WOMEN BISHOPS AND RECEPTION

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The GAFCON movement faces an important decision. At this time, GAFCON churches have a variety of rules (canons) and practices regarding the ordination of women:

- Some provinces restrict ordination of bishops, priests, and deacons to men only.
- Some restrict ordination of bishops and priests to men but ordain women as deacons.
- Some restrict ordination of bishops to men but ordain women as priests and deacons.
- Some do not restrict ordination of women to any order but have not in fact ordained a woman as bishop.

This variety is reflected in the current state of Anglican churches worldwide and indeed of Christian churches more generally. It represents a relatively recent change from a uniform historic tradition which restricted ordination in holy orders to men only (*N.B.*: the history of deacons and deaconesses is more complex).

So how do we move forward? It may seem easy simply to say: "let everyone do what is right in his own eyes." However, that very biblical quotation (Judges 21:25) conjures up the age when the people of God were disunited, warring tribe against tribe, and rejecting every authority divine and human. A similar situation obtains today, where churches that have changed their practice on women's ordination have gone on to overturn biblical essentials, especially in the matter of human sexuality. In the West, it is no coincidence that the ordination of homosexuals in the last twenty years followed the ordination of women twenty years before that. Seeing how the acceptance of homosexual ordination has torn the fabric of the wider Anglican Communion, we are right to ask whether the ordination of women to the episcopate might have the same effect in the GAFCON fellowship.

So the question facing the GAFCON movement is whether a single rule can or should be maintained across all those churches affiliating with it. This leads us to the question of the *reception* of change in the life of the church.

Introduction: Reception and Tradition

Imagine you find a package on your doorstep. It is wrapped in plain brown paper and has no postal stamp or return address. Should you bring it into your parlour – it might contain a precious jewel – or should you take it out into an open field – it might be a bomb!? Receiving the gift is only intelligible when you know who sent the gift, what it might contain, who delivered it, and what you are supposed to do with it. Similarly, when we think of the ordering of the church, we can only understand reception in terms of *who established the order, what is the substance of that order, how it was delivered to us, and how we are to pass it on.*

St. John describes the process of reception thus:

> That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. (1 John 1:1-4)

God sent his Son, the incarnate Word, into the world, and the apostles – the "we" being the community of eyewitnesses – testified to this event in their writings, and the church gratefully *receives* the apostolic Gospel and transmits that Gospel to the ends of the earth and to the end of the age. The vehicle of transmission is *tradition* and the agent is the Holy Spirit, who inspires the Scriptures and leads the church (John 16:13).

Reception and tradition are important because God's Word entered into time "from the beginning": "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Hebrews 1:1-2). The role of the Old Testament writers was to gather up and to herald the promises of God in expectation of the messianic King and the New Covenant to come.

The Formation of Christian Tradition

Jesus and the Gospel

Jesus' Good News of the Kingdom is just that – something new – and that message needed new packaging: "new wine must be put into fresh wineskins" (Luke 5:36-38). Jesus' preaching was hugely disruptive, as he frequently challenged the "tradition" of the Jews (cf. Mark 7:1-12) in such a way that people responded: "'What is this? A new teaching with authority!'" (Mark 1:27). The Gospel confounded the understanding and expectations of his own disciples (e.g., Mark 10:35-45). The misunderstanding of Jesus' message was part of the larger rejection of Jesus himself: "He came to his own but his own did not receive him" (John 1:11).

While the Gospel caused a great disruption of tradition, it also led to the formation of new tradition. Jesus explained this formation in the parable of the Sower and the Soils (Mark 4:3ff.). The Sower (Jesus) scatters the seed (the Gospel), some on the beaten path, some on shallow, rocky soil, some in the weeds, and some on fertile soil. If we translate this parable into a paradigm of the development of the Church's tradition, we find the following principles:

- *The Kingdom is constituted by receiving the Word of the King.* Preaching the Gospel introduces a new order of things. The seed of God's Word is consonant with that which has been given in the Old Testament Scripture, but it is transformed by the Person of the Sower, the Word made flesh. The new covenant will have a family resemblance to the old, but it will be radically reconfigured in the life of the Church.

- *True doctrine is the treasure of a living community of born-again believers, not necessarily the product of an institutional bureaucracy.* The Kingdom comprises those who "have root in themselves," those who have been chosen out of mankind to receive the Word gladly (faith) and who bear good fruit in abundance (obedience).
- *The authenticity of an innovation in the Kingdom is not immediately apparent* until the seeds sprout, and even then some innovations may look promising at first but later be scorched by the sun or choked by weeds. Innovations may be faddish, and like other fashions quickly fade, or they may reflect an anxiety to make Christianity acceptable to the "cultured despisers" of the day. In either case, an innovation needs to be tested over time, with a readiness to reject it on the basis that "an enemy has done this."

The preaching of the Gospel (*kerygma*) was to be accompanied by the passing on (*paradosis*) of Jesus' teaching (*didache*). Jesus stated this simply to his disciples at the Last Supper: "If you love me, keep my commandments," and he promised that the Comforter would guide them into all truth (John 14:15-16; 16:13). The Risen Lord commanded the apostles to make disciples of all nations "teaching them all that I have commanded you" and promised to accompany them through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-8).

Apostolic Tradition: Pedagogical and Apologetic

Receiving and passing on the Gospel tradition served two inter-woven purposes: pedagogical and apologetic. The Gospels themselves record the *paradosis* of "all that Jesus began to teach and do" (Luke 1:2; Acts 1:1; cf. John 20:30-31). Likewise Paul "delivered" the eyewitness testimony of the Resurrection which he himself had "received" (1 Corinthians 15:1-12), as well as his own personal testimony (Galatians 1:11-15). He also conveyed creedal and liturgical nuggets of Jesus' and the apostles' teaching (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 8:6-8; 11:23-26; Philippians 2:5-12).

Seldom was the apostolic tradition merely instructional. Usually it was directed to correct misunderstandings by converts or to rebuke false teachers. The militant character of tradition appears in Paul's early letters: "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter" (2 Thessalonians 2:15; cf. Ephesians 6:11ff.). Paul's concern is urgent in the Pastoral Letters, as he prepares Timothy and Titus to "guard the deposit" and "teach sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 6:20; Titus 2:1). The warning tone becomes apocalyptic in later letters. Jude, for instance, urges the faithful to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered ("traditioned") to the saints" because of "ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4; cf. Revelation 2:25).

Conciliar Tradition: The Jerusalem Council

The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 provides an example of how the church receives and forms the tradition of Christ. The issue at the Council was St. Paul's preaching of the Gospel of justification by faith alone. Certain Jewish Christians were traditionalists of a sort, arguing that when Gentiles were converted, they should be circumcised "to keep the law of Moses" (verse 5). The outcome of the Jerusalem Council was a consensus decision of the gathered apostles and elders "to lay on [the Gentiles] no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality" (verses 28-29).

