

ACC/LC/5/3/1(a)

**REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY
APPOINTED BY THE
PRIMATES OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION**

ON

WOMEN AND THE EPISCOPATE

**TO AID DISCUSSION IN PREPARATION
FOR THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE 1988**

WORKING PAPER

WOMEN AND THE EPISCOPATE
Report of the Primates Working Party

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P R E F A C E

The Working Group on Women and the Episcopate was asked for by the Primates at their meeting in Toronto in March 1986. The Archbishop of Canterbury, after consultation, invited the following to form the Group:

Chairman: The Most Reverend John Grindrod, Primate of Australia

Mrs Mary Tanner (Theological Secretary of the Board for Mission and Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England)

The Rt Reverend Edward Jones (Bishop of Indianapolis, USA)

The Most Reverend W.P. Khotso Makhulu (Archbishop of Central Africa)

The Rt Reverend Samir Kafity (President-Bishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East)

with the Rt Reverend Michael Nazir Ali and Canon Christopher Hill as Consultants.

At the second meeting Archbishop Makhulu was unable to be present because of commitments in Africa and his place was taken by Archbishop French K. Chang-Him, Archbishop of the Indian Ocean.

The initial action was to gather responses from the Provinces. The first meeting of the Group then took place in January 1987. The second and final meeting was in July 1987. At the end of this meeting the report was submitted to the Archbishop of Canterbury and, at his discretion, made available to the St Augustine's Seminar meeting at the end of July and early August.

The Working Group, as the report reveals, realised that it had a responsibility not only to receive the responses of the Provinces, but also to refine certain issues arising from them for discussion and debate. Discussion of and decision about Women in the Episcopate is one of major consequence in the life of the Communion, affecting more sharply than Women in the Priesthood, Provinces' relationships to one another and consequently order and unity in the Communion.

In the third part of the report, Moving Ahead in Communion, the process, technically known as 'Reception', is referred to. The term to a certain extent is a misnomer, as the process of 'receiving' something into one's life, may mean, after long testing, that it is rejected. It needs to be understood that 'Reception' is an open process.

The Working Party saw the limits of its own work and pointed forward to the importance for the Lambeth Conference to set in motion an ongoing process of consultation and to develop pastoral principles that would be of aid in the relationship of Provinces to one another.

The Most Reverend J.B.R. Grindrod,
ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE AND PRIMATE

21st August, 1987

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

1. The movement to bring women within the threefold order of ministry in the Anglican Communion has a considerable history. Discussion has gone on between Anglicans at the level of the Lambeth Conference and at meetings of the ACC. Some Provinces already ordain women to the presbyterate and have widespread experience of the contribution of women in the ordained ministry. Other Provinces, though by no means all, have had, or are in the process of having studies to discover the mind of their Province.

2. The 1978 Lambeth Conference was important in setting the direction of developments in the decade leading to the Twelfth Conference in 1988. Although not all would agree as to the wisdom of the conference resolutions on the matter, resolutions 21 and 22 were crucial for subsequent developments. They gave freedom to Provinces to proceed to ordain women to the presbyterate without feeling that it would lead to a break in communion, and also provided some preliminary background for the discussion of women and the episcopate. Resolution 21 noted that since Lambeth 1968 four Provinces had proceeded to ordain women to the presbyterate and eight other member Churches of the Communion had 'either agreed or supported in principle or stated that there are either no fundamental or no theological objections to the ordination of women to the historic threefold ministry of the Church', This might be thought to suggest that Resolution 21 in fact envisaged the possibility of ordination to the episcopate. This would be in line with the view held by many in the 1970s which assumed that, once women were ordained to the presbyterate, there were no further arguments to preclude consecration to the episcopate. However, Resolution 22, devoted to Women and the Episcopate clearly hinted at an implied difference between ordination of women to the presbyterate in a Province, and consecration to the episcopate.

