is not an especially virtuous practice!

To try and appease those who objected to women priests and women bishops, the Church of England adopted the (so-called) 'Five Guiding Principles' to help maintain unity. The first principle is crucial. It shapes how the remaining four are read.

The First Principle states: "the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience".

Let us dwell on those words: 'fully', 'unequivocally', 'equally open to all', 'without reference to gender'. That those so ordained are 'true' and 'lawful'. True means true. Not half true. The society that Philip North belongs to does not believe one third of his clergy are 'true' clergy. (But he does admit they are 'lawfully' ordained).

The faithfulness of the church, and its public witness, is neither affirmed nor rewarded by finding some fudged middle ground between sexism and equality. Any more than it is between racism and impartiality, or any kind of exclusion based on a person's identity, and their inclusion.

The Five Guiding Principles seek a middle-way between inclusion and exclusion. They are muddled. We would not tolerate, quite rightly, a post-apartheid South Africa that still gave honoured places in government to those who held racially-segregationist views.

At the same time, we would not dispute that South Africans holding such segregationist views - not all of whom were white, incidentally - were also loyal and good South Africans. We would not drive them away. We'd seek reconciliation with those fellow-citizens.

But we would seek truth too. We would not honour their views, giving them a place in governance, or be seeking to protect or enshrine such views as equally valuable, credible or laudable. Such views do not lead to 'mutual flourishing'.

The Church of England would not dream of tolerating views on race that spoke of difference and diversity, and then re-licensing these terms as leverage for the means of further discrimination. Why does it allow this on gender?

For a passionate-moderate like myself, let me state clearly that not all views are of equal worth on race or gender. Some are wrong and harmful. Being tolerant - and I do believe in a tolerant, mild, open church - also means that, sometimes, views that are manifestly intolerant have to be named and resisted.

Moderates have backbones too.

The story of the wisdom of Solomon, and found in the Old Testament (1 Kings 3), is well known. Two women gave birth together. One baby dies, and so the bereaved mother steals the other child. In the cold light of day, both are left to dispute who the remaining baby belongs to. The mothers tell conflicting stories.

Solomon's wisdom was to call the mothers together, and offer to divide the surviving child in two: have half each. One mother expresses contentment with this result. She gets half. Both will now share in pain and grief. It keeps things balanced. But the real mother says to the one who has lost her baby, 'take the child'. Solomon awards the child to mother who would give up her baby, in order to spare its life.

What has this story got to do with Sheffield Diocese? Everything. The catholic group that felt they have lost their beloved Church of England have filched something of it back. Their Sheffield dispute is about entitlement. But the women clergy, and male clergy ordained by women bishops, will not let their diocese be divided in two. Their ministry, morale and integrity now have to be forfeited for the good of the whole. Their self-sacrifice will be enormous.

Alas, we have no Solomon leading the Church of England. So our goodly moderates will be constantly compelled to accede to small pressure groups, who keep threatening to take 'their' half-share of the child away.

I know that Bishop Philip North is a loyal Anglican. But his appointment does not represent a triumph for a broad church that can now showcase its diversity, and a capacity to live with differences and disagreements.

It sends a completely different message to the world. Namely, that we tolerate exclusion and discrimination at the highest levels. And that our Church leaders support such discrimination, in the name of inclusion and 'mutual flourishing'.

The Church of England has to find better ways forward with its complex balancing act: between managed diversity and integrated unity. We cannot be seen, as a public, national church, to be sanctioning and sacralising such sexism.

Philip North's appointment to the See of Sheffield, whilst he is still a card-carrying member of a group that doesn't believe women can be 'truly' clergy, is not a step forward for the church. It's a step backwards into dense fog, and greater darkness.

The Very Revd Professor Martyn is the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford.  
He worked in Sheffield Diocese from 1997-2004

## **Appendix G: Arun Arora's Yorkshire Post article**

### **Arun Aurora: Why the CoE must be a broad church when it comes to new Bishop of Sheffield**

*Yorkshire Post, Saturday 4 March 2017*

I RECENTLY received an email from an academic researcher on a proposal to set up a new website for the creation of an "intersectional discussion group". Her proposal ended with a rather startling statement: "We reject racism, misogyny, violence, aggression, sexism, ablism, homophobia, transphobia, casteism, white supremacy, patriarchy and oppressive ideologies."

I was reminded of the email by a piece in The Times earlier this week which reported that "British universities suffer from "group-think" with a strong left-wing or liberal bias among academics".

As the husband of an academic, I found much of this rather surprising. Many of the academics I know tend to be thoughtful, reflective – and as you might expect from people involved in higher education – able to balance views in a way which rises above the kind of strident polemical tone which might be more likely to be found amongst undergraduates rather than those who teach them.

But the advent of digital technology seems to have seduced those who might otherwise know better into making the kind of rash statements which social media often elicits. Not that such statements are only to be found on Facebook or Twitter.

Writing in these pages earlier this week, the Reverend Professor Martyn Percy implied that those who support the appointment of Bishop Philip North as the new Bishop of Sheffield, and the Church of England's settlement on enabling women to be bishops were akin to those who held apartheid era racially-segregationist views. Following Professor Percy's logic that means he is suggesting the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, as good as holds racist views. So much for thoughtful and reflective views.

That astonishing implication goes to the heart the issue with Professor Percy's argument. It's not so much that he doesn't make out a case but rather that those who disagree with him must be labelled in such a way as to make holding an opposite view morally unacceptable. By presenting his arguments in such terms where is the room for reasoned and balanced debate? Or, to put it another way, when did it become acceptable for academics to start playing the man and stop playing the ball?

Professor Percy is at pains in his article to suggest he thinks Bishop North is a good man and the argument is not personal. Well, if someone told me that I should resign from my job because my views were effectively sexist, I think I'd take that rather personally. Taken as a whole, Professor Percy's argument goes beyond stating his own view to requiring someone else who holds a different view to either agree or resign.



The nomination of Philip North as the next Bishop of Sheffield was made within the frameworks and processes agreed by General Synod in 2014. Many, if not all, of Professor Percy's arguments were heard and considered by Synod before being rejected.

Rather than casting out opponents into the wilderness – or labelling them with epithets such as “racist” or “sexist” – the 2014 settlement sought to achieve how people with fundamental differences could still walk together. In doing so the settlement reflected one of the great beauties of the Church of England in its theological breadth.

Since that settlement was reached, 10 women have been consecrated as Bishops in the Church of God. Philip North is the first Diocesan bishop to have been nominated whose views on women bishops reflect the Church's traditionalist approach and also those of our sister Churches across the world including the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Church: 10 to one is a pretty good result for those whose desire is to keep score against their opponents. For the Church as a whole it is a sign that mutual flourishing is possible and that despite disagreement it is possible to work together. However, Professor Percy's argument would suggest even this is too much.

In the nomination of Philip North the Church of England has an opportunity to demonstrate to a wider world that enables opponents to flourish. I have no beef with Martyn Percy the man. But the implications of his argument are that by disagreeing with him I am no better than an apartheid-supporting racist. Professor Percy is better than that and the Church of England should be too.

Reverend Arun Arora is director of communications at the Church of England.

## Appendix H: MP Guest Blog Reflection (Lenten) on 'Abstinence'

### Abstaining: A Lenten Reflection

Lent is traditionally the season of self-denial and abstinence. We refuse comforts, luxuries and essentials, so we might accompany Christ on his road to Calvary. We deny ourselves so we can take up our cross. We set aside those things that inhibit us from running the race set before us (Hebrews 12: 1-2).

The word 'abstain' comes from the Old French words *abstainer* or *abstenir* (14c.), and the earlier *astenir* (13c.), meaning to "hold (oneself) back, refrain voluntarily, abstain (from what satisfies our desires), practice abstinence", and from the Latin *abstinere* or *abstenerere*, with connotations of "withholding, keeping back, keeping off". The word *ab-stain* means, literally, to let go; to not hold; or to withhold (oneself).

So as we are in the early days of Lent, let me say something about abstinence as a moral virtue in ecclesial life. After all, the New Testament is packed with issues and problems on this very subject. Should gentiles be circumcised, or should Jewish converts withhold their desire to see believers marked by this sign of the covenant? The New testament Church answered this clearly (see: Acts 15:24, 1 Corinthians 7:18-19 and Galatians 5:2-4).

Should Christians abstain from eating meat offered to idols? It was a regular custom of the near east for retailers to charge more for quality meat offered at a shrine or altar dedicated to a god, demi-god or idol. Paul counsels caution. He does not believe such gods really exist, so ontologically, the meat does not have more nutritional or sacred value than normal meat. But nonetheless, he counsels (1 Corinthians 8: 1-13) us to be mindful of 'weaker brethren' who might struggle with Christians eating any and every food, irrespective of origin. But actually, they did. Can Christians drink wine? Moderately, it would seem (see: 1 Tim 5:23); but not to excess (see: 1 Corinthians 6: 10; Romans 13:13).

Food was a battleground for the early church. It symbolised much for the first Christians, and their permissive eating habits would have been remarked upon and critiqued by those of other faiths, and none. Jesus allegedly ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11: 19). He was accused by some of being a drunkard and a glutton. Yet the church went on to feed the poor, widows and orphans (Acts 6: 1-7; I Timothy 5: 1-16).

The Kingdom of God that Christ proclaimed, and was to come, would be an inclusive banquet. The early Christians broke bread together, and did so inclusively and equally as a sign of God's abiding regard for all. There was no distinction in Christ. All were one: 'neither male nor female, Jew or Greek, slave or free...'. All are one in Jesus Christ: united, equal (see: Galatians 3: 28). Bishops, as a sign of their leadership and service in that kingdom, like Christ, share in the one bread, as a sign of being one body (1 Corinthians 10: 17).

Because food was so important to the peoples and church of the New Testament, and abstaining and self-denial of food in Lent is still (rightly) so prevalent today, I offer one foodrelated analogy here to help illuminate the current issues in Sheffield Diocese. The analogy is simple.

A diocese is like a family restaurant. It caters for many different tastes in food. It caters for all manner of special diets too; even specialist religious diets. So there remains a way of eating in this restaurant that respects every kind of proclivity, within reason, that could conceivably

be catered for. Indeed, for those who want all their food cooked separately from others to avoid taint, and even prefer to eat only with those who share such proclivities, they can eat in a separate room within the restaurant. This restaurant even allows you to bring in your own chef, if required; and it has a separate kitchen in the building to enable a variety of taintfree provisions.

So far, so good. Now, here are some things that would be reasonable and unreasonable to accept or expect. It would be reasonable to go to a family restaurant and only order and eat vegetarian food. But it would be unreasonable to complain about the other diners who were eating meat or fish. It is reasonable to request a vegetarian option at a steakhouse; and no good steakhouse would be without such choices on the menu. It would be unreasonable and rude to go a vegetarian restaurant and request a rare-cooked steak. It would be reasonable to take over the restaurant and run as it was. But less reasonable for the new owner to refuse to offer certain things that were once on the menu, because they troubled his or her own conscience. It would not be reasonable to differentiate between the diners, dividing the vegetarians from the meat eaters at tables. Or for that matter, to exalt those on special diets, and at the expense of the majority of the other customers.

There is something here about power-relations, and what one person's choice of abstention means for everyone else. Bishop Philip North is an abstainer. He is entitled to be so. He abstains from ordaining women. He abstains from recognising and affirming their full and equal *sacramental* ordination, (NB: but not *lawful*, although this is still against Principle One of the 'Five Guiding Principles'). He abstains from clarifying his views on what happens when a woman priest celebrates the Eucharist at an altar in Pitsmoor or on the Manor Estate - or any other parish of the Diocese. He abstains from recognising the sacramental efficacy of men ordained by women bishops. He abstains from full participation in a Eucharist and Consecration, unless they are male-only affairs, and the sacramental 'integrity' of the event is guaranteed.

All this abstinence is entirely a matter for the liberty of his conscience, and let me say clearly and unequivocally, that the Church of England, in all its breadth and charity, should permit such liberties. And let me repeat that Bishop Philip is, undoubtedly, a gifted priest and minister, and a fine Bishop of Burnley.

But as the Diocesan Bishop of Sheffield, all of his choices - his chosen ranges of abstinence - are no longer about his liberty of conscience as an individual. They are now imposed on others, and moreover, on those who do not share his liberty of conscience. Indeed, many, if not most in the Diocese, want to affirm those things from which he chooses to abstain. But as Bishop of a Diocese, all are forced to accept a culture and polity formed around *his* abstentions, and his individual liberty of conscience. This is unreasonable.

In terms of our restaurant analogy, the new owner will now effectively be telling all the diners what can and can't be eaten; what choices are no longer available; what food, if eaten, has more value than other choices; which diners are recognised as real, valid customers; and which ones, though affirmed and supported as valued, are in fact not as real and valid as the others. One person's self-denial now becomes forced on all the other diners. One person's abstention becomes a universal imposition. The only way to get through this debacle would be for the new owner to either give up on owning and running the restaurant - self-denial and abstention. Or, to be able to say, unequivocally, that all meals offered here were and are

good, and will be served and affirmed as nourishing food, and as part of a flourishing restaurant.

To put this analogy to work in terms of any ecclesial polity, it seems to me that the following are reasonable. That those who cannot, in conscience, receive the ministry of women, be allowed to 'self-cater' so to speak, and eat separately if they wish, in this restaurant. That those who wish to only eat vegetarian, or who never eat fish, be able to enjoy their food with other diners - so ecclesial tastes across the spectra are respected and catered for.

What would be unreasonable would be the following. To expect, under the 'Five Guiding Principles', a woman bishop to be able to celebrate the Eucharist for a major festival at the Shrine of Walsingham. That would be like asking for steak at a vegetarian restaurant: a potentially offensive request. Equally, what is also unacceptable is to expect diners who are used to a wide variety of tastes being respected and catered for, including specialist diets, to be told it is 'unreasonable' of them to complain about the new owner restricting their choices, and by implication, querying the value of their everyday food.

I can't speak for Philip North here. I know that his ministry in Blackburn Diocese was experienced as positive and pastoral by the women clergy there. But that ministry was received in a Diocese where, historically, it had been difficult for women clergy to be regarded and well respected. Sheffield is not Blackburn. Sheffield is a Diocese where women clergy are well-used to equality - full, unambiguous and clear for two decades now - and it can only be a step backwards for them to have a Bishop who, due to his own liberty of conscience, regards them differently from male priests. By 'differently', I mean that he abstains: from saying what they are when ordained; what actually happens when they celebrate the Eucharist; and what happens when a woman bishop ordains a man (nothing, presumably?). Bishop North abstains from commenting on these concerns.

The problem here is that abstention has two qualities. Self-denial as a spiritual discipline is all well and good. But abstention, as a political act, is not neutral. It means either 'no'; or; 'I am not sure, and don't support you'. Abstention is something that is potentially negative. Applied to others, politically, abstention denies others their rights and equality: it robs them of a crucial decision, or of affirmation in a meeting. Abstention means 'no'. And this is what Bishop Philip needs to grasp. His ambiguity and abstention on women clergy is a 'no' to them; not a 'maybe'; and certainly not a 'yes'.

Yes, I know that over thirty women from Blackburn Diocese wrote in to *The Church Times* to say that Bishop Philip was supportive of them, and a very good bishop in his own right. I am sure that's true. But it is not, with respect, the issue. Bishop Philip is not at the centre of some popularity contest. Finding a hundred more women to agree with the women of Blackburn would add nothing to this debate. Because the issue is not popularity; it is integrity. Does he think these women clergy are fully and unequivocally valid: sacramentally, not just lawfully? If the answer is 'no', then he *cannot* fully affirm them in their ministry. At some deep level, he will not believe their ordination to be 'true'.

This all matters much more in a place like Sheffield - and for a Diocesan Bishop - than it might have mattered in Burnley. Because Sheffield is a city that is accustomed to equality in its fine universities, new cutting-edge industries, the NHS, the police, social services, local government, schools, as well as its gritty estates and tough neighbourhoods. Inequality has no place there. If the leaders of these institutions had been asked by the Archbishops'

Secretary, directly, whether they could work with a bishop in public ministry who felt discrimination against women was theologically legitimate, I doubt any could have replied in the affirmative. The Bishop of Sheffield is a public figure, not just a church leader. So someone who embodies the public face and ministry of the established church will need to work with this public, shared commitment to equality; indeed, help to lead it. Philip North's stance on his own women clergy would make this implausible, and potentially disingenuous.

Further afield in the Diocese, we perhaps forget, all-too-easily, that the legacy of the Rotherham Enquiry on the sustained culture of abuse of young people (between 1997-2013), most of it sexual, mostly against girls and young women, identified *inequality* as a major underlying issue. Simon Danczuk, the Labour MP for Rochdale where similar cases were prosecuted, observed that "a very small minority of people in the...community have *a very unhealthy view of women*...it's a complex jigsaw, and ethnicity is just one of the pieces. Class (was) a major factor, (as were working conditions)...".

What places like Rotherham will need from the next Bishop of Sheffield is someone who believes in the equality of women and men, boys and girls alike, and has an uncompromising unequivocal regard for their full dignity and total parity. This is utterly and totally essential.

Women are not some 'theological issue' on which to have a view, and shape an ecclesial polity. They are equally and fully created in the image of God; half of the world's population. It will not do, in public ministry, to be a church that treats women differently - regarding them as unequal, and able, by virtue of their gender, to be treated in a way that is discriminatory.

The map in this debate badly needs redrawing. The Church of England is not "balanced" when, after acquiring ten women bishops, it decides to even things up with the preferment of a traditionalist diocesan bishop that won't recognise those women bishops. Balance would be 50% of our bishops as women. Balance would be 50% of our priests as women. Balance would be something that reflected our congregations and parishes up and down the country. Traditionalists are a tiny, tiny percentage of our worshippers. We have created imbalance here, and in our attempt as a church to staunch the furious hurt of a few, have actually offended and alienated a great many more. And especially the wider public, who look on agog at our sacralised sexism.

In the name of balance, then, abstention is the main issue to dwell on in this season of Lent. It is surely time for the Church to realise that it is profoundly unwise for the wishes of a small minority to dictate terms to the vast majority. The integrity of the restaurant can remain intact and still serve minorities. But the restaurant is virtually bound to fail in serving the wider public, and the whole church, if the chosen abstentions of one person are now to be imposed upon the many in Sheffield Diocese.

The early Christians knew that food was integral to the life of the church. They broke bread together; they shared common meals; they fed the poor and the hungry; they treated everyone as being made equally in the image of God, and as full citizens of heaven. There was one body - and so only one bread. What Sheffield Diocese needs is a Bishop who can inhabit all of this, and with full confidence and complete integrity. The New Testament has made very little room for selective abstentions.

The Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy is Dean of Christ Church, Oxford

## **Appendix I: MP Essay on ‘Discrimination’, April 2017**

### **Not a Matter of Opinion: Discernment, Difference and Discrimination**

Riceville in Iowa is a town you have probably never heard of. But in 1968, a young junior school teacher, Jane Elliott, conducted an extraordinary experiment with her class of eight- and nine-year-olds. Elliott had been struck by a TV news interview on the day that Martin Luther King Jr had been shot. Concerned by the implicit racial bias in the TV reporting (i.e., one reporter opined that “black people will need controlling more than ever, now...”), Elliott decided to trial her social research. She divided her class into two: kids with brown eyes, and kids with blue eyes.

Over the course of the next few days, she fed the class new lines of thinking. Blue-eyed kids were smarter, more honest, cleaner and more civilised, she said. The blue-eyed kids were rewarded with extra playtime, and given preferential seats in class. Brown-eyed kids were punished more harshly for wrong-doing, and treated as inferior. They class were told they were more likely to get in to trouble. The blue-eyed kids began to enjoy their sense of superiority. And they began to believe it was all true. Although this educational social experiment only lasted a few days, she observed that discrimination was easy to induce. We are, as people, suggestible.

We cannot change our eye-colour. It is a part of our identity. We may have opinions about what skin colour, natural hair colour or eye-colour all might mean and infer. But these are all opinions we can change. So the cornerstone of modern law on equality is that it is wrong to discriminate against people on the basis of their given identity: male, female, black, white – and other givens. Opinions about identity can change. But identity, as a fundamental ‘given’, is accorded the status of equality in law in most developed nations.

Now, there are three different ways in which one could conceive of discrimination. First, if done on the basis of a person’s or peoples given identity, we rightly call this unlawful discrimination. Except for the churches – who exempted themselves from the 2010 Equality Act – every other employer, organisation or institution that tries to promote discriminate on the basis of another person’s or peoples identity is liable to prosecution and penalty. As gender is a given, including transgender, gender-based discrimination is illegal. Increasingly these days, sexuality is seen as a ‘given’. Not necessarily from birth; but a sufficient ‘given’ nonetheless, in the sense that it is a ‘natural orientation’, and not a lifestyle choice. For any employer, organisation or institution to try and discriminate on grounds of sexuality is to risk an incursion with the law. Only the churches continue to discriminate in this way.

Second, one could discriminate on grounds of competency. Employers, organisations and institutions do this routinely. Not everyone can go to Oxford or Cambridge to read law or physics. Tests are taken, and criteria applied. Only the best make it. As long as the discrimination is fair (i.e., only intellectual), then it is applied. But due allowances must be made for disabilities of various kinds, such as dyslexia. And this may extend to educational opportunities too. So, in a very close call between two candidates of equal merit and one place, universities may invest in some mindful and appropriate ‘positive discrimination’.

Equally, to balance the diversity in a Board of Directors, one may make judicious use of discriminatory reasoning.

Third, there is discrimination on the grounds of integrity. A person applying to run a Vegan charity would be expected to embody and support the values of the charity. They could not, I think, run a dairy and beef business in their spare time, and claim that was hobby that did not interfere with the performance of their duties. It would. The public would probably think it was odd, and also hypocritical. The rationale and reputation of the charity would be susceptible under such leadership. True, the actual competency of the individual to run the charity may not be in doubt. They might be able to do the job on every level of competency. But as a matter of integrity, they should not even be considered for the role.

The Philip North case involved all three forms of discrimination. As a member of 'The Society', Bishop North does not believe women can be real - or "truly" - clergy. His own integrity – that of believing in a male-only ontological patrilineal succession – makes it impossible for him to believe that women can be "truly" clergy. But Bishop North's integrity would require the others to negate their own integrity and (given) identity in deference to his opinion and to accept his episcopal oversight. Not just the clergywomen either. Any parish that welcomed women clergy, or had women clergy as part of a team would be similarly affected. So would those parishes where the clergyman was ordained by a female bishop. Despite Bishop North's claim that he would promote women to positions of leadership in the church, the official position of 'The Society' he represents is that ultimate leadership in the church is exercised by episcopal and priestly (male-only) colleagues, and not by the laity. The Director of 'the Society', Dr Colin Podmore, a layperson, has confirmed this.

So the laity, parishes and congregations of Sheffield Diocese would have been left with some very awkward questions had the appointment of Bishop North gone ahead. If these sacraments of grace that the congregations of South Yorkshire received daily and weekly at the hands of their clergy are good and efficacious enough for them, why would they not also be good enough for their bishop? Who, let us not forget, would have had to share the "cure of souls" with these clergy.

This is where the language of 'sacramental assurance' is particularly iniquitous. For some in 'The Society' want to be slightly fudgy-agnostic about women clergy and the sacraments they celebrate. "We can't be *sure* they are vehicles of grace", they say. But women are somehow to appreciate being esteemed as pastoral colleagues, who are nonetheless able to work in their vocations and ministries. A language of equality is deployed with one hand; but it is withdrawn with the other.

But this won't do. It is discrimination, dressed up as doctrine. Can the owner of an airline say, for example: 'look, all our pilots are great, and we train and treat them all equally – it is just that I *personally* won't fly in any of our planes piloted by women, because I can't be *sure* of them, so I advise my close family to veto likewise. But as for the wider public, well, I don't much mind...'. Could a male Senior Partner in a General Practice advise patients not to use their equally-well qualified female doctors – only because they are women? It would be discriminatory to do so.

Can a diocesan bishop say that up to a third of his clergy are not "truly" priests, so that at least one third of the parishes are not receiving valid sacraments? Apparently so. To be clear, that is the present position of the Church of England. This is discriminatory. Not on the basis of

competency, either. Rather, purely on the grounds of *identity*, and the promotion of the discriminators 'integrity' (i.e., merely their opinion, which can be changed). Over and against the integrity of the identity of the clergy, parishes and people (i.e., which can't be changed). This is gender-based discrimination, pure and simple.

Bishop Philip, as a leading member and one of several Bishops who leads 'The Society', does not recognise women clergy as 'truly' clergy (as Principle One of the 'Five Guiding Principles' requires). Or men ordained by women bishops. Bishop Philip has said he recognises these people as "lawfully" clergy, but not "truly" – hence the call of 'The Society' to issue identity cards, solely in order to discriminate, and to not receive the ministry of women, and men ordained by women bishops. That group constituted over one-third of the clergy in Sheffield diocese, where +Philip was to be bishop, until his withdrawal on March 9<sup>th</sup> 2017.

As far as the 'Five Guiding Principles' (5GP's) are concerned, it is worth remembering that these were imposed on Synod by the House of Bishops as the 'cost' (or counter-weight) for approving women bishops. They are not part of the legislation in Parliament that approved women bishops. They constitute an imposed Code of Practice, which, as I say, members of 'The Society' do not, de facto, adhere to.

Some in 'The Society' might claim that they are on the receiving end of discrimination in the Church of England. So let us deal with this, briefly. First, no-one doubts their priestly or episcopal ministry based on their fundamental, given identity: male. Second, they are not discriminated against on grounds of competency: they can be Bishops, Deans, and so forth. Third, there is provision for those who belong to groups that hold discriminatory views – they are given 'Flying Bishops' (i.e., PEV's) and other preferment and resources.

Is there a 'stained glass ceiling' for those who hold such views, preventing them from becoming Diocesan Bishops in places not familiar with their opinion being used in the exercise of leadership, ministry and oversight? The 'Five Guiding Principles' says there is no such ceiling. But common sense, theological integrity and Christian charity tells us that such views would be extremely unwelcome in most dioceses.

Consider the parallels. Suppose a male Head Teacher, about to be appointed in a tough innercity Church School, does not think women should hold positions of authority or teach – especially in religious studies. At the school, one third of the teachers are women. Half the pupils are female. So are half the parents of the pupils. At interview, the candidate explains that they get on well with women, encourage them in their work, and will support them. But their religious conscience leads them to conclude women should not really teach, or be leaders.

Should the governors appoint him, even if he is the best candidate in every other sphere? The law would say 'no' to this appointment, and the governors would be penalised if they went ahead. It would be an inherently discriminatory act. Because, the appointment of this Head Teacher would discriminate against all the women teachers – solely on grounds of their identity, not their capacities or competencies. If the appointment went ahead, the parents would rightly complain: what message does this send to their daughters – and to their sons, for that matter?

This is what happened in Sheffield. The laity lobbied against the appointment in large numbers. They did not want their diocese run by a leader who held inherently discriminatory



views. Neither did the clergymen want this either: what would it say about them, as ordained men? And the women, of course, stood their ground too, quite rightly. There is no reason for any other diocese to act differently in the future. Nor should they.

Some have already let out shrill cries that Philip North's withdrawal was a victory for populism. It was nothing of the sort. Rather, it was a powerful demonstration of localism. Sheffield diocese wants a bishop who is in full 'catholic communion' with the rest of the church. Philip North's consecration as Suffragan Bishop of Burnley was only carried about by PEV's and other 'untainted' bishops – even the Archbishop of York stood aside in his own Minster. Sheffield diocese also needs a bishop who is local communion with all his clergy – not just the men (provided, of course, those men were not ordained by a woman bishop). Bishops are to be a focus of catholic and local unity. Bishop Philip could be neither, through his own choice to be a member of 'The Society', that won't accept the wholeness and integrity of the whole church. 'The Society' cherry-picks on the basis of gender-based discrimination.

Whatever deals were done on the floor of General Synod, there was no reason at all for the people of Sheffield and South Yorkshire to pay the price for this – either as a dubious experiment in "mutual flourishing" (e.g., what if it didn't work? How would you know if it was, as it had not been tried before?). The localism of the bishop should not be underestimated. In 2015, 12.5% of the population voted UKIP. If we had proportional representation as our election system, UKIP would have over 80 MP's. (NB: the LibDems would have over 30). But just imagine the task of allocating the UKIP MP to geographic constituencies. Would Witney like to be represented by one? Or what about the centre of Birmingham or Bradford? The locals would resist – and fiercely, I suspect.

Sheffield diocese resisted a bishop of 'The Society' for largely similar reasons. Yes, 'The Society' has national clout. Yes, the 'Five Guiding Principles' were hammered out on the floor of General Synod. But quite rightly, nobody wants to pick up the price for that locally. Why should they? Local MP's are elected locally. Bishops are not. But – and this is crucial – they need to be able to represent their locality. Introducing a card-carrying candidate who champions gender-based discrimination to South Yorkshire and Sheffield would never easily work. It was patronising and iniquitous to even ask the question of the locals. Why should they have ever have even countenanced such a discriminatory agenda, let alone given it serious consideration? What were the CNC thinking of? Sheffield, proudly, was a city that held some of the very first Suffragette meetings in the early twentieth century.

This whole debacle all has serious consequences for our mission and ministry as a national church. One of the reasons this had not been adequately addressed is that the Church of England is hierarchical. So, our church leaders did not seem too bothered in 2008 when Kristin Aune, a sociologist of religion, announced startling findings. Collectively churches in England have been losing 50,000 women worshippers a year, over a million in total. Evidence indicated this was partly because young women found churches alienating and disempowering. As a church we tolerate discrimination, and give it space to flourish, and also resource it financially through 'flying bishops' and other provisions. As the commentator Savi Hensman has noted, writing in *Ekklesia*,

"There is also a widespread lack of understanding of the theological importance of justice and the psychological and sometimes physical damage done by discrimination of all kinds...In addition, many senior clergy live in something of an institutional bubble

where problematic practices are glossed over. For instance in a hospital, if a junior doctor announced that he did not regard women as proper doctors, it would be unlawful to appoint him, let alone let him be supervised by a man rather than the woman who heads his department. Yet the major concessions already made by the church are often taken for granted by those who benefit. Likewise school governors would not just nod through the appointment of a head if he were part of a movement which encouraged parents not to let their children be educated by women teachers....”.