Looking back from this side of history, one can hardly imagine another outcome, but that was not obvious at the time and required a major paradigm shift in the "received" teaching (the *masorah*) of the Old Testament concerning Israel and the Gentiles (e.g., Deuteronomy 7:1-4; Ezra 10:11-14). What are the key elements by which the church received this new understanding of the Gospel from the mission practice of Paul and Peter?

- *Tradition is grounded in revelation*. As the Old Testament Scripture is itself the product of God's revelation to Israel, so the doctrine of justification by faith apart from the law was the result of *new revelation* to Paul (Galatians 1:12) and to Peter (Acts 10). Paul considered this new revelation to be essential, pronouncing anathema on anyone who denied it and confronting Peter "to his face" about it (Galatians 1:8; 2:11). Peter in turn confirmed the truth of Paul's Gospel saying: "But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will" (verse 11).
- *Tradition is open to "indifferent" variations so long as essential truths are maintained*. Although he considered his central doctrine to be non-negotiable, Paul was willing to accept secondary conditions – abstaining from food sacrificed to idols (verse 29) – which in no way contradicted the Gospel, so long as the fundamental principle was preserved entire.
- *Tradition is upheld and ratified by the church's leadership*. James, the brother of Jesus, pillar apostle and bishop of the Jerusalem church, acknowledged the call to the Gentiles, which he saw as a fulfilment of prophecy and therefore concluded that "we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God."
- *Tradition is Spirit-led and passed on through written precedent*. The Jerusalem council agreed with James and wrote a letter, saying: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." There is no specific mention of a prophetic word confirming the decision, but the Council's letter was received by the church (verses 30-31) as authoritative and was included in Acts for our learning.

Acts 15 is a paradigm text for reception and was so understood by future generations in calling of ecumenical councils to deliberate on important matters of faith and order.

The Historic Tradition

The sub-apostolic Fathers testified that the New Testament writings they had received were of apostolic origin and authority, as Richard Bauckham has brilliantly argued in his recent *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (2006). So, for instance, the second-century bishop Papias stated: "I did not entertain those people who recall someone else's commandments, but those who remember the commandments given by the Lord to the faith and proceeding from the truth itself."

So when the Creed states: "We believe in one holy catholic and *apostolic* church," it is acknowledging that its own identity depends on the tradition of revealed truth that has been passed down in the Scriptures and tested through theological controversy. The substance of this tradition includes the "rule of faith" as expounded in the Apostles' Creed; the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, according to the Creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople; and the doctrine of the Person of Christ as truly God and truly Man, according to the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon.

The Church Fathers and Councils did not claim to be developing "new" doctrine but rather to be faithfully transmitting the teaching of the Scriptures. This "conservative" mindset is reflected in the Eastern Church's attitude to "holy tradition." One of my Orthodox friends used to say that the Orthodox have two tracks for change: the fast track, which is counted in centuries and the slow track in millennia. In the West, the famous dictum of Vincent of Lérins (5th century) expresses this conservative view of what is called the *sensus fidelium*: "In the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all."

In Articles I-V, the Anglican Reformers received this tradition in its entirety. They understood that traditions and councils could and did err, but they also knew that they had received the faith through the unbroken history of the church (see e.g., Bishop John Jewel's *Apology of the Church of England* [1562]). At the same time, they confessed that certain seeds of the Gospel – justification by faith alone and the church as priesthood of believers – had lain dormant in the church tradition. Hence the Reformers claimed to be *retrieving* biblical and apostolic doctrine. Kevin Vanhoozer puts it this way:

> Retrieval is a mode of "handing down" – traditioning – the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). At the same time, retrieval does more than repeat: it reforms. And it reforms not according to the standard of a past formula but according to the living and active Word of the Scripture. (page 23)

The 1662 Anglican Ordinal exemplifies this approach to Scripture and tradition. The Bishop asks the ordinand first about believing and teaching from Scripture:

> Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain all Doctrine required as necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? And are you determined, out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge; and to teach nothing, as necessary to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?

He then proceeds to ask about the ordinand's readiness to conform to the particular form of Anglican doctrine, discipline and worship "*as this Church has received the same*."

In our day, the GAFCON movement is seeking to uphold the faith once for all delivered to the saints. The Jerusalem Declaration is an example of this orthodox Anglican understanding of tradition. The first seven articles of the Declaration are backward-looking or better, foundation-laying, citing the Gospel and Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Bible, the Creeds and ecumenical Councils, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and Ordinal, and the dominical sacraments. The Declaration then proceeds to address contemporary concerns such as sexuality and family, the mission mandate, stewardship of the environment, the unity and diversity of the churches, including those who depart from the faith, and the expectation of Christ's Return in glory.

Tradition and the Ordained Ministry

The Threefold Order of Ministry: From the Patristic to the Modern Period

The Creeds testify to the divine character of "one holy catholic and apostolic church" and its ministry, which was considered to be of apostolic origin. As explained in *Women Bishops in the Church of England* (the 2004 "Rochester Report"), the distinctive "apostolic" role of bishops (*episkopoi*), though not fully settled in the New Testament, probably emerged in the late first- or early second-century church as a result of Paul's commissioning second-generation leaders like Timothy and Titus to "keep the mystery of faith with a clear conscience" (1 Timothy 3:9).

The Church Fathers passed on the tradition of a threefold order of bishops, presbyters (a.k.a., priests), and deacons, which was maintained in the East and West until the Reformation. The 1662 Anglican Ordinal justifies the "fullness" of this order (what came to be called the *plene esse* view) as based on the combined weight of Scripture and tradition: "It is evident unto all men *diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient Authors*, that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons" (emphasis added).

The patristic church appointed only male bishops, priests and (less certainly) deacons. This tradition seems to have been uncontested. Even if, as some argue, Paul recognized Junia as a female apostle (Romans 16:7) – and that is by no means certain – the early church chose not to continue to recognize women as official successors of the apostles, even on an occasional basis.

Historically, the restriction of ordination to men was justified by the precedent of Jesus' selection of the Twelve to represent the Church as heads of the new people of God. The first church council described in Acts involved *the election of Matthias* (Acts 1:12-26). The inner core of Jesus' followers – the Twelve (minus Judas Iscariot), "together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" – gather in prayer (verse 14). Peter then spells out the qualifications of a successor:

> "So one of the men (Grk: *'andrōn*) who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." (verses 21-22)

Given the striking role given to women in the Gospel narratives – women who travelled with Jesus and who witnessed the Resurrection – would this not have been the opportunity to open the tradition to a woman as a successor? Clearly that was an option not considered appropriate in passing on the apostolate of Jesus.