While recognising that a member Church of the Anglican Communion may wish to consecrate a woman to the episcopate, and accepting that such a member Church must act in accordance with its own constitution, the Conference recommends that no decision to consecrate be taken without consultation with the episcopate through the Primates and overwhelming support in any member Church and in the diocese concerned, lest the bishops office should become a cause of disunity instead of a focus of unity.

3. It is not surprising that some of those Provinces which now have ten or more years experience of women in the

presbyterate should be facing the question of the consecration of women to the episcopate. In September 1985 the House of bishops of the Episcopal Church in the USA passed the following resolution:

that the majority of the members of the House do not intend to withhold consent to the election of a Bishop of this Church on grounds of gender and now call upon the Presiding Bishop elect to communicate this intention to the Primates of the Anglican Communion and seek the advice of the Episcopate of the Anglican Communion through the Primates at the earliest possible date.

The resolution thus makes quite clear the intention of the House of Bishops not to withhold consent to the election of a woman as bishop. At the same time it remained faithful to the Lambeth 1978 resolution which called for both internal discussion within a Province and also consultation with the wider episcopate through the Primates.

4. At the meeting of the Primates in March 1986 in Toronto the matter was on the agenda. The Primates went back to the resolutions of the 1978 Lambeth Conference and stated that in their opinion there was no inconsistency between resolutions 21 and 22: they merely reflected different emphases. 'One was concerned with the theology of the threefold ordained ministry, the other with the structures which go to maintain the Church's unity'. The Primates were aware that the Episcopal Church had the constitutional right to proceed to ordain women to the episcopate. They, however, welcomed the request from the USA for consultation and saw it as indicating that the Episcopal Church recognised the consequences its action would have in the life of the wider Anglican family - and ecumenically. The Primates did not see the request for consultation as a request for permission to go ahead. Nor was it understood as merely informing the Communion what was to happen. 'They saw consultation as a two way process in which, while the Episcopal Church could explain the reason behind its position, the other Churches of the Communion could present their reflections on this issue and in turn themselves be challenged. Consultation was seen to include a spelling out of the consequences of the ordination of women to the episcopate within the wider Anglican family, in order that the Episcopal Church's decision should be as fully informed as possible'. In addition to setting out briefly some of the issues raised, the Primates also asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to continue the process of consultation by establishing a small Working Party (cf Appendix). 'It would gather together the reactions of the Anglican Provinces to the admission of women to the episcopate'.

5. A small Working Party was set up under the Chairmanship of the Archbishop of Brisbane and met in January and July, 1987. The task of the Working Party was:

to collate responses of the Provinces by June 1987 so that the Episcopal Church of the USA could take the findings into account in September 1987... The report of the Primate's Working Party will be an important resource for the Lambeth Conference of 1988.

6. In Part A of this report the Working Party has quoted extensively from the replies sent to it by the Provinces. The replies contain material ranging from official statements to unofficial papers by individuals. Part A also includes the reflections and resolutions of ACC-7. The Working Party has also included some of its own reflections on the material sent it. Part B treats five issues which the Working Party suggests any Province would need to have satisfied itself about before proceeding to consecrate a woman to the episcopate. Part C looks at the question of the autonomy and interdependence of the Provinces as they relate to the matter of the consecration of women to the episcopate and also to the idea of 'reception'.

PART A**LISTENING AS A MARK OF COMMUNION**

7. In a communion of Churches which places value on both the autonomy of individual Provinces and the interdependence of the Provinces there are issues, like those relating to the cultural expression of the Gospel, which may appropriately be decided on by each autonomous Province. Other issues are bound up closely with the nature of the Communion itself and ought only to be decided with due regard to the interdependence of the different parts of the Communion. Consultation between the different Provinces, listening in love to a variety of viewpoints, and the discipline of hearing and identifying with what a new development means in very different contexts from our own, should characterise the life of churches in communion, if that communion is not to be fractured. This way of discovering the mind of a communion of Churches is all the more difficult when it touches a matter which affects us at a rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious level, and about which there is as much 'unknowing as knowing'. The matter is further complicated when what is being decided is not just a doctrine to be discussed but a doctrine that is to be embodied in a practice which affects not just the life of a single Province but the wider communion of the Church. It is a mark of maturity and an important witness in a world fragmented and divided when the members of a communion of Churches can listen to one another, understand one another, care for one another, make decisions together and find ways of acting without fracturing communion.