We need to remember that Britons spoke loudly in favour of ordaining women as priests in the Church of England. Seven-to-eight in ten endorsed them in polling by Gallup (1976, April and October 1984, 1988, 1996), NOP (1978, 1981, 1984), Marplan (1979), MORI (1989), and Continental Research (1993). In the 2013 Westminster Faith Debates (Woodhead/YouGov) polling consistently showed that the general public, and regular churchgoers, all perceived the Church of England to be negative and discriminatory towards women in respect of ordination to the priesthood and to the episcopate. (See Clive Field, 'Has the CofE lost the English people? some quantitative tests' *Theology* 2017, Vol. 120(2) 83–92).

Yet the church does discerningly permit *some* discrimination, when it allows for ‘liberty of conscience’. The church has, in its wisdom, made gracious provision and concessions to those who, in conscience, cannot accept women priests. Through such support, the church enables these groups to flourish. But there is no reason to welcome their inherently discriminatory gender-based worldview into the wider church, and crown it with the honour of governance and grant them even wider oversight. Especially when it would mean large numbers of clergy might find their identity, ministry and value now no longer held value under such a new bishop.

Speaking personally, I can barely imagine what it might be like for a woman priest, going for their annual appraisal, and as the Vicar of a tough and demanding working class parish somewhere in Sheffield diocese during 2016. Having been appraised, they might receive affirmation for their work and vocation, and encouragement to continue developing the mission and ministry of the parish. But can you imagine going through that same process in 2017, when their new bishop does not recognise the same woman as even being ordained, or that her parishioners are not now in receipt of any valid sacramental ministry? That would be Bishop Philip North’s position, according to ‘The Society’ he represents.

If I were that clergywoman, this would destroy my morale. It would fundamentally undermine my identity and confidence. And that is essentially the difference between valid discernment in ministry, and pathological discrimination. Discernment is good, and disagreement can be creative. But discrimination damns others who, quite independent of their gifts and competencies, are destined to be denigrated, disempowered and disabled - solely on the basis of their identity - by those practicing putative discrimination. That’s why it needs to be resisted, at all costs.

The Sheffield debacle began to unravel some time before I published my original essay (‘Questions of Ambiguity and Integrity’, February 24<sup>th</sup> 2017). At the consultation stage of the process to select a new bishop, the women clergy of the diocese were asked, informally, if they would welcome a woman bishop. In what can only be described as an act of gracious magnanimity, they said ‘no’, indicating that the diocese was not ready for this yet. They

were also thinking of their (fellow) clergy in the (so-called) 'Hickleton Chapter', which is a 'virtual' and non-geographic gathering, made up of the male clergy under the PEV (i.e., 'flying bishop'). The women at no stage were asked if they would accept a bishop who did not ordain women. They quite reasonably assumed that the first question implied the second question was not on the table. The "Statement of Needs", drafted by a small group of 'insiders', carefully avoids any reference to this second question:

<http://www.sheffield.anglican.org/statementconsultation>

This was, with the benefit of hindsight, a "deliberate lapse" on the part of that small group drafting the "Statement of Needs". No-one consulted on whether the Diocese of Sheffield would welcome a bishop who would not ordain women.

What then happened was inevitable: the views which should have been gathered by the drafting group could only be voiced once Philip North had been selected. Parishes and clergy duly registered their concerns, in large numbers. The postbag was enormous, and grew daily. This was no organised campaign. It was ordinary people, concerned about the impact of gender-based discrimination in their local parishes. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Jane Elliott's 1960's social experiment could not be repeated today. But we have other social studies to reckon with. Research shows that companies where women are strongly represented at board level in the top 100 FTSE companies, they tend to out-perform their more male-dominated competition. Where the male-female ratio is 50-50, the figures are better still. This also encourages better harmony and happiness in the workplace.

In contrast, the Church of England's idea of "balance" is evening up the number of 'traditionalist' bishops with those who are women bishops. These numbers are about tied at the moment. (There are ten women bishops; but there are nine serving bishops who won't ordain women – including one for the Conservative Evangelicals). There are still only two diocesan bishops who are women.

Frankly, this is pathetic. And it shows that the Church of England is keener to pander to forces of discrimination and sexism than it is to embrace gender justice and equality. The Church of England consistently sends out mixed signals. It is good to have women clergy, apparently. But please, don't let us celebrate this too much for fear of upsetting those who still want to engage in gender-based discrimination.

What is now needed in the Church of England is a thorough and wholesale review. Not just of the 'Five Guiding Principles', and the question of whether or not a 'traditionalist' can ever be a diocesan bishop. These are mere symptoms of the deeper malaise. What the Church of England now needs to review is just one thing: discrimination. Just that: discrimination.

Why does the Church of England promote, prefer and resource people and groups who discriminate against people on the basis of their gender, sexuality and identity? We would not tolerate it on age, or ethnicity. But on gender? Why, exactly? Do we still think that the discriminators might have something valid and useful to say about women that the wider church still needs to hear? That women are, after all our debates, still potentially worth *less*?

I know that those who subscribe to alienating forms of theological anthropology won't be converted quickly or easily. It took generations to achieve comparable change on slavery and racism. Women, meanwhile, don't want to be fobbed off with "gracious respect"; they want

equality. Women are not a ‘theological issue’ to be ‘resolved’. They are half the population: mothers, daughters, friends, family, sisters...people. The language of “mutual flourishing”, enshrined in the Declaration of the ‘Five Guiding Principles’, is of little use to the women if it allows them to still be discriminated against – especially if such views are still regarded as being of *equal value* in the church.

It is sheer nonsense, of course, to accord equality of status to views that are inherently discriminatory. Such logic can only lead to the *further perpetuation* of inequality and discrimination. The only winners in that battle would be those who vest their ‘identity politics’ with derogatory and discriminatory theological anthropologies. Women cannot easily ‘flourish’ as equals under such conditions. So the ‘Five Guiding Principles’ are merely a ‘cease fire’ in the Church of England’s long saga of Gender Wars. Or a truce, at best. But these ‘Principles’ cannot bring peace. Because a temporary political solution cannot resolve our deep theological divisions. Only deeper theology will bring us lasting peace. Such theology will be founded on equality and inclusion, not dubious ‘equal-but-different’ discriminatory reasoning.

Let me illustrate this with a plausible, but hypothetical case. Suppose for a moment Patrick was ordained deacon by one of our female diocesan bishops. Patrick served a curacy in her diocese. After a year she alone ordains him priest. But towards the end of his curacy, he begins to harbour much stronger catholic inklings. Some of his new close friends are members of a group known as ‘The Society’. Now as a new priest-in-charge, he feels alone, and longs for fraternal priestly fellowship.

So Patrick applies to join ‘The Society’. He attends a weekend at Walsingham with members of his congregation and other priests and parishes. But at the final concelebrated Eucharist, in which all priests take part, a friend takes him aside and advises him it would be better if he did not robe, and sat with members of his congregation. Another suggests he robes, but does not say the words or raise his hands at the moment of consecration. And other says it matters not if he robes, nor what he says, as it would be void anyway – so what harm is done?

Poor Patrick. He has realised that his priestly ministry cannot be received or recognised by anyone in ‘The Society’, as he was ordained by a woman. But can he be “re-ordained” now? What legal and theological provisions can ‘The Society’ make for clergy like him? Legally, he can’t be ordained again. But the official position of ‘The Society’ is that he was never “truly” ordained.

In the event, Patrick decides on none of the options his friends at the Walsingham weekend offer. He goes for a walk, and has a cuppa in a local café. And as he drinks his tea, he has an epiphany. So, this is what “mutual flourishing looks like”, he muses to himself. “This is what it is like to be a women priest in the Church of England.”

Such a case would be a farce. But it is plausible. And it exposes, at a stroke, the sheer folly of the Church of England in tolerating this asinine theology of ‘taint-based-ontology’. One based solely on the gender of the minister – a simple case of gender-identity-based discrimination.

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The road to equality for women has been slow at times, even in the twentieth and twentyfirst centuries. So it is important that disingenuous debate and discriminatory action is challenged and resisted in the Church of England. In their commentary on the ‘Five Guiding Principles’

Forward in Faith write that it is possible to affirm the first guiding principle and respect for women priests and bishops as ‘lawful office holders’, because,

“...the Church of England is committed to admitting women to all orders of ministry, but this does not require its members to agree with the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate. The distinction between office (diocesan bishop, archdeacon, incumbent) and order (bishop, priest, deacon) is important. If someone has been appointed to an office by due legal process, that office is not vacant. It is possible in good conscience to recognize the holder of that office as holding the legal responsibilities that belong to it. Such recognition does not necessarily involve recognizing him or her as a bishop or priest in the sacramental sense, or receiving his or her sacramental ministry. Similarly, canonical obedience to an office-holder does not imply anything about the officeholder’s sacramental status. Clergy owe canonical obedience to the holder of the office of diocesan bishop, whether or not he or she has been ordained to the order of bishop...”. (see ‘The Five Guiding Principles: A Commentary’, Forward in Faith, 2a The Cloisters, Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG).

This is of course, ‘straining the gnat and swallowing the camel’ (Mt. 23: 24). The first principle affirms that women are ‘truly and lawfully’ clergy. But as I pointed out in my earlier essay, and referring back to W.S.F. Pickering’s work (See *Anglo-Catholicism: A Study in Religious Ambiguity*, London: SPCK, 1989) this is a deep dynamic in Anglo-Catholic identity, and one perceptively excavated in his sociological analysis: namely, a fondness for ambiguity. Similar problems arise over whether ‘mutual flourishing’ *really* means what it says to both parties. Because Forward in Faith are clearly committed to eventual *extinction* of women clergy, as their commentary on the second and third guiding principles plainly state:

“...that the Church of England ‘has reached a clear decision on the matter’ is plainly the case. A clear decision may not necessarily stand for all time, however. Acknowledgement of the decision may be coupled with hope and prayer that, in the fullness of time, the Church of England will come to recognize it to have been wrong...a process of discernment within the Anglican Communion embodies the concept of ‘reception’...the Church of England’s decision regarding women’s ordination may be clear, but it cannot be regarded as absolute...”.

And on guiding principle five, Forward in Faith writes

“...this principle implicitly recognizes that full communion will *not* be possible, and that communion will be diminished (because the Church of England no longer has an episcopate or a priesthood that enjoys full mutual recognition)...”.

These readings of the ‘Five Guiding Principles’ are contemptuous and dishonest. They mock the spirit and letter of the Code. In view of this, it was entirely right that Bishop Philip North declined the nomination to the See of Sheffield. He would have not have been in full communion with the vast majority of his clergy, and not in full communion with more than

80% of his congregations and parishes - something that 'The Society' also confirms in its literature. This would have been an untenable ecclesiological and theological position for anyone in a position of governance and oversight. Namely, someone who holds a minority view: but cannot recognise or affirm the majority view - as a matter of their conscience. It is best, therefore, if such people who represent a tiny minority view, does not attempt to lead the majority who simply don't and won't share such views. For who will want to follow someone who does not recognise or affirm the vast majority of their followers? What kind of leader discriminates against their followers and employees? And asks that we pledge our fealty, and understand and empathise with their discrimination, because they want this discrimination to have the quasi-legal status of a 'protected characteristic'?

The whole approach of the 'The Society' and Forward in Faith to the 'Five Guiding Principles' lacks integrity and sincerity. Their engagement with the 'Principles' is built on discriminatory, duplicitous and disingenuous interpretations of language. It cannot be truthful to claim that they are committed to 'mutual flourishing'. Only to then openly pray and work for the extinction on women priests and bishops, and so return the Church of England to a state of exclusive male leadership.

The irony of Anglo-Catholic groups such as 'The Society' and Forward in Faith is that their heavy investment in ambiguity produces some very odd results - ones that ultimately undermine their position. In their tortuous manoeuvres to both affirm and deny women, all with disingenuous and discriminatory uses of language, they end up in a position effectively affirming Lay Presidency at the Eucharist. By denying women are truly clergy - and those men ordained by women bishops - yet doing nothing to prevent these weekly celebrations at altars all over the Church of England, they sanction such action. One can only assume that any good 'traditionalist' bishop worth their salt would put an immediate stop to laypeople celebrating Holy Communion across their diocese. I imagine that the language of 'sacramental assurance' will once again be appealed to here: "we can't be *sure* these people are priests, and their sacraments *efficacious*...but we never said they were only laypeople". But this is all just insulting and facile. And it makes no sense. You can't be 'a bit pregnant'. You can't be half baptised. You can't be half ordained.

It is to such matters that Sir Philip Mawer's review now turns. As the Independent Adjudicator for the Church of England in the implementation of the 'Five Guiding Principles', he will have to review not just the failure of process in the Sheffield case, but also the serious theological failures that underpin this matter. And the mocking, disingenuous ways Forward in Faith read the guidelines. Failure of process is one thing; the manifest deficiency of theological principles, quite another.

To be clear, I am willing and able, in all conscience, to see those groups that wish to practice discrimination – be they the ontologically-based in 'catholic' wings of the church, or the "complementarians" in conservative Evangelicalism – continue as part of the Church of England, and to be resourced for their flourishing. I do not think it ecclesially-wise or Christianly-charitable to try and drive them out. They are part of the body of Christ. More unites us than divides us.

But make no mistake: these groups are also, inherently, *discriminatory*. And I cannot see how justice or integrity is best-served, or the mission and ministry of the national church can ever be enhanced, by extending the influence of such groups across the wider church. These

groups have elected to marginalise themselves; this is their own chosen path. They have chosen opinions that necessitate their distancing from the mainstream. And so they should remain in their partially sealed-off wings (but self-constructed, incidentally), until such time as they wish to part company with those alienating opinions, and no longer choose to practice their identity-based discrimination. Our integrity – and interestingly, theirs too – demands nothing less.

The Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy, Dean of Christ Church, Passiontide 2017

**A Clash of Cultures:  
Church Autonomy and Human Rights**

It is true that we did not consult the Churches about being regarded as a public authority or, indeed, any of the many other organisations which will be affected by the Bill. I have to confess that it did not occur to anyone in government that the churches would have any particular difficulty in playing their proper part in the enforcement of human rights in Britain. I therefore make no secret at all of the fact that, when this subject was raised in Committee, I was surprised by the suggestion that Churches and religious bodies should wish to be exempted from a Bill designed to enable people to assert before the courts of this country the basic rights and freedoms which they have enjoyed under the convention since 1953. I would have expected them to be as enthusiastic as any other body for the incorporation of the European Convention...<sup>3</sup>

The roots of democracy lie buried in the past. It is commonplace to imagine that the foundations of the modern democratic states owe their shaping to modernity itself: that without continental revolutions, industrialization and the Enlightenment, many people would still be living under feudal regimes or carefully ordered hierarchies of aristocracy. Yet the shaping of states and the emergence of democracy is often a tortuous and evolving process. In the USA, that narrative of history may be fairly obvious to many. The same might be true for other countries. Yet for many countries in Western Europe, the history is more ambiguous. Monarchies live side by side with democracies. More recent histories of fascism and communism also muddy the waters. In the case of Britain, it is far from clear when democracy first began, and it certainly could not be said to be complete, in spite of its proud boast to possess 'the mother of parliaments'. Claims for the origins of democracy can be attached to Henry II, and his elevation of the law above the day-to-day power of monarchs. Others would point to Magna Carta, Simon de Montfort, or even Oliver Cromwell. The shift of power from aristocracy to democracy and the emergence of the modern state has been a gradual process.<sup>4</sup>

In the midst of these debates, the autonomy of the church has been an issue for several hundred years. In Britain, Magna Carta (1215) gave the church the authority to regulate its

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<sup>3</sup> Lord Irving, the Lord Chancellor, *Speech to the House of Lords*, Hansard, London, 19 January 1998 <sup>4</sup> See Schama, *History of Britain*, I, for a general introduction. For a more specific treatment of the foundations of nation states, see Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, 1980).



own affairs, with its own courts and disciplinary procedures. At a stroke, the Reformation under Henry VIII took those powers back to the crown, the sovereign becoming the head of the Church of England. In the rest of Europe, the Reformation affected the alliances of church and state, from Calvin's Geneva to Luther's Germany. In the eighteenth century, revolutions curbed papal powers further still, forcing some countries to alienate their 'national religion' in favour of a democratic or revolutionary state. In the twentieth century, successive popes have had to come to terms with (or condemn) socialism, communism, fascism, liberalism, pluralism, consumerism or the internet<sup>4</sup> -anything, in fact, which has threatened to undermine the theocracy of the Vatican.<sup>5</sup>

At first sight, a debate about church autonomy and human rights might seem unnecessary. After all, are churches not in favour of human rights? They are. Do they not campaign for justice and peace? They do. Are they not against racism and other kinds of discrimination? Generally, yes. Yet it is in this last area that the real problem can be located for churches in America, Western Europe and other parts of the world. Fundamentally, there is often a clash of cultures, between the values espoused by modern democratic states and those held by religious groups who are attempting to present theocratic standards within a public domain.<sup>7</sup> For example, some Baltic countries, in which Christianity is the national and established religion, and is funded by the state, have not been able meaningfully to debate the theological pros and cons of women bishops, since the law of the land forbids discrimination on the grounds of gender. The issue of women's rights within the church is, in effect, determined by the state, not the church: the latter is 'forced' to accommodate. Similarly, in the Church of England, there are 'guidelines' on how a bishop or diocese may treat a clergyperson who is living in a homosexual relationship. Yes if that clergyperson is serving as a hospital chaplain, a position that is funded by the taxpayer, the National Health Service, as the employer of the chaplain, has a policy of non-discrimination in respect of sexuality, gender and the like. In other words, the employment rights of a gay or lesbian priest are arguably better protected by the NHS than they are by an individual bishop, who

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., 'The Syllabus of Errors' (1864)-a papal condemnation of liberalism, cited in H. Bettenson (ed), *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 272-74.

<sup>5</sup> For a succinct summary of church-state relations in Europe, see G. Moyser (ed.), *Religion and Politics in the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1991). <sup>7</sup> It is taken as read that Bonhoeffer's resistance to the German state during the Second World War, or the tireless campaigning of many against the Apartheid regime in South Africa-both of which required opposition to a church that lent support to an abusive statecraft- are fine examples of individuals or church groups opposing a theologically legitimized state of affairs or social goal.

may decide that a priest living an 'active' homosexual life is incompatible with the teachings of the church.<sup>6</sup> Here, there is resistance.<sup>7</sup>

As with the previous chapter on establishment, a consideration of theology, human rights and ecclesial distinctiveness is an intricate interweaving of issues and disciplines that interconnect. To acquire any degree of clarity requires some understanding of law, established religion and Christian culture. In this chapter, I shall consider three issues in turn. First, there is an interrogative exploration of the issues for British churches and their relation to the Human Rights Act. Secondly, there is a further examination of civil religion, following on from the previous chapter. Thirdly, there is a brief sketch of how religion can continue to offer some shape in a pluralist culture, in which the guarantee of 'rights' may be competitive and conflictual.

## **The Church and the Human Rights Act:**

### **An Interrogative Discussion**

In order to investigate the potential tensions between ecclesial traditions and the culture of human rights, we now turn to a brief (and deliberately interrogative) discussion of the Human Rights Act (HRA) and the role of the churches. During 1998, representatives from British churches met with Home Office officials to secure an exemption for churches from the Human Rights Bill.<sup>8</sup> The Bill, adopted by the Labour government, became law in October 2000. The Human Rights Act (HRA) is concerned with making 'public' authorities accountable to the European Convention on Human Rights. The Act seeks to bring about equality and justice for all: it is an Act that gives 'further effect' to the 1953 Convention on Human Rights. So why would churches have been seeking exemptions from the Act? What would have been the effect of succeeding in securing such exemptions? Did members of churches understand sufficiently how they were being represented in this matter?

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<sup>6</sup> The clash of cultures becomes even more complex when competing religious convictions can be identified with debates about public space and the role of faith. For example, at one Northern English hospital, the NHS Trust has a policy of encouraging mothers to breastfeed on the wards after giving birth. A nearby Muslim community, a significant client of the same hospital, objected that this 'immodest' and potentially offensive to other Muslim patients and their visitors. They would prefer all women –no just Muslim women- to be screened from view when breastfeeding. However, Islam is not necessarily anti-democratic and pro-theocratic. For further discussion see J. Haynes, *Religion in Global Politics* (London: Longman, 1998), p. 128, and Daedalus (*The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*) 129.4 (2000), 'The End of Tolerance: Engaging Cultural Differences'; several essays in this issue are of relevance.

<sup>7</sup> At the time of writing, there is an unresolved legal dispute in the Diocese of York, where a hospital chaplain is refusing to work with his newly appointed gay colleague, because he believes that a 'homosexual lifestyle' is incompatible with the teachings of the church, and, therefore, holding office within it. The NHS Trust, on the other hand, does not permit members of staff who are homosexual to be discriminated against. The diocese, which employs neither priest, is virtually powerless in terms of policing the dispute.

<sup>8</sup> The arguments for exemption were widely seen as reflecting the concerns of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, although he was publicly 'committed' to the HRA. An ecumenical group of academics, clergy and laity met with the Home Office Minister, Lord Williams of Mostyn, in October 1998, to put the case for the churches accepting the Bill, and giving the initiative more vocal support in public.

The pro-exemption voice appeared to be mostly inspired by a strong but small conservative lobby. In the case of the Church of England, it was alleged that one prominent conservative evangelical churchman has been quick to galvanize like-minded lawyers into action, lobbying for exemption left, right and centre. Grist was added to the mill when it was suggested that a right-wing USA-based Christian pressure group was part-funding the legal costs of fighting the HRA and its incorporation into British law.<sup>9</sup> Typically, the concern of the Christian right over the legislation was that it might have meant churches being 'forced' to recognize (or even conduct!) homosexual marriages, or Anglo-Catholic parishes 'compelled' to include women on short-lists for vacant posts. Such scenarios are, of course, the stuff of scare tactics. Clearly, whatever form the Bill was going to be adopted in, statute law in England still only recognizes marriage between a man and a woman: no additional European legislation can change that. Equally, the rights of Forward in Faith<sup>10</sup> to parishes would always have remained protected, with the preferred particularity of an exclusively male priesthood for a small minority of churchgoers unaltered by an Act, Convention or the Bill.

The Bill has its origins in the United Nations Charter (10 December, 1948) which was a 'universal declaration' promoting freedom, justice and peace for all 'regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status'. The European Convention on Human Rights was signed in 1950, and came into force in 1953. The Human Rights Bill is, in fact, more about social aspiration and orientation than about specific prescriptions. The Bill states of itself that it is intended to 'give further effect to the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights'.<sup>11</sup>

For political and theological conservatives, the devil is in the detail. For example, Article 14 of the Convention states that 'the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, natural or social origin, association with minority, property, birth or other status'. Yet the Convention is careful to avoid legislating for employment practice. (It protects a limited range of rights. For example, Article 4 prohibits 'slavery', but recognizes that 'forced or compulsory labour' does not prohibit military service or 'normal civic duties'.) Forward in Faith parishes will not find themselves guilty of sexual discrimination under law for refusing the ministrations of a woman priest (even if they are actually being sexist), and nor will religious schools be forced to appoint well-qualified teachers who are not sympathetic to the ethos of the education on offer. Such scruples are protected under Article 9 of the Convention, which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion, whereby the liberty 'to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety'. Equally, Article 12 (Right to Marry)

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<sup>9</sup> It may also be the case that this same USA-based Christian group helped to fund Kenneth Starr's investigations into the Clinton-Lewinsky affair-widely seen in America as an attempt by the Christian right to destabilize the more liberal programme of Clinton and Gore. These allegations have proved to be difficult to substantiate.

<sup>10</sup> i.e., 'traditionalist' clergy, laity or parishes opposed to the ordination of women as priests within the Church of England. Forward in Faith is 'catholic' in its culture. The evangelical equivalent within the Church of England is an organization known as 'Reform'.

<sup>11</sup> *Human Rights: A Bill* (London: HMSO, 23 October 1997).

checks itself by offering it 'according to the national laws governing the exercise of this right'. It looks as though the conservative voice may be too reactionary, with fears based on a false and exaggerated reading of the Bill.

Indeed, it is hard to see what churches might ever have had to fear from such a Bill. Yet there was a move to amend Clause 6, which is concerned with the definition of 'public authority', by adding churches, religious charities and religious schools to the list of exemptions. The effect of this would have been to excuse religious bodies from a clause that states that 'it is unlawful for a public authority to act in a way which is incompatible with one or more of the Convention rights'.<sup>12</sup> There is a further issue with Clause 10, which may eventually allow a Minister of State to challenge the General Synod, although assurances by the Lord Chancellor have been given on this. (However, concerned churches may still need to consider the wider and long-term implications of the Amsterdam Treaty, especially as it effects legislation on discrimination.) Once again, it appears that conservative voices feared a 'liberal whitewash' here. However, closer attention to the Bill (in the same clause) reveals that the clause does not apply if 'as the result of one or more provisions of primary legislation, the authority could have acted differently'.<sup>13</sup>

What the Bill offered to the churches and religious bodies was to include them as part of the public domain, while continuing to respect their particularities. At the same time, the Bill acts as a benchmark for public standards which religious bodies must at least correspond with, but not necessarily conform to, most especially if they are already protected by primary legislation. The difference is crucial. The Bill invites all religious organizations to participate in a civil society by virtue of being public authorities. While this makes them accountable to the public they serve, it also protects their freedom of expression.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, to press for exemption is effectively to argue for religion being a private matter and not accountable to the public. Naturally, it is hard to see the missiological advantage in such a course of action for any church, let alone one established by law. If the maintenance of church identity is dependent upon decent public standards being excluded, then it is surely time to reconsider an established church claiming to exercise a public theology.<sup>15</sup>

One of the greatest challenges that faces the United Kingdom (not just the church) is how to modernize and adapt as a body in a third millennium that is more public and plural, globalized yet individualized, democratized yet privatized. The watchwords for a more forward-looking culture are now emerging: participation, modernity, opportunity, quality of

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. the amendment tabled by Baroness Young, Lord Kingsland and Lord Henley in *Second Marshalled List of Amendments* (London: HMSO, 21 November 1997), paragraph 40.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of how the Courts would work to enact the Bill in cases of discrimination, see *The Council of Europe and the Protection of Human Rights* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion see D. Westerlund (ed.), *Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics* (London: Hurst & Co., 1996). The authors in this volume suggest various models of church-state interaction, which they refer to as 'policies of religion'.

<sup>15</sup> See M. Hill, 'Church Autonomy in the United Kingdom', paper presented to the Second European/American Conference on Religious Freedom, 'Church Autonomy and Religious Liberty', University of Trier, Germany, 27-30 May 1999.

life, radicalism, communication, possibility and flexibility. The public domain is deemed to be the crucible of a caring society. Correspondingly, churches are being invited to

participate afresh in the making of society, not just healing its brokenness or protecting its own interests.<sup>16</sup>

One of the dangers the church faced, in attempting to turn its back on the legislation, is that it would no longer be classed-at least in rhetoric rather than legal terminology - as a 'public authority'. Therefore, by definition, it could be perceived as a private and unaccountable body, at a distance from the centre of being in society. In the case of the two established churches in Britain (Anglican in England, Presbyterian in Scotland), there were and are manifest risks involved in adopting this position. Loss of 'public' status is an unintended but self-marginalizing strategy that might mean vacating the socio-ethical arena. How, then, could churches speak with integrity on justice, discrimination and parity if they chose to be exempt from the very laws that bind the rest of society? Only, it seems to me, if they can claim that their morals are superior.<sup>17</sup>

And any moral claim of this sort would necessarily be open to public scrutiny. When the Roman Catholic Church report *The Common Good*<sup>18</sup> appeared in 1997, it was praised by media and churches, and was perceived as a significant contribution to public and political life. Yet it did not take long for politicians and other public figures to point out that the Roman Catholic Church itself was not adopting the standards and measures for its employees that it was prescribing for the rest of society. If trades union representation and the rights of 'ordinary' workers are to be flagged up as concerns of the church for the common good of society, then presumably these same standards of justice and fairness are already being practised by the church in relation to its clergy? Actually, they are not. Prescriptions for democracy from the churches do not always translate into descriptions of their own theocracies.

A case for moral superiority requires the churches to be already living by standards they regard as better than, not just different from, those of society. Conservative Christians may well object to homosexual unions or gender equality in ecclesial office. Yet no one is compelled to marry or bless a gay union, or employ a woman or a man against their better judgment. So, rather than the churches resisting socio-legal engagement, it is arguably wiser to focus on participation, even if that risks greater public accountability and change. The

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<sup>16</sup> For a refreshing perspective and critique, see R. Furbey, 'Urban Regeneration', *Critical Social Policy: A Journal of Theory and Practice and Social Welfare* 61 (November 1999), pp. 419-45.

<sup>17</sup> See the discussion in Audi, *Religious Commitment*, pp. 81-144, where the author argues for the separation of church and state. Religious convictions, according to Audi, cannot translate easily into secular reasons for laws and moral codes. Religious values, therefore, must become subsumed as part of ethics if faith groups wish to share in the shaping of a civil society.

<sup>18</sup> *The Common Good* (London : Catholic Information Office, 1997).

fear for some is that this may ultimately disclose that the 'morals' of the churches on some issues may not in fact be superior, but rather different and particular, or even backward.<sup>19</sup> Yet they would still be respected in a plural society, even as they are appropriately challenged.<sup>20</sup> It is probable that the adoption of the legislation by the government-now enshrined in the Human Rights Act of October 2000- will indeed eventually marginalize such particularities, and dislodge a significant conservative minority from the centre of the political, ecclesial and social ground, placing them on the periphery. To put it another way, the Church of England will take another small step away from being the 'Conservative Party at prayer'.