Modern proponents of women's ordination argue that examples like this one merely reflect the "patriarchal" cultural norms of the day. Some argue that Jesus broke with the patriarchal mindset of Judaism in his treatment of women but chose twelve "patriarchs" to accommodate Jewish sensibility and Old Testament typology. Similarly, some argue that Paul laid down the principle of equality and ministry based on spiritual gifts but restricted "headship" in the Church to men to accommodate the customs of the Greco-Roman household.

There are two problems with the modern critique. The first is that there is simply no convincing evidence in the New Testament tradition for women holding "office" in the church. The second problem is that the apostles give a theological rationale for their tradition of a "father-headed" family and church (1 Corinthians 11:1-11; 14:33-35; Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Peter 3:1-7). Note in particular the divine rooting of fatherhood in the Trinitarian language of Ephesians 3:14ff., where the Headship of God the Father is reflected in the social order:

> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father (*pater*), from whom every family (Grk: *patria*) in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love…

As noted in "Consecrated Women," the Working Party Report in the Church of England (sec. 4.2.6; page 113): "The Pauline prayer forcefully reminds us that all other relationships (domestic, ecclesiastical and so on) are subject to, and patterned on, the divine Fatherhood of the One Father."

The apostles saw an analogy between the authority structure of the household (Grk: *oikos*) and of the church (cf. Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19; 1 Peter 4:7). In particular, the bishop was likened to the father of the family (1 Timothy 3:2-5).

There is a continuous tradition of a male-headed episcopate. The question was never raised seriously in the early church, even though women continued to exercise "diaconal" and prophetic ministries. In the Catholic church, women held important positions as heads of monastic communities, but none were admitted to holy orders. Although the Reformers challenged celibacy as a requirement for ordination as an unbiblical development, and some argued for a twofold order of presbyters and deacons as more biblical, none of the churches of the magisterial Reformation considered changing the male-headed character of the ordained ministry.

The Tradition of Catholic Anglicanism

Alongside the Reformed tradition of the Church of England grew another variant tradition, sometimes called "High Church," or "Anglo-Catholic" or more generally "Catholic Anglican." This tradition is based on the following main convictions:

- The visible church, properly ordered, is an essential of the Gospel.
- Authority in the church has descended from Christ through the apostles to the bishops of the church (apostolic succession).
- Bishops properly ordained are an essential mark of the true church and are the sign of its unity: "where the bishop is, there is the church" (Ignatius of Antioch).
- Ministerial authority was founded by Christ and communicated to presbyters and deacons through the laying on of hands by bishops.
- The validity of the sacraments requires a properly ordained priest or bishop.

- Presbyters and bishops serve as priests *in persona Christi* (representing Christ) in sacred acts: blessing in the Triune Name, declaring absolution, and presiding at the "eucharist sacrifice."

For Catholic Anglicans, it is simply impossible for a woman to fulfill the office of bishop or presbyter. Bishop William Wantland explains it this way:

> Traditionalist Anglo-Catholicism claims that the practice of ordaining only men to the priesthood is established on the precedent of Christ, upheld by Scripture, and received through an unbroken tradition in the Church down the centuries. The ordination of women, therefore, is not to be permitted. It is this appeal to tradition which is the primary argument against the ordination of women; but unless God is thought to be arbitrary, the received practice implicitly asks for some rationale. Traditionalists insist firmly on the equality of women, and reject old explanations of this practice which rooted it in inequality. Therefore, as a secondary argument in explanation of the first, they turn to the question of how the biological sex of the celebrant might affect the symbolism associating the priest with both Christ and the Father. Because Christ took humanity as a man, and because God chose to reveal himself under predominantly masculine language, mixing the female sex with a set of symbols referring to both is, effectively, a form of false teaching.
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> We believe that only a Priest (or Bishop as High Priest) may offer the Eucharistic sacrifice (see Hebrews 10). We know, from both the New Testament and the ancient Authors, that a male priesthood is an acceptable ikon or image of Christ as Priest, and that such Priests are authorized to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice. We do NOT know that in regard to female priesthood.
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> If (for the sake of argument) a woman cannot, in God's will, be a Priest, then she cannot validly offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, nor am I fed on the Body and Blood of Christ, if I partake of her offering. My soul, no longer sacramentally nourished, is in mortal danger. Will I continue to eat food that may have no nourishment value, if nourishing food is available? Not likely. So, because I have no assurance of the validity of such novel ordinations, I shall refrain from them as long as that lack of assurance continues.
>
> Likewise, if a woman cannot be a Bishop, then she cannot validly ordain anyone to the priesthood, and those she purports to ordain are not validly authorized to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Needless to say, the ordination of priests and bishops (deacons are another matter) poses a severe conscientious problem for Catholic Anglicans. Many Anglo-Catholics have gone over to Rome or Orthodoxy; others have joined "continuing churches" that are out of communion with the main Anglican jurisdictions. Some have found ways to remain in a mixed polity with women priests, such as the ACNA (see below). But it is difficult to see how Catholic understanding of the church can survive with women bishops.

Women's Ordination: A Change in the Tradition

The ordination of women in Protestant churches began with a trickle in the 19th century and spread more widely in the 20th. In general, the "holiness" churches (Wesleyan-Methodist-Pentecostal) moved in this direction faster, followed by "mainline" Protestants (Presbyterian, Lutheran, Anglican). On the other hand, many Protestant bodies continue to ordain only male bishops and pastors (in the USA, e.g., Southern Baptists, Presbyterian Church of America, Missouri Synod Lutheran, Evangelical Free Church, Christian Missionary Alliance). Roman Catholics and Orthodox maintain male-only orders.

The current state of the churches of the Anglican Communion is found in the Appendix. An increase in the number of provinces ordaining women has occurred in the past 25 years. Because several large jurisdictions do not ordain women bishops or presbyters (Nigeria, South East Asia, Sydney), the total number of Anglicans represented that do and do not is about equal (note: the numbers of the Church of England are misleading).

The first Anglican woman to be ordained presbyter was Florence Li Tim Oi, ordained on an emergency basis in 1943 in Hong Kong; the regular ordination of women priests dates from the late 1960s and '70s. The first Anglican bishop was Barbara Harris in USA (1989), followed by New Zealand (1990), Canada (1994), Australia (2008), South Africa (2012), Ireland (2013), South India (2013), England (2015), and Wales (2017). As of this date, the only woman Primate was Katherine Jefferts Schori of the Episcopal Church USA (2006-15). Many of the provinces that have ordained women presbyters, and all of those who have ordained women bishops, have pursued other "liberal" directions with regard to theology and ethics, including the ordination and marriage of homosexuals.