8. Moreover, the Anglican Communion also enjoys varying degrees of communion with other churches, those which have maintained the catholic order and also those churches which spring from the Reformation. Any developments need to be taken with due consideration to the deepening communion between churches within the ecumenical movement and especially in consultation with those churches with which we are in full communion. In some of the churches of the Reformed tradition women are beginning to exercise a ministry of oversight: their experience is important for us. The Methodist Church in the USA, for example, has two women bishops and the Methodist Church of Great Britain in 1987 appointed the first woman as a District Superintendent. A woman was among the candidates for Presiding Bishop for the newly constituted Evangelical Lutheran Church in the USA. As Anglicans at the Reformation claimed to have continued a ministry within the universal Church, there is a particular need to discuss developments with those churches that have the historic threefold order. Consulting with and listening to the experience and reactions of sister churches within the wider Christian fellowship will

witness to the possibility of a more united and whole life to which all our ecumenical endeavours are committed.

9. Archbishop John Grindrod, the Chairman of the Working Party, asked for views on the consecration of women to the episcopate from the Provinces of the Communion. We received 15 replies. The constraints of time for consultation meant inevitably that some of the responses do not represent the officially declared mind of the Province. Nevertheless the material received by the Working Party points to significant issues in the debate. We note that there was only one written response from the continent of Africa. However, Archbishop Khotso Makhulu from the Church of the Province of Central Africa was present with us at our first meeting. We also received the report and resolutions from the meeting of the Conference of Anglican Provinces in Africa. Archbishop French Chang-Him supplied a response from the Indian Ocean and was himself with us at our second meeting. We recognise that there are a variety of reasons for Provinces not responding: the time scale for response was short; in some areas of the world the very survival of the faith is the over-riding vital priority; in some Provinces other issues may be more pressing and the fact that women are not, or cannot be, ordained may not be considered an impediment to the ministry; some Provinces may be reticent to express the traditional and theological reasons against the ordination of women. In spite of the incompleteness of the responses the Working Party considers that the following evidence does provide an important background for the consideration of the matter by the bishops attending the 1988 Lambeth Conference.

Voices from the Provinces:

(i) The Anglican Church of Australia

10. The Group received the following response from the Australian National Bishops' Conference:

A. Theological Issues

- (1) We see no new theological issue differing from the arguments for and against the Ordination of women to the priesthood.

Those who support the consecration of Women Bishops do so for the same reason they support the Ordination of Women as Priests. Those who oppose women as Bishops oppose for the same reason they oppose women as priests.

There is a theological question of unity. In an important sense the bishop is the centre of unity for the Church. Even those supporting the consecration of women as Bishops, as an isolated theological issue, believe it has implications, at least in terms of time, for the unity of the Church at more profound levels than the priesting question.

- (2) Because the bishop is the sign of unity the consecration of a woman to the episcopate places two theological issues in juxtaposition more than the issue of women priests.

Consideration in Isolation

The fullness of ministry for people v the fullness of the unity of the Church at this point in time. Therefore the consecration of a woman to the episcopate could be a theological hindrance in the short term.

B. Ecclesiological Issues

- (1) The consecration of women to the episcopate would create a potential for the fracturing of our unity as a national Church.

A subsidiary issue arises as to the mutual acceptance of the regularity of Orders and Confirmation administered by a woman bishop. There is therefore a great need for slow movement and consensus.

- (2) In our relationship with other provinces who may choose to proceed to the consecration of women to the episcopate we need patience and the acceptance of diversity rather than to become separated.
- (3) There are implications for the person consecrated as a bishop if her episcopate is rejected and not recognised on the grounds of gender. This has the potential of creating an identity crisis both for the particular person and her Diocese.