Naturally, it was the fear of marginalization that drove the pro-exemption lobby in the first place. If society and the majority of churchgoers embraced the Bill and its spirit as it did (the spirit arguably being the more important of the two), then objectors are left out in the cold. Yet had they succeeded, the vast majority of ordinary, civil-minded churchgoers would have been lumbered with defending a conservative agenda in the interests of protecting overall ecclesial particularity. And, ironically, the marginalization would still have occurred, since the churches would have effectively voted not to be 'public' authorities. (Indeed, ecclesiastical courts were exempted from the Act in its final form.) For the Church of England, 'establishment' would mean morphological ties to a monarchy, while a connection with the sociality engendered by the democratic and elected state would at the same time wither.<sup>21</sup>

To be sure, there were and are grounds for churches being cautious about embracing legislation that ties them into society as 'public' and 'accountable'. Bonhoeffer would doubtless have had plenty to say about this, as would Desmond Tutu on the Dutch Reformed Church in the Apartheid era.<sup>22</sup> (Having said that, the South African churches played a significant role in peacekeeping and monitoring in the transition from Apartheid to democracy, and through the subsequent administration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, are offering a visionary model for 'public' theology.) Any church closely identified with society risks obviating its 'difference', and therefore the very point of belonging to what should be an alternative community. Pulling down all the social and moral frontiers of the church would be a mistake: the unbounded is soon the empty. People do not flood into bodies without definition: they flood out. But nonetheless, the situation of the churches in Britain with regard to the Act was different to those that churches once faced in Germany or South Africa. They were not being asked to sanction crude nationalism, and nor were they being asked to keep silence in the face of anti-Semitism, racism or its

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<sup>19</sup> For some earlier perspectives on the churches and human rights, see *Human Rights and Christian Responsibilities*, I-III (Geneva: WCC, 1975); A. Miller (ed.), *A Christian Declaration on Human Rights* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); and H. Todt and W. Huber (eds.), *Theological Perspectives on Human Rights* (Geneva: WCC, 1977).

<sup>20</sup> Readers interested in comparisons with other countries will find J. Thierstein and Y. Kamalipour (eds.), *Religion, Law and Freedom: A Global Perspective* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000) very illuminating. Essays cover press freedom, advertising and ethical issues, human rights and politics.

<sup>21</sup> For a fuller discussion, see P. Edge and G. Harvey (eds.), *Law and Religion in Contemporary Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2000)

<sup>22</sup> For a very different perspective on Christian opposition to the state in another African nation, see M. Schoffeleers, *In Search of Truth and Justice: Confrontations Between Church and State in Malawi 1960- 1994* (Blantyre: Christian Literature Association, 1999).

modern-day equivalents. Nor were the churches being asked to lose their identity, or entirely conflate it with the 'public' realm under some kind of utilitarian principle.

On the contrary, the distinctiveness the churches can offer is being invited afresh to participate in society as salt and yeast. The Human Rights Act offers the opportunity for churches to recover their public role, and rediscover their prophetic voice in the political realm. In this sense, churches need to move beyond a simplistic dichotomy in which they either say an uncritical 'yes' to the Act, or seek to secure a potentially damaging legal exemption. A wiser approach to the culture of rights enshrined in the Act would be to go with the flow of the legislation, with a combination of passion and coolness, recognizing that it is only when public participation has been assented to that the prophetic can flourish where it is needed. In other words, I am suggesting that churches can only be the social form of the truth (or the social transcendent body) if they ensure that they remain public bodies.<sup>23</sup>

This form of engagement is of course a risk, but no more so than the incarnation itself. While some would argue that this is an invitation to weld together secular liberalism with select Christian doctrines, my argument nonetheless stands. Pursuing this agenda is about being prepared to see Truth being embodied socially, contextually and temporally, in order that grace may abound. In such a situation, the church cannot guarantee its own power absolutely, nor be sure of entirely protecting truth, nor be certain of the outcomes of its intercourse with society. But it can at least be there, and continue to speak as of right as a public body, and as a social incarnation of transcendence, mystery and morality. Put another way, the task of Christians is not to guard an empty tomb, but rather follow a risen Lord, and serve society.<sup>24</sup>

### **Conflating Secular and Sacred Cultures: Paradigms of Civil Religion**

Bhikhu Parekh—the first Hindu peer in the House of Lords—outlines a new paradigm for a relationship between religion and the state.<sup>25</sup> First, he argues that instead of religion being marginalized (as many secularists might wish), its distinct contribution to public life should be recognized, and faith given a stake in maintenance of a free and open society. He is aware that religion can sometimes do the opposite of this, but suggests that the more openly dialogical a religion becomes, the more it is able to foster moderation and respect within itself: society can 'civilize' the church. Secondly, when religion enters politics, it has to accept the constraints of political life. This includes speaking in a 'public' language that is intelligible to all citizens, and accepting 'the burden of public judgment' which some-times requires people to live with deep disagreements. Thirdly, religion plays an important and direct role

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<sup>23</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Markham, *Plurality and Christian Ethics*, chs 8-10.

<sup>24</sup> Of course, how this is done will vary from one Christian tradition to another. For a critical and theological perspective on the human rights agenda, see J. Lockwood O'Donovan, 'Historical Prolegomena to a Theological Review of Human Rights', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 9.2 (1998), pp. 52-65. O'Donovan identifies three dominant conceptual elements in the tradition of rights theory: property right, contract, and freedom of choice. For O'Donovan, there is a question as to why Christian thinkers have been willing to 'adopt a child of such questionable parentage as the concept of human rights'.

<sup>25</sup> B. Parekh, 'When Religion Meets Politics', in *Keeping the Faiths: The New Covenant Between Religious Belief and Secular Power* (London: Demos, 1997), pp. 7-12.

in moral life, and the community therefore has a deep and collective interest in the well-being of churches and their beliefs. For this reason, religion should be taught in school in the same way that children should be politically educated. The teacher is neither to subvert nor to convert, but to discuss beliefs in an open, respectful, comparative and analytical manner, recognizing that religion is a distinct form of human consciousness and experience.

To give Parekh's arguments a slightly different turn, it could be argued that being a Christian in the twenty-first century cannot simply be about belonging to a church, but should equally be seen in terms of being a certain type of citizen within society.<sup>26</sup> 'Civil religion' therefore becomes something significantly more than 'social glue' or 'the spiritual dimension' to society. It also becomes bound up in the actual aspirations of society which are themselves related to the common good. Andrew Shanks takes this a stage further, when he argues that

A genuinely 'open' church... would be an open forum: reproducing within itself the full range of (thoughtful) moral conflict characteristic of the surrounding world; excluding nothing except intolerance; and differing from the world only in the exemplary manner in which it tried to process these conflicts...<sup>27</sup>

Shanks continues by contending that the church must move beyond simply providing pastoral remedies for personal sin, which he says can no longer make the church, priest or pastor a focus for communal unity. Instead, the clergy need to be gifted in tackling the phenomenon of structural sin on behalf of the community: they need to be issue-raisers, prophets and protagonists. In this respect, he sees the Christian Spirit as being invested in a new form of mission:

the stage which Christianity has now reached is to recognise that the church- phase of its development is over, and that the Christian Spirit has entered into its ethical, or political, maturity... the innermost essence of Christianity drives it out beyond the Church; it has to seek embodiment in nothing less than the body which encompasses the entirety of human life, namely the state.<sup>30</sup>

Yet Shanks, like Parekh, knows that churches need to be maintained as distinctive bodies, independent of the state and the public, if they are to be the yeast and salt of the Kingdom of God. The church is there to help fund civilizing strands within society. But it does not own society, and nor does it entirely own all the moral strands that might guide and make sociality.<sup>28</sup> As Coleridge suggested almost two centuries ago, the church of the nation is

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. P. Clarke, *Citizenship* (London : Pluto Press, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> A. Shanks, *Civil Religion Civil Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 90

<sup>30</sup>Shanks, *Civil Religion*, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup> Recent research on Sector ministry in England (i.e. prisons, hospitals, the armed services and higher education) has shown a modest expansion in the number of non-Christian chaplains that institutions are employing, although the situation remain far from perfect. See J. Beckford and S. Gilliat, *Religion in Prison: Equal Rites in a Multi-Faith Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1998; S. Gilliat-Ray, *Religion in Higher Education: The Politics of a Multi-Faith Campus* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2001); and H. Orchard, *Hospital Chaplaincy: Modern, Dependable?* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).



not quite the same as the church of Christ, yet it is there to secure and improve the moral cultivation of its people, 'without which the nation could be neither permanent or progressive'.<sup>2930</sup> The church is therefore not a world to come, but another world that now is, whose role is to combat political evil, not just institutional defects.

While this may be true of churches in Britain,<sup>31</sup> and perhaps more generally of Western Europe,<sup>32</sup> the parameters of civic religion within civil society follow some very different contours in the USA. The fundamental breach between the ruled and the ruler, coupled with the need of large post-Enlightenment states to win the willing assent of the governed, and achieve a degree of consensus on the normative foundations for legitimizing authority, have always posed a problem for nations where religion is not established. Writers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) argued that religion should play a key part in the legitimization of the state, but at the same time, it does not follow that this leads to a reestablished church. For Rousseau, Christianity was a religion of inward devotion-a spirituality that was vital for individuals, but which had no obvious or organized political shape, except insofar as it could contribute to what he famously dubbed 'civil religion':

Now, it matters very much to the community that each citizen should have a religion ... Each man may have, over and above, what opinions he pleases, without its being the Sovereigns business to take cognisance of them; for, as the Sovereign has no authority in the other world, whatever the lot of its subjects may be in the life to come, that is not its business, provided they are good citizens in this life.. . The dogmas of civil religion ought to be few, simple and exactly worded, without explanation or commentary. The existence of a mighty, intelligent and beneficent Divinity, possessed of foresight and providence, the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws: these are its positive dogmas. Its negative dogmas I confine to one, intolerance...<sup>33</sup>

It is not difficult to recognize these idealized seedlings-of religion embedded in American civil society-within Rousseau's words. Indeed, the notion that a form of religion somehow shapes modern American life in a non-controlling way is a thesis with a long track record.

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<sup>29</sup> S.T. Coleridge, *On the Constitution of Church and State* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976 [1823]), p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> More accurately, it is the 'Christian culture' of a society rather than simply specific churches that produces civil society, although the two are normally closely related. It is also worth noting that many societies, guilds, companies and other associations, with Christian or other religious roots, also help to produce a civil religion and civil society culture. The Freemasons are, in Britain at least, one obvious example. See P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1550 - 1800: The Origin of an Associational World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>32</sup> See D. Herbert, *Religion and Civil Society: Multiculturalism, Democracy and Spirituality* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: Dent, 1973), pp. 307-308

Ernst Troeltsch has argued that liberal democracy is a product of religious forces.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Talcott Parsons affirms liberal American democracy, not as a secular creation, but rather as the institutionalization of Protestant values. For Parsons, American democracy is a child of Protestantism, not a secular competitor.<sup>35</sup> George Jellinek has further argued that the American concept of inalienable rights (and toleration) is traceable to the radical religious movements that were expelled from Europe, and were early settlers in America.<sup>36</sup> To an extent, many Americans have derived a degree of comfort from the creation and sustaining of such a culture.

However, this picture of almost benign support-civil society and civil religion living off one another in gentle symbiosis has changed markedly as American culture has rapidly developed in the post-war years. In America, as in many Western European countries, the supposedly inclusive nature of a civil society has been challenged by religious groups that claim their spiritual or cultural rights are not being respected. This challenge may range from pressing for legal exemptions in respect of attire (e.g., Muslim girls wearing headscarves to school in France, or British Sikhs wearing turbans but not crash helmets), to defending female genital mutilation.<sup>37</sup> At the extreme, religious groups may resort to terrorism, such as the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in September 2001. Equally, Roof and McKinney point to the influence of black churches on American politics, and the advancement of civil rights through appealing to the white Christian conscience.<sup>38</sup> Far from being benign, religious values are now commodities that are very definitely mobilized. Similarly, the New Christian Right has also gained prominence, becoming increasingly active in politics.<sup>39</sup> In recent years, the New Christian Right has become suspicious of 'tolerance' as a general principle of civil religion. Indeed, there are now in the USA many religious lobbying groups, highly organized and well funded, which seek directly to influence the shaping of American life as well as the foreign policy of the USA. Writing in 1967, Robert Bellah noted how 'pluralized' civil religion was being made up of an eclectic mix of symbols, beliefs and ideals. Granted, these performed a similar legitimizing function to the one Rousseau had in mind, insofar as they provided a fairly simple creed that supported civil society. Yet Bellah has also observed how the very foundations of post-war American civil religion are themselves now threatened by vapid individualism.<sup>40</sup> The present parameters of the debate

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<sup>34</sup> E. Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: A Historical Study of the Relations of Protestantism to the Modern World* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1966).

<sup>35</sup> T. Parsons, 'Christianity and Modern Industrialised Society', in E. Tiryakian (ed.), *Sociological Theory, Values and Sociological Change* (London : Collier-Macmillan, 1963), pp. 33-70.

<sup>36</sup> G. Jellinek (ed.), *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1979).

<sup>37</sup> See U. Menon, 'Does Feminism Have Universal Relevance? The Challenges Posed by Oriya Hindu Family Practices', pp. 77-100; K Pratt-Ewing, 'Legislating Religious Freedom: Muslim Challenges to "Church " and "State" in Germany and France', pp. 31-54; and R. Shweder, 'What About Female Genital Mutilation? Why Understanding Culture Matters', *Daedalus* 129.4 (2000), pp. 209-33. Shweder shows that female genital mutilation actually empowers the Kono girls of Sierra Leone (p. 212), which offends American feminists.

<sup>38</sup> Wade Clark Roof and W. McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. R. Wuthnow, 'The Political Rebirth of American Evangelicals', in R. Wuthnow and R. Liebman (eds.), *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation* (New York: Aldine Publishing, 1983), pp. 167-85.

<sup>40</sup> See R. Bellah, 'Civil Religion in America', *Daedalus* 96.1 (1967), pp. 1-21, and *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in a Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

are perhaps best described by Richard John Neuhaus. On the one hand, Neuhaus maintains that an American civil society cannot exclude religion from shaping public life and discourse. On the other hand, he also argues that religious traditions can only inhabit such space on the condition that they respect the rules of open public debate, and do not themselves become tyrannical and autocratic.<sup>41</sup>

In other words, we are back with Parekh: religion being offered to society, rather than imposed upon it. Mindful of Bellah's championing of civil religion, of Neuhaus's 'public philosophy', and of the improbability of Christendom, Ian Markham agrees with these insights when he affirms that there are now only three ways in which religion can properly enable a process of what he describes as 'cultural enrichment' within 'secular' society:

Instead of a unitary culture in which one language, one religion, one history and one set of images dominate, we need a diverse culture in which different languages, many religions, and several narratives and images coexist in stimulating tension... Cultural enrichment requires three different processes. First, we must develop the separateness of each community. We should empower communities to create the space for their tradition to be affirmed... The second process within cultural enrichment is that of community engagement, implying dialogue, disagreement, and a mutual exploration of truth... The third process is that of faith communities discovering their voice within the public square. Public policy requires a moral dimension...<sup>42</sup>

This is the new paradigm of civil religion within so-called secular cultures: a subtle blend of prophetic resistance and respectful accommodation, based on the overall resilience of religious tradition within a culture that may, at first sight, not appear to welcome religious insights at all.

However, there are a number of ways of following the recipe described above. Christian social thought is hardly new, and the faith-based contours that are sometimes offered to help society shape itself can have markedly different outcomes.<sup>43</sup> For example, the transition from the Clinton-Gore years to the presidency of George W. Bush will test Neuhaus' thesis as much as it confirms it. Within weeks of assuming power, Bush launched an initiative that encouraged 'faith-based' social programmes to supplement or replace government social welfare programmes. In Britain, collaboration between churches and government in urban renewal programmes is well established. However, the American equivalent-the Office of Faith-Based Welfare-has an entirely different feel to it. Marvin Olasky is, arguably, its guru-an ex-communist who espouses a philosophy of 'compassionate conservatism',<sup>44</sup> a less than

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<sup>41</sup> R. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1984), pp. 258-60

<sup>42</sup> See Markham, *Plurality and Christian Ethics*, p. 151

<sup>43</sup> From a North American perspective, see A. Fitzgibbon, *In the World But Not of the World: Christian Social Thinking at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000). For more general perspectives, see A. Walsh, *Religion, Economics and Public Policy: Ironies, Tragedies and Absurdities of the Contemporary Culture Wars* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), and R.J. Elford and I. Markham (eds.), *The Middle Way: Politics and Economics in the Late Thought of R.H. Preston* (London: SCM Press, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> M. Olasky (with a Foreword by George W. Bush), *Compassionate Conservatism: What it is, What it Does and How it Can Transform America* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

subtle blend of politico-religious concerns, which has been partly responsible for shaping the moral tone of Bush's presidency. No less influential has been Myron Magnet and his work,<sup>45</sup> with Bush describing his bestseller as 'the book which influenced me the most, second only to the Bible'.<sup>46</sup> The triumvirate of Bush's religious advisors is completed by Chuck Colson, the former assistant to Richard Nixon, jailed for his part in the Watergate scandal. Colson is known for his dramatic conversion to Christianity during his seven-month prison sentence,<sup>49</sup> and for his subsequent advocacy of prayer ministry in prisons as an aid to correction and transformation. Colson is the founder of the Inner- change Freedom Initiative Charity, which actually runs some prison wings in American jails, and claims that the rates of recidivism are lower in those that the charity manages.<sup>47</sup>

This development arguably represents a stage beyond civil religion, at least in the sense that Rousseau might have meant it. 'Civil' has become elided with 'public', and in the process, and correspondingly, faith is now more sharply defined and narrower in its outlook. But what does this mean? In essence, it suggests that the very 'public space' that religion once nestled within is now deemed to be empty of values, or, alternatively, full of competing convictions that need policing. Thus, religious groups that are so minded no longer see their values as 'private' or as individual, but rather as qualities that may transform an allegedly vacuous and over-liberalized democracy into something more like a theocracy. It is perhaps an inevitable consequence of the individualism identified by Bellah, coupled to the pluralism and modernity of the post-war years, which has eroded the original concept of civil religion and led to this loss of confidence in the generous and inclusive shaping of public space.<sup>48</sup> And that moment is full of ironies. For example, ultra-right-wing Christian Republicans can campaign against abortion 'for the sanctity of life', while at the same time presiding over legislature that sends record numbers of black prisoners to death row, while at the same time arguing for 'liberal' gun laws that enable individuals to protect themselves. The moral incoherence is staggering,<sup>49</sup> yet at the same time makes perfect sense in a culture in which crimes and their punishments are based on highly selective hermeneutics that in turn reflect the federal and frontier preference for the values of the Old Testament and with which the actual founder of Christianity would never have been comfortable.<sup>50</sup> Casanova is probably right when he asserts that religion in modern times is differentiated, but not

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<sup>45</sup> M. Magnet, *The Tragedy of American Compassion: The Sixties Legacy to the Underclass* (Dallas: Prodigal Press, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> E. Vulliamy, 'The Power of Prayer: America's Moral Crusaders', in the *Observer* (4 February 2001), p. 17.

<sup>49</sup> See C. Colson, *Born Again* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984).

<sup>47</sup> Vulliamy, 'Power of Prayer', p.17.

<sup>48</sup> On the transition from civil to public religion, see W. Swatos, Jr, and J. Wellman, Jr, *The Power of Religious Publics: Staking Claims in American Society* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999). In a way the subtitle says it all. The fact that 'claims' are now 'staked' shows how the implicit religious values of America- 'invisible religion', to borrow from Thomas Luckmann- have been transformed into a much narrower set of explicit claims, which will divide as much as they ever unite. Many of the essays in the volume reflect these concerns from a confessional perspective.

<sup>49</sup> For a comparative discussion of Bellah and Neuhaus, see Markham, *Plurality and Christian Ethic*, chs 6 and 7, especially pp. 94-95.

<sup>50</sup> Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (London: Virago, 1987), is set in a post-apocalyptic America, where states are governed according to Old Testament principles

privatized. It continues to have an influence on the public and political landscape, even though it may now mainly consist of protests--either against secularism, consumerism or liberalism, or more generally against the excesses of the modern state.<sup>51</sup>

Paradoxically, Bush's turn towards faith-based charities, and away from 'big government', represents a retreat from the dream of Rousseau, and the vision of America's founders. 'One nation under God' is a civil, cultural and unifying affirmation with a long and august history, which still serves an increasingly complex and diverse society. In the rapid descent from an inclusive sentiment to an electioneering slogan, the words are in danger of evolving into a politically and socially divisive instrument in the hands of those who want to bring religion to bear directly upon select aspects of public life. In turn, this will mean that the shaping of civil religion will have an increasing impact on the definition -and eventual limitation- of human rights.

### **Commonweal in Uncommon Cultures**

The collapse in civic confidence, coupled to the identification of 'social space' as something 'public' that can be filled by various interest groups (including the religious), does seem to confirm Nazila Ghanea-Hercock's thesis that 'no ultimate solution can be found to this question of on what to basis to resolve all conflicts that are ever to emerge between human rights and the endless wealth and diversity of religious or other beliefs'.<sup>52</sup> However, there may be hope. She notes that religious and secular cultures can change; worldviews are not 'frozen'. This fact alone, she argues, ought to encourage dialogue between religions and the proponents of human rights upon the areas where they do not see eye to eye. It may be that seemingly intractable disagreements about sexuality, gender or personhood can be resolved. She suggests two interim understandings that may help this process along. First, mutual respect between the traditions of human rights and religious traditions must recognize that 'all traditions and practices have to pass the test of some sort of universal moral code'. She cites An-Na'im in support of this contention:

Traditional culture is not a substitute for human rights; it is a cultural context in which human rights must be established, integrated, promoted and protected. Human rights must be approached in a way that is relevant and meaningful in diverse cultural contexts...<sup>53</sup>

The second interim understanding recognizes that human rights are a 'man-made' code. As such, they can do no more than register the highest moral values that any society presently perceives. Again, this suggests that religions may have a part to play in contesting or supporting such values, even as they are themselves supported and contested. This is an

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<sup>51</sup> Casanova, *Public Religions*

<sup>52</sup> N. Ghanea-Hercock, 'Faith in Human Rights: Human Rights in Faith', in Thierstein and Kamalipour (eds.), *Religion, Law and Freedom*, p. 221.

<sup>53</sup> A. An-Na'im, 'Towards a Cross-Cultural Approach to Defining International Standards of Human Rights: The Meaning of Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading punishment', in idem (ed.), *Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Quest for Consensus* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. xiii <sup>57</sup>Ghanea-Hercock, 'Faith in Human Rights', pp. 222-23.

important insight, for it recognizes that churches, if they wish to argue for a particular stance on gender or sexuality, must do so in a way that renders them accountable to civil society, if indeed a religion wants to be regarded as public, or to make public claims. This dynamic affects all faiths. The Church of England's stance on women bishops may look credible within its own ecclesial culture, but it looks like an archaic form of discrimination in the eyes of the general public. Equally, the treatment of homosexuality in some faiths may be internally coherent, but may at the same time turn out to be a worldview that denies that faith a public voice. The challenge then, is to observe human rights within cultural circumstances.<sup>57</sup>

The tolerance of liberal societies (which may be linked to liberalism)<sup>54</sup> may have an important role to play in the future, if the particularity of church autonomy is to co-exist with a meta-culture of human rights. In Alec Vidler's *Essays in Liberality*,<sup>55</sup> he suggests that the patron saint of theologians ought to be the person who is tolerant; not because they regard all opinions as doubtful, but because they know that God alone is true. Such a person is ready to learn from all people, not because they have no creed of their own, but because their creed assures them that God is teaching and chastening all people.

Behind Vidler stands the deeper liberalism of scholars such as Isaiah Berlin. Berlin is conscious of the tension between liberty and equality, which is frequently at the heart of ethical dilemmas, or contested value- systems that may emerge between faith groups and human rights proponents.<sup>56</sup> Equality may demand the restraint of liberty. Equally, liberty may prevent degrees of equality: in a liberal society, there is always a collision of values, which reflects the very essence of what we are as individual human beings, and as collective society. Berlin is clear that the primary task of pursuing the ideal of liberalism is to avoid extremes, particularly extremes of suffering. Yet in order to do that, Berlin states, it becomes necessary to live with tensions. Of course, one does not opt for intolerable choices-but one is often left with a precarious equilibrium. A primary task of liberalism must therefore be to maintain a kind of peaceful openness, which will be the foundation of a civil society. The prospect of church autonomy and human rights co-existing within a culture depends upon this.<sup>57</sup> However, this may still be perceived as alienating by some cultures and religious groups within society. Laurence Sager argues wisely for civil society when he states that 'the regime of liberty is premised on protection rather than privilege'.<sup>58</sup> In other words, a civil society does not attempt to dole out advantages or exemptions to groups or individuals on the basis of their beliefs. Rather, it aims at parity, and therefore takes an interest in religions or cultural practices only when the rights of individuals or groups are being impeded or eroded.

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<sup>54</sup> I accept that liberalism does not have a monopoly on tolerance, only that tolerance is a particular hallmark of liberal societies.

<sup>55</sup> A. Vidler, *Essays in Liberality* (London: SCM Press, 1970).

<sup>56</sup> I. Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 12-18

<sup>57</sup> Berlin, *Crooked Timber*, p. 17. See also I. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>58</sup> L. Sager, 'The Free Exercise of Culture: Some Doubts and Distinctions', *Daedalus* 129.4 (2000), pp. 193-208. The quotation is from p. 206.

Four centuries ago, Richard Hooker committed himself to a vision of church and society that prefigures this. That is to say, he saw civil society and civil religion as a matter of progressive growth and mutual interdependence, with church and society providing one another with life and health. Organic approaches to ecclesiology recognize the heterogeneity of congregations and churches, and their deep need to be reconciled in a common, if complicated, life. For Hooker, the church was a living body that was rooted in society, and sometimes in their operations the two could not be distinguished:

The stateliness of houses, the goodlines of trees, when we behold them delighteth the eye; but that foundation which beareth up the one, that root which ministereth unto the other nourishment and life, is in the bosom of the earth concealed: and if there be at any time occasion to search into it, such labour is then more necessary than pleasant, both to them which undertake it, and for lookers-on. In like manner the use and benefit of good laws, all that live under them may enjoy with delight and comfort, albeit the grounds and first original causes from whence they have sprung be unknown, as to the greatest part of men they are.<sup>59</sup>

In Hooker's mind, sociality is supported by two foundations (or perhaps exists under two overlapping 'sacred canopies'): 'a natural inclination, whereby all men desire sociable life and fellowship', and 'an order expressly or secretly agreed upon, touching the manner of their union in living together'.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the ideal order is described by Hooker as 'the law of a Commonweal'. Significantly, the concept of an original agreement makes the order similar to a social contract. Just as all types of law derive from divine laws, all authority derives from ultimate authority, which is from God. And yet Hooker does not abuse this lineage by demanding slavish obedience. For Hooker, laws are public, and all truth is in a kind of common trusteeship.

The use of Hooker-only alluded to here very briefly- suggests that the tension between church autonomy and human rights need not be so sharp. Hooker argues for the upholding of a civil society, because he sees this as a guarantor of both humanity and religion. Moreover, a public religion, even if it had to be compromised in certain of its aspects to become and remain public, was better than a private faith. Or, put another way, an extensive and intensive private religion-even one whose adherents may be growing in number all the time--does not offer the same benefits to society as an open civil religion.<sup>61</sup> Hooker understood that the images of God contained within a civil religion may both subvert and legitimate political authority or the values within a prevailing culture.<sup>62</sup> If churches are prepared to be public and accountable, that card can still be played, as and when necessary.

Martyn Percy, 2002

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<sup>59</sup> See R. Hooker, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (London: J.M. Dent, 1907 [Everyman Edition], Book 1.1.2. For a modern rendering of Hooker's seventeenth-century English, see A.S. McGrade, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For a short introduction to Hooker, see M. Percy, *Introducing Richard Hooker and the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1999).

<sup>60</sup> Hooker, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I, X 1

<sup>61</sup> For a contemporary discussion, see R. Shweder, M. Minow and M. Markus (ed s.), *The Free Exercise of Culture* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2001).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. D. Nicholls, *Deity and Domination: Images of God and the State in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 1989).

## REVIEW OF SHEFFIELD NOMINATION

NOTE OF A MEETING WITH THE VERY REVD PROF MARTYN PERCY AT THE  
DEANERY, CHRIST CHURCH OXFORD ON TUESDAY 9 MAY 2017Those present:

The Very Revd Prof Martyn Percy, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford [MP]

Sir Philip Mawer, the Independent Reviewer

Jonathan Neil-Smith, Assistant to the Independent Reviewer

MP agreed that, subject to his reviewing the draft, a note of this meeting could be published as part of the evidence made available to the Review.

The following were the main points made by MP in response to questions put by the Independent Reviewer, with some supplementary questions from Jonathan Neil-Smith:

1. MP had no official role in this matter. He was not paid by the C of E although he was fully part of it. He had written about such concerns on previous occasions (e.g. an article for *The Daily Telegraph* in 2013 on women bishops). His 24 February article on the Modern Church website – ‘*Questions of Ambiguity and Integrity?*’ - had only been a platform for his views. He had not been commissioned to write it. He saw himself as an independent theological voice examining issues of concern to the Church and society.
2. MP pointed out that whilst to hold discriminatory views on women on religious grounds would enjoy some protection under the law (e.g., freedom of speech, opinion, etc), it was not a ‘protected characteristic’ in the same way that race, gender, age, disability, marital status and sexuality were in employment. Thus, a Head-teacher in a religious school that believed that women could not hold authority to teach would be entitled to run the school in that manner, on the assumption that the parents of the pupils and the staff all shared and accepted that same theological construction of reality. In such a case, all parties willingly consented to a hierarchical view of gender-relations. However, the law did not permit that Head-teacher to go to an ordinary, normal school, and attempt to preside over that school in a like manner. That would be experienced as discriminatory behaviour directed towards those staff, parents and pupils.
3. In the same way, MP stated that you could not expect to export and hoist a bishop who held gender-based-discriminatory views on a diocese, parishes and congregations that had not invited them, and expect these to be welcomed. It would lead to a range of inherently discriminatory behaviours and actions. Moreover, discriminatory gender-based views - and similarly ones on age, sexuality, race or disability - were not ‘protected characteristics’. They might be tolerated in society, but they did not enjoy equal protection and status in law and society. Neither should they in our churches.