The Rationale for Change in the Tradition on Holy Orders

Progressive Challenge and the Sexual Revolution

So what is the cause of the change from the universal norm of male-only ordained leadership in the Christian church for 1800 years and the current rise of women in orders in the West? This change is related to the rise since the 18th century of the "modern" doctrine of equal rights (John Locke), of the Romantic exaltation of individual feeling (Jean-Jacques Rousseau), and of the "postmodern" view that "God is dead" and absolutes of any sort are artificial barriers to "the will to power" (Friedrich Nietzsche).

One further characteristic of contemporary thought is the belief in "progress." The progressive holds that history is moving inexorably toward more and more enlightenment. At times progressivism has adopted Christian language about the end-times, and some theologians have argued that progressivism is itself the work of the Holy Spirit, as exemplified in the words of this Episcopal hymn: "New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth." The idea of reception as a developmental and dynamic "process" is indebted to the progressive worldview. Although optimistic progressivism endured a severe shock due to two world wars, the Great Depression, and the spread of Communism, it has reemerged in the late 20th century in the garb of the Sexual Revolution.

The Sexual Revolution, in my view, represents a threat to the faith unlike those faced in the patristic or Reformation periods. It is about what it means to be human, created in the image of God. Seventy years ago C.S. Lewis wrote about the threat in terms of *The Abolition of Man*. At about the same time, Aldous Huxley described a *Brave New World* with test-tube babies, mind-altering drugs, sex without marriage or children, all of which is too familiar in the West today. More recently, the bioethicist Leon Kass warns:

> Human nature itself lies on the operating table, ready for alteration, for eugenic and neuropsychic "enhancement," for wholesale redesign. In leading laboratories, academic and industrial, new creators are confidently amassing their powers and quietly honing their skills, while on the street their evangelists are zealously prophesying a posthuman future. For anyone who cares about preserving our humanity, the time has come to pay attention.

David Robertson states the alternatives facing us starkly: "If we take away humanity made in the image of God, if we try to re-image according to our own imaginations, then we will continue to go down this road to hell."

According to Scripture and to most "traditional" peoples, being human involves being male and female, but according to the gospel of the Sexual Revolution, there is no such thing as sex. "Binary sex," a.k.a. male and female, has been replaced by "gender identity" – Facebook now lists 71 possible genders – and counting. The new gospel is profoundly gnostic – you alone know and proclaim your gender, and you can change it at will. This view is profoundly anti-children since desire has been divorced from procreation, as can be measured by the widespread practice of abortion and the resulting depopulation of the West – except for Muslims, who continue to follow their tradition.

Three Waves of Feminism`

Because of its relevance to our topic, I shall focus on one stream of the Sexual Revolution in particular – feminism. Elements of feminism – the recognition of the dignity of women in God's eyes and in family, church, and society – clearly predate contemporary feminism and are rooted in the biblical understanding of God's creative work. But there is equally clearly a development of feminist thought which borrows from the wider anti-Christian idea of progress.

Feminism in the West is generally acknowledged to have emerged in three discrete "waves." The *first wave*, dominant in the 19th century through the mid-20th, focused on attaining equal political and economic rights (voting and property rights) for women. Early feminists, many of them Evangelical Christians, supported the "nuclear" family and advocated family-friendly policies for breadwinning fathers and stay-at-home mothers. The *second wave* of feminism, which flowered in the second half of the 20th century, called for *equal access* for women in higher education and the workplace, often accompanied by quotas and "affirmative action" policies aimed at *equal results*. The *third wave*, radical or gender feminism, aimed to "deconstruct" and undermine the traditional family and promoted various forms of libertinism: lesbianism (female-female), transgenderism (females claiming to be male and vice versa) and polyamory (multiple kinds of sexual relationships).

What is common to *secular* feminism is the rejection of God's Word concerning man in the image of God, male and female. The result is the very kind of moral chaos Paul describes as typical of human rebellion against God:

> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. (Romans 1:26-28)

Each of these waves has impacted churches differently. *First wave feminism* has been often promoted by Evangelicals as an aspect of the Gospel's breaking down barriers of tribe, class and sex in the name of "the freedom with which Christ has made us free" (Galatians 3:28; 5:1). Evangelicals see such freedom as compatible with traditional family roles, while opening the door to exceptional women rising to leadership. *Second wave feminism* is less compatible with orthodox Christianity: it tends to demean wives as "love slaves" and homemaking as "drudgery"; it favors transferring volunteer work to state agencies and calls for quotas for representing women in the wider society. This second view is reflected in many Western Anglican provinces that have adopted women's ordination to the presbyterate and episcopate.

The *third wave of radical* or *gender feminism*, unimaginable for many in the Global South, is coming on strong in many Western churches. For instance, the Episcopal Church USA now declares by canon law that no person shall be denied access to ordination based on "sexual orientation or gender identification (SOGI)" This means that self-declared homosexuals and "transgendered" persons can and are becoming clergy in these churches and that opposition to their status is a punishable offense. Proponents of gender feminism consider the church's traditional position evil and intolerable, although they may dissemble when it helps their cause and say they simply want to be "inclusive."

Is There an Authentic Christian Feminism?

The question for orthodox Christians, it seems to me, is whether the three waves of contemporary feminism are logically linked as a counter-tradition to the historic position of the Church of the ages. In other words, when one begins with the egalitarian assumptions of the first wave, does one inevitably end up with the radical rejection of male and female distinctions and disruption of family relationships of the third wave?

There is evidence that this has been the case in Western churches. However, it should also be noted that most of these Western churches had already begun to deviate from biblical orthodoxy before radical feminism appeared. This raises the question of *post hoc, propter hoc*, that is, did feminism cause the breakdown of orthodoxy, or did the breakdown of orthodoxy open the door to radical feminism? Put another way, is there an orthodox alternative to the three waves of feminism which can form a legitimate development of the Church's tradition of holy orders?

If I may say so, as one who has lived in the West and in Africa, I do not think the innovations of radical feminism *necessarily* accompany women's ordination. There are amazing examples of

ordained women in ministry and leadership, who uphold the authority of scripture and the principles of the Jerusalem Declaration. That said, the ordination of women is still a very recent development, and it is unwise to draw final conclusions from such a short history. Furthermore, it is not enough to test the authenticity of a new order based on individual examples.

Orthodox Anglicans who would argue for women's ordination need to make a thorough case for an alternative paradigm, addressing some of the following questions:

- What does it mean to be a man or a woman, a husband or a wife, a father or a mother, if women are engaged in interchangeable roles and responsibilities in ministry? If one argues for "equality *and* complementarity," what are the areas where sameness does not trump difference? For instance, is there a place for masculine initiative and courage and for feminine modesty and peaceableness in different kinds of ministry, e.g., church planting vs. chaplaincy?
- What will be the shape and dynamics of Christian family life if women are working full-time and taking on jobs that may require them to travel extensively or work odd or extra hours? Does the "double-income" economic expectation lead inevitably to a class divide where the educated leave their children to be minded by uneducated relatives? Is this a good thing, or will it inevitably lead to elitism and social strife?
- In the West, second- and third-wave feminism has resulted in the separation of sex and procreation. What values can the church offer that will uphold the dignity of child-bearing and -rearing, if economically and socially men and women can be more prosperous and free by remaining single or living the DINK ("double-income, no kids") lifestyle?
- Should there be differences in the distribution of the "men's" and "women's" work in the church or society, such that one might expect to find a majority of men performing certain tasks and of women performing others? Should families direct educational expectations of sons and daughters along this line?