C. Ecumenical

- (1) Because the Bishop is the focus of unity and any immediate consecration will cause a measure of disintegration and disunity within the Anglican Communion, such a move in the short term will

create ecumenical difficulty especially in our relationship with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. But, it could also be argued, that the consecration of women bishops would make no difference in the short term as the Roman Catholic Church does not recognise our existing orders anyway (i.e., there is nothing to spoil).

- (2) We have a responsibility to be true to perceived truth to proceed to such consecration if we are convinced of their validity and integrity, notwithstanding the ecumenical consequences and implications.
- (3) The ordination of women as either bishop or priest is not a conversation stopper to our dialogue and ecumenical conversation with the Roman Catholic Church.

(ii) The Anglican Church of Canada

11. Like the Episcopal Church in the USA, the Anglican Church of Canada has a considerable experience of women in ordained ministry. Many in Canada acknowledge that 'we could not foretell the positive value of women in ordained ministry until we had experienced it'. The Church is learning how having women amongst the clergy is bringing a new wholeness to the way ordained ministry is exercised. Although as yet no woman has been consecrated to the episcopate in Canada, the Working Party notes that there was a woman among the six candidates nominated for a suffragan bishopric in the diocese of Toronto. Against this background the Canadian House of Bishops in June 1986 passed the following resolution:

The Bishops:

- (1) Note with gratitude the many signs of God's blessings on the ministry of women priests which affirm our belief that our Church was led by the Spirit of God in its decision to proceed with the ordination of women;
- (2) Affirm its recognition that there is no theological or canonical impediment to the consecration of women as bishops within our Church, but counsels our Church to move with special sensitivity in this matter especially until Lambeth 1988.
- (3) In recognising that the episcopate is a sign of unity, note the importance of Lambeth discussions on the consecration of women as bishops within our Communion both so that the unity of our Communion may be

maintained and so that fullness of God's gifts in men and women may be received within the episcopate to the creation of a deeper unity and a more effective witness in the carrying out of our mission;

(4) Urge the need for the development of a clear articulation of the theological rationale for our understanding of episcopacy as a contribution to our dialogues with other Churches.

The House of Bishops approved the resolution by a vote 30-0. In receiving this resolution the General Synod of the Canadian Church went on to resolve:

That this General Synod:

receive with gratitude the memorial from the House of Bishops about our positive experience in Canada with women in priesthood;

urge our bishops to carry to the Lambeth Conference our conviction that the priesthood of women has indeed been blessed and has enriched our common life; and

ask the Lambeth Conference to search for a way of upholding the unity of the Church while allowing Provinces to move, as appropriate for them, to the election and ordination of women to the episcopate in response to the call of God and the Church.

12. The Working Party notes that these resolutions show a firm conviction that God has blessed the ministry of women priests and that there is no theological or canonical impediment to the consecration of women as bishops. The implication is that the Canadian Church looks forward to the consecration of women for its own life. At the same time it shows a sensitivity to the rest of the Anglican Communion and a concern for the preservation of the unity of the Communion. However, the unity of the Communion is not in their thinking to be separated from the fuller unity which would be witnessed in mission should women be received within the episcopate. Implicit in the resolution from the Canadian Church is the question of the nature of the unity that has to be preserved and developed within the Body of Christ.
13. A further indirect contribution to the discussion came from Canada in reaction to the refusal by the General Synod of the Church of England to allow women legally ordained abroad to preside at the eucharist when visiting England. A resolution from the Canadian House of Bishops was sent by Archbishop Michael Peers to the bishops of the Church of England. The resolution of the Canadian House of Bishops made clear the

strain on the Communion that arises when the ministry of a priest is rejected on the grounds of gender. The resolution further drew attention to the processes of decision making within the Anglican Communion:

We have sensed among ourselves an uneasiness about the decision-making processes of the Anglican Communion and we are looking for ways to have a review of the organs of our Communion which could be improved or created to allow the whole Communion to reach a common mind on matters on which diversity disrupts our koinonia.