4. MP regarded the 5 Guiding Principles as ‘a Gordian Knot that could not be untied’; in that they attempted to resolve an unresolvable issue. Forward in Faith/The Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda had sought to drive a wedge between ‘true’ and ‘lawful’ in the First Principle; and had consequently invested it (and the word ‘true’ in particular) with the minimum of meaning. They had in effect adopted ‘(internalised) ecumenical gymnastics’ with regard to the sacraments celebrated by women priests.
5. MP took particular issue with the published views of The Society, which appeared to regard sacraments celebrated by women priests as, in effect, “lay celebrations”. He saw no way of reconciling The Society’s interpretation of the 5 Guiding Principles with that of the rest of the C of E, any more than one could compromise or find middle ground between racial discrimination and racial equality. The Society’s views were clearly discriminatory. The Church could not therefore accord them equal status with the views of the majority.
6. There was a debate to be had about the provision of suitable pastoral arrangements for traditionalists. MP agreed that a broad Church should continue to resource congregations and clergy that held to a minority opinion on identity and hierarchy in relation to gender, sexuality and other non ‘first-order’ matters. However, it was not acceptable to export those ‘private proclivities’ and discriminatory views into arrangements for wider diocesan oversight and governance.
7. With regard to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Guiding Principle, MP indicated sympathy with the argument based on ‘reception’. However, it raised questions as to who was receiving what? Reception was about reception by the *whole* Church, including the lay people of Sheffield. What if the people of Sheffield did not wish to receive Philip North’s theological views and practices in relation to the clergy who already served and cared for them? He felt that reception was an elastic concept. He did not regard the concept of reception or the 5 GP’s as implying that Forward in Faith’s interpretation was of equal value or an equally valid position, as many would regard it as inherently discriminatory. In his view, Forward in Faith’s interpretation evacuated the 5 GP’s of all substance. Forward in Faith wished to be treated and valued equally - but the positions they held promoted inherent inequality, which was discriminatory.
8. On the question of the ‘bishop as a focus of unity’, MP stressed unity as being sacramental and ontological: it was more than a matter of “photographed hugs and handshakes”. A diocesan bishop (and the Archbishops) had to be able to affirm the sacramental validity of all their clergy. It would be ecclesiologically disastrous if they could not do so. MP’s view was that it should not be possible for someone who had publicly stated that they could not affirm the sacramental ministry of women priests (and men ordained by women bishops) to be a diocesan bishop. He saw a distinction between the (unstated) position held by Richard Chartres as Bishop of London (who had never articulated discriminatory views), and bishops of The Society, who openly subscribed to particular stated views that promoted gender-based inequality. Bishop Philip North was clearly ‘joined at the hip’ to The Society - and literature from The Society confirmed his role of episcopal leadership in this body; and so he must therefore be assumed to have accepted all of its statements. Certainly he had done nothing to distance himself from the views The Society had expressed.

9. MP took issue with the 5 Guiding Principles, as they had been interpreted by The Society in a way which he did not imagine had been intended by their authors.
10. MP had initially been rather cheered by Bishop Philip North's appointment, but the trigger for his article had been the February edition of *New Directions* which had spelt out the implications of appointing a 'non-ordaining Society bishop'. His conviction was that a diocesan bishop needed to have unequivocal sacramental unity with his clergy and he could not see how the appointment would work.
11. On *The Guardian* article of 24 February, MP explained that he'd been in touch with the paper on another matter. The timing of the publication of Harriet Sherwood's piece had not been his intention, and he regretted that it had appeared in a way that had not given Bishop Philip North sufficient time to respond.
12. MP had not intended his article to be a personal criticism of Bishop Philip North: its focus had been on the theological views articulated by bishops of The Society. If Bishop North had found it personal, MP pointed out that ordination was personal too, and that many women clergy found the non-recognition of their orders deeply personal and undermining. MP had written three times now to Bishop Philip on a personal basis but had received no reply to any of his letters.
13. MP acknowledged that, whilst his critique of Bishop North's appointment had been theological and ecclesiological, some of the language he had used had been polemical. However, having seen the *New Directions* article mentioned earlier, he had believed that the nomination was, at the least, embarrassing for the C of E as well as an ecclesiological nonsense, given the views expressed by the Society of which Bishop North was a member.
14. MP was concerned at the way the Church of England Communications Unit had appeared to turn on some of its own clergy and theologians (as it had done with respect to the *Green Report*, and on sexuality). It was certainly acting in a way that seemed to undermine good and fair theological debate on issues crucial for the Church, and its place in society.

JNS

15/5/17 (rev'd 25/5/17)

## The Archbishop of York responds to concerns over the nomination of the new Bishop of Sheffield.

Saturday 25th February 2017

**Writing in the Yorkshire Post today, the Archbishop reaffirmed his support for the nomination of the Rt Revd Philip North, Bishop of Burnley, to be Bishop of Sheffield.**

**This was in response to concerns expressed both within the Diocese and from the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, The Very Reverend Professor Martyn Percy. A fuller version of the article which appears in the [Yorkshire Post](#) is published here:**

The announcement of the nomination of the Right Reverend Philip North, Bishop of Burnley, to be Bishop of Sheffield, has given rise to much debate in recent days. This nomination ought not to have surprised members of the Church of England who have followed the process by which the Church of England reached agreement to proceed with the consecration of women as bishops.

A report in the Guardian noted that the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, the Very Reverend Professor Martyn Percy has objected to Bishop North's nomination with a variety of arguments. Most if not all of those arguments were raised and presented during and before the General Synod debates on this issue in 2014. In supporting the ordination of women as bishops the Synod overwhelmingly did not accept these arguments and favoured a position of mutual flourishing for all in the Church.

Earlier, in 1998, the Lambeth Conference – a gathering of Anglican Bishops from around the world – noted in Resolution III.2 that in relation to the unity of dioceses the Conference “in particular calls upon the provinces of the Communion to affirm that those who dissent from, as well as those who assent to, the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate are both loyal Anglicans”.

Much of this might come over as the Church debating the number of angels that might fit on a pinhead. After all Bishop Philip has assured women clergy in the diocese that he is in favour of women's leadership and would actively promote it. I am firmly convinced that this is true, and am confident that women clergy in the Diocese of Sheffield will not only be accepted, but also be encouraged, inspired, and furthered in their ministry by their new Diocesan Bishop. However, there remain those who question the integrity both of the agreement reached by the Church of England, and of Philip North himself. And that simply won't do.

Personally, I regard Bishop Philip's nomination as a moment of opportunity for the Diocese of Sheffield, and for the Church of England as we participate in the mission of God, acknowledging and welcoming our diversity as a community held together in Christ. As I said at the time of the announcement of his nomination, 'Philip brings with him tremendous energy for mission and ministry. He is a disciple of Christ, full of the Holy Spirit, grace and insight. His wholehearted commitment to Christ, his Gospel and his world will make him a leader who will lead in the way of Christ – with a willingness to be led as well as lead. His experience in a wide range of settings across England has prepared him well for the challenges and opportunities of leadership in the Diocese of Sheffield. It was a joy to work with Bishop Philip on the Crossroads missions both in Sheffield and in Blackburn. His deep understanding of the communities he has served has enabled him to speak for them, and share the love of Christ with them. He is a team player who seeks to bring the best out of everyone. My prayers are with Bishop Philip and the people in the Diocese of Sheffield as he prepares for this exciting new ministry.' We look forward to welcoming him to our North East region group of Bishops – and in particular to our 'Talking Jesus' mission in the Diocese of Durham next weekend.

This debate matters not just because of Philip's own integrity – which remains unimpeached in the midst of debate – but also because of the nature of the Church of England itself which reached a resolution in 2014 that enabled people who disagree on the consecration of women as bishops being consonant with the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it, to continue to remain together as members of one Church bound together in Jesus Christ. This is not a "winner takes all" approach but rather one that seeks – as the Lambeth resolution said – to recognise that those who dissent as well as those who assent to particular propositions are both treated as loyal members of the Church. It's a lesson that we need to hear in times where fractious disagreement can threaten to boil over into unwise actions. We should all heed our Lord's words to John in Mark Chapter 9 vs 38 – 40 who said to him, 'Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us.'

It was for those reasons that in May 2014 the House of Bishops made its Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (GS Misc 1076) in the context of the impending legislation enabling the consecration of women to the episcopate which received final approval by the General Synod in July 2014.

Central to the House of Bishops Declaration are the five guiding principles which need to be read one with the other and held together in tension, rather than being applied selectively:

"•Now that legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are the true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience;

•Anyone who ministers within the Church of England must be prepared to acknowledge that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter;

•Since it continues to share the historic episcopate with other Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and those provinces of the Anglican Communion which continue to ordain only men as priests or bishops, the Church of England acknowledges that its own clear decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God;

•Since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures; and

•Pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England."

Bishop Philip North's nomination is entirely consistent with these guiding principles. The last two are particularly pertinent. For those reasons, and after much thought and prayer, the Crown Nominations Commission, for the See of Sheffield, nominated the Right Reverend Philip North to be Bishop of Sheffield, and Her Majesty the Queen has accepted their nomination. I look forward to welcoming him to Sheffield.

+Sentamu Eboracensis

### **Martyn Percy: Bishop's views mean he should decline job**

**Yorkshire Post:** Monday 27 February 2017 (as published)

It may surprise readers of The Yorkshire Post that I agree with most of what the Archbishop of York wrote in Saturday's edition. Philip North, the Bishop of Burnley, is a fine person.

But he should decline to be the next Bishop of Sheffield, and here is why. He cannot, in his conscience recognise, value and affirm the sacramental integrity of one third of his clergy.

Such a position has no integrity. He will be the cause of division, and cannot bring unity. His views on women clergy mean that he is an instrument of partition and pain. He cannot bring healing.

On the one hand, Bishop Philip says he is committed to women in leadership. But on the other hand, he clearly believes that these same women – his own clergy – are not true priests. And so he undermines them. His apparent affirmation does not compensate for his subversion.

My essay in *Modern Church* did not call for Bishop North to resign. It asked him to either fully and unequivocally affirm all his clergy – and so distance himself from the position of the Society he helps to lead. And if he can't or won't do this, he is not the right person to lead and unite the Diocese of Sheffield. Simple.

Philip North's commitment to a society that does not accept female clergy as true, full and equal alongside male clergy is a form of gender-based discrimination. It has no other name.

He is part of a catholic society that believes only men can truly be priests and bishops. What leadership roles, exactly, are left for the women, in a church run by such men?

At this, there have been some howls of protest from conservative catholic groups in the Church of England. The logic is very odd. Namely, they should be allowed to be intolerant of women. But it is apparently intolerant of me to object to this. I would simply argue that tolerating intolerance is not an especially virtuous practice!

To try and appease those who objected to women priests and women bishops, the Church of England adopted the (so-called) 'Five Guiding Principles' to help maintain unity. The first principle is crucial.

It states "the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience".

Let us dwell on those words: 'fully', 'unequivocally', 'equally open to all' and 'without reference to gender'. That those so ordained are 'true' and 'lawful'. True means true. Not half true. The Society that Philip North belongs to does not believe one third of his clergy are 'true' clergy. (But he does admit they are 'lawfully' ordained).

The faithfulness of the church, and its public witness, is neither affirmed nor rewarded by finding some fudged middle ground between sexism and equality. Any more than it is between racism and impartiality, or any kind of exclusion based on a person's identity, and their inclusion.

The Five Guiding Principles seek a middle-way between inclusion and exclusion. They are muddled. We would not tolerate, quite rightly, a post-apartheid South Africa that still gave honoured places in government to those who held racially-segregationist views.

I know that Bishop Philip North is a loyal Anglican. But his appointment does not represent a triumph for a broad church that can now showcase its diversity, and a capacity to live with differences and disagreements.

It sends a completely different message to the world. Namely, that we tolerate exclusion and discrimination at the highest levels. And that our Church leaders support such discrimination, in the name of inclusion and 'mutual flourishing'.

The Church of England has to find better ways forward with its complex balancing act: between managed diversity and integrated unity. We cannot be seen, as a public and national church, to be sanctioning and sacralising such sexism.

Philip North's appointment to the See of Sheffield, whilst he is still a card-carrying member of a group that doesn't believe women can be 'truly' clergy, is not a step forward for the church. It's a step backwards into dense fog, and greater darkness.

*The Very Reverend Professor Martyn Percy is the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. He worked in Sheffield Diocese from 1997-2004.*

**Arun Arora: Why the CoE must be a broad church when it comes to new Bishop of Sheffield****Yorkshire Post:** Saturday 04 March 2017 'Have your say'

I recently received an email from an academic researcher on a proposal to set up a new website for the creation of an "intersectional discussion group". Her proposal ended with a rather startling statement: "We reject racism, misogyny, violence, aggression, sexism, ablism, homophobia, transphobia, casteism, white supremacy, patriarchy and oppressive ideologies." I was reminded of the email by a piece in The Times earlier this week which reported that "British universities suffer from "group-think" with a strong left-wing or liberal bias among academics". As the husband of an academic, I found much of this rather surprising. Many of the academics I know tend to be thoughtful, reflective – and as you might expect from people involved in higher education – able to balance views in a way which rises above the kind of strident polemical tone which might be more likely to be found amongst undergraduates rather than those who teach them. But the advent of digital technology seems to have seduced those who might otherwise know better into making the kind of rash statements which social media often elicits. Not that such statements are only to be found on Facebook or Twitter.

Writing in these pages earlier this week, the Reverend Professor Martyn Percy implied that those who support the appointment of Bishop Philip North as the new Bishop of Sheffield, and the Church of England's settlement on enabling women to be bishops were akin to those who held apartheid era racially-segregationist views. Following Professor Percy's logic that means he is suggesting the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, as good as holds racist views. So much for thoughtful and reflective views. That astonishing implication goes to the heart the issue with Professor Percy's argument. It's not so much that he doesn't make out a case but rather that those who disagree with him must be labelled in such a way as to make holding an opposite view morally unacceptable. By presenting his arguments in such terms where is the room for reasoned and balanced debate? Or, to put it another way, when did it become acceptable for academics to start playing the man and stop playing the ball?

Professor Percy is at pains in his article to suggest he thinks Bishop North is a good man and the argument is not personal. Well, if someone told me that I should resign from my job because my views were effectively sexist, I think I'd take that rather personally. Taken as a whole, Professor Percy's argument goes beyond stating his own view to requiring someone else who holds a different view to either agree or resign.

The nomination of Philip North as the next Bishop of Sheffield was made within the frameworks and processes agreed by General Synod in 2014. Many, if not all, of Professor Percy's arguments were heard and considered by Synod before being rejected. Rather than casting out opponents into the wilderness – or labelling them with epithets such as "racist" or "sexist" – the 2014 settlement sought to achieve how people with fundamental differences could still walk together. In doing so the settlement reflected one of the great beauties of the Church of England in its theological breadth.

Since that settlement was reached, 10 women have been consecrated as Bishops in the Church of God. Philip North is the first Diocesan bishop to have been nominated whose views on women bishops reflect the Church's traditionalist approach and also those of our sister Churches across the world including the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Church: 10 to one is a pretty good result for those whose desire is to keep score against their opponents. For the Church as a whole it is a sign that mutual flourishing is possible and that despite disagreement it is possible to work together. However, Professor Percy's argument would suggest even this is too much.



In the nomination of Philip North the Church of England has an opportunity to demonstrate to a wider world that enables opponents to flourish. I have no beef with Martyn Percy the man. But the implications of his argument are that by disagreeing with him I am no better than an apartheid-supporting racist. Professor Percy is better than that and the Church of England should be too.

*Reverend Arun Arora is director of communications at the Church of England.*

### **Statement from the Bishop of Burnley, The Rt Revd Philip North**

**09 March 2017**

It is with regret and sadness that I have decided that I am unable to take up the nomination as Bishop of Sheffield.

The news of my nomination has elicited a strong reaction within the diocese and some areas of the wider Church. It is clear that the level of feeling is such that my arrival would be counter-productive in terms of the mission of the Church in South Yorkshire and that my leadership would not be acceptable to many.

I am grateful for the love, prayers and care that have been shown me over recent weeks by numerous people, especially the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Blackburn and the clergy of the Blackburn Diocese. In particular I would like to thank the Bishop of Doncaster and the diocesan team in Sheffield for their support.

I apologise to the many for whom this decision will come as a disappointment. There is clearly much to be done on what it means to disagree well and to live with theological difference in the Church of England. The highly individualised nature of the attacks upon me have been extremely hard to bear. If, as Christians, we cannot relate to each other within the bounds of love, how can we possibly presume to transform a nation in the name of Christ? I hope though that this conversation can continue in the future without it being hung upon the shoulders of one individual.

I do not doubt for one single second the Lordship of Christ or his call upon my life, but the pressures of recent weeks have left me reflecting on how He is calling me to serve him. I am grateful to the Bishop of Blackburn for allowing me a period of leave to reflect on and pray about the events of the past few weeks and would ask for this space to be respected. I hope that, as we continue on the Lenten journey, we will each be able to hear God's voice speaking to us in the wilderness, drawing forth order and beauty from the messy chaos of our lives.

## Archbishop of York Statement on Bishop Philip North

Thursday 9th March 2017

I have been informed that the Right Reverend Philip North, the Bishop of Burnley, has notified the Prime Minister of his intention to withdraw from his nomination as Bishop of Sheffield.

Philip is a gifted and godly bishop with a passion and calling to serve the poor and those on the margins. In a time of uncertainty and change in our nation and the wider world, his has been a prophetic voice, calling the Church back to the command of Christ to serve the poor and the marginalised. In recent days in particular, we have heard time and time again of his inspirational effect on the Church in the Diocese of Blackburn among both lay and ordained, male and female. Bishop Philip is one of those within the Church of England who, *‘on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests’*, there has been a strong reaction from a number of individuals within the Diocese of Sheffield and the wider Church of England, and this has ultimately led Bishop Philip to reconsider his nomination to the See of Sheffield. He has prayerfully concluded that, in such a climate, he would not be able to fulfil the central calling of a diocesan bishop, to be a focus of unity.

This is a personal decision which I understand and sadly accept. However what has happened to Bishop Philip clearly does not reflect the settlement under which, two and a half years ago, the Church of England joyfully and decisively opened up all orders of ministry to men and women. It also made a commitment to mutual flourishing; that those who *‘on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests, will continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures; and pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contribute to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England.’*

There will be continuing debate in the coming days and weeks of lessons to be learned, how that learning might inform and inspire us to act as a Church in our dealings with one another and how, when we disagree, to **disagree Christianly**, remembering at all times that our identity is **in Christ alone**.

It is now time – during this season of Lent - that the Church spends time in penitence, repentance and reflection. If we are serious about our commitment to loving one another and to mutual flourishing within the Body of Christ, there must now be time for us all to reflect and recognise in Bishop Philip's own words *'The highly individualised nature of the attacks upon me have been hard. If as Christians we cannot relate to each other within the bounds of love, how can we possibly presume to transform a nation in the name of Christ? I hope though that this conversation can continue in future without it being hung upon the shoulders of one individual.'* I agree with him entirely.

I invite the Church to join me in prayer for the Bishop of Burnley, the Diocese of Blackburn in which he serves, and for the Diocese of Sheffield at this time.

+Sentamu Eboracensis

Archbishop of York



 THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  


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William Nye  
*Secretary General*

28 April 2017

*Dear Philip,*

**Nomination to the See of Sheffield and Concerns raised about the Operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration under Regulation 27**

1. Thank you for your letter of 29 March. I am grateful for the opportunity to assist you with the review the Archbishops have asked you to undertake on the operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests following recent events relating to the See of Sheffield.
2. You ask for help in identifying the key issues which I judge to be central to understanding and addressing the matters raised by the Archbishops. I propose to address myself principally to three of the five areas that the Archbishops have raised, points (a), (c) and (e). Point (b) will doubtless be covered by others submitting material to you, notably the Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments.
3. However, I begin with some general reflections, which perhaps relate particularly to point (d), "the reactions to [the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield] in the Church and beyond." We may infer from Bishop Philip's statement accompanying his withdrawal that he would not have done so had it not been for some of the adverse reactions to his nomination and for the manner in which some of them were expressed. Thus the nature of those reactions, and the reasons for them, are, I suggest, central to your inquiry.
4. First, one or two points of definition. In this letter I use:
  - "non-ordaining bishop" to mean a bishop who for reasons of theological conviction has chosen not to ordain women to the priesthood (though in practice such "non-ordaining" bishops often do ordain women to the diaconate, and in some cases choose not to ordain either women or men to the priesthood);

- “resolution parishes” means those parishes whose PCCs have passed a resolution as provided for in paragraph 20 of the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests; and
  - “2014 settlement” means the set of legislation and other documents which comprise the settlement agreed by the General Synod in July 2014, permitting the consecration of women to the episcopate. This includes the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests, and the Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure 2014.
5. The issue which appeared to be central to those who expressed concern about the nomination of Bishop Philip was the issue of bishops who do not ordain women and the relationship between such a bishop and the women clergy in his diocese. This issue is not a new one. It was not a new issue in January 2017, when Bishop Philip was nominated to the See of Sheffield. Nor was it new in July 2014, when the 2014 settlement was agreed. It has been an issue in the Church since the first ordinations of women priests in 1994. There have since 1994 been a number of dioceses with women clergy, and with diocesan bishops who do not ordain women as priests.
  6. Arrangements have been in place since legislation enabling women to be ordained to the priesthood was carried in 1993 “to ensure that [...] the integrity of differing beliefs and positions concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood should be mutually recognised and respected” as the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993 put it.
  7. There was also a recognition both in the debates that led up to the ordination of women to the priesthood and in the debates leading up to the consecration of women to the episcopate, reflected in the ‘Five Guiding Principles’, that the Church of England’s decision on ministry and gender was “set within a broader context of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God”. By way of illustration of this broader context, Resolution III.2 of the Lambeth Conference 1998 called upon the provinces of the Anglican Communion “to affirm that those who dissent from, as well as those who assent to, the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate are both loyal Anglicans” and that “there is and should be no compulsion on any bishop in matters concerning ordination or licensing”.
  8. Serving bishops who do not ordain women to the priesthood (though they may ordain women as deacons) have made provision in their dioceses for their suffragan or area bishops to do so. The ‘London Plan’ (most recently updated in 2016) has been a notable example of how this has been arranged, the recently retired Bishop of London (like all his predecessors) having been a non-ordaining bishop.
  9. The new elements in the nomination of Bishop Philip were more limited: first, the appointment of a non-ordaining bishop in succession to one who ordained women; and second, the first appointment of a non-ordaining diocesan bishop following the 2014 settlement.
  10. It appears that there may have been a belief amongst some in the Church that the passing of the legislation in 2014 meant that all future bishops – or all future diocesan bishops, at least - would ordain women to the priesthood (or would, perhaps, be required to do so). As discussed below under point (c), that is not a

position envisaged – specifically at paragraphs 11-13 – by the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests, either in relation to diocesan or to suffragan bishops.

11. The theological concerns that questioned how Bishop Philip as Bishop of Sheffield would relate to women clergy in his diocese were, though, entirely congruent with any concerns about relationships in other dioceses with non-ordaining bishops. At the time of writing there is one other such diocese (Chichester), and until recently two. In previous years since 1994 there have been more such dioceses.
12. It is perhaps understandable that concerns should be expressed more strongly about the relationship between a non-ordaining diocesan bishop and female clergy in a diocese which has not had recent experience of this issue. It is worth noting that some of the concerns expressed, particularly locally, were more of a questioning nature, seeking to explore this issue, and to elicit information or reassurance about Bishop Philip’s understanding of or approach to it; while some, particularly nationally, were more clearly opposed, not just to the nomination, but explicitly to the House of Bishops’ Declaration and to the 2014 settlement as a whole.
13. I now turn to some specific information relating to the points in your letter.

**(a) What has been done in the Church, including in the diocese of Sheffield, to inform and educate clergy and laity about the settlement agreed in 2014 and the effect of the Declaration within that settlement?**

14. First, what did the national Church do? The national Church institutions’ work to inform and educate clergy and laity about the settlement and the Declaration was essentially confined to the process of developing the settlement itself, and the accompanying scrutiny through the normal Synodical process.
15. Discussions preparing the way for new legislation to remove the legal obstacles to the consecration of women to the episcopate began immediately after the first attempt at legislation foundered in November 2012.
16. In July 2013, the General Synod debated a report from the House of Bishops (GS 1886) which considered the way forward for the new legislative process. This report contained the ‘Five Guiding Principles’ and the suggestion of a Declaration by the House of Bishops and/or a new Act of Synod. In November 2013, the Synod debated the whole package of proposals, which included a draft of the Declaration by the House (GS 1924). It was at this group of sessions that the draft Measure and draft Amending Canon No. 33 received First Consideration.
17. In February 2014, the Synod passed a resolution welcoming the draft Declaration containing the ‘Five Guiding Principles’ (little changed from the version discussed the previous November) and the draft Resolution of Disputes Procedure Regulations (GS 1932). This group of sessions also included the revision stage of the draft Measure and draft Amending Canon and consideration of the draft Act of Synod Rescinding the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993. In July that year, the draft Measure and draft Amending Canon received Final Approval and the draft Act of Synod Rescinding the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993 was also finally approved, affirmed and proclaimed an Act of Synod. Amending Canon No. 33 was enacted in November 2014.

18. This was a very intense 18-month legislative process and one which attracted significant press coverage throughout. Alongside the usual draft legislation, we circulated background documents, including drafts of the Declaration and 'Five Guiding Principles', and members of the legislative Steering Committee took part in meetings around the country to explain the package of proposals. The whole package was also subject to the procedures specified under Articles 7 and 8 of the Synod's Constitution, so diocesan synods and, where diocesan synods asked them to do so, deanery synods also debated the proposals and reported back to the Synod's Business Committee. It would be fair to say that the package of proposals, which included the Declaration and the 'Five Guiding Principles' received widespread attention during this period, across the Church, through its synodical structures. They were discussed at four successive General Synods, and in diocesan synods and some deanery synods.
19. After the legislation had been carried, we informed dioceses that the legislation had been carried, required them to promulge Amending Canon No. 33 and reminded them of the House of Bishops' Declaration and the 'Five Guiding Principles'.
20. The consecrations of Bishops Libby Lane (Stockport), Rod Thomas (Maidstone) and Philip North (Burnley) provided an opportunity for public explanation of aspects of the theology around the 2014 settlement and included press releases and notes to editors at the time of each announcement and again at each consecration.
21. Beyond that, however, the national Church institutions took no further steps at a formal level to inform or educate about the settlement, but looked to dioceses to do so as necessary. In retrospect, it might have been more helpful if the NCIs had provided some relevant and accessible material to assist the bishops and the dioceses with the process of education and reception. One might also suggest that bishops and staff alike, who had been very closely involved in the minutiae of this issue for many years, and in the details of the 2014 settlement, understandably may have assumed that the Church as a whole had followed the debates, and hence the nature of the final settlement, more closely than was actually the case.
22. Secondly, what did the dioceses do? In preparing to answer this point, I wrote to all diocesan bishops (copied to diocesan secretaries) on 5 April to ask for responses by 21 April specifically in relation what the dioceses did to educate and inform.
23. At the time of writing I have heard back from 32 dioceses.
24. The picture across the dioceses is varied. In 23 dioceses, no special arrangements were made to inform or educate beyond, in most (but not all) cases, letters to the clergy and discussions at diocesan synod. In such cases they have, however, been clear that they do, of course, require all ordinands to give assent to the 'Five Guiding Principles' and that this gives the bishop an opportunity to explore them with candidates and explain what they mean within the context of their own diocese. Bishops in these dioceses will also have had meetings with resolution parishes to discuss their theological convictions and to explain the process.
25. In the remaining dioceses, four have additionally drawn attention to the Declaration and the 'Five Guiding Principles' on their website and e-newsletter. Five dioceses – Chichester, Coventry, Exeter, Manchester and Sheffield – say they have made more



proactive efforts to identify ways in which the spirit of the 'Five Guiding Principles' can be incorporated into as much of the life of the diocese as possible.

26. For example, in Norwich, there were at least three occasions when reports were published on the diocesan website (and at least once through the online diocesan newsletter), which informed everyone about the nature of the legislation, the 'Five Guiding Principles' and the House of Bishops' Declaration. But it was not thought that the 2014 settlement was so very different from the one that had existed before that more needed to be done.
27. In Manchester, the Bishop has established a "mutual flourishing" group. Chaired by the Bishop, the group is formed of roughly equal numbers of those who support the ordination of women and those who are not personally able to receive such ministry in all its forms. It includes both the Bishop of Beverley and the Archdeacon of Rochdale. The group tries to identify issues at a very early stage and to come to a consensus on how to respond to them. Members of the group are well connected across the diocese and in a position to disseminate any learning or wisdom it develops. It has engaged in conversation with the Principal of the local non-residential training scheme and one of the members of the governing body, to understand how both sides can better ensure that the scheme provides an appropriate route for conservative and traditionalist candidates. It has also looked at the nature of diaconal ordinations in terms of the concept of mutual flourishing set out in the Declaration.
28. In Sheffield, in addition to two presidential addresses, the then Bishop also formed a "Ministry Provision Advisory Group" which consulted with various groups across the diocese to produce the report *New Norms New Beginning*. The report makes various recommendations for how people should communicate with each other across the diocese and across theological convictions. The Advisory Group developed a "Mutual Flourishing Declaration" and its recommendations include proposals for a common language to aid communication and for continued discussion and discernment across the diocese. The report was approved by the diocesan synod in July 2015. The Bishop indicated his intention to implement all of the report's recommendations and requested that all PCCs, and deaneries, discuss the report.
29. There have been, therefore, a number of examples of good practice. It is not evident, though, whether any of these have focussed specifically on the particular case of what would happen if a non-ordaining bishop were appointed to a diocese and what that would mean for his relationship with women clergy in the diocese (except to the extent this is implicit in any material in London and Chichester, which already had non-ordaining diocesan bishops). The discussions, and any steps taken, have tended to focus on what the settlement means for those parishes that cannot accept the ministry of a woman bishop and how those parishes can be recognised, acknowledged and encouraged as fully part of the diocese and of the legitimate spectrum of belief within the Church of England.
30. A more detailed summary of the responses I have received from dioceses can be provided if required.