These are questions that GAFCON churches need to take up, whether or not they end up ordaining women to any of the orders of ministry.

There is a final question which bears on our Task Force: does the ordination of women as presbyters necessarily require ordaining women as bishops? Putting the question another way: given the strong association of episcopacy with the apostolate, is it not possible that the church might ordain women to the presbyterate but retain men only as representative heads of the church?

"Receiving" a pattern of ordained ministry calls for careful distinguishing of different kinds of office in the church. We have seen that whereas presbyter and bishop were originally overlapping offices (and exclusively male), the distinction between the two emerged very early. It may well be that ultimately the church should open both offices to women or retain (or return to) the male-only paradigm. But to reach a common understanding, it is far preferable to "prove" women in the presbyteral order first before rushing to ordain women as bishops.

Indeed, it is possible that the order of deacon might be developed to provide opportunities for women's ministry and leadership and should be seen as an alternative paradigm to the pattern that developed in the West.

I hope our Task Force may play an ongoing role in helping the GAFCON movement and the wider Christian church to look carefully at these matters. For this reason, I propose that the TFWE might plan a track on "men and women in ministry" for the 2018 GAFCON Assembly in Jerusalem.

Reception and Women's Ordination in Anglicanism

The Change in Lambeth Resolutions

The reception of women's ordination in the Anglican Communion was not a result of a consultation, deliberation, and consensus such as is found in Acts chapter 15. Here is a snapshot of the process of reception drawn from the Resolutions of the Lambeth Conferences.

In 1930, the bishops declared: "The order of deaconess is for women the one and only order of the ministry which we can recommend our branch of the Catholic Church to recognise and use" (Resolution 67). In 1948, in response to an enquiry whether ordaining a woman priest for a twenty-year experimental period would be acceptable within Anglican tradition and order, they stated: "the Conference feels bound to reply that in its opinion such an experiment would be against that tradition and order and would gravely affect the internal and external relations of the Anglican Communion." Lambeth 1968 may reflect a change in attitude. The bishops said: "The Conference thankfully recognises the particular contribution of women to the mission of the Church; and urges that fuller use should be made of trained and qualified women…" But even in 1968, there was no authorization of overturning the church's historic order.

Then, suddenly in 1978, we find a lengthy Resolution 21 on Women in the Priesthood, noting that since 1968 three provinces (Hong Kong, Canada and USA) have already ordained women presbyters and eight other provinces have declared "no theological objections" to such a change. In response to this new situation, the Conference affirmed the autonomy of member churches and the "legal right" to ordain women, while noting that such actions have "consequences of utmost significance for the Anglican Communion as a whole." In Resolution 22, they go on to recommend "that no decision to consecrate a woman bishop be taken without consultation" through the Primates and the overwhelming support in the Province involved "lest the bishop's office should become a cause of disunity instead of a focus of unity."

So what had happened to effect this change in the thinking of the Lambeth bishops? Certainly, it reflected the rise of feminist influence in Western society, but it also revealed a weakness in the structures of the Anglican Communion. The Lambeth "conference" had neither legal nor judicial authority over the "autonomous" provinces, an arrangement "baked into the cake" from its beginning in 1867. Hence there was no formal way the wider Communion could stop a member church from taking unilateral action. Furthermore, the Western churches had dominated the Communion structures, even while the former colonial churches were growing in numbers and maturity. Hence when the Episcopal Church determined to ordain women priests and later bishops, the only choice for other churches was to try to find a compromise solution – or make a

radical break of communion. It took thirty years and three Lambeth Conferences before this last resort was reached at GAFCON 2008.

Although the American Episcopal Church had had strong Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic revivals in the 19th century, by the 20th century it was best known as the church of the economic and cultural elite. When Western elites embraced political radicalism in the 1960s, the leadership of the Episcopal Church was quick to follow. This led them to promote the second-wave feminist agenda in the 1960s and 70s, the gay rights agenda in the 1980s and 90s, and now in the past decade the so-called "gender identity" agenda.

The way this agenda was introduced is also noteworthy. Proponents of women's ordination recruited three retired bishops to ordain eleven women priests in 1974, all in contravention of the Prayer Book, canons, and recent resolutions of the church's General Convention. This "facts on the ground" tactic gave the sense of inevitability to the change which overcame opposition and led to authorization of women's ordination as priests and bishops in 1976. (Because the terms of the debate were narrowed to matters of social justice, there was no attempt to distinguish the orders of priest and bishop.)

The Episcopal Church applied this same politicized approach to the wider Communion in 1978. Women's ordination was presented as a "done deal." The same tactic was used in 1988, as the Episcopal Church was on the verge of consecrating its first female bishop regardless of Lambeth 1978. The 1988 Conference bowed to this pressure and pleaded that other provinces "respect" the decision and maintain "the highest possible degree of communion" with those who had forged ahead (Resolution 1). The Conference went on to direct the Archbishop of Canterbury to establish a "process of reception" within the Communion and with other churches.

Having bullied the Lambeth bishops twice, the Episcopal Church tried it a third time in 1998, this time with the ordination of practicing homosexuals. This time the Conference stood firm, due to the leadership of the Global South bishops, and led to Resolution I.10 on Human Sexuality. Angered by this setback at Lambeth 1998, the leaders of the Episcopal Church rejected its counsel, consecrated a practicing homosexual as bishop in 2003 and threw the Anglican Communion into chaos. This unilateral defiance of church tradition and authority continues to this day. For instance, according to current Episcopal canon law, divorced, homosexual, and "transgendered" persons are accorded absolute right to ordination, and any priest or bishop who denies one of these individuals access to ordination may be brought up for trial and deposed.

I have recited this history in some detail in order to make the point that the change in tradition regarding women's ordination was never duly considered and tested by biblical or historical standards but was thrust upon the church by means of a politicized strategy of a heretical church. Does this mean that women in holy orders is wrong? Not necessarily, but it does caution those who wish to discern God's will in this matter. As Scripture counsels: "One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless" (Proverbs 14:16).

Reception in Contemporary Anglican Thought

I think it is fair to say that the radical tactics of the Episcopal Church forced on the wider Communion the notion of "open reception," resulting in the Eames Commission reports in the 1990s and the Windsor Report ten years later. Open reception, in my view, is a verdict looking for a rationale.