Although the communication between the Canadian and Church of England Houses of Bishops relates to women in the presbyterate, it raises issues that relate also to the ordination of women to the episcopate: namely the impairing of communion caused by the non-recognition of ministries and the processes by which the Anglican Communion may form a common mind on those crucial matters on which 'diversity disrupts communion'

(iii) The Church of England

14. The Working Party notes that the Church of England ordains women to the diaconate but not yet to the presbyterate. The General Synod has called for legislation to be drawn up so that women may be ordained to the priesthood. Any such legislation will have to be considered by Diocesan Synods and receive a two-thirds majority in each of the three houses of the General Synod. It will also need to come before Parliament and receive the Royal Assent.
15. In July 1987 the House of Bishops considered material from a Working Party set up by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on the ordination of women to the episcopate as well as the statement on women and the episcopate issued by the meeting of the Primates at Toronto. The House carried the following resolutions:
 - (1) The House of Bishops welcomes the statement on Women in the Episcopate agreed by the Primates' Meeting, Toronto, March 1986, and endorses its request to the Archbishop of Canterbury for consultation on this matter between the Provinces of the Anglican Communion.
 - (2) The House of Bishops recognises the inter-relatedness of the theological issues raised by both the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate, but it also notes that the question of the ordination of women to the episcopate is only likely to become a live issue in a Province if and when that Province has a mature

experience of women priests otherwise suitable for consideration for the episcopate.

- (3) The House of Bishops considers that within the theological issues - eg. "headship" and "representation" - ecclesiology is especially relevant to any consideration of women in the episcopate; it draws particular attention to para. 42 of the House of Bishops' Report The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood (GS 764):

Although not strictly within our remit, the question of the consecration of women as bishops was seen to be closely related to the ordination of women to the presbyterate and to the considerations relating to that legislation. It is very difficult to sustain an argument for any essential sacramental distinction between the presbyterate and the episcopate such as to put in doubt the possibility of a woman's admission to the episcopate once the presbyterate has been granted. However, on grounds of the authority of jurisdiction which belongs to a bishop and the scriptural issues of headship, some might want to argue against such consecration. Further, because of the ecclesiological role of a bishop as focus of unity within his local Church and his role as symbol and link of communion between his Church and the universal Church, it might be considered by some as inappropriate to consecrate a woman as long as some Provinces remain opposed in principle to the ordination of women. There might be considered sufficient ecclesiological reasons for caution and restraint on the question of the consecration of women to the episcopate while there is no consensus on the issue. While it is possible to legislate in the case of priests diocese by diocese, the episcopate, as bond of unity and communion between dioceses and Provinces, could not be so legislated for. Were bishops not able to recognise each others' ordinations and therefore not able to act collegially, that would lead to a serious rupture in communion. We recognised that such considerations are being looked at by the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate.

The Working Party notes the House of Bishops went on to encourage the Archbishops' Group on Women and the Episcopate and the Primates' Working Party:

- (a) to continue to explore these issues, together with a consideration of the positive and negative implications of women in the Episcopate for koinonia within the Anglican Communion, within the developing ecumenical fellowship, and within the wider unity of humanity.
- (b) to consider how change or development in Order is received by Anglicans within the universal Church.
- (c) to examine the implications of one Province admitting women to the episcopate in advance of other Provinces.
- (iv) **The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean**

16. The Archbishop of the Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean wrote to our Group:

The simple answer from PIO is that the matter is not yet an issue. However, we were aware that the question of women and the episcopate was bound to come up once women were ordained as deacons and priests.