31. What is clear from the responses I received is that, while considerable effort has been put into informing (mainly clergy and diocesan synods) about the existence of the Declaration and the commendation by the House of Bishops of the Declaration to all members of the Church of England, rather less has been done in the wake of the 2014 settlement to ensure that there is a full understanding among clergy and laity of all aspects of the settlement. Most information and education has focused on the position of minority parishes that might pass resolutions under the Declaration.
32. It is, therefore, likely that some of those who are best informed about the Declaration will be those in resolution parishes, who have been in discussion both with their diocese and, in the case of traditional catholic congregations, with *Forward in Faith*, or in the case of conservative evangelicals, with the Bishop of Maidstone or with organisations such as *Reform*.

**(c) The consistency of the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield with the Declaration**

33. Bishop Philip North's nomination to the See of Sheffield was consistent with the House of Bishops' Declaration.
34. As noted above, the Declaration makes no assumptions about the theological standpoint of future diocesan or suffragan bishops. It notes (para. 11) that the Crown Nominations Commission and diocesan bishops will need to bear in mind the desirability of ensuring that either the diocesan bishop and/or a suffragan bishop should be willing and able to ordain women to the priesthood. It also notes (para. 12) that, where there is a vacancy in see, the diocese may express a view in its Statement of Needs as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women to the priesthood.
35. Thus, while neither the Declaration nor the 'Five Guiding Principles' set out in terms that non-ordaining bishops may still be appointed to diocesan sees, it is absolutely clear that this possibility is envisaged and provided for and there is no suggestion that no further non-ordaining diocesan bishops would be appointed. Nor does the Declaration offer any particular theological guidance on the nature of the relationship between a non-ordaining bishop and female clergy. But, again as previously noted, this is because the 2014 settlement and the Declaration do not introduce this situation as a new possibility. It has existed since 1994, and was already the case in two dioceses at the time of the formulation of the Declaration.
36. In the case of Sheffield, the suffragan bishop (the Bishop of Doncaster) does ordain women as priests and the diocese did not, in its Statement of Needs, expressly state a view as to whether its new diocesan bishop should ordain women to the priesthood.
37. The critical issue may be more one of expectation than of whether the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield was consistent with the Declaration (which it was). Some in the Church may have been expecting that, following the 2014 settlement, no new diocesan bishops would be appointed who would not ordain women to the priesthood (this is picked up in the response I received from the Diocese of Lichfield). But no such undertaking has ever been made or intended and the Declaration is clear about the importance of ensuring that "senior leadership

roles within dioceses continue to be filled by people from across the range of traditions” (para. 13).

**(e) The response of the institutional Church to the nomination and to the reactions to it**

38. In this section I talk about the response of the national Church to the nomination and to reactions to it. Doubtless you will obtain parallel information about provincial and diocesan responses.
39. The nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield was announced on 31 January this year. Reports received by the national Church institutions at the time of his nomination suggested that it was generally favourably received, with many commenting that, given his interest in the poor and disengaged and his willingness to speak up for them, Bishop Philip was a good choice for a diocese such as Sheffield and would add a lively voice to the House of Bishops. It also appeared at that point that the nomination of a non-ordaining bishop, selected on his merits for the diocese and for a national role, and following on the consecration of ten women bishops, might mark some degree of closure to the long-running debates on women and the episcopate in the Church.
40. The national Church institutions were not made aware of concerns in the diocese or at national level until some three weeks later. This three-week period included a group of sessions of General Synod. Very little sense of concern about the nomination reached the NCIs during General Synod. I am aware of having seen a copy of just one letter expressing concern about the nomination during this period.
41. On 23 February, through a request from the *Guardian* for comment, we were alerted to the imminent publication of an article by the Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy calling on Bishop Philip to withdraw from the nomination. The article was published on 24 February. We then got in touch with contacts in the diocese of Sheffield, including the Bishop of Doncaster, and with Bishop Philip, and learned of concerns and questions that had been expressed by some in the diocese in the intervening period.
42. As Secretary to the House of Bishops, I saw my responsibility as supporting the policy of the House and the 2014 settlement as approved by the national Church through General Synod. On that basis, staff in the NCIs sought to help explain the policies contained in the 2014 settlement, and the House of Bishops’ Declaration, and to explain how the nomination of Bishop Philip was consistent with the settlement approved by the Church nationally.
43. We issued a press statement on February 23 noting that the arguments in Professor Percy’s article had been considered by the Synod in the debates leading up to the 2014 settlement and had been rejected in favour of the ‘Five Guiding Principles’ and a position of mutual flourishing for all in the Church.
44. It became clear, through postings on social media, that concern about Bishop Philip’s nomination had been growing in some quarters since the time of its announcement. On 24 February, a number of bishops were contacted asking if they would be prepared to speak publically in support of the Declaration, the ‘Five

Guiding Principles' and what they meant. A significant number of bishops did so, either spontaneously or following this contact.

45. We published on 28 February a blog (<http://cofecomms.tumblr.com/post/157822785237/5-guiding-principles-on-women-and-the-episcopate>) – *5 Guiding Principles on Women and the Episcopate – A User Guide* (copy attached). This was intended to be a simple statement from the national Church on the 2014 settlement and how it applied to the nomination to the See of Sheffield. It notes, as the Declaration itself does, that “there will need to be some sensitivity to the feelings of vulnerability that [some] will have because not everyone will receive their ministry” and that the practical working out of the arrangements in the Declaration may not be easy, for the Church as a whole or for individuals.
46. Similar material was covered, in different language, in an article by the Archbishop of York published in the *Yorkshire Post*.
47. Various steps were taken to seek to temper the nature of the debate within the Church, particularly on social media. For example, a number of people were particularly exercised by a reference to “identity cards” for clergy members of the Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda, which had been highlighted by Professor Percy. We drew this to the attention of the director of *Forward in Faith*, and the Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda subsequently issued an apology for any offence caused by this form of words.
48. On 28 February, we shared with the editor of the *Church Times* a letter which had been signed by a number of female clergy in the Diocese of Blackburn in support of Bishop Philip’s ministry. The editor agreed to print the letter.
49. On 3 March, a press release was sent to national religion correspondents and local media in Sheffield diocese highlighting the letter in the *Church Times* and, on 4 March another press release was issued to the same recipients containing quotes from the Bishops of Stockport, Dorking, Repton, Hull and Newcastle in support of the House of Bishops Declaration and the nomination of Bishop Philip. On 4 March, the *Yorkshire Post* carried an article by the Revd Arun Arora under the headline “Why the Church of England must be a broad church when it comes to the new Bishop of Sheffield”.
50. Throughout this period, contact was maintained with Bishop Philip himself, with the Archbishop of York, with a number of other bishops, with the Bishop of Doncaster and with others in the Diocese of Sheffield.
51. On 6 March, Bishop Philip wrote to the Queen and Prime Minister to withdraw from the nomination. Between 6 March, when Bishop Philip wrote to the Queen and the Prime Minister, and 9 March when Bishop Philip’s withdrawal was made public, we worked on a communications plan to include statements from Bishop Philip himself, the Archbishop of York and the Bishops of Doncaster and Blackburn.
52. Once we had become aware of the scale of concern about the nomination of Bishop Philip to the See of Sheffield, the staff of the NCIs, acting in support of the House of Bishops, sought to address some of the concerns raised and to draw attention to the support for the nomination by many in the Church, including women clergy and

women bishops. We tried to raise awareness of the 'Five Guiding Principles' and the House of Bishops' Declaration and how the nomination was consistent with them. We also sought to provide support to Bishop Philip, though for much of this time he was on retreat at the beginning of Lent.

53. I do hope that this is of assistance to your review and I stand ready to expand on any of these points should you wish me to do so.

Yours ever,

W.N.

William Nye LVO  
Secretary General, Archbishops' Council

**Debates on the House of Bishops' Declaration**

You ask whether it was made clear in the debates which led up to the 2014 settlement that the House of Bishops' Declaration allowed for non-ordaining bishops to be appointed to diocesan sees. The recollection of those of my colleagues at Church House who were closely involved in the debates, and who are still employed here, was that the debates in the Steering Committee and in the General Synod did take this point on board. Obviously, the 2014 settlement comprised a large number of elements, and each individual element - even one as significant as this - will have been referred to only by some speakers, and in some debates. However, there are references to this point in a number of the debates.

It is perhaps worth providing some context to this point. The introduction of the House of Bishops' Declaration meant that it would replace the previous Act of Synod of 1993. The Act of Synod provided for there to be no discrimination in appointments at any level in the Church between supporters and opponents of women's ordination. Thus between 1994 and 2014 dioceses were not permitted to specify that they would prefer an ordaining bishop (or indeed a non-ordaining bishop). What was new in the House of Bishops' Declaration was not the possibility that a non-ordaining bishop might be appointed to a diocesan see. Quite the contrary: what was new was that for the first time dioceses would be allowed to request that they exclude the possibility of a non-ordaining bishop.

There are various points in the debates in General Synod in which speakers have clearly studied the draft House of Bishops' Declaration, and are commenting on the provisions in paragraphs 11-13. They do in their speeches recognise that the Declaration allows for further appointments of non-ordaining bishops. But they are comparing the new provisions with the old provision of non-discrimination. A number of speakers - some from one or other conservative perspective - express concern about these provisions in the Declaration; but their concern is about the introduction of the ability of a diocesan vacancy in see committee to specify its preference for an ordaining bishop, and a worry that very few dioceses will not make such a request.

I am sending you in parallel to this some marked-up extracts<sup>1</sup> from the debates in General Synod in November 2013, February 2014 and July 2014 which are relevant. For example, Mr Richard Mantle in November 2013 (page 159) expresses concern that traditionalists should 'have a share in the episcopal jurisdiction held by the House of Bishops.' Mr Gerald O'Brien in February 2014 (pages 81-82) refers explicitly to paragraph 12 of the Declaration, and expresses concern that 'in something like 40 out of 42 dioceses that will be continuing, there will be a majority in favour of the ordination of women'. There are a number of similar speeches, from Synod members who have read and studied the Declaration and expressed concern that almost all dioceses will request ordaining bishops. By way of contrast, in the November 2013 debate the Archdeacon of Portsmouth (page 177) proposed that "we should not be able to pick and choose our bishops whether we disapprove their gender..." In February 2014 the Bishop of Rochester, replying to the debate, sought to reassure Synod that the House of Bishops would ensure the supply of bishops representing the variety of traditions.

As regards discussion in the Steering Committee, I am afraid that minutes were not taken at the relevant meeting on October 2013. I have though sent you in parallel four documents - originally confidential, and therefore not necessarily approved for publication - from organisations and individuals commenting in September 2013 on the draft approach which led to the 2014 settlement. These are from a variety of conservative and liberal perspectives. Each of them refers at least at one point to the possibility (then in paragraph 9 of the draft declaration) of there being a non-ordaining diocesan bishop.

<sup>1</sup> These extracts can be accessed via the relevant volume of the General Synod *Report of Proceedings*

## Philip North affair exposed theological weakness of ‘traditionalism’

### Details

Written by Linda Woodhead

Published: 20 March 2017

Hits: 10504



Pope Francis meets the Archbishop for the Church of Sweden

**On Friday 24th February Martyn Percy wrote [an article](#) questioning the nomination of Philip North, Bishop of Blackburn, to the see of Sheffield.**

How, he asked, could someone who believed that women clergy and those ordained by them were not real clergy serve as bishop in a ‘woman-friendly’ diocese where women make up a third of the clergy? You could do one or the other but not both.

In the debate that has unfolded on social media since then, no-one has answered this challenge – not even Philip North himself. The evasions reveal a Church in retreat from serious theological reflection.

### ‘Personal attacks’

The initial tactic of Bishop North’s defenders was to praise him for his personal qualities and attack critics of his appointment for theirs. The Church of England’s large PR team set the tone by asking women clergy in the diocese of Blackburn where North is currently a bishop to sign a letter saying how nice and ‘inclusive’ they had found him. Bishop Pete Broadbent followed up by tweeting about ‘intolerant exclusive “inclusives”’, a phrase which quickly turned into a meme for conservatives.

In response, clergymen and clergywomen in Sheffield started [a website](#) to raise their concerns. They repeated Percy’s challenge. A Sheffield MP took up their concerns.

When, on Thursday 9th March, Philip North announced was declining the nomination, the hope that this was in response to the challenge were dashed by his [letter of resignation](#). It cited ‘highly individualized... attacks upon me’ which have been ‘hard to bear’ and which created level of opposition which would make mission in South Yorkshire difficult. A pragmatic decision then, not a theological one.

### The ‘Five Guiding Principles’

By this point a second line of defence had gained momentum amongst North’s supporters: appeal to ‘[the Five Guiding Principles](#)’. The vast majority of people, including Anglicans, had never heard of them.

A well-intentioned piece of church-speak, they turned out to have been drafted by a subcommittee in the heat of the desperate attempt to get women bishops approved by Synod in 2014; the failure of the previous attempt under Rowan Williams had caused such public outrage

that even Prime Minister David Cameron was moved to tell the Church of England to 'get with the programme'.

The first two principles say that

**'all] those whom [the Church] has duly ordained and appointed to office are true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience'**

and

**'that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter.'**

But the fourth principle says that those who don't recognise women bishops or priests

**'continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion'**

and must therefore be allowed to flourish.

In other words, rather than resolving the contradiction Percy had put his finger on, the Five Guiding Principles just restate it.

### **It's fine to discriminate**

The **'Archbishop Cranmer' website** offered one of the few attempts to answer to Percy's challenge. It defended discrimination.

It offered two examples: paraplegics not being offered a job with the Fire Service and 'Oxbridge' accepting only the intellectually elite. Percy was condemned as a trendy relativist and discrimination against women clergy was upheld as properly Christian discrimination.

The general point about discrimination is a good one: discrimination lies at the heart of perception, judgement and even 'feelings' (as the philosophers Martha Nussbaum and Robert Solomon have shown us). It can indeed be good or bad, true or false. But no-one, least of all Percy, seemed to be disputing this. The pinch comes in deciding what, in practical circumstances, counts as good or bad discrimination.

Even the examples given are not straightforward. A firefighter crippled by an injury in service could nonetheless proceed to lead the fire service; in Oxbridge the bar is set at excellence. Universities strive to take the best qualified irrespective of gender, disability and so on.

In relation to women priests it is the *kind* of discrimination practised that is under challenge, not discrimination per se. Philip North and the 'Society' to which he belongs want to reserve the highest power in the Church for men even if women candidates have superior gifts and competencies – but they won't explain why. They are unable to justify their discriminatory principles.

### **'Separate integrities'**

Press on any of these defences too hard and they send you down the chute which leads to the decision made in 1992 to protect opponents of women's ordination by allowing 'separate integrities' in the Church of England. Another well-intentioned piece of legislation, it protected opponents of by creating what was in effect a church within the Church with its own 'flying bishops' and 'alternative oversight'.

The most credible defence of North's appointment isn't a theological one but a secular one: the liberal principle which says that people should be free to hold whatever view they like so long as no-one is harmed. **Elaine Storkey** took this line when she argued that North could easily have

**'put all the structures in place necessary for him to be a focus of unity'.**



The rejoinder, however, was more powerful. People asked how North could claim to be in communion with the third his clergy who are women and how he could sponsor women for ordination training to a ministry which, however much he might like and affirm the individuals, he doesn't actually regard as ordination to a ministry of sacrament. And [Jeremy Pemberton asked](#) how he could be a pastor to his whole diocese when he would have to appoint clergy to parishes to dispense sacraments when he has no confidence that they are real sacraments. No answers have been given.

### **Back to theology**

So the theological, moral and pastoral challenges keep popping back up however much North and his supporters try to beat them down. The reason is simple. Those in power in the Church of England decided to ordain women not because they had a late-onset conversion to feminism, nor because they were forced to do so, but because they conceded the theological argument. As Archbishop William Temple had admitted over half a century before:

**'if we could find any shadow of theological ground for the non-ordination of women I should be immensely comforted, but such arguments as I have heard on that line seem quite desperately futile.'**

It's become fashionable for 'traditionalists' to say that the wide support for women priests amongst Anglicans and the population in general has nothing to say to the church. They are wrong. A wider moral shift in society helped Christians to see the implications of their own orthodoxy more clearly than they had before.

From the serious theological explorations which took place over several decades we learned many things. We learned that God has no gender and that feminine language for God is no more inappropriate than masculine. We learned that women played a more central role in early Christianity than Church history had let on, and that what the CofE means by priesthood does not derive directly from the New Testament. We realised that the priest who represents Jesus at the altar and says the words of the Eucharistic Prayer over the bread and wine represents Christ in Christ's humanity, not in Christ's gender. And we discovered that there is therefore no reason why a woman may not preside at Communion: when she does so, she represents Jesus, our human High Priest.

The irony which the Philip North controversy has exposed is that it is the so-called liberals who are the ones clinging to orthodoxy and tradition, and the so-called traditionalists who are appealing to liberal principles of freedom, toleration, and equal respect. Lacking a strong theological basis for their position, the defenders of North are behaving like relativists who believe their position must be upheld not because it is true but just because it is their identity.

The traditionalists lost the argument about God, gender and priesthood a long time ago, and now find themselves unable to offer a theological rationale for 'separate provision' or a bishop who doesn't recognize the orders of an ever-expanding proportion of his own clergy.

**The reason the appointment of Philip North collapsed so swiftly was not that its opponents were particularly nasty but that its supporters have been unable to address the challenges they raised.**

## NOMINATION TO THE SEE OF SHEFFIELD

### RESPONSE TO THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWER FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF FORWARD IN FAITH

1. We are grateful to the Archbishops for asking you to address the concerns that have arisen in the Church following recent events relating to the See of Sheffield.
2. We write in response to your letter of 29 March to the Bishop of Wakefield, in which you seek help in identifying the key issues which, from the perspective of Forward in Faith, are central to understanding and addressing the five matters raised by the Archbishops. As you request, we order this response with reference to those matters.  
  
**(a) what has been done in the Church, including in the diocese of Sheffield, to inform and educate clergy and laity about the settlement agreed in 2014, and the effect of the Declaration within that settlement;**
3. Much of the public discussion of the Bishop of Burnley's nomination to the See of Sheffield displayed ignorance of the content, significance and meaning of the 2014 settlement, the Declaration and the Five Guiding Principles. The Archbishops' first question helpfully seeks to identify the reasons for that ignorance.
4. We have done a great deal to inform and educate those who look to Forward in Faith about the 2014 settlement, and to promote acceptance of it and adherence to it. Commentary material, articles and addresses have been published in *New Directions*. At the beginning of 2015 there was a training day for the Society bishops' representatives in each diocese, and we sent a pack of materials to 500 parishes. Our Advice Booklet, now in its second edition, was published both in print and on our website. The website includes a detailed commentary on the Declaration. We have published the Five Guiding Principles as a pocket-sized leaflet and also a commentary leaflet on the Principles. All of this material is available on our website ([www.forwardinfaith.com/Declaration.php](http://www.forwardinfaith.com/Declaration.php)).
5. We are not aware of any comparable effort, or indeed any effort at all, undertaken on behalf of the House of Bishops or the Archbishops' Council, to promote awareness of the settlement, the Declaration or the Principles, to inform the clergy and laity of the Church of England about them, or to help them to understand them. The Declaration is available on the Church of England in its original, word-processed, GS Misc format, but otherwise we are not aware of any official publication of the Declaration or the Principles, or of any material designed to promote them, or to help the clergy and people of the Church of England to become familiar with them and to understand their meaning and significance.
6. Given the important role that archdeacons play in many of the processes to which the Declaration is relevant, indications that many of them have insufficient awareness of its content and meaning are a particular concern. We wonder what training about the Declaration has been given to archdeacons.

7. We are aware of the existence of a ‘Transformations Research and Implementation Group’, involving officially-appointed members of the College of Bishops, the aim of which is ‘ensuring the flourishing of the ministry of ordained women in the Church of England’. We do not know what central funds may have been expended in support of its work. We are unaware of any comparable group having been established to promote ‘mutual flourishing’ or knowledge and affirmation of the Five Guiding Principles, and we do not know what funds – if any – have been expended to inform and educate about the 2014 settlement.
8. ***If your investigation confirms that little or nothing has been done to inform and educate, archdeacons, other clergy and laity about the 2014 settlement, we hope that you will make recommendations as to how this should be remedied.***
9. We are aware that ordinands are required to give affirmation to the Principles prior to selection and again prior to ordination, but we are not aware of any material published by the Ministry Division which is designed to help them to engage with the Principles or to understand what they mean. We believe that many training institutions make no effort to ensure that their ordinands understand the Principles. We are not aware of any resources having been published or circulated to support them in doing so. In the absence of any effort to promote the Principles, to inform ordinands about them, or to help them to understand them, requiring them to give affirmation to them is in danger of being a mere ‘tick box’ exercise. ***Again, if your investigation confirms that our impression is correct, we hope that you will make recommendations as to how this should be remedied.***
10. We asked Forward in Faith branch officers and the Society bishops’ representatives in the dioceses to indicate whether they are aware of any efforts on the part of their dioceses (before the Bishop of Burnley’s nomination to the See of Sheffield) to inform clergy and laypeople about the 2014 settlement and to educate them about it (i.e. to help them to understand the meaning and significance of the Declaration and Principles). So far, our survey has received responses from 31 of the 39 dioceses in which there are branch officers and/or a resident bishop’s representative:
  - In 21 dioceses there was no awareness of any such effort.
  - In 7 dioceses information had been sent to diocesan synod members (in one case, in the form of a written answer to a question).
  - In 5 dioceses information had been sent to parish clergy.
  - In 2 dioceses there had been discussion in some deanery synods.
  - In 1 diocese the matter had featured at the diocesan clergy conference.
11. Ironically, the Diocese of Sheffield is one of two dioceses which had made a significant effort to promote understanding of the settlement. A report was prepared and circulated to all parish clergy in 2015, and discussion by PCCs was encouraged. However, the response to a question at the November 2016 meeting of the Diocesan Synod indicated that, while a significant number of PCCs had discussed the diocesan report and the Principles, ‘a greater number of PCCs have not done so or have not

provided an answer to these questions'. Remedial action was sought, but we are not aware that such action was taken.

12. The attempts to promote understanding of the Principles and 'mutual flourishing' may be part of the background to the fact that the Vacancy in See Committee did not request a diocesan bishop who would ordain women to the priesthood. What subsequently happened may be taken as indicating that what was done in one of the dioceses that did more than most to foster understanding of the 2014 settlement was – in a context in which (as far as we are aware) nothing at all had been done nationally – not enough.

**(b) the process leading to the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield;**

13. We do not have any concerns about the process leading to the Bishop of Burnley's nomination. However, it has been suggested that, if the Vacancy in See Committee was not asked whether it wished to request a bishop who would ordain women to the priesthood, it should have been.<sup>1</sup> That suggestion is a matter of concern.
14. One of the differences between the 2014 settlement and that of 1993 is that the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993 precluded Vacancy in See Committees from making such a request (because the Act of Synod said that there should be no discrimination between candidates for senior office who support the ordination of women to the priesthood and those who do not). By contrast, the House of Bishops' Declaration does not include a non-discrimination requirement and therefore permits such a request to be made. Para. 12 says: '... dioceses are entitled to express a view, in the statement of needs prepared during a vacancy in see, as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women'. Nowhere does the Declaration state that the Committee should be invited to consider whether it wishes to express a view on this question. There are a huge number of possible matters that a Vacancy in See Committee might wish to consider including in its statement of needs and there is no requirement as to which of them should be considered by the Committee for possible inclusion. *We would be concerned if it were to be suggested officially that the possibility of discriminating against candidates who would not ordain women to the priesthood should be singled out as a matter which must be considered by the Committee.*
15. Given that the Diocese of Sheffield had made some efforts to promote familiarity with the contents of the Declaration, any suggestion that there was not, among the membership of the Committee, awareness that para. 12 of the Declaration mentions the possibility of requesting a bishop who would ordain women to the priesthood would seem implausible.

**(c) the consistency of that nomination with the Declaration;**

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<sup>1</sup> 'Many in Sheffield did not know that addressing this question should have been part of the process': Statement by "Women and the Church", 5 March 2017.

16. The nomination of the Bishop of Burnley to be the Bishop of Sheffield was entirely consistent with House of Bishops' Declaration.
17. That some have suggested that the nomination was inconsistent with the Declaration is a matter of concern. ***We hope that your report will refute such suggestions.***

18. Para. 12 of the Declaration reads in full:

‘In addition, dioceses are entitled to express a view, in the statement of needs prepared during a vacancy in see, as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women. In dioceses where the diocesan bishop does not ordain women he should ensure that a bishop who is fully committed to the ordained ministry of women is given a role across the whole diocese for providing support for female clergy and their ministry.’

The first sentence says that dioceses are entitled to express a view one way or the other. It does not say that they are, or should be, *required* to do so. The second sentence assumes that there will be dioceses (plural) in which the diocesan bishop does not ordain women.

19. Para. 13 of the Declaration reads:

‘All bishops have a shared responsibility for the welfare of the whole Church of England. It will be important that senior leadership roles within dioceses continue to be filled by people from across the range of traditions.’

Given that the Bishop of Doncaster, the Dean of Sheffield, and both archdeacons support the ordination of women to the priesthood, the nomination of a diocesan bishop who would not ordain women to the priesthood would have fulfilled this requirement of the Declaration.

**(d) the reactions to that nomination in the Church and beyond;**

20. Some of the reactions to the nomination have given rise to grave concern.
21. We have already made reference to false claims that the nomination of a bishop who would not ordain women to the priesthood was inconsistent with the Declaration.
22. Our greatest concern is the repeated misrepresentation in much of the discussion of meaning of the first of the Five Guiding Principles, which reads:

‘Now that legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are the true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience.’

Nowhere in this First Principle is there a statement that traditional catholics (or anyone else) should hold a particular view as to the sacramental validity of the ministry of women (and men ordained by women) as bishops and priests. [For further analysis, see the Annex to this submission.] Such a requirement would pose problems

not only for catholics but also for some liberals and evangelicals, since it presupposes a catholic understanding of the sacramentality of ordination and of the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements which they do not share. ***This misrepresentation of the First Principle requires authoritative correction.***

23. We also have concerns relating to the manner of the reaction on the part of some. We invite you to measure those reactions against the requirements of paras 9 and 10 of the Declaration:

‘9. Reciprocity means that everyone, notwithstanding differences of conviction on this issue, will accept that they can rejoice in each other’s partnership in the Gospel and cooperate to the maximum possible extent in mission and ministry. There will need to be an acknowledgement that the differences of view which persist stem from an underlying divergence of theological conviction.

10. In particular reciprocity will mean that those of differing conviction will do all within their power to avoid giving offence to each other. There will need to be sensitivity to the feelings of vulnerability that some will have that their position within the Church of England will gradually be eroded and that others will have because not everyone will receive their ministry.’

24. Some public statements by Church of England clergy have refused to recognize that the stance of traditional catholics rests on a theological conviction which Principle Four acknowledges to be within the spectrum of Anglican teaching and tradition.

25. We invite you to give particular attention to an article by the Dean of Christ Church, which was published on the website of “Modern Church” (of which Dr Percy is one of the Vice-Presidents), and to a report of it on the same website by Kieran Bohan, published on 24 February 2017.<sup>2</sup> The report includes the following:

‘Percy believes the inevitable inequality that would be introduced through Bishop North accepting the nomination to the See would have profound and disturbing ramifications for the public witness of the church in the region, and for the pastoral oversight of its female clergy across the Diocese. He adds:

“Sheffield is a go-ahead, vibrant, progressive city, with cutting-edge universities and research-led industries. It is thoroughly modern. The public will neither comprehend nor welcome this rather fogeyish sacralised sexism of the religious organisation known simply as ‘The Society’, whose Council of Bishops includes Bishop Philip North.” ’

This quotation appeared in a report in the *Guardian* newspaper on the day on which it was published on the Modern Church website.<sup>3</sup>

26. Dr Percy has a right to hold his opinions and to express them. People’s opinions, however moderately expressed, may be offensive to others, and there is no such thing as a right not to be offended. However, the Declaration does embody an expectation that ‘those of differing conviction will do all within their power to avoid giving

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<sup>2</sup> <http://modernchurch.org.uk/news-blog/bishop-north-resignation>, accessed 7 April 2017.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/24/new-bishop-sheffield-opponent-female-priests-urged-decline>, accessed 7 April 2017.

offence to each other'. It might be thought that the more senior the office held, the more care should be taken in this regard. *We invite you to consider whether the Dean of Christ Church allowing himself to be quoted on the Modern Church website and in the Guardian as describing the theological convictions of The Society as 'this rather fogeyish sacralised sexism' constituted an 'act or omission under the House of Bishops' Declaration' in that – in relation to that published comment – he did not do all within his power to avoid giving offence to those who hold the theological convictions that he derided.*

27. In his article, Dr Percy wrote that in the future:

'To be a priest in The Society, you'll need to show that the bishop who ordained you, was, in turn, ordained by someone pure and efficacious, and in turn, was ordained likewise – stretching all the way back to our present time. The "ontological genealogy" will have to demonstrate an unbroken chain of purity, and be a "taint free" litany of bishops. This is sacralised sexism.' In an email sent on the day of publication, Dr Percy's attention was drawn to the following comment by the Council of Bishops of The Society, contained in para. 2.6 of its statement 'A Catholic Life in the Church of England':

'We reject any so-called 'theology of taint' whereby a bishop who ordains women to the episcopate or the priesthood thereby invalidates his own orders and renders invalid the orders of those whom he subsequently ordains. Men who have been ordained to the priesthood by a male bishop who stands in the historic apostolic succession of bishops at whose episcopal ordination a male bishop presided will be welcomed as Priests of The Society, irrespective of whether the ordaining bishop also ordained women to the episcopate and/or the priesthood.'<sup>45</sup>

Dr Percy was invited to remove from his article the claim that the policy of The Society would be directly contrary to this published statement by its Council of Bishops. He declined to do so.