Paul Avis, a widely respected and published Anglican ecumenist, is the preeminent spokesman of "open reception" as it is propounded today, especially within the context of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion. In an essay titled "Toward a Deeper Reception of 'Reception,'" (*Reshaping Ecumenical Theology* [2010], chapter 5), Avis gives a brief history and explanation of reception. Reception, he claims, is a term derived from Roman Catholic ecclesiology, explaining "the incorporation of the teaching of the Magisterium into the life of the Church." In this sense, "reception" is a form of what John Henry Newman called the "development of doctrine," one that justifies continuous Roman Catholic tradition, capped by the teaching of the pope. Avis rejects this "top-down" approach and proposes an alternative model of development: dialogue between equal partners, "marked by the features of gradualness, active discernment, responsibility, unpredictability and the real possibility of non-reception." (p. 85).

Avis then turns to the "open process of reception." Avis's particular example of open reception was the decision by the English House of Bishops in 1992 to authorize women's ordination to the presbyterate. This decision was a deviation, as I have noted above, from the historic tradition of the Christian churches and of the Prayer Book Ordinal. It might seem strange that an ecumenist like Avis is so blithe in justifying an action which immediately and perhaps permanently put the Church of England at odds with Rome and Orthodoxy and many Protestant bodies. (This decision, for instance, led the Rev. Michael Harper, a leader in charismatic renewal, to leave the Church of England for Orthodoxy.)

Why not wait for wider consensus before authorizing this innovation? Here is where *reception as process* comes in. Avis writes:

> Tradition is the 'given' pole of what is being transmitted. Reception is the active pole. What is handed down does not remain unaffected or unchanged by the process. It is adapted, embodied, subject to practice and to context. (p. 89)

The "open process of reception," as Avis defines it, is an application of the unfolding process of history: "As the Spirit-guided Body of Christ, the Church is continually developing its fundamental appropriation of the apostolic faith in order to respond to fresh circumstances, [t]o meet new knowledge, fresh insights and changes in society." In a similar vein, in the debate in 1992, Bishop Michael Adie claimed that women's ordination is "a reasoned development, consonant with Scripture, required by tradition," to which Bishop Kenneth Kirk responded: "How could a development which had played no part in the tradition, be said now to be required?" (Bishop Kirk also left the Church of England for Rome in 2004).

The idea of change being *required* recalls Martin Luther's famous saying: "Here I stand. I can do no other." Indeed Avis invokes the Reformation as the most striking example of a radical change in the church's tradition.

> It was a central plank of the Reformers' platform that, where matters affecting salvation are concerned and where the conscience of the Christian people is being harmed, a particular church has the right to take action, unilaterally if necessary, and indeed is bound to do so. (p. 87)

But is the ordination of women a "matter affecting salvation"? Secularists and many Christian feminists answer Yes on the grounds that any differentiation between women and men is a violation of fundamental justice and conscience. By this standard, the entire tradition of the church stands condemned.

The irony of "open reception" is that while it begins by appealing to openness and dialogue, it always ends in a demand for uniformity and submission. There is indeed a process but it goes only one way in accordance with what is called [Richard] Neuhaus' law: "Where orthodoxy is optional, orthodoxy will sooner or later be proscribed."

Avis might claim that the reception process in the Church of England regarding the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate is still open, but that is a hollow claim. The Church now *requires* its ordinands to affirm that "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" ("The Five Guiding Principles"). [Add note about the Philip North case in 2017.]

My point is simply this: "open" reception is not open. It is not characterized by "gradualness, active discernment, responsibility, unpredictability and the real possibility of non-reception." It is not the way the church should seek the Lord's will in a matter of importance for its identity. We need to find another way.

Reception: The Case of the Anglican Church in North America

The issue of women's ordination as priests and bishops has been a matter of dispute and division within North American Anglicanism for about fifty years. The "continuing churches," most of them of Anglo-Catholic conviction, left the Episcopal Church over the issue of women priests in the 1970s. On the Evangelical side, the Reformed Episcopal Church has retained male-only orders from its founding in 1873 up to the present, and the Anglican Mission in the Americas (AMiA) and its offshoot PEAR-USA (now dispersed among several dioceses within ACNA) decided, in response to a two-year study headed by Bishop John Rodgers, to discontinue ordaining women to the presbyterate.

The issue presented itself with considerable urgency to the founders of the Anglican Church of North America (ACNA) in 2009, at which time none of its constituent jurisdictions had women bishops while some permitted ordination of women priests and deacons and others did not. The ACNA leadership came up with a modus vivendi: its constitution and canons (VIII.2 and III.3.7 respectively) limit eligibility for the episcopate to males, while leaving "dioceses, clusters and networks" free to ordain or not ordain women to the priesthood and diaconate. I have spoken of "no women bishops, women priests optional" as a kind of short-hand definition of the current rule.

The cautious nature of this solution is not surprising, given the potential for strife and division this issue has caused. In the case of the ACNA, women's ordination threatens the delicate balance of Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals and even the unity among Evangelicals (and charismatics). Some members of ACNA hope to return to the traditional orders of males only; other members would wish to see women ordained to the episcopate. It does not appear likely at this point that either of these groups will be satisfied in the short term.

An ACNA "Task Force on Holy Orders" has studied this matter for the past three years; its final report is due out in early 2017. The Task Force has noted that the "three streams" of Anglican tradition view the matter of women's ordination quite differently, with Anglo-Catholics opposing it altogether on grounds that a woman cannot represent Christ at the altar, whereas Evangelicals and charismatics see ordained ministry as something based on a personal and spiritual gifting. The Task Force notes that all three traditions have reasons for their position rooted in Scripture, history and practice. Because both positions for and against women's ordination can be faithfully argued, and because likely there is not yet sufficient consensus to change the Constitution and Canons, the present "tradition" remains normative for the foreseeable future.

Clearly the current ACNA position creates anomalies for those who hold an Anglo-Catholic understanding of sacramental orders, as they must accept the presence in their province, even if not in their dioceses, of women priests whom they cannot recognize as such. Likewise many others will find this position falling short of the ideal of openness to Spirit-led ministries. In particular, ordained women priests have to live with the anomaly that in some dioceses of their own church, their specific calling is fully accepted and in others it is not recognized at all. Ultimately, these anomalies may not be successfully held in tension, and one side or the other will have to give ground, but any change will have to gain a substantial consensus, which does not now exist.

The Anglican Church in North America is a young church, though its roots go deep. How long will the "no women bishops, women priests optional" rule endure? The Task Force on Orders did not resolve the dilemma, and I suspect that there will be no set time limit placed on reviewing the current position. The canonical bar on ordaining women bishops and allowing dioceses the option to ordain women presbyters does not rule out the possibility of a change in either direction, but it does give a presumption that allows the church to carry on its life while testing whether the current arrangement represents a long-term resolution.