The Province of the Indian Ocean also hopes that the above issue will have been discussed at Lambeth '88 before any part of the Anglican Communion decides to go ahead and ordain women to the episcopate. In some parts of this Province there are some important cultural issues and traditions regarding the role of women in society that need to be addressed besides the theological and ecumenical implications regarding the ministry of women in the life of the Church. In some dioceses there are no women even on parish or diocesan committees. There are other more pressing issues. The above comments perhaps help to qualify the response that for us the question of women and the episcopate 'is not yet an issue'.

17. As a member of the Working Party the Archbishop was able to expand on these comments. He described the wide diversities that exist in the three islands that make up the Province, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles. Some are very westernised in custom and outlook. In two dioceses, most of the clergy have had opportunities of studying in other parts of the Anglican Communion. In these two dioceses, women have been playing an increasing role in liturgical matters, preaching at certain services and administering the chalice. This is felt to be a necessary preparation for any eventual ministerial office women may be called to consider in future should such be their calling or vocation. In some other dioceses women have not been liturgically involved apart from singing in the choir. The culture in some respects is such that wives and children do not sit at table with their

husbands. There is to some an apparent contradiction. Women in such places play very important roles, however in other spheres in society, in teaching, nursing, in the civil service. Reflections on the role of women in the Church and society have led the Province to think more deeply about their situation. They have realised, for example, that they need to have women representatives on both diocesan (in places where they are not yet members) and Provincial Synods. This is bound to affect the cultural and traditional mores as well in the long run. A kind of ecclesiastical and cultural liberation is in process.

(v) The Church of Ireland

18. The Archbishop of Armagh wrote to the Working Party:

So far as the Church of Ireland is concerned the question of women in the Episcopate is not as yet one of concern. The first women to be made Deacons are due to be ordained in June 1987 following a decision of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland to admit women to the diaconate some years ago. We have not yet discussed the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood although I feel this issue will be forthcoming within the next few years. The interest of the Church of Ireland at present in women in the Episcopate is confined to concerned interest in the debate within the Anglican Communion at large.

(vi) The Holy Catholic Church in Japan

19. The Working Party received a response from the House of Bishops of the Nippon Sei Ko Kei. The response contained the following in relation to Women and the Episcopate:

- (3) Concerning the issue of the ordination of women to the Episcopate, we think that sufficient theological discussion and dialogue has not been carried out and that the understanding of the issues has not been deeply searched throughout the entire Anglican Communion. However, we think that it is up to the autonomous decision of each Province and the self-decision of the believers of that Province to decide, and an international concerece, such as Lambeth, should not have the decision-making authority over any one Province. Accordingly, we think that there is no positive reason to deny the stand of ECUSA's General Convention resolution at Anaheim that a person will not be denied the Episcopacy only on the grounds of being female. But at the same time we think that the ordination of women to the Episcopate must only take

place after sufficient discussion and dialogue within the Communion, and ecumenically, so as not to raise up an obstacle to the unity of the Holy Catholic Church, where the Episcopacy is the focus of unity within and without the Diocese.

- (4) We think that those Provinces who cannot agree in good conscience to the ordination of women to the Priesthood and Episcopate should pay all due respect to the will of those Dioceses or Provinces who do, and the bond of unity should not be cut. But at the same time, we think that the freedom of the conscience of those individual persons or Dioceses or Provinces who cannot agree to the ordination of women to the Priesthood or Episcopate should be respected and given full pastoral care, and should not be treated with impetuous canonical dispositions.
- (5) We, the NSKK, would like to continue further discussions on the issue of the ordination of women to the Priesthood and Episcopate, taking into consideration those situations and understandings as stated above.

(vii) The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East

20. The following resolution was adopted by the Standing Committee of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East in January 1987 as representing the mind of the Province:

This conference wishes to communicate through our President-Bishop to the Primates of the Anglican Communion our conviction that apart from other considerations the consecration of a woman to the Episcopate is at best inopportune and until there has been a wider and deeper study of the theological, pastoral and ecumenical implications, no such consecration be contemplated.