28. The continuing attempts of our opponents to smear us by claiming that we hold beliefs relating to 'purity' and 'taint' that we do not hold are a cause of serious concern. *We invite you to consider whether knowingly persisting in alleging that those of differing convictions hold doctrines that they have publicly stated that they do not hold is in line with the principles of reciprocity and mutuality embodied in the House of Bishops' Declaration, and in particular whether such behaviour is consistent with paragraphs 9-10 and 14 of the Declaration.*
29. *We would also be grateful for your advice on what might be done by the Church of England to ensure 'an acknowledgement that the differences of view which persist stem from an underlying divergence of theological conviction' (Declaration, para. 9) is based on adequate knowledge and acceptance of what the relevant convictions are and are not.*

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<sup>4</sup> *Communion, Catholicity and a Catholic Life: Statements by the Council of Bishops of The Society* (London, <sup>5</sup>), p. 21, also available at [www.sswsh.com/statements.php](http://www.sswsh.com/statements.php)



30. The Bishop of Burnley did not apply to be the Bishop of Sheffield, but responded positively to a vocation presented to him by a commission of the Church. Complaints about the decision to nominate him, and requests for that decision to be set aside, should have been directed to those who were responsible for the decision, not to the person who had faithfully accepted God's calling mediated through a commission of the Church.
31. On 26 February 2017 a 'Pastoral Letter to Philip North was published on the website of SAME ("Sheffield Action on Ministry Equality").<sup>6</sup> The blog posting states,  
 'The letter asks that Bishop Philip takes (*sic*) note of the number of people signing the letter (names are not being published, but simply shared with Bishop Philip). The shareable link for signing is... The two public representatives for this letter were: Revd Ali Dorey, and Revd Dr Jeremy Clines, in case of any queries or questions.'

***We hope that your report will include reference to the means by which these names were shared with Bishop Philip.***

32. ***We hope that you will consider the extent to which the conduct of those members of the clergy responsible for the SAME campaign was in line with paras 9 and 10 of the Declaration.***
33. ***We hope that you will also consider whether the nature of the public campaign urging Bishop Philip to withdraw his acceptance of the nomination, the frequency of the public statements made, the public actions and 'publicity stunts' involved, and the frequency of the electronic and other communications sent to him from the SAME website or at the urging of those responsible for the campaign, taken together, might be considered by reasonable people to be a campaign of harassment and bullying of a bishop in the course of his work – a campaign, the nature of which would tend to bring the Church of England into disrepute.***
34. ***We also invite you to consider the response to this campaign (which included disparagement of the theological convictions of traditional Catholics) on the part of the Catholic clergy and laity of the Diocese of Sheffield.*** We trust that you will find that they behaved throughout with dignity and restraint in the face of considerable provocation.

**(e) the response of the institutional Church to the nomination and to the reactions to it**

35. Especially given what happened when Bishop Philip was appointed as Bishop of Whitby, and the knowledge that the six members of the Crown Nominations Commission elected by the Diocese of Sheffield (led by the Bishop of Doncaster) will have had of their own diocese, we imagine that the Crown Nominations Commission will have been clear that some adverse reaction to Bishop Philip's nomination was inevitable. Its members may have been surprised by the volume of the reaction or by

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<sup>6</sup> <https://shefminequal.wordpress.com/blog/page/3/>, accessed 7 April 2017.



its extent (which, as far as we are aware, has never been authoritatively quantified) but cannot have been surprised that it occurred.

36. ***In the light of this, we hope that you will report on***

- what plans were made and what action was taken on behalf of the Commission in advance of the announcement to prevent, mitigate or contain adverse reactions in relation to Bishop Philip's stance with regard to women's ordination;
- whether guidance was given to the Bishop of Doncaster in advance of the announcement on handling that aspect of the situation;
- whether advice was given to the Bishop of Burnley as to how he should handle it;
- what steps were taken to monitor reactions on a day by day basis, and by whom;
- at what stage, and by whom, the attention of the Archbishops and of senior staff in Church House was drawn to the difficulties being experienced in the Diocese.

37. We are grateful to the Archbishop of York and staff acting under his direction for the efforts that they made to defend the decision of the Commission once they became aware of the level of opposition to it. We wonder why the Archbishop of Canterbury did not feel able to comment publicly, given the importance of the House of Bishops' Declaration to both Provinces of the Church of England.

38. One point that was not sufficiently stressed in official comments on the nomination (both national and diocesan) was the fact that the decision did not represent an imposition on the Diocese of Sheffield by an external body. Rather, the decision was made by a two-thirds majority of a Commission of fourteen voting members, six of whom (43%) were elected by the Diocese to choose its next bishop on its behalf. After Bishop Philip's withdrawal, the Bishop of Rochester wrote on his website, 'That nomination must also have been made with the agreement of most (perhaps all) of the six Sheffield Diocesan representatives on the Crown Nominations Commission.'<sup>7</sup> It is unfortunate that this important point was not emphasized at the outset and repeatedly.

39. The members of the Crown Nominations Commission are rightly expected to maintain confidentiality about the Commission's proceedings. They should not divulge what was said in interviews or discussions, or the voting figures. But we wonder whether the requirement of confidentiality precludes individual members of the Commission from expressing publicly their support for the decision made by the Commission in which they had participated, and urging acceptance of it.

40. We are aware that some at least of the diocesan members of the Commission made strenuous efforts to secure acceptance of the rightness of the Commission's decision. There is a perception, however, that the six diocesan members, led by the Bishop of

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.jameslangstaff.co.uk/?p=165>, accessed 7 April 2017.

Doncaster, did not, as a body, publicly take corporate responsibility for, and advocate acceptance of, the decision in which they had participated and which, in the Bishop of Rochester's words, 'must... also have been made with the agreement of most (perhaps all) of [them]'. In particular, the Bishop of Doncaster's pastoral letter, issued on 1 March, was perceived by many as failing to urge acceptance of the decision in which he had participated.<sup>8</sup>

41. *If you find that the SAME campaign involved public bullying and harassment, we hope that you will report on the extent to which those responsible for the oversight and discipline of the clergy sought to challenge and prevent unacceptable behaviour while it was happening.*

25 April 2017

ANNEX

### MISINTERPRETATION OF THE FIRST GUIDING PRINCIPLE

1. The first of the Five Guiding Principles reads:

'Now that legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are the true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience.'
2. This sentence is plainly a statement of the corporate belief of the Church of England. If all clergy and ordinands were to be required to be 'fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open to all, without reference to gender', rather than merely recognizing and accepting that that is the Church of England's commitment, that would make nonsense of the whole Declaration.
3. Strictly speaking, the statement that 'the Church of England... holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are the true and lawful holders of the offices that they hold' might also be said to be solely a statement of the Church of England's corporate belief. However, the final part of that phrase – 'and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience' – does reflect duties owed by the clergy, and it clearly flows from the first part.
4. It has been suggested that this second part of the First Principle precludes traditional catholics from rejecting, doubting or being agnostic about the sacramental validity of the orders of female priests and bishops and those ordained by them. However, even if one interprets the statement as one which requires agreement (rather than mere acknowledgement that this is the official view of the Church of England) a close examination of the wording shows that it does not require any belief about sacramental status or validity.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sheffield.anglican.org/news/a-pastoral-letter-for-clergy-and-licensed-lay-members-of-the-dioceseof-sheffield>, accessed 7 April 2017.

5. The phrase ‘appointed to office’ clearly does not refer to ordination, since ordination has already been mentioned (‘whom it has duly ordained’). In the phrase ‘are the true and lawful holders of the offices that they hold’, the word ‘office’ must mean what it means in the preceding phrase. It plainly refers to offices such as Bishop of X or Vicar of Y, not to the order of bishop or priest. This interpretation is strengthened by the reference to canonical obedience. Canonical obedience is owed to someone because he or she is the holder of the office of diocesan bishop; it is not owed to those who have been ordained to the episcopate but are not currently diocesan bishops.
6. Forward in Faith has been clear and consistent in saying that traditional catholics should accept that a woman (or a man ordained by a woman) who has been appointed as the bishop of a diocese or the vicar of a parish is the true and lawful holder of the office of Bishop of X or Vicar of Y: the office is not vacant. We have been consistent and clear in saying that the clergy owe canonical obedience to their diocesan bishop, whether male or female, as the lawful office holder, and are under his or her jurisdiction. We have also stressed that lawful office-holders should be given respect. The points about recognition as true and lawful office-holders and about canonical obedience and jurisdiction have been a ‘stretch’ for some members of Forward in Faith, but we have considered it essential to be faithful to the First Principle (in this generous interpretation of its applicability).
7. Nowhere in this First Principle is there a statement that traditional catholics (or anyone else) should hold a particular view as to the sacramental validity of the ministry of women (and men ordained by women) as bishops and priests. Such a requirement would pose problems not only for catholics but also for some liberals and evangelicals, since it presupposes a catholic understanding of the sacramentality of ordination and of the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements which they do not share.
8. The Declaration says that the Principles ‘need to be read one with the other and held together in tension, rather than being applied selectively’. The First Principle needs to be read with the Fourth Principle, which speaks of ‘those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests’. The First Principle cannot be interpreted in a way which requires those who hold the theological conviction mentioned in the Fourth Principle to disavow that conviction.
9. ***The misrepresentation of the First Principle as obliging traditional catholics to acknowledge the sacramental validity of the ministry of female priests and bishops and those ordained by them requires authoritative correction.***

## REFLECTION BY DR J WORTHEN IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FROM SIR PHILIP MAWER

It would seem to be important to emphasise at the outset that the House of Bishops' Declaration of 2014 built on two decades of experience in the Church of England of living with deep disagreement on the subject of the ordination of women. It also rests on the substantial thinking undertaken during those two decades, and indeed on the substantial thinking that led up to the passing of legislation allowing the ordination of women to the priesthood in 1994. The situation of a diocesan bishop who does not ordain women to the priesthood on the basis of theological reservations on this question serving as the bishop for female and male priests alike was not created by the legislation of 2014, but the legislation of 1994. Hence it is addressed explicitly in the House of Bishops' document debated in 1993 that paved the way for that legislation, *Bonds of Peace*, and in the theological report that accompanied it, *Being in Communion*, but not in the 2014 Declaration.

Similarly, in the 2004 report, *Women Bishops in the Church of England? A Report of the House of Bishops' Working Party on the Episcopate*, GS 1557, the central issue was whether a woman can be a bishop for a whole diocese, including those who do not recognise her as a bishop because of her female gender. No attention was given to the inverse situation, of whether a man can be a bishop for a whole diocese including those whom he would not ordain as a priest because of their female gender, because it had already existed for ten years and was not something expected to change. Moreover, *Bonds of Peace* had already made the case in 1993 that fundamentally we are dealing with the same 'set of theological, ecclesiological and moral concerns' in the case of both those welcoming and those resisting change on the ordination of women: namely, how do dioceses continue to express the communion of the church when that communion is significantly restricted, as it will be within each diocese for the foreseeable future.

On the question of the bishop as a 'focus for unity', the phrase may be relatively recent, but it reflects an insistence on the distinctive role of bishops with regard to the church's unity that can be traced back to the second century of the Christian Era. Crucially, this role hinges on the bishop's distinctive ecclesial role with regard to *both* the 'local' church (i.e. his or her diocese) *and* the 'universal' church. It should not be reduced to the secular idea of the institutional leader as a 'unifying figure'.

The *Common Worship* ordination service for bishops says that 'they are to gather God's people and celebrate with them the sacraments of the new covenant. Thus formed into a single communion of faith and love, the Church in each place and time is united with the Church in every place and time.' This implies two crucial points about bishops and unity. First, the primary way in which bishops enable the expression of the church's unity is

through their liturgical, preaching and sacramental ministry – through being, as the service says later, ‘principal ministers of word and sacrament’. Second, the bishop’s role with regard to unity *in* the diocese is inseparable from the bishop’s role with regard to unity *of* the diocese with other dioceses and with the whole church of God, in the present and through history. Only as it is ‘formed into a single communion of faith and love’ can ‘the Church in each place and time’ be united with ‘the Church in every place and time’. A third point arises later, where the word ‘unity’ actually occurs: bishops must promise to ‘strive for the visible unity of Christ’s church’. Unity is not simply something that grows organically from the due exercise of episcopal ministry, but is a challenging task that requires from bishops their energy and attention.

*Episcopal Ministry: The Report of the Archbishops’ Group on the Episcopate 1990*, GS 944, has a short but significant section headed ‘The bishop as sign and focus of unity and communion.’ A key sentence summarising its conclusions on this subject states that: ‘In the local church [i.e. the diocese] the bishop focuses and nurtures the unity of his people; in his sharing in the collegiality of bishops the local church is bound together with other local churches; and, through the succession of bishops the local community is related to the Church through the ages’ (para. 351). The first two points found in the Ordinal are also clearly present here, with the unity of the ‘local church’ with other churches in ‘every place’ then being distinguished from its unity with other churches ‘in every time’.

*Women Bishops in the Church of England?* includes an extended section of chapter 2 on the bishop as an ‘instrument’ (rather than focus) of the church’s unity. After a historical survey going back to the patristic period, it criticizes *Episcopal Ministry* for its neglect of the third point identified from the Ordinal, the duty of the bishop to seek and strive for the church’s unity, which it describes as pertaining to a ‘dynamic’ view of the bishop’s role regarding unity (2.7.18 & 19). It also stresses that this unity must include the Church of England’s relations with other churches, because only with them can the whole of the church be visibly one (2.7.21).

Finally on this subject, it might be noted that these texts – including the Ordinal – do not make any distinction between diocesan bishops and other kinds of bishops with regard to their responsibilities for expressing, enabling and seeking the unity of the church.

With regard to the idea that the role of diocesan bishop requires the person to be ‘in full sacramental communion’ with all presbyters in the diocese, the basic point which needs underlining here is that there has been since 1994 a limitation to ‘full sacramental communion’ in the Church of England that affects *everyone* within the Church of England, and specifically affects the ministry of every priest and every bishop in the Church of England. Since 1994, there has not always been ‘full sacramental communion’ between priests in the same diocese, and in many cases restrictions also on sacramental communion between some priests and their diocesan bishop. Certainly since 2014, the Church of England is clearly in a situation where that lack of ‘full sacramental communion’ between

the diocesan bishop and some priests within the diocese is effectively the norm, in that it will regularly be the case that one of the following limitations to sacramental communion apply: (a) the diocesan bishop would not receive the elements at a service where a woman priest was presiding; (b) some priests who do not accept the ordination of women do not fully receive the sacramental ministry of the diocesan bishop.

The appointment of a 'traditionalist' as a diocesan brings this normal reality to the fore in a way that may be uncomfortable for some. But it does not create that reality. The reality – of limitation to sacramental communion that affects every member of the Church of England, with a specific impact on the relationship between ordained ministers generally and the relationship between bishops and their priests in particular – follows from the path that the Church of England has chosen to follow over the past two and half decades, and not without careful thought and thorough deliberation at every critical stage.

The key issues here are laid out with some clarity in *Being in Communion*, GS Misc 418, published to accompany *Bonds of Communion* in 1993. The report lists the 'constitutive elements of communion' as 'baptism; eucharistic communion; ministry; ordered and structured life; mutual care and apostolic mission' (paragraph 5), noting that 'Ordained ministers have a particular responsibility for maintaining and focusing the Church's continuity and unity. For one church to be in ecclesial communion with another involves the mutual recognition of all the baptised and of those who are called to be ordained ministers of the communion, particularly in its eucharistic expression' (paragraph 6). Commenting specifically on the role of bishops for ecclesial communion, it proceeds to say of the bishop that 'He represents the Christian community in his diocese to the wider Church and the wider Church to his diocese. Hence while the recognition of ministries and the communion between all the ordained is necessary for maintaining the communion of the Church, the episcopal ministry is of particular importance for both maintaining and focusing that communion' (paragraph 9) – affirming again that the different dimensions of the bishop's role as focus of unity that were highlighted earlier.

All of this represents a theological understanding of communion that has continued to underpin much Anglican as well as ecumenical ecclesiology. Crucially, however, *Being in Communion* grapples with the paradox of what it means for a church to 'be in communion' when there are evident limitations on the 'constitutive elements of communion' actually binding the members of that church to one another, including 'eucharistic communion'.

It begins its reflection on this subject with the situation in the Anglican Communion, citing at paragraph 18 Resolution 1 of the 1988 Lambeth Conference, which might be seen in retrospect as sketching the essential contours of the thinking that has subsequently informed the Church of England's ecclesiology: 'that each Province respect the decision and attitudes of other Provinces in the ordination or consecration of women to the episcopate, without such respect necessarily indicating acceptance of the principles involved,

maintaining the highest degree of communion with the Provinces which differ.’ The compressed wording of the resolution clearly implies that:

- a) it is possible to respect ‘the decision and attitudes’ of others on the question of the ordination of women, without sharing that decision and those attitudes;
- b) such respect can be expressed in warm, courteous and fair dealings between those who take different views;
- c) consequent differences in belief and practice on this matter mean that we can no longer speak in a straightforward way of being in ‘full’ communion with one another;
- d) we do however remain truly *in* communion;
- e) this relationship of communion implies a corresponding imperative to strive to maintain ‘the highest degree of communion’ with those who differ from us.

These assumptions have underpinned the life of the Anglican Communion since the 1980s and the life of the Church of England since the 1990s. They are clearly reflected in the 2014 Declaration of the House of Bishops. Of course, they can and have been questioned and critiqued, but they have also been extensively argued for and defended, within the Church of England and across the Anglican Communion.

Mindful of the situation in the Anglican Communion, *Being in Communion* proceeds to situate the Church of England’s own decision on this matter in the context of ‘a much broader and longer process of discernment within the whole Church under the Spirit’s guidance’ (paragraph 20). This sentence, together with much of the final section of the report, is reproduced verbatim in the opening section of *Bonds of Peace* (in this case at paragraph 2). A key sentence in the next paragraph sums up the document’s theological understanding of the situation that the Church of England is entering: ‘The Church of England needs to understand itself as a communion in dialogue, committed to remaining together in the ongoing process of the discernment of truth within the wider fellowship of the Christian Church’ (paragraph 21, *Bonds of Peace* paragraph 3). The point about discernment is taken up and affirmed again in the 2014 Declaration.

The phrase ‘communion in dialogue’ may be especially worth pondering. The way that the Church of England lives the communion that is God’s gift has been affected in significant ways by how it has chosen to respond to the decision about the ordination of women as priests and bishops. One result of that is that it is no longer possible to speak in a straightforward way about the Church of England holding ‘full sacramental communion’ within its own life, or with other churches. Yet it remains truly a church, bound together as communion and bound together in communion with other churches. This situation has been commented on more recently in the document published last year by the Faith and Order Commission, *Communion and Disagreement*, at paragraphs 67–68, and described there as ‘a remarkable adventure in how ecclesial communion can be sustained without agreement in

belief and practice on something that has been considered to be of decisive importance for “full” communion.’

The continuing significance of the bishop as a ‘focus’ of unity therefore needs to be understood in relation to the kind of unity we have within the Church of England today. In the wording of *Being in Communion* affirmed in *Bonds of Peace*, that unity may be characterized as ‘a communion in dialogue, committed to remaining together in the ongoing process of the discernment of truth within the wider fellowship of the Christian Church’, and it is this difficult but real unity for which bishops are called to be a focus, a sign and an instrument in the contemporary Church of England.

**The Revd Canon Jeremy Worthen,**  
*Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Theology*

5 May 2017



Canon Dr Malcolm Grundy,

Jonathan Neil-Smith,  
c/o the Office of the Independent Reviewer,  
The Central Secretariat,  
Church House,  
Great Smith Street,  
London SW1P 3AZ.

31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

Dear Sir Philip,

I hope that you will excuse my writing to you about the events concerning the appointment of a new bishop in the Diocese of Sheffield. Long ago I ceased to be active in commenting on current Church of England matters. The reason for breaking my silence now is that since I retired from being Director of the Foundation for Church Leadership I have completed a PhD on the nature of episcopal oversight and am continuing with this study.

Some of my research and conclusions might give you a little background for the Independent Review which the Archbishops have asked you to undertake. My comments relate to the Five Guiding Principles and especially to the third one where direct reference is made to episcopacy within a continuing process of discernment in the other historic denominations as well as in the Anglican Communion. My thesis looked in some detail at what the ecumenical agreements Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM), the Porvoo Common Statement and the continuing Anglican-Methodist Unity Discussions all say in relation to the theological and ecclesial nature of episcopal ministry.

The issue to be explored following the Sheffield appointment is the need to gain a particular assurance or otherwise from our Archbishops. It is that in considering a controversial name from a group within the Church of England which was unlikely claim universal support were they acting in the spirit of these ecumenical agreements which have been assented to by our local and national synods.

I need to explain my reason for suggesting that you need to explore this and consequent questions. These ecumenical agreements, after stating that *episcopate* contains the essentials of Koinonia, Apostolicity and Unity, go on to say that *episcopate* is exercised Personally, Collegially and Communally.

My view is that in nominating Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield, our Archbishops were appointing a person whose ministry could not properly be exercised Collegially or Communally; Collegially because Bishop Philip does not recognise those bishops who are women and Communally because he could not command the affirmation of women priests in his new diocese. More widely he could not expect the respect and affirmation of his ministry by many outside the church but resident in his diocese. I am attaching an

extract from my thesis which spells out the content and applied implications of these ecumenical agreements in more detail.  
(<http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/6565>).

In your Review I wonder if it is possible for you gain any indication that the Archbishops familiarised themselves once again with the essence of these agreements, to which they and we are bound. Is it possible for them to explain in which ways these inform their interpretation of the Five Guiding Principles? Is it possible for you to discover whether or not in their preliminary meetings the Archbishops or the members of the Vacancy in See Commission took any steps to enquire in the diocese whether or not there was adequate familiarity with the interpretation of the Five Guiding Principles which the Archbishops intended? Also, to what extent was there any local awareness of existing and binding ecumenical agreements?


I wonder if, in particular relation to the action which those making the appointment intended to take that there was sufficient understanding of how an unexpected interpretation of these Principles would be received. My view is that insufficient preparatory work was done. It is also possible that those conducting the preliminary visits were themselves unaware of the need for such work, not sufficiently aware of the theological and ecumenical territory or of the possible consequences of their actions.

I hope that these observations, which arise from detailed research on my part, will suggest something of the theological and ecclesiological issues which need to be named and explored. An enquiry into 'who said what' and asking about the nature of the letters sent to Bishop Philip would not answer the wider questions which continue to be raised by concerned people and groups across our church.

At a personal level and within the scope of what I have said above I think that the Principles and ecumenical agreements which I hope inform them would allow the appointment of a suffragan bishop who could exercise oversight of a particular group within a diocese. Suffragans do on the whole have a specialist portfolio of some kind. The work of a diocesan bishop is primarily to exercise oversight over the whole of a diocese and all those within it. Baroness Perry pointed this out long ago now in *Working with the Spirit: choosing diocesan bishops* (Ch 2, p 17, 2.8 and in other places).

I hope that you will find these comments helpful. I am also in correspondence with Archbishop Sentamu on this matter and he knows that I am writing to you. I cannot think of anyone in our church more suited to conduct such a difficult task and assure you of my thoughts and prayers.

With all good wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Helen Grundy'.

Visiting Fellow, York St John University

### 3.2.1 An integrated understanding of oversight

The historical origins and ecumenical documents give some key words and concepts by which we can identify key theological characteristics of *episkope* for the future. These have been demonstrated in the history of episcopal churches and in a series of ecumenical agreements. The first three of these describe the context within which oversight is exercised and the basis upon which the church derives its authority and purpose in relating to its members and to the wider world and are contained in the *BEM* agreement on Ministry.<sup>1</sup> The second three describe the way in which oversight is exercised by those in positions of responsibility and the ways in which all those called to ministry share the responsibility of oversight and are suggested first in the Porvoo Common Statement.<sup>2</sup> That each is related in an inextricable way to the other is of the essence of a renewed and ecumenical understanding of oversight.

They can now be seen in diagrammatic form to describe a ‘template’ for an integrated understanding of oversight. It summarizes the descriptions so far and in this diagrammatic form demonstrates the relationship between each and the interdependence between each for an integrated understanding of oversight:

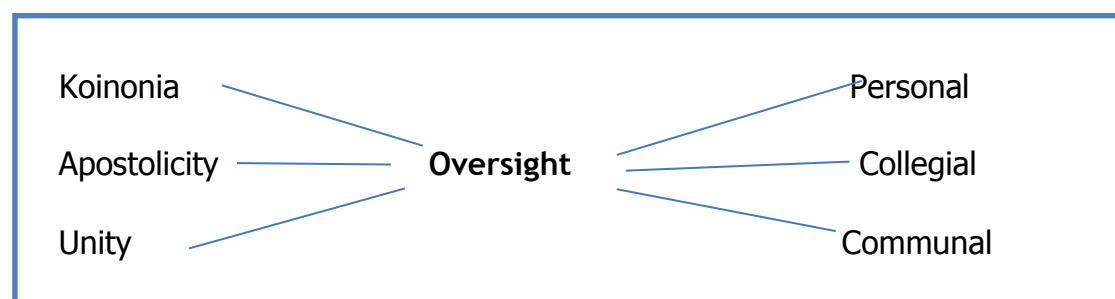


Diagram 1

An integrated understanding of oversight

<sup>1</sup> *BEM, Ministry*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Porvoo Ch 4, Section B, *Apostolic Ministry*: para. 44. p. 18.

### 3.2.2 Core theological concepts of oversight

The first part of Section 3.1.1 in this Chapter identified the places in BEM where key concepts are located. In the itemized sections of this introductory paragraph Koinonia, Apostolicity and unity are identified alongside what for me will become key components for the practice of oversight as personal, collegial and communal. Understandings of these key pieces of ecumenical theology are expanded in the sections below.

**Koinonia** - every characteristic of oversight must arise from the community from and within which it is expressed. It arises as a function from the calling of the ‘whole people of God’.<sup>3</sup> Christianity while being a faith which upholds and inspires the individual has alongside this the basic tenet that faith only grows and is informed by membership of a wider group, which itself is part of an even wider community. The basis of this is the sacrament of baptism through which all Christians recognize one another as members of a common community of faith.<sup>4</sup>

**Apostolicity** - the ways in which this community of churches expresses its unity is that it adheres to internationally agreed characteristics and methods of appointment based on understandings of the continuity of a commission begun and legitimized by the first Apostles. Most significant for many denominations is that the structure itself can be traced back to the work of the apostles who themselves were commissioned by Jesus during the time of his earthly ministry.

History is not everything and the nature and verification of ‘apostolic succession’ has been a great part of the agreements, and differences, in discussions about unity. It is a central point of debate in the Anglican-Methodist Conversations. The Porvoo Agreement has established the centrality of this for the Scandinavian and Nordic Churches; the Anglican Communion establishes this for its constituent churches and province. It is a

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<sup>3</sup> *BEM: Ministry, The calling of the whole people of God*, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *op. cit.*, *ibid.*, p. 2-3.

place where the Roman Catholic Church does not yet acknowledge this 'succession' as a basis of its unity with other churches. This lack of acknowledgement, and the emerging ways of giving pastoral oversight in a divided church suggest that Apostolicity is likely to embody different forms as the search for a common mind and ecclesiology continues.

**Unity** - Recent decades have been characterized by a search for structural unity between denominations. This search is now seen by ecumenical theologians to be drawing to a close and as a time when energy may have been misspent.<sup>5</sup> New forms of unity are emerging and are characterized by emergence from a wilderness experience in which a generation of ecumenical explorers is described by Rimmer and others as having become lost.<sup>6</sup> The basis for unity continues to rest with agreements which, for the historic denominations, remain binding if not internalized. A continuing search for appropriate unity remains a core task in the exercise of oversight. It has to be pursued by new generations who place their calling within understandings of *episkope* which are personal, collegial and communal.

### 3.2.3 Understandings of oversight applied

**Personal** - the very fact that *episkope* is expressed in the appointment of a person, a bishop, as the person who gives the oversight- means that oversight will always be about people in relationship. This is the essence of my re-visited concept of visitation. *BEM* says, 'It is personal because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by a person.'<sup>7</sup> Leadership is always personal but always in relationship with other people and is conducted in ways which reflect the needs and acceptable practices of the age. It explains why in this present age apostolicity has come to be interpreted at least in part as 'leader in mission'.<sup>8</sup> It is the communities of the faithful who adopt this method of oversight or

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<sup>5</sup> Avis, P., *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology*, T & T Clark, Continuum, London & New York. 2010; Kasper W., *Harvesting the Fruits*, Continuum, London & New York, 2009. Preface p. vii

<sup>6</sup> Rimmer, C.M., *Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Wilderness*, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *BEM*, p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> *Common Worship: Ordination Service*, p.55. *BEM: Ministry*, para 29 and following commentary, p.26.

governance who acknowledge willingly that they do not exist in isolation: they are not independent, self-governing churches or communities. The style and nature of the personal nature of oversight is undergoing change. No longer will the 'monarchical' style of episcopal leadership be acceptable in many or most parts of the world. Personal episcopal leadership and oversight will, as always, require the consent of the people who make up the church. The second report of the Anglican-Methodist conversations published in 2001 has the important reminder that personal episcopal office is not carried out in a completely individual way, 'The personal dimension presupposes the collegial and the communal, complementing them and upholding them'.<sup>9</sup> From local Christian communities will arise ready to be identified and called those who have the qualities required for leadership and oversight of communities which have very different expectations from those of the first centuries or the Middle-Ages. The pressures and new structures of the Reformation made new demands of churches which continued with episcopacy as a fundamental structure. We have seen that it was the personal influence and example of the episcopal leaders of the day which built the bridges for a transition.