I would point out one notable feature of the ACNA rule. It draws a line distinguishing the office of bishop from that of presbyter. It did this, I think, because many traditionalists, both Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical, see the office of bishop as representing the whole church outwardly to other dioceses within the province and to other historic churches. The Eastern Orthodox, for instance, have been especially open to further relationships with the ACNA.

It seems to those of us in North America that while the "no women bishops, women priests optional" rule creates anomalies and tensions, it is workable, or livable, whereas to have some dioceses with women bishops and others refusing to recognize women bishops or priests ordained by them would make it impossible to function as a unified body. The rule also ensures

that the Primate will be a male, who can represent the church within the GAFCON movement and wider ecumenical discussions.

Women Bishops and the Polity of GAFCON

For more than a decade, I have been writing about the "polity," i.e., the constitutional or governmental character, of the GAFCON movement, both as it relates to its own member churches and as it relates to the historic Anglican Communion and its "Instruments of Unity." That polity is an ongoing issue was highlighted in 2016, which began with the Anglican Primates' "gathering" in Canterbury and ended with the Global South meeting in Cairo, at which GAFCON and Global South Primates expressed grave disillusionment with the existing structures of the Communion. There may be further recommendations to strengthen the levels of formal participation in the life of GAFCON movement.

One phrase that emerged from the 2008 Jerusalem assembly describing GAFCON was "confessional and conciliar." The idea of a confession of faith is biblical and underlies the form of the creeds and the Articles of Religion. It was the great merit of GAFCON 2008 that it produced the Jerusalem Declaration, which has been widely accepted through its churches and even beyond that among other orthodox Anglicans.

The Jerusalem Statement of 2008 established the Primates' Council, which has been serving the GAFCON churches for the past eight years. Additional proposals from a "Governance Task Force" in 2017 may strengthen and deepen the GAFCON's conciliar oversight. I believe it will be important for each GAFCON province (and its dioceses) to avoid unilateral actions which might destabilize our young movement. Consecration of a female bishop before the GAFCON movement as a whole agrees to it would be one such action.

Unilateral action is a particular issue for a communion of churches. A particular church may enforce discipline through its canons and oversight bodies, but what happens when there is a major difference in order and practice among churches claiming autonomy? The wider Anglican Communion is an object lesson in this regard. For 130 years, it functioned tolerably, despite many differences of churchmanship and culture. At Lambeth 1998, however, the issue of "human sexuality" tested its integrity, and its structures proved inadequate. This failure was one of the "facts" cited in the Jerusalem Statement in 2008 justifying the summoning of the Conference.

Traditionalism: The Abuse of Tradition

I have been arguing that the Church's observance of men in holy orders is part of its tradition and that therefore it should exercise caution in making changes to the consensus of the wider church. I admit that this builds a "conservative" bias into the matter of women in the episcopate. At the same time, tradition is by its nature God's unfolding rule of the church through time. We are deluded if we think we can recreate "first-century Bible-land." The Church Fathers and Reformers would be the first to disabuse us of any such delusion. There is an old saying that "tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."

Testing the tradition of men and women in church leadership cannot ignore matters that have arisen in the modern period. While there may have been ages when women were considered

intellectually inferior and incapable of achievement in the public arena of education, medicine, commerce and politics, this is clearly refuted by the role women play in many areas of society today. Furthermore, some of the most pronounced "patriarchal" societies have been ruled by kleptocratic strongmen who bear no relationship to the kind of servant leadership held up by Jesus. Even in "conservative" churches, male leaders can take advantage of their offices as "my lord bishop" to deny any objection or to marginalize any who disagree with them.

Some may be tempted to silence any challenge to traditional church order by merely invoking the "seven last words of the church": "we've never done it this way before." Traditionalists can abuse the conservative weight of tradition by closing off discussion with a threat of veto. The "continuing" Anglican churches in North America, for instance, have mistakenly tried to freeze a certain piety and polity, and this frozen ground has not been productive of evangelism and mission.

While terms like "the listening process" have been abused by progressive revisers, the idea of fellow Christians listening carefully to each other's testimony is the heart of the conclusion "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." If the GAFCON movement, while acknowledging different views on the ministries of men and women, concludes that women should not be made bishop, this conclusion need not shut down for all time further deliberation and even certain kinds of experimentation.

The pre-GAFCON book *The Way, the Truth, and the Life* included in its definition of Anglican orthodoxy "a spirit of liberality," which it defined in this way:

> It may seem strange to include 'liberality' alongside sola scriptura, the gifts of the Spirit and the cost of discipleship, but it should not be. As St. Paul says, '… where the Spirit is, there is liberty.' (2 Corinthians 3:17), and his own pastoral practice as an apostle exemplifies the aphorism: 'In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.' Liberality of spirit characterizes the Anglican via media approach to doctrinal, liturgical and pastoral matters, which seeks to be firm in matters of salvation and modest with regard to secondary or 'indifferent' matters (adiaphora). Going back to John Jewell and Richard Hooker, this 'sweet reasonableness' (Titus 3:2) has been a hallmark of Anglican writers, with George Herbert, C. S. Lewis and John Stott being prime examples.

In my view, true liberality of spirit is not contrary to fidelity to the Word and the church's tradition. Our movement will be challenged and I hope characterized by that spirit in whatever it concludes.

Conclusion: Reception and GAFCON

How does this analysis of "reception" apply to the question of the ordination of women as bishops in the GAFCON fellowship? This is the question that was set for our Task Force. Let me summarize some conclusions for discussion, based on material above:

1. Reception implies something sent, which implies something passed on. That something is tradition. The Church's primary tradition is God's Word, which is received in the canon of Scripture. The first test of authentic tradition is its conformity with God's Word. On

this basis, the church over the centuries has developed tradition represented in the Creeds and Councils and in the threefold order of ministry.

2. The tradition of the Christian church on holy orders from apostolic times up until the last two hundred years has been that of a male-headed ministry in all three orders. This remains the tradition of Rome and Orthodoxy, of many Protestants, and of about half the Anglicans worldwide.

3. The advent of equal rights of women and various forms of feminism in the wider society has led some churches to reconsider and change the historic tradition and ordain women: some to the diaconate, some to the presbyterate, and some to all orders, including episcopacy. About half the Anglican provinces have approved women priests; a few churches in the West have ordained women bishops.

4. The churches who have promoted ordination of women, including the Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada, have done so on the basis of "open reception," i.e., by enacting a change in practice while calling for further testing and evaluation after the fact. This process is dubious both in theory and practice: in theory because it "begs the question," assuming an affirmative conclusion; and in practice because there is no real intention to go back. One sign that this approach is not of the Lord is the fact that it has been used over the past twenty years to justify the ordination of practicing homosexuals to the presbyterate and episcopate.