**Collegial** - the one significant characteristic of episcopally led churches is that the leaders operate as a group in relation to one another.<sup>10</sup> We have seen that this is represented in the Ordinals where bishops are required to teach agreed doctrines and to develop renewed missionary structures. Bishops have to talk together, reach fundamental agreements together, and to draw the boundaries of faith and order together. In order to do this, bishops have to represent their people as they meet together in provinces and as the provincial leaders, the archbishops, meet together in council. All this has now to be done in the essential relationship which bishops have with their clergy and their lay people as they meet together in synods. These structures are the characteristic of church order in the first centuries and have now become an essential feature of modern church government.

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<sup>9</sup> Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England, *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant*, CHP and Methodist Publishing, 2001, p.56.

<sup>10</sup> *BEM* p. 26, *Porvoo*, p. 25.

Such meetings are not the same as those expressed in most forms of modern democracy. The purpose of meeting in these groups is to debate together in attempts to achieve unanimity. The Porvoo Common statement says, 'It is collegial, first because the bishop gathers together those who are ordained to share the tasks of ministry . . . because through the collegiality of bishops the Christian community in its local area is related to the wider Church'.<sup>11</sup> It is for the episcopal leaders, the bishops to find their appropriate place in this modern system. It has to be a place which safeguards their historic and ecclesiastical role. Their new place will not be achieved, and gain consent, without their willingness to act collegially and represent the mind of a church which is universal in faith if not in structure. Furlong however is severely critical of the adoption of a more 'collegial' style in the Church of England saying it is 'borrowed clothes' from the Roman Catholic Church. Without the understanding examined in the documents above she describes an anxiety to some extent justified, that individual initiative and opinion could be stifled:

. . . 'Collegiality' - borrowed clothes from the Roman Catholic Church which do not quite fit, since the Church of England is a very different organization. Those who are interested in the deliberations of the Church want to know what the bishops are actually thinking, as individuals, not as an undifferentiated mass. We would hate to think they have forgotten the art of disagreeing.<sup>12</sup>

Is it possible to define what collegiality actually means? We are fortunate that Mary McAleese, Emeritus Professor of Law and former President of the Irish Republic has chosen to make a study of the uses of the word. With a lawyer's precision she concludes with a summary definition:

At its simplest, the idea of collegiality is rooted, however vaguely, in the notion of a college. It suggests a gathering of individuals into a common association or grouping ring-fenced in some identifiable way.<sup>13</sup>

She also concludes, in ecclesiastical use, that collegiality does not refer to the modern development of synodical government or to bishops and clergy

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<sup>11</sup> *Porvoo*, Section B *Apostolic Ministry*, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Furlong, M., *The C of E; the State It's In*, p. 181.

<sup>13</sup> McAleese, M., *Quo Vadis? : Collegiality in the Code of Canon Law*, p. 25.

meeting together but to bishops working together or meeting for a specific purpose.

**Communal** - trust will not be achieved unless those expressing and exercising episcopal leadership represent changing expectations and cultural norms in the societies in which they exercise their jurisdiction. Bishops represent tradition and one of the characteristics by which they act with integrity is that they are aware of and are formed by their own tradition. Their ministry arises from the faith and the traditions of the communities which have shaped and chosen them. But communal means much more than that today. BEM says, 'It is communal, because the exercise of ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community's effective participation in the discovery of God's will and the guidance of the Spirit'.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps more than ever before communal authority contains within it expectations about accountability. Never before have bishops needed to be accountable to their clergy and congregations in the ways that they are today. Authority is almost turned on its head and will be unless the ministry of *episkope* - oversight - has the consent of the people who are governed and cared for by bishops.

These new expectations contain within them the emerging expectation that *episkope*, represented by one person, rests ultimately with the community which calls that person out to be its leader. This kind of communal oversight with representative figures who are vested with specific tasks and roles is unique to episcopal churches; it is a treasure which needs to be retained but is one which needs to be rediscovered and re-valued by the communities of faith which give it shape and which owe it willing allegiance.

The history of episcopacy outlined at the beginning of this chapter gives scope for continued interpretation. A distinguished ecclesiastical lawyer has commented about the failures of the Church of England to hold itself together in its decision-making process, 'The process has exposed the raw edges of living with difference in a broad church, with love, sincerity and

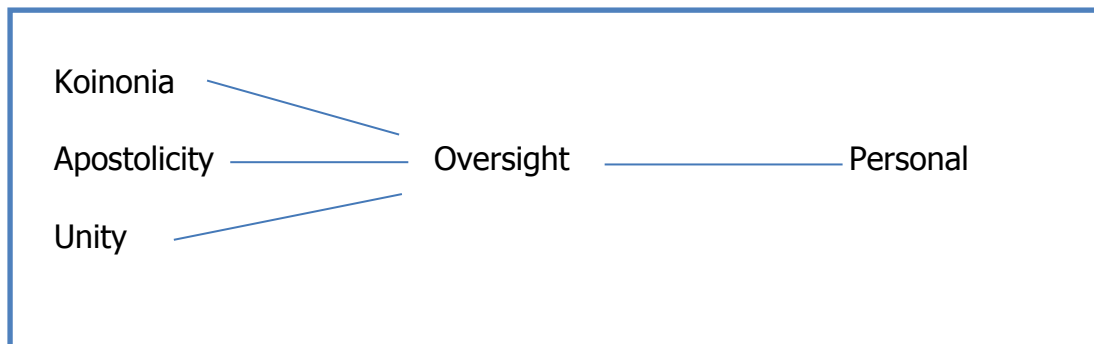
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<sup>14</sup> *Porvoo*: p. 25.

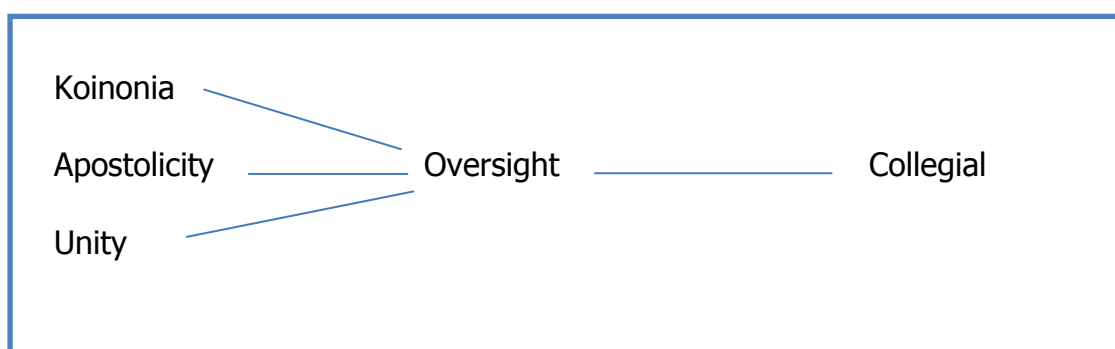


graciousness'.<sup>15</sup> The ecumenical review concludes that oversight is exercised personally, collegially and communally within a framework of unity in the apostolic common life of the Christian community. It has to be set in history and justified by a developed theology of ministry. It now needs developing through an examination of secular leadership practice and the construction of generic models within which oversight can be exercised.

Each of the core theological components of oversight is exercised separately in the outworking by an individual or by a 'college' of leader bishops or by the leader bishops in relation to the communities which both recognize and give them authority. This working out of oversight is described in the three diagrams below:



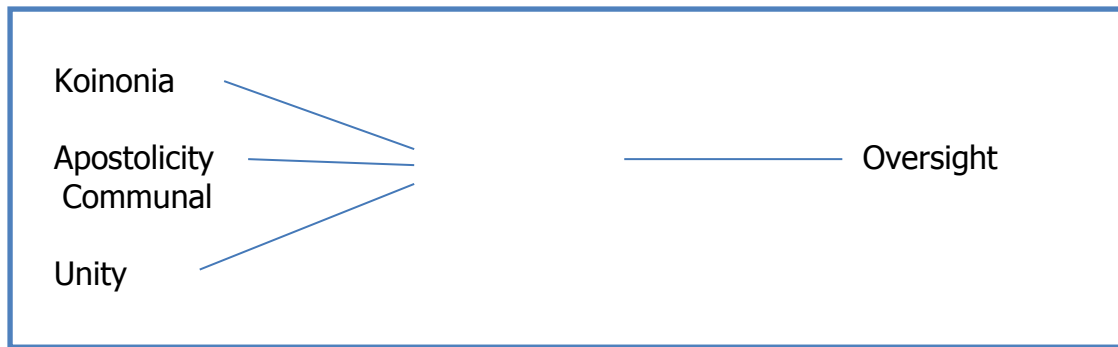
**Diagram 2**  
**Personal Oversight**



**Diagram 3**  
**Collegial Oversight**

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<sup>15</sup> Hill, M., *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*: Vol 1, 2013, p.3.



**Diagram 4**  
**Communal Oversight**

In this extended description of the modern development of ecumenical theology we have seen how a search which initially was meant to achieve forms of organic unity failed. What is needed now is the essence of these agreements, with their significant contribution to an understanding of oversight, to become embedded by reception into the life of the participating denominations. The development and growth of Christianity in many parts of the world has seen an emphasis shift and with it cultural changes in the oversight and governance of the churches. The gain for this study is that a theological underpinning for a universal understanding of *episkope* as oversight will continue to need to be broadened.

A basis in the combination of tradition, theology and ministerial practice for the practice of oversight has now been established. For the next stage in my exploration and reconstruction of *episkope* as oversight it has now to be related to the ways in which oversight is described in organizational thinking. In the next chapter the basic understandings of oversight with integral components including that of individual and team leadership will be examined and developed.



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## **AFFIRMING CATHOLICISM**

### **Response to the Independent Reviewer on the appointment of the Rt Revd Philip North as Bishop of Sheffield and his subsequent withdrawal.**

#### **(a) What has been done in the Church, including in the diocese of Sheffield, to inform and educate clergy and laity about the settlement agreed in 2014, and the effect of the Declaration within that settlement?**

We cannot comment on this question with direct relation to the Diocese of Sheffield.

- In general, however, we believe that a culture of distrust has come to pervade the Church of England, which is not focused simply on differences relating to the ordination of women.
- In particular, we believe that beyond dioceses where the ministry of women has been fostered by a bishop who is opposed to the ordination of women, there is very little understanding of how it is possible to be opposed to the ordination without being sexist, or whilst being supportive of the ministry of ordained women. The stories told by either side of the other tend to be stories of failures rather than successes in understanding and support.
- We are aware that the existence of the SWSH and particularly of the publicity surrounding its decisions considerably exacerbates these tensions. Whilst we understand why the Society has felt it necessary to find a way of recognising priests whose ministry it deems acceptable, we are not convinced that the rationale offered by the Society is consistent with the five guiding principles.
- We believe that it could now be important and helpful to review the experiences of those living across these differences, both exploring positive accounts of mutual flourishing and providing safe spaces in which stories of hurt and failure can be shared. This process could give some indication of what approaches support mutual flourishing as well as generating information and substance in a situation which seems currently to be shaped largely by hearsay.
- Moreover, in a context in which the debates about the ordination of women to the priesthood now lie nearly twenty-five years in the past, and in which discrimination on the grounds of sex/gender is (at least in theory) prohibited by law, there is little awareness of the range of views still held across the church of England. There might be a case for producing clear, brief, and impartial explanations of different theological positions and of the Church of England's approach for a new generation of churchgoers.

#### **(b) The process leading to the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield:**

- We cannot make comments on this process since most of us have no direct knowledge of it, and for those who do, considerations of confidentiality would make it inappropriate to comment.

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**(c) The consistency of that nomination with the Declaration:**

- The majority of the members of the AffCath Board – but by no means all – believe that the nomination of the Rt Revd Philip North as Bishop of Sheffield was consistent with the Declaration. However, we are also concerned that not enough attention was paid in the Five Principles to clarifying what it means for ordained women to flourish under the jurisdiction of a bishop who does not recognise their orders. In our view, this is the issue which caused the reactions questioning this nomination.

**(d) The reactions to that nomination in the Church and beyond:**

- We recognise that the questions raised (publicly by Martyn Percy, but also by others) related to the theological and pastoral basis on which a bishop opposed to the ordination of women would minister to and have pastoral responsibility for the ordained women in his diocese, and also the basis on which those ordained women could be considered his representatives. This is not a new question, indeed, it is one with which some dioceses have been grappling for over twenty years. However, this would have represented a new experience for Sheffield and we believe that it was legitimate to raise the question of how this would work and to ask for a more detailed answer than the one that had been given.
- Within the AffCath Board, responses to the nomination of the Rt Revd Philip North varied widely. The Board included those (both men and women) who were delighted by and fully supportive of this nomination, and those (also both men and women) who felt it to be painful and inappropriate. As noted above, members of the former group found this nomination fully in line with the Five Guiding Principles. Members of the second group could not conceive how this nomination could be true to the first, and perhaps also the second of the guiding principles. They asked the question: how can a diocesan bishop who is opposed to the ordination of women support the ministry of ordained women with integrity?

**(e) The response of the institutional Church to the nomination and to the reactions to it:**

- Observing what happened, we found it astonishing that it appeared that the questions raised appeared not to have been anticipated. (These were questions which AffCath and others had articulated throughout the process leading to the admission of women to the episcopate.) We further found it unhelpful that the official response appeared to believe that an instruction to flourish can create mutual flourishing. In our view, mutual flourishing has to be nurtured and cannot be commanded. (In particular, we do not believe that it is the place of the communications officer of the Church of England to be formulating responses to these and other questions, and to become embroiled in this and other discussions.) We would suggest that much more attention needs to be paid to the real difficulties presented by living the Five Principles. This will be very important going forward to similar questions about same-sex relationships.
- We also believe that there is an urgent need to explore the theology of the Five Principles and in particular the concept of mutual flourishing, not only in relation to attitudes towards women's ordination. We have heard stories of evangelical clergy seeming to question their catholic colleagues' Anglican credentials, and on occasion, even their Christian commitment. The women among these catholic clergy may find it much easier to relate to a bishop who has doubts about their ordination than to a colleague (or indeed a bishop) who expresses doubts

about their Christianity. We would suggest that such stories reveal a church which is very deeply divided, and that real consideration needs to be given to how to rebuild a conviction across the Church of England that the Church needs to move forward together and to consider how to do so.

- This raises the question of the role played by churchmanship in this appointment and in subsequent responses to it. This seems to us very unclear. We do note that at least some ordained Anglo-Catholic women in the Church of England currently experience more of a sense of minority through being Catholic than being female; however, unlike their male counterparts, they do not have the option of membership of the Society, which offers an understanding of theology, worship and even ecclesiology which is closer to their own.
- In all of this, we would suggest that not enough has been done to ensure that the Church of England complies with legislation against sex discrimination in those areas where it is not exempt from that legislation. In order to build trust, the Church of England needs to demonstrate that the Church's commitment to enabling those who cannot accept the ordination of women to flourish within its life and structures does not mean that sexist and discriminatory behaviour are acceptable. It would, it seems to us, be very helpful if the Church of England could offer a clear statement of the unacceptability of sexism, as it has articulated the unacceptability of homophobia. In addition, much more work needs to be done to explore and articulate the distinction between legitimate theological objection to the ordination of women and sexism.

In conclusion we would wish to observe that the response to the Rt Revd Philip North's nomination as Bishop of Sheffield has proved the most contentious that, over five years, the board of AffCath has ever written. The Board of AffCath is a group of largely like-minded people, and yet we did not agree on our response to this appointment. This arose in large part from the fact that the ministry of the same person can be experienced in very different ways. These different experiences cannot be simply held together. We believe that the Church of England has set itself a very difficult task in moving forward under the Five Principles. We do not believe that enough has been done to educate and support the wider church in this task. We believe that without a much stronger commitment to education and mediation in order to build trust and to overcome the divisions within the church, on questions of churchmanship as well as the ordination of women (and indeed sexuality), it may well not prove possible to hold together such opposing positions in the same institution.

Modern Church Office, 22 The Kiln, Burgess Hill, RH15 0LU.

General Secretary: Canon Guy Elsmore, Administrator: Mrs Diane Kutar

31 March 2017

Dear Sir Philip,

Thank you for your letter of 29 March in which you invite Modern Church to comment upon the circumstances surrounding the appointment of Philip North as Bishop of Sheffield.

Before doing so, I should like to emphasise that Modern Church, although associated with the cause of gender and other inclusivities within the Church, is not itself a campaigning organisation, and did not campaign against this appointment. In the interests of open and rational theological debate, to which we are committed, we publish in print and online articles submitted by a variety of authors, on topics ranging from the Trinity through creationism to homosexuality, which may well often reflect the interests of many of our members, but explicitly represent only the views of those authors, and we are always open to well-argued and courteous challenges to any such views.

Our comments will focus on point C in your letter. I have consulted with Trustees in composing this response, and believe the sentiments expressed would be shared by the great majority of our members. (Please note that the bulk of this debate has unfolded on websites and social media, and we hope this will be an important focus of the attention of your investigation.)

Modern Church welcomes the Declaration of the House of Bishops and the intention behind the Five Guiding Principles for its implementation (though we believe that the Sheffield situation shows that they need further clarification). In particular we note and support the opening statement within the Principles that:

*the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are the true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience.*

A Diocesan Bishop is the supreme authority of the Church of England within his or her Diocese. It follows that it is essential that he or she should be able to make a similar affirmation, and should treat all lawfully ordained and appointed bishops, and all those whom they have ordained, as having full authority, including sacramental authority, within the Church.

In the case of Bishop Philip North, it would appear, from his known position on such matters, that he cannot make that unequivocal affirmation, because he regards women priests and bishops, and any male priests whom the latter have ordained, as not being in a true and full sense priests.



Modern Church Office, 22 The Kiln, Burgess Hill, RH15 0LU.

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The Guiding Principles properly make provision for those who conscientiously hold views of that kind within the Church, and for their continued flourishing. However, it is our contention that the right of such conscientious objection cannot, as a matter of either good theology or good order, be extended to Diocesan Bishops, because of their special responsibilities. For such persons to be appointed, in the interests of the own “flourishing”, will inevitably affect the “flourishing” of those under their charge whose Orders they feel obliged to question or reject, and from whose hands they cannot in conscience receive Holy Communion.

Given that there is debate within the Church about the source of priestly authority and the concept of “apostolic succession”, it would have been open to Bishop Philip, and the Archbishops, to find some compromise formula. It could, for example, have been made crystal clear that he did *fully and unequivocally* accept the priestly and sacramental ministry of women priests, and male priests ordained by women bishops, *within the Church of England*, whilst retaining a personal conscientious *doubt* about their full place *within the [ecumenical] Apostolic Succession* as he, and those like him, understand that concept, at least until the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches had recognised their ministries (an aspiration referred to in the Guiding Principles).

So far as we are aware, no such formula was considered, developed or promulgated in advance of the appointment. If it had been, it might have reassured the women priests of the Diocese of Sheffield and their many supporters. Failure thus to act in advance would inevitably have a considerable adverse effect on their “flourishing”.

It is a matter of great regret to us that, due to a failure of theological and pastoral imagination, it proved impossible to avoid the resistance to the appointment which led Bishop Philip eventually to decline it. Whilst we may disagree with his theology of priesthood, we recognise his outstanding ability, vision, faith and commitment. Our difficulty in this appointment relates only to the structural issues of legitimate authority and the integral relationship between bishop and clergy which ordination confers and parochial (and other) mission assumes. We urge the House of Bishops to take steps to ensure that such a failure of imagination will not occur again.

May I reiterate that Modern Church is not a campaigning organisation, but is committed to promoting open, high-quality, reasoned theological debate. It has a proud history of doing so, not only in relation to issues of gender and equality but in many other areas. We have always welcomed debate, discussion and engagement with all points of view in the Church, and continue to do so.

Yours sincerely

Jan van der Lely  
Chair, Modern Church.

29<sup>th</sup> April, 2017

Dear Sir Philip,

Reform is grateful for your invitation to comment upon the Archbishops' request to review recent events in Sheffield by way of their letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017.

We regard you as having an unenviable task made inevitable by the inadequacy of the arrangements created in 2014. That Philip North was someone who had both the appropriate personal experience of and personal investment in the issues which are the subject of the Declaration and yet felt unable to accept the nomination to Sheffield manifestly demonstrates that deficiency.

It is our view that the greatest weakness of the Declaration was always the failure to even attempt a definition of what was meant by "flourish" (in paragraphs 5 and 14) and "mutual flourishing" (in paragraph 5).

Reform's position is that "flourish" and its (derivatives) means that complementarians and orthodox-catholics, alongside egalitarians, should expect nothing less than full and equal participation in all roles in and all institutional structures of the Church.

In response to the specific points raised by the Archbishops, we wish to say the following:

(a) **what has been done in the Church, including in the diocese of Sheffield, to inform and educate clergy and laity about the settlement agreed in 2014, and the effect of the Declaration within that settlement;**

Reform has no reason to believe that there was any deficiency in information and /or education with regard to the 2014 arrangements.

Reform's representative to MPAG considers the time spent working through the practical implications in the diocese was useful and productive. A copy of their thinking, 'New Norms, New Beginnings', was sent to all clergy in the diocese.

Reform, Church Society, the Bishop of Maidstone and others have worked hard to keep our constituency informed of both the opportunities and, from our perspective, limitations of the Measure.

The most vociferous opponents of the nomination of Bishop North from within the Church have been engaged with debate both before, during and after the 2014 arrangements were put in place. Reform would never suggest that their stance arose from ignorance.

(b) **the process leading to the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield;**

The Diocese of Sheffield is a relatively conservative diocese. In 2011 they missed rejecting the first Measure by one clergy vote – an outcome that might have been very different if one Conservative Evangelical had not been ill (see appendix for figures).

If our understanding of 'flourishing' is correct, then we have no reason to believe that the process leading up to the nomination was flawed. It produced two names – one who ordains women and one who does not.



We retain a residual concern, however, if a Diocese's silence under paragraph 12 of the Declaration is necessarily assumed to invite the appointment of a bishop who does ordain women as opposed to one who does not. The relevant paragraph contains no such assumption one way or the other and yet the former appears to have operated as a presumption for those opposed to the nomination of Bishop North. We would be grateful for some clarity on this issue, as it has considerable bearing on the matter of how we define 'flourishing' in the future.

**(c) the consistency of that nomination with the Declaration;**

At the expense of repetition- the nomination was entirely consistent with the Declaration *if* "flourish" means full and equal access to roles and institutional structures even if the participant(s) hold, (what are deemed to be) minority theological convictions.

We believe that the implications of having a traditional or conservative diocesan bishop was a specific scenario discussed in the MPAG group. Such an appointment was considered perfectly possible, providing the Bishop of Doncaster remained someone who would ordain women and could therefore provide pastoral and sacramental care to those supportive of this position.

**(d) the reactions to that nomination in the Church and beyond; and**

The reactions of the Church appeared to display a different understanding of "flourish" to that we have set out. Almost all the criticism of Bishop North's nomination involved criticism of his theology while permitting no critique of the theology of others by him and those who agree with him.

Our understanding of the Declaration is that the theology of complementarians, catholics and egalitarians are equally within the spectrum of opinions held by faithful Anglicans and therefore worthy of equal respect. In the case of Bishop North, however, it seems that the different views were treated as asymmetrical- the bishop could not both retain his theological convictions on his own terms and be a Diocesan bishop. Equally, it appears that his views might be tolerated but only if he remained a suffragan bishop.

Reform members in Sheffield were very disappointed that a handful of people chose to use the media to encourage dissent rather than make use of the internal 'listening exercise' organised through deaneries and Area Deans that had been set up by Bishop Peter. There is no doubt that the purpose of <https://shefminequal.wordpress.com/> was to create a 'campaign' against the nomination – the 'action' page highlights this – in direct conflict with Paragraph 14 of the Declaration.

As to reactions from beyond the church, Reform notes that the expectation of the Declaration is that matters such as the nomination of Bishop North are (a) theological and (b) for those within the church. As such we are of the view that reactions that were not theological and/or were sociological and/or come from outside the Church should have been of no relevance to the process. To the extent that they became of relevance the House of Bishops failed to uphold their own Declaration: refuting such views was primarily their responsibility.

**(e) the response of the institutional Church to the nomination and to the reactions to it.**

As we have set out, it is our view that the failure of the nomination of Bishop North is a failure of 'flourishing', caused primarily by the failure of the House of Bishops to uphold their responsibilities outlined in paragraphs 4 and 13 of the Declaration.

It is our opinion that in the face of an orchestrated ("social") media campaign, the lack of a united, public defence of the House of Bishops' personal and corporate commitment to mutual flourishing, did not assist the Bishop of Doncaster as he sought to care for those in Sheffield and further undermined the position of Bishop North. To avoid the Declaration itself being fatally undermined, the House of Bishops must now satisfy all involved that there will be no repetition of that failure and that the intent of the Declaration will be met.

We therefore believe it would be helpful if your review could address the following specific questions:

1. Does "flourish" (and its variants) mean that both what the Declaration describe as the "minority" and the concomitant majority should expect full and equal participation in all roles and institutional structures of the Church or does it mean something else?
2. In particular, does it mean that the minority can only expect to flourish insofar as that is tolerable to the (perceived) majority in any particular situation or that they have a reasonable expectation of representation (broadly) in proportion to numbers sharing their convictions?
3. In the light of the clarification provided in response to (1) and (2) above:
  - a. could the House of Bishops have done more to fulfil their commitments under paragraph 4 of the Declaration?
  - b. could the House of Bishops have done more to fulfil their commitment under paragraph 13 of the Declaration?
4. In particular, could the House of Bishops have done more to uphold their own Declaration?
5. What role was played by "conventional and "social" media in the failure of the nomination?
6. If the role of either form of media was significant and inappropriate in the failure of the nomination what advice should be given with regard to future nominations, including whether there should be an expectation that a (form of) moratorium upon media comment upon matters pertaining to the Declaration should be observed between nomination and consecration.

It will come as no surprise if we pass on to you that the failure of Bishop North's nomination has only served to engender an increased lack of confidence in arrangements that ever since 2014 many have believed to be designed to marginalise those who retain traditional catholic or complementarian theology.

Our prayers are with you as you seek to restore that confidence in the manner you outlined after your initial appointment.

Yours faithfully,

Rev Dr Mark Burkill, Chairman of Reform Council.

## Appendix: Sheffield Diocese Voting Figures

(according to <http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/005146.html>)

On the main motion: That this Synod approve the proposals embodied in the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure and in draft Amending Canon No30.”

the voting figures were:

	For	Against	Abstentions
Total	37	28	6
Clergy	13	12	5
Laity	23	16	1
Bishops	1	0	0

And on the following motion “to ensure that those unable on theological grounds to accept the ministry of women bishops are able to receive Episcopal oversight from a bishop with authority (i.e. ordinary jurisdiction) conferred under the Measure rather than by delegation from a Diocesan Bishop” they were:

	For	Against	Abstentions
Total	42	23	4
Clergy	22	8	0
Laity	20	15	3
Bishops	0	0	1

## **WATCH response to the Independent Review into the appointment of the Bishop of Sheffield.**

*a) ‘what has been done in the Church, including in the diocese of Sheffield, to inform and educate clergy and laity about the settlement agreed in 2014, and the effect of the Declaration within that settlement;’*

1. We do not feel that we have a brief to answer this question.

*b) the process leading to the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield;*

### **2. S12 Statement of Needs**

2.1 As we outlined in our earlier letter we have concerns about whether the consultation of the diocese during the Vacancy in See process clearly explored whether the appointment of a bishop who would not ordain women would work in this diocese.

2.2 It is our understanding that questions were asked about whether a woman candidate could be considered. It was clear that the complex tensions within the diocese around the issue of women’s ordination meant all those asked said that this would not be an appropriate option.

2.3 It does not seem that the question about whether this diocese was suitable for a candidate who did not ordain women was widely asked.

2.4 It does not seem that the issue of clearly stating in the statement of needs that the diocese would like a bishop who ordained women (s12 of H of B Declaration) was widely understood. Many in Sheffield have said they thought this was now the “default” position.

2.5 It needs to be made clear to all involved in the drawing up of the statement of needs that explicit statements are necessary. We understand that many in Sheffield felt that in explaining the particular tensions in the diocese over this issue they had made it clear that the women clergy needed the full support of their diocesan bishop and that, for them, this meant that he would ordain women.

2.6 We know from at least one other diocese (Oxford) that the Vacancy in See Committee were initially discouraged from making such a statement as it would be ‘not in keeping with the five guiding principles’. It seems to be

important that those who help diocese explore their needs and write up the statement address this question explicitly. As we have seen, when they do not, people feel betrayed.

**2.7 We would argue that it is discriminatory to ask directly about whether a woman candidate would be suitable but to not ask deliberately whether a candidate who does not ordain women would be suitable.**

2.8 It would also be helpful to know if those who met with the wider constituency of Sheffield, beyond the church, discussed the possibility of a bishop who would not ordain women. Did they try to understand to know how this would be perceived by the wider public in the cities and wider communities of the diocese?

### **3. The Sheffield CNC**

3.1 In our letter to the Prime Minister (13<sup>th</sup> March 2017), we raised concerns about the role of one of the central CNC members in this appointment process. It has been customary for a central member to stand aside if the diocese under consideration is the one for which they are an elected member of General Synod. By standing aside they ensure that the balance between the central church and the diocese is maintained.

3.2 In the Sheffield CNC Jane Patterson did not do this and was part of the appointing panel. She is an elected member of General Synod for Sheffield; one with strong views in opposition to the ordination of women. She is also a trustee of the Anglican Mission in England Church in Central Sheffield.

3.3 We note that the selection of members of the CNC for Sheffield contained no ordained women and that meant that the whole interviewing panel contained only one ordained woman. We wonder if this is one of the reasons that the position of the women in the diocese does not seem to have been a high priority for the CNC.

3.4 The panel did contain representatives of the conservative evangelical constituency in Sheffield and from the Hickleton Chapter (the traditionalist extra-geographical chapter.)

### **4. General Comments on the CNC process.**

4.1 There is a wider question than simply the Sheffield process, which is hopefully being addressed by the review of the CNC, about how the interviewing panels of the CNC can better represent the different voices in a diocese. There is also the very real concern that the current CNC process makes it difficult to appoint women diocesan bishops because of the need to get a proportion of votes from the whole interviewing panel, which includes those who do not think that women should be bishops.

***c) the consistency of that nomination with the Declaration;***

5.1 The Church of England is committed to the 5 Guiding Principles. These are intended to enable women clergy, male clergy ordained by women, those who support and welcome the ministry of women and those who are unable to accept the ministry of women to all flourish within the life of the Church. It is significant that it is not individual flourishing that is the aim of these principles, but enabling the highest degree of communion possible, which is about the flourishing of all. There are inherent tensions and at some points the flourishing of some will come at a cost to others. The principles do not lay down a procedure for working out whose flourishing is prioritised when there is a genuine conflict of interest. This is the situation in Sheffield.

**6. The Society of St Wilfred and St Hilda's reading of the Five Guiding Principles**

6.1 The bishop appointed to Sheffield, +Philip North, belongs to the Society of St Wilfred and St Hilda (SSWSH) which is supported and administered by Forward in Faith. This organisation provides a very particular reading of the 5 guiding principles clearly set out on their website. (<http://www.forwardinfaith.com/WBProvisions.php?id=2130>). They maintain that the first principle distinguishes between the 'orders' of clergy and their 'office' in a way that is not a standard differentiation of the terms. Thus, they suggest, that you can affirm a woman as a vicar whilst not affirming that she is a priest and not recognising her sacraments as valid.

6.2 This distinction between the orders and office of a curate or vicar is not part of the general understanding of the Church of England. It is generally assumed that these offices need to be held by individuals who have been duly ordained.

6.3 It does not seem in keeping with the principles to have as the diocesan bishop someone whose reading of Principle One seeks to deliberately

distinguish between the office and order of his women clergy. To repeatedly state an affirmation of women's leadership as opposed to their priesthood undermines the women clergy and all the laity who worship in the churches where they minister. We do not believe that in the drawing up of the principles General Synod understood this distinction was being made.

6.4 The Society also maintains that Principle two does not mean the decision cannot be reversed and suggests that Society members should hope and pray that it will be. This is deeply undermining for those women serving as clergy in the diocese, and for their congregations.

**6.5 Therefore we conclude that a bishop of SSWSH cannot affirm principles 1 & 2 in a way that is affirming of women clergy, of male clergy ordained by women and the laity who worship in churches where they serve.**

6.6 We recognise that there can be good examples of individuals working together despite these very different readings of the principles. We think that this is possible where there is not a serious imbalance of power. However, when we alter the power balance and the person with oversight of the diocese publicly holds these views we find it hard to see how the clergywomen and those laity in the churches where they minister can genuinely flourish.

6.7 There is nothing in the House of Bishops Declaration which acknowledges the potential difficulties facing the clergy and congregations of a diocese when it is the majority who are in impaired communion with the diocesan bishop. The Declaration focused on the issue for minorities.

6.8 The Declaration shows little appreciation for how demoralising it is for people to work in a diocese where your gender makes you unequal to male clergy in the eyes of your bishop. Women can do nothing to change their gender and we had hoped that principle one took this seriously.

6.9 The statistics published last year for Ministry Division make it clear that dioceses where the diocesan bishop does not ordain women have considerably fewer women incumbents. Women clergy do not seem to flourish where they are not affirmed. If women clergy choose not to work under these

circumstances then lay people do not get the benefit of a mix of gender within the clergy and this can impact on their ability to flourish.

6.10 The fifth principle speaks of providing pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority in a way that maintains ‘the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England’.

6.11 WATCH has always supported this provision. However, we do want to stress that ‘mutual flourishing’ needs to take account of clergy and laity. Whilst provision is made for a minority, the needs of the majority must also be affirmed. The full inclusion of women in the orders of the church must be taken seriously and not dismissed by semantics. This is particularly important for those employed by the church. These clergy are often working extremely hard, in difficult jobs and should be able to trust that their ordained status is fully respected and affirmed by the bishop with whom they share the cure of souls.

***d) the reactions to that nomination in the Church and beyond;***

7.1 The announcement made on 31<sup>st</sup> January that Bishop Philip North was to be the new Bishop of Sheffield made no mention of his stance on women’s ordination. This meant that many in the diocese and beyond were not initially aware of this.

7.2 People became aware of his position through internet searches and through hearing from others. When searching online, one of the main things people found was the unusual circumstances of +Philip’s consecration and the suggestion that this was in response to the earlier consecration of + Libby Lane.

7.3 Many clergy and laity in the diocese were learning in a piecemeal fashion that the new bishop would not be ordaining women and had been consecrated in a special service so that no one who had participated in the consecration of a woman laid hands on him.

7.4 There was no statement or organised response from the wider church to acknowledge or address people’s concerns. Many assumed that the lack of



comment on his views about women's ordination implied that the Church hierarchy felt that these views were of little importance.

7.5 This left those within the diocese, the Dean of Women's ministry, the Bishop of Doncaster the Dean and other individuals having to manage a high level of questioning, bafflement, hurt and shock. The strength of such feeling would have been expected. This diocese has had a diocesan bishop who ordains women for the last 20 years and nothing had prepared most people for the possibility of the new bishop not fully recognising the priesthood of a significant percentage of the clergy.

## **8. WATCH's Response to the appointment**

8.1 WATCH responded to the initial announcement with a short statement.

*WATCH notes the announcement that Rt Rev Philip North, currently Bishop of Burnley, is to be the new Bishop of Sheffield. Whilst we acknowledge the strengths he will bring to the role, with his experience and passion for urban ministry, evangelism and work with young people, we also note his stance on the ordination of women. We are aware of the sadness felt by many in Sheffield that they will now have a Diocesan Bishop who will not ordain women. Sheffield is a diocese with a large number of women clergy and we sincerely hope that the new Bishop will promote a culture in which ordained women will feel validated and encouraged to flourish.*

*We also note that once again a man has been appointed to a vacant diocesan post. We have concerns that the current appointment system makes it harder for women to be appointed as diocesan Bishops. We hope that as the Church seeks to live out the 5 guiding principles the importance of Women flourishing in the church may be taken as seriously as that of the minority who remain opposed to their ordination.*

8.2 We also listened to members in Sheffield. (One of our national committee members is a lay woman in Sheffield diocese.) **We did not then, or at any point, organise or participate in a campaign to make +Philip withdraw from the process.**

8.3 We listened to the deep frustration of a number of the women clergy after the meeting with +Philip on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb and particularly their concern that there

were no responses at all to any of the questions they had asked in the subsequent written follow up. It appeared to them that he had not thought seriously about the provisions that might be necessary for those who he could not fully support. The question of who would ordain people in the diocese was discussed but issues of pastoral care and developmental support were not explored in a way that recognised the needs of the women clergy.

8.4 Male clergy and laity who had not been invited to any such meeting were also expressing frustration to us that no one seemed to recognise that they might also find the appointment very difficult.

8.5 At our National Committee meeting 11<sup>th</sup> February 2017 we made time to discuss the appointment and agreed to write two letters with our concerns about the process. We wrote to the Prime Minister (letter attached) and to the Independent Reviewer. We discussed the wider issue of the problems for women being appointed as diocesan bishops. In the light of all of this the Chair posted a piece on our website on equality which referred to the situation in Sheffield in the context of the Church's need to learn about good equality practices.

8.6 We followed the debates around the issue and we affirmed those who set up the SAME website as a local forum for debating the key theological issues the diocese was facing. The SAME group were local people from within the Sheffield diocese. Some of them were members of WATCH and began plans to re-launch a Sheffield branch. However, it is important to be clear that the SAME group were and are independent. It was this group that took the initiative, and organised themselves to deal with a particular pressing situation and to voice questions that were not being addressed and answered by the Church in any other forum.

8.7 WATCH posted two other pieces on our website. These were both in response to comments made in the media. The first was our view of what 'mutual flourishing' does and doesn't mean and the second was about the misuse of the concept of balance in this debate. Women are not a theological position to be balanced with a different theological position.

8.8 In everything we wrote we were extremely careful to talk about the issues and not the person. We did not see anything in the public domain that was personally disparaging of Philip North. We know from our own experience that it can be hard when you are the subject of a theological debate and we acknowledge that this has been deeply unpleasant for Bishop Philip.

**8.9 WATCH did not participate in any media interviews until after +Philip had withdrawn.**

**8.10 It is our strong contention that this appointment was not thought through carefully. It was highly likely that there would be concern about this appointment and that these concerns needed careful consideration. It appears that little thought was put into anticipating these concerns, of finding constructive ways of listening to them and answering them. The failure to do this meant that these genuine theological worries were explored within social media.**

8.11 Having met with people, ordained and lay, in Sheffield diocese after these events we report their sense that Sheffield was being ‘used’. They noted that many of the comments about this appointment representing mutual flourishing came from people beyond the diocese. They expressed a concern that appointing a bishop who did not ordain women to this post allowed many in the wider Church to affirm the concept of mutual flourishing without having to live with the consequences. Many of the comments made were by people who did not know the diocese and did not think about the actual experience of those living and working in Sheffield diocese.

8.12 The appointment of a bishop who would not be able to fully endorse the ministry of the women clergy in the diocese was seen by the wider public as another example of the Church of England’s poor attitude to women. This is particularly concerning at a time in the Church’s life when it is losing the younger generation of women, both as members of the Church and as potential ordinands. There are serious mission implications of a Church that appears unable to fully affirm the women who work for it.

***e) the response of the institutional Church to the nomination and to the reactions to it.***

9.1 As has been outlined above it seems that the initial response of the institutional Church nationally was to not anticipate the concerns of people in Sheffield diocese and the wider church and then not to take them seriously.

9.2 We have heard positive comments about the time given by the Bishop of Doncaster and others in Sheffield diocese to listen to the concerns of individuals and parishes. However, there has been no attempt from the Archbishops, or the House of Bishops, to discuss the theological issues this appointment raises; just a simple ‘we agreed all this in synod’. The reaction to the appointment makes it clear that we did not. Synod agreed a set of principles and this appointment raised questions about how very different ways of reading those principles can be held together.

9.3 In this context, the comment offered in a letter to the Church Times by 3 of those involved in drawing up the legislative package for 2014, are relevant:

*The problem, however, is that they are, as their name suggests, “principles”. All principles need work to be applied in practice, and the more important a principle, the more vital it is that time and energy are put into thinking through its practical outworking. If the Five Guiding Principles have a future, and we sincerely hope that they have, we need to commit ourselves to ongoing and careful theological reflection on what they mean in practice, not least in the appointment of a diocesan bishop. (Church Times letter 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017 from The Dean of York, Dr Paula Gooder and Mrs Margaret Swinson)*

9.4 Media comments by the Church of England Communications Department were at best patronising to the women clergy and at worst offensive and inaccurate.

9.5 Patronising statements suggested that women should stop worrying and trust those in authority. (*‘You have my word; female clergy will not be undermined by the new Bishop of Sheffield’* Archbishop of York in Yorkshire Post 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017) This was unhelpful when the very discussion was about the lack of consultation, the concern that someone in authority over them did not recognise their orders and the Archbishop of York would have no ability to do anything if the atmosphere in the diocese did become uncomfortable for women clergy.

9.6 The Director of Communications, Arun Arora, wrote this in the Yorkshire Post

*Since that settlement was reached, 10 women have been consecrated as Bishops in the Church of God. Philip North is the first Diocesan bishop to have been nominated whose views on women bishops reflect the Church's traditionalist approach and also those of our sister Churches across the world including the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Church: 10 to one is a pretty good result for those whose desire is to keep score against their opponents. (Arun Arora Yorkshire Post 4<sup>th</sup> March 2017)*

9.7 This is an offensive and inaccurate statement. He is failing to distinguish between diocesan and suffragan bishops. There are 10 women bishops but only 2 diocesan. +Philip had already been consecrated as a bishop within his timescale. The suggestion that there is some kind of score keeping and that people view others as opponents is offensive and inflammatory. Principle one of the 5 Guiding Principles states that orders are open to all 'without reference to gender'. The women who are bishops are bishops not 'women' bishops.

9.8 Like many people WATCH received offensive posts on our Facebook page and via Twitter.

9.9 WATCH is also concerned about the pressure put on women clergy to make statements in support of Bishop Philip North. Such statements did not help the theological debate because they all focused on the working relationships of individuals; not the deeper, systemic challenge of serving in a diocese where the Diocesan Bishop denies the full priestly and sacramental ministry of women. In fact they made the whole debate personal to+ Philip, something most of us were trying to avoid.

9.10 We are concerned that the women in Blackburn diocese were asked by the Church Communication Department to write in support of Philip North. We understand that although some were happy to sign the letter, there was considerable emotional pressure put on other individuals to sign. This was an orchestrated campaign, not a spontaneous response but presented as if it had been.

## **10. Conclusion**

10.1 There appears to have been an inadequate exploration of the appropriateness of appointing to the diocese of Sheffield a bishop who does not fully support the priestly ministry of women. There are particular reasons why this diocese was not a good fit for a Traditionalist.

10.2 There are genuine problems with an appointment system which does not ensure that women clergy have a reasonable voice in the process.

10.3 The likely reaction to such an appointment does not seem to have been anticipated or well handled.

10.4 The response to the appointment of a bishop, who does not ordain women and who belongs to SSWSH, to the diocese of Sheffield raised genuine theological questions which had not been properly addressed in the drawing up of the Principles and the House of Bishops Declaration. It was highly predictable that there would be a reaction from within the diocese. The deep concerns that many articulated were not orchestrated. These questions still need to be taken seriously and addressed by a group, similar in composition to that which drew up the original legislation, and not dismissed as 'liberal campaigning'.

Revd Canon Dr Emma Percy

Chair of WATCH

13<sup>th</sup> April 2017



Rt Hon. Theresa May MP  
Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

14 February 2017

Dear Mrs May

I am writing to you on behalf of the national committee of WATCH (Women and the Church). As a charity with a focus on how women can flourish in the Church of England we have a role in drawing attention to ways in which women have been discriminated against. The church is exempt, for theological reasons, from the 2010 Equality Act so that women clergy do not have the same kind of protections they would have in other fields of work.

The Crown Nominations Commission recently recommended to you that Bishop Philip North, currently Bishop of Burnley, be appointed for the vacant See of Sheffield. As Bishop Philip does not ordain women and is a member of The Society of St Wilfred and St Hilda, which questions the validity of women's orders, women clergy in Sheffield are concerned at his appointment. There are, we believe, three procedural issues which need to be brought to your attention.

1. The House of Bishops' Declaration GS Misc 1076 agreed on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014 states

*s12. In addition, dioceses are entitled to express a view, in the statement of needs prepared during a vacancy in see, as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women.*

It is not clear that the people of Sheffield diocese were made aware that they could make a statement requesting an ordaining bishop. Many assumed that because this had been an ordaining diocese for over 20 years this position would naturally continue to be respected. The request in the *Statement of Needs* about a Bishop who would be a focus of unity, and the inclusion of a statement referencing the substantial number of women clergy, was deemed by many to be making the desire for an ordaining bishop clear. I have written separately to the Independent Reviewer of this Declaration, Sir Philip Mawer on this matter.

2. We understand that under principles of good governance the normal practice of the Crown Nominations Committee is to recognise times when there is a conflict of interest in the permanent members. When the vacancy in See occurs in the same Diocese as that from which the permanent member was elected they normally stand down for that appointment and a replacement represents the national church. It has been brought to our attention that Ms Jane Patterson (General Synod member for Sheffield diocese) did not follow this practice. In effect Sheffield diocese had an extra representative with all the attendant voting rights.

3. When the announcement of the new Bishop was made by your office no mention was made of the fact that Bishop Philip was someone whose theological position means he cannot fully support the ordination of women. We feel that this was disingenuous, leaving many people to find this out subsequently through unofficial means. As his appointment fundamentally changes the relationship of the women clergy to their Diocesan bishop some indication of that fact ought to have been included. We understand that the Church of England has agreed that both positions are valid, however when a woman bishop is appointed her gender is obvious; a man who will not ordain women needs to be identified as such for clarity's sake.

We know that Parliament strongly encouraged the church to find a way of enabling women to be Bishops in the established church. We accept that the way General Synod and the House of Bishops chose to make that possible ensured a respected and protected place within the church for those who could not accept this.

What concerns us in this appointment is that a committee which had only one clergywoman on it out of 14 people and which had an imbalance of representatives from the diocese, now means that the women clergy of Sheffield Diocese are expected to carry out their ministry in a climate where the validity of that ministry is not held to be the same as that of their male colleagues. We believe that this appointment is not safe and could be open to challenge.

Yours sincerely,

Rev Canon Dr Emma Percy, Chair of WATCH

Trinity College, Oxford OX1 3BH

Cc. Archbishops of Canterbury & York

Second Estates Commissioner, Dame Caroline Spelman MP



**Nomination to the See of Sheffield and Concerns raised  
by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York**

**Submission to Independent Reviewer by Bishop of Maidstone**

**Introduction**

The nomination of the Rt Rev'd Philip North to the See of Sheffield seemed at the time to be a remarkable but joyful celebration of the concept of 'mutual flourishing.' It was a nomination not only widely welcomed throughout the Church – and particularly perhaps by traditional Catholics – but also by an overwhelming majority of conservative evangelicals. The subsequent vocal opposition to the nomination, coupled with the withdrawal of the Rt Rev'd Philip North from his acceptance of the nomination, not only removed that sense of joyful celebration but also negatively affected the perception of 'mutual flourishing' held by many. The result of the whole episode was – and is – that there is now less confidence than before that those who cannot accept the ministry of women bishops on theological grounds will genuinely be encouraged to flourish within the Church of England.

This submission will not seek to address all of the points of concern raised by the Archbishops, not least because of my lack of involvement in the process leading to Bishop Philip North's nomination. However, based on my own experience over 19 months and consultations with those evangelical parishes in Sheffield that have availed themselves of the provisions in the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (the Declaration), it will seek to comment on:

- What has been done to inform and educate clergy and laity about the Declaration
- The consistency of the nomination with the Declaration
- The response of conservative evangelicals to the nomination
- The challenges now facing the concept of 'mutual flourishing'

**Information and Education**

The then Bishop of Sheffield was one of the first to invite me to become an Assistant Bishop in the Diocese – where I was subsequently known as one of the two 'appointed' bishops (the other being the Rt Rev'd Glyn Webster). This followed a wide-ranging consultative exercise undertaken by a working group chaired by Bishop David Hawtin, which had earlier produced a document entitled 'New Norms, New Beginning.' This document was widely circulated and was discussed at the Diocesan Synod. It is noteworthy that it stressed that 'mutual flourishing' would not be easily achieved but that it did involve deanery and diocesan structures being 'open to people of all traditions.' (p27). A number of recommendations were made, most of which were based on the assumption that the Declaration, the five guiding principles, and the concept of mutual flourishing would be promoted and widely discussed at deanery and parish levels.

As a way forward for the diocese, the document was something of a model for how to address the issues that had previously divided us. I promoted it as such during early visits to different dioceses. My own appointment within the Sheffield diocese in February 2016 was given a high profile and I was subsequently able to agree a protocol for operating within the

diocese with the diocesan bishop. My relations with senior staff within the diocese were, and have continued to be, very constructive. What is more, among those whom I have consulted, there is genuine gratitude for the way in which flourishing is encouraged in practical ways by the acting diocesan bishop and the archdeacons.

However, it has to be said that after all the initial enthusiasm and effort, much of what the document had envisaged by way of action at deanery and parish level failed to materialize. 'New Norms, New Beginning' had envisaged the 'appointed' bishops being involved in a monitoring group for the deanery and parish discussions, but I am not aware of this having been set up. This is in no way a criticism of the diocese; the departure of the Bishop of Sheffield in the summer of 2016 meant that such new initiatives could not easily be accommodated. Nevertheless, there seems to have been little follow-up to the production of 'New Norms, New Beginning.' I have been told that at a recent meeting of the Diocesan Synod, a poll showed that few parish representatives had read the document. Those parishes I consulted were unaware of it having been discussed at either deanery synods or chapters. They also spoke of different diocesan officers seeming to suggest that a PCC resolution under the Declaration effectively precluded the vicar from consideration as an Area Dean, and characterizing their position as being 'anti-women,' despite 'New Norms, New Beginning' urging care with words. Some incumbents have reportedly gone much further in their descriptions of the attitude to women of those who have passed resolutions or who hold 'traditionalist' views. It is perhaps no surprise that in one case I was told that a female incumbent felt unable to attend a Deanery chapter meeting at which a conservative evangelical incumbent was present because she felt his presence and beliefs undermined her position.

The conclusion I have drawn therefore is that whilst there was very helpful consultation within the Diocese of Sheffield prior to 2015, since then, despite the clearly positive leadership being given, there has been an absence of engagement at the local level with the Declaration, or with the concept of mutual flourishing. At the very least, what are now needed are fresh conversations at every level within the diocese in order to build mutual understanding and respect as well as clarity about the access of clergy and laity of all traditions to all deanery and diocesan roles.

In their request to you, the Archbishops were not only concerned with what has happened in the diocese of Sheffield but also with what has happened within the wider church to inform and educate. For my own part, I have visited the diocesan bishops of all but three dioceses in order to discuss the implications of the Declaration and to explore whether there might be ways in which I could help within the life of the dioceses. In thirteen cases, I have also been able to meet their senior staff teams in order to discuss issues arising out of the Declaration. I have also sought to engage PCCs in consideration of the issues: so far I have met 51 throughout the UK. In addition I have published a booklet giving guidance to PCCs – over 700 of these have been requested to date.

I regret that I am not in a position to give a comprehensive overview of the efforts being made by others throughout the country to promote understanding of the Declaration. I have, however, encountered various individual issues which demonstrate that there is much still to be done to promote this understanding. Two examples might give a feel for this:

- One of the issues most frequently raised with me at senior staff meetings is how to deal with the topic of men's and women's ministries during interviews to fill parish vacancies. This is particularly pressing when candidates are being considered who hold views about male headship when the parish itself has not taken a particular view. Diocesan representatives feel themselves to be in a difficult situation where on the one hand they wish to enable a candidate to be open about their convictions, but on the other know that in opening up the question, the PCC representatives might immediately dismiss the candidate without giving proper consideration either to the five guiding principles or to a candidate's wider merits. This demonstrates the difficulty of securing commitment to the five guiding principles at the level of the parish.
- When considering the prospect of new church plants – or the possibility of granting BMO status to church plants which have not yet been officially recognized, it has been clear to me that some of those being consulted (eg on archidiaconal pastoral committees) object on the grounds of the views being taught in those congregations or held by a prospective minister on male headship. The view has been expressed to me that 'flourishing' means acceptance for those who are already part of the parish structure but does not mean a preparedness to accept an expansion of their activity.

### **The Consistency of the Nomination with the Declaration**

The references in the Declaration to 'Reciprocity' (paras 9-13) mean that it should be unexceptional for someone who has 'traditionalist' views (whether from traditional catholic or conservative evangelical theological convictions) to be considered for nomination to a See. Paragraph 9 states that 'notwithstanding differences of conviction on this issue, (everyone) will accept that they can rejoice in each other's partnership in the Gospel and cooperate to the maximum possible extent in mission and ministry.' Paragraph 10 speaks of the need for those of differing conviction to do all within their power to avoid giving offence to each other. Paragraph 13 concludes the section on reciprocity by saying that 'It will be important that senior leadership roles within dioceses continue to be filled by people from across the range of traditions.' It is in this context that the wording of paragraph 11 about the Crown Nomination Commission should be understood. While the thrust of that paragraph is to make clear that each diocese should have at least one serving bishop who ordains women to the priesthood, this is clearly within a context where bishops will continue to be appointed who do not. It follows that the principle of Bishop Philip North's nomination to the See of Sheffield cannot possibly be inconsistent with the Declaration. Indeed, the Declaration assumes that such nominations will be made.

That said, paragraph 12 of the Declaration does entitle dioceses to express a view in the Statement of Needs it prepares during a vacancy in see, as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women. Examination of the Statement of Needs that was prepared in Sheffield shows that no view was expressed on this subject. That said, there was an open acknowledgement that there had been tensions in the past but that the diocese was now committed to mutual flourishing. In paragraph 1.4 it stated: 'Our next Bishop must, therefore, be someone who can see the value in the different traditions, affirm them and be able to relate to them, reflecting the doctrine of the Body of Christ and

being a focal point of unity.’ There is no suggestion that the nomination of Bishop Philip North was inconsistent with articulating either this value or affirmation.

### **The Response of Conservative Evangelicals to the Nomination**

A number of conservative evangelical clergy expressed their welcome to Bishop Philip North when his nomination was first announced. I wrote to him personally in a similar vein. It was felt that despite his different theological tradition, he had a strong record of promoting mission and was entirely fair in any decisions involving people of different churchmanships. As a gifted apologist and with a heart for those on the margins of society, it was felt he had much to offer the diocese. It was surprising therefore to read an article in the Church of England Newspaper (CEN) of 24<sup>th</sup> March 2017 which suggested that ‘evangelicals were ready to oppose North as bishop’. This prompted a letter to the CEN from 14 conservative evangelical clergy which was published on 7<sup>th</sup> April. This explicitly disavowed any suggestion that they were preparing to oppose the nomination, expressed sadness about the events that led Bishop Philip to step down, and stated their belief that the actions of a significant minority in the diocese were quite wrong.

When the news broke that Bishop Philip North had declined the nomination, I issued a press release on 9<sup>th</sup> March, the text of which read:

I am deeply saddened that Philip North has felt forced to withdraw from his nomination as the next Bishop of Sheffield. It will be a huge loss to Sheffield and is a body blow to the concept of ‘mutual flourishing’ which lay at the heart of the agreement to introduce women bishops in the Church of England.

Philip has huge gifts to offer the Church, and his leadership in Sheffield would have given a great boost to mission.

However, the damage to the principles on which the House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests is based, is profound. If all orders of ministry and all appointments are equally open to men and women, then the same has to apply to those who hold that the ministries of men and women are distinctively different. If it does not, if there is, in effect, a glass ceiling that prevents those of traditional churchmanships ministering at all levels of the Church, then the Declaration and the provisions that came with it lose all credibility.

I know that both Archbishops were personally wholly committed to the concept of mutual flourishing and it was warmly supported by the General Synod. If it is to survive as our governing motif, then urgent action will be needed to demonstrate its effectiveness. In the absence of such action, we will simply have given in to those who hounded Philip North out of office.

### **The Challenges Now Facing the Concept of Mutual Flourishing**

The issue with which I believe we are left following Bishop Philip North’s withdrawal from the nomination is whether or not ‘mutual flourishing’ means equal opportunity and treatment for all, whatever their convictions over men’s and women’s ministries, or whether those who are in the minority within the Church of England are simply being treated on sufferance.

To some extent, this issue is exacerbated in the case of nomination to a see where those involved believe that the diocesan bishop must be a focus for unity. Although in Bishop

Philip North's case, his ability to be a unifying influence had been demonstrated through his existing ministry in Blackburn, there is, in general, a strong evangelical view that 'the focus of unity' concept has been widely misinterpreted. For evangelicals, the focus of unity is Christ himself, as He is revealed in the gospels and apostolic teaching. Bishops foster unity insofar as they hold faithfully and promote such apostolic teaching. The idea that bishops, in their own persons, need to hold a 'majority' view on everything in order to foster unity has no place in New Testament teaching. Nevertheless, the latter view has often prevailed – and in the case of Sheffield was seen by a vocal minority to preclude Bishop Philip North's appointment.

More generally, I have a growing concern over the number of occasions when I have been told that the appointment of a complementarian evangelical (ie one who believes in male headship) to a deanery or diocesan role will 'undermine' female priests working in the deanery or diocese. Despite the fact that very few such evangelicals would want to question the validity of any priest's orders, the mere presence of conservative evangelical clergy is regarded by some as offensive. That said, it is important to recognize that the majority of female priests do not take this view and are entirely supportive colleagues in ministry. Nevertheless, the voices of a vocal minority can sometimes be so loud, that prospective appointments are made to appear controversial and are therefore avoided 'for the sake of unity.' It is noteworthy that no complementarian evangelical bishop has been appointed in any diocese since the House of Bishops' Declaration was approved – apart from my own appointment.

A further difficulty with the way 'mutual flourishing' operates is the treatment of complementarian evangelical women who wish to be, or have been, ordained as permanent deacons. Amongst those I have consulted, they believe they are made to feel 'second best' to those women who are ordained as priests. They report that their role and distinctive theology is widely misunderstood by diocesan staff; that there are few opportunities for service and wider diocesan roles; that their options for training are limited and that they are made to feel as though they are a drain on diocesan resources.

The withdrawal of Bishop Philip North has brought many of these growing concerns to a head. It seems to me therefore, that if 'mutual flourishing' is to imply a ready acceptance of each other within a climate of growth, we need to go further than simply advocating that discussions about the Declaration take place at deanery and parish levels. I believe a guide to mutual flourishing needs to be produced – set explicitly only within the context of the Declaration (ie not in the context of wider issues such as sexuality) – which can then be discussed in deaneries and diocesan synods before coming to General Synod itself. However, the production of more material will not in itself persuade those who rely on the provisions in the Declaration for their ministries that mutual flourishing really does mean equal treatment. Ultimately, this will now only happen when a man who does not ordain women is nominated to a see.

Rt Rev'd Roderick Thomas  
Bishop of Maidstone  
April 2017