5. True development of doctrine and practice requires time, careful testing, and consensus at the highest levels, as was the case at the apostolic council in Acts 15. This has not yet happened in the churches of the Anglican Communion and/or among the churches of the GAFCON fellowship. The Primates' existing moratorium on ordaining a woman bishop recognizes the need for lengthy consideration and the danger of premature and unilateral action by one member church. The question is whether the moratorium should not be indefinite until such time that a consensus is reached, which could be a consensus to ordain women bishops or to cease ordaining women to one or both of the other orders.

6. The status quo with regard to women's ordination among GAFCON churches is varied: some churches ordain women deacons only; some ordain women deacons and presbyters only; others have authorized ordination of women in all three orders but have not at this point elected a woman bishop. Is it not possible that this status quo is God's providence, allowing us to follow a genuine process of reception?

7. The biblical and theological objections to women in holy orders vary according to the particular order: women in the diaconate seems least problematic and even commendable; women bishops is the most problematic, as bishops are representative heads of the church internally and externally; and presbyters fall in-between as local pastors and teachers. Because the demand for "open reception" came from advocates of "social justice," there has been no serious evaluation of whether a church may promote women in one order and not the others. The Diocese of Sydney provides an interesting

case of how that might work (see the Report of Archdeacon Kara Hartley); the Anglican Church in North America may provide another case.

8. If it is right that the highest level of church council should be male-headed, it might raise the question of whether provinces might have female assistant bishops under diocesans, or female diocesan bishops under a male primate. However clever, this idea seems to undermine the integrity of the episcopal order. A bishop is bishop by ordination; further distinctions are secondary.

9. The GAFCON movement is seeking to model a form of Communion governance and discipline. The ordination of a woman bishop is one issue that might challenge and threaten its coherence as a communion of churches. Even if the ordination of women to the episcopacy is less than a "first-order" matter, it is nevertheless a major innovation in church tradition. Therefore, it will be important for all member provinces and dioceses to avoid any unilateral action that would preempt a communion-wide decision.

This essay, along with others presented to the Task Force on Women in the Episcopate, is itself a step toward a better understanding of the issue of women in holy orders, especially in the episcopate. It is meant to accompany and perhaps assist a "Survey of Member Provinces," which was sent out in November. It is also the third agenda item for the meeting in January. It is my hope that it will help the Task Force to give some substantial advice to the Primates in what is a significant stage of our movement becoming a long-term reality.

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Women's Ordination in the Anglican Communion: Overview

The current situation regarding women's ordination in the Anglican Communion can be seen in the following table, which lists the 38 member churches and the 6 extra-provincial churches:

Province	Ordination of female deacons permitted	First female deacon	Ordination of female priests permitted	First female priest	Consecration of female bishops permitted	First female bishop	Refs
Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia	✓	✓	1976[a]	1977	✓	1990	[1][2]
Australia	1985	1986	1992	1992	2007[b]	2008	[3][4][5]
Bangladesh	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	[6][7]
Brazil	1983	1984	1983	1985	1983	✗	[6][8][9][10]
Burundi	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	[6][11][12]
Canada	1969	1969	1975	1976	1986	1994[c]	[13][14]
Central Africa	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	[6][15]
Central America	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	[6][16]
Congo[d]	✓	✓	?	?	✗	✗	[6][19]

Province	Ordination of female deacons permitted	First female deacon	Ordination of female priests permitted	First female priest	Consecration of female bishops permitted	First female bishop	Refs
England	1985	1987	1992	1994	2014	2015	[21][22][23]
Hong Kong	✓	✓	1971	1944[e]	✗	✗	[6][24][25]
Indian Ocean	2002	✓	2006	2006	✗	✗	[6][26]
Ireland	1984	1987	1990	1990	1990	2013	[27][28][29]
Japan	✓	✓	1998	1998	✓	✗	[6][30][31]
Jerusalem and the Middle East	✓	✓	2011	2011	✗	✗	[6][32][33][34]
Kenya	✓	1983	1990	1992	✗	✗	[6][19][35][36]
Korea	2005	✓	2008	✓	✗	✗	[6][37][38][39]
Melanesia	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	[19][40]
Mexico	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	[8][41]
Myanmar (Burma)	✓	✗	✓	✗	?	✗	[42]

Province	Ordination of female deacons permitted	First female deacon	Ordination of female priests permitted	First female priest	Consecration of female bishops permitted	First female bishop	Refs
Nigeria	✓	?	✗	✗	✗	✗	[6][18]
North India	✓	✓	✓	1984	✓	✗	[6][43]
Pakistan	✓	2000	✗	✗	✗	✗	[6][32][44]
Papua New Guinea	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	[11]
Philippines	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	[6][45]
Rwanda	✓	1996	✓	?	✗	✗	[6][46]
Scotland	1986	1986	1994	1994	2003	✗	[47]
Southern Africa	1982	✓	1992	1996	✓	2012	[19][48][49]
South America	✓	✓	2015	2015	✗	✗	[6][50]
South East Asia	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	[51]
South India	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	2013	[52]

Province	Ordination of female deacons permitted	First female deacon	Ordination of female priests permitted	First female priest	Consecration of female bishops permitted	First female bishop	Refs
South Sudan and Sudan	2000	✓	2000	✓	2000	✗	[53][54]
Tanzania	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	[6][55]
Uganda	✓	1983	✓	✓	✓	✗	[11][56][57]
United States	1970	✓	1976	1974[f]	1976	1989	[35][60]
Wales	1980	1980	1996	1997	2013	*2017*[g]	[62][63][64]
West Africa	1987	1987	2000	✓	✗	✗	[6][11][56][65]
West Indies	1992	1994	1995	1996	✗	✗	[6][66][67][68][69]
Bermuda (extra-provincial)[h]	✓	?	2009	?	?	?	[70]
Ceylon (Sri Lanka; extra-provincial)[h]	✓	2003	✓	2006	?	✗	[71][72][73][74]
Cuba (extra-provincial)[i]	✓	1986	✓	1990	✓	2007	[6][75][76]

Province	Ordination of female deacons permitted	First female deacon	Ordination of female priests permitted	First female priest	Consecration of female bishops permitted	First female bishop	Refs
Falkland Islands(extra-provincial)[j]	?	?	?	?	N/A	✗	
Portugal (extra-provincial)[h]	✓	1997	?	?	?	?	[77]
Spain (extra-provincial)[h]	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✗	

Note that provinces are categorised above according to the overall provincial policy on the ordination of women. In provinces where individual dioceses have considerable autonomy (e.g. the Anglican Church of Australia), some dioceses may be less permissive than the province overall.

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