Through the Primates we appeal to those Churches now contemplating the consecration of a woman bishop to be understanding of the effect such consecration would have in the cultural and religious context of this Province with particular regard to our relationship with other Churches in this place.

21. The President-Bishop, The Right Reverend Samir Kafity was able, as a member of the Primates' Working Party, to explain this resolution further. He drew attention to the fact that some of the Provinces have not yet had cause to face the issues raised by the ordination of women either to the

presbyterate or the episcopate. Further they had no experience of women in ordained ministry against which to determine the question of the episcopate. Communion-wide study, therefore, of the issue is needed so that those Provinces which already have a considerable experience may help those who have no experience, where the issue is as yet not on the agenda. What is needed is to stop perceiving the situation as totally polarised between those for and those against. Further, only a study on the level of the Communion can take full account of both the cultural aspects of the debate and the wide ecumenical implications. In the situation of the Middle East the relationship between Anglicans and the Orthodox Churches is an important dimension in any discussion of the issue.

(viii) The Church of the Province of Melanesia

22. The Council of Bishops of the Church of Melanesia discussed a paper written by the Sub-warden of Bishop Patterson Theological College in the Solomon Islands. Although no official resolution was passed by the bishops, the bishops agreed to send to our Working Party the paper they had discussed as a contribution to the debate.
23. The paper is entitled A Melanesian Reaction to the Admission of Women to the Episcopate and makes quite clear it is a personal reaction intended to help Melanesians consider and provide constructive answers. The paper concentrates on the perceptions about women, their role and function in Melanesian society showing how social attitudes influence theological reflection on this issue. The changing social attitude to women in Melanesia will have a bearing on the decision made. The view of the author of the paper is that:

despite the various factors militating against the ordination of women to the priesthood, other factors demonstrate increasing support of this possibility. In Melanesia, women are taking more responsibilities in public life, and if it so happens that we have a right woman to assume such a role within the church, I see no reason for withholding ordination. The timing must be right and a united decision from the whole church must be given.

(ix) The Church of the Province of New Zealand

24. The Working Party notes that the Church of the Province of New Zealand ordained its first women to the presbyterate in 1977. This was the result of a lengthy process involving consultation at a number of levels. Diocesan Synods were asked for an opinion; professional opinions were sought in

the fields of psychology, theology, biblical study, sociology and biology; cultural opinions were canvassed and ecumenical responses sought. Further, New Zealand also reports that it consulted with every other Province of the Anglican Communion through its Primate or Senior bishop and received no opinion that New Zealand should not proceed as it thought right.

25. Those who promoted the legislation for the ordination of women to the priesthood made a 'political decision' not to include opening the episcopate to women.

It was believed that it was more sensible to achieve the ordination of women to the priesthood than have to debate a number of other issues that probably would have been raised if the Episcopate was also being debated as open to women. But the decision to not include the Episcopate in the changes being made did not imply any belief that these were different issues of substance to debate. Many believed that the decision completed in 1977 made the Episcopate open to women and that constitutionally it is possible in this Province for a woman to be elected in an Electoral Synod already.

26. As a result of a number of requests the 1986 General Synod agreed to support the introduction of a new Canon on Holy Orders, the provisions of which will make it quite clear that the Episcopate will be open to women, once the procedures laid down by the Church of England Empowering Act, 1982 are completed. This will probably be in May 1989.
27. In replying to the request of our Working Party, the Province of New Zealand made the following assessment based on its experience of women in the priesthood:

It is notable that a large number of the arguments adduced by the Primates as reasons for not acting towards the consecration of women as bishops were held prior to the decisions which were made to ordain women to the priesthood. Experience has shown these arguments to have no foundation; the ordination of women to the priesthood has led to us having a richer priesthood and a church with wider perspectives than we once had. It has been shown that ecumenical relationships have not been adversely affected, and with the Roman Catholic Church have grown enormously in this period. We can be confident that giving the episcopate to women will have a positive effect on our life - sometimes it will be disquieting as the men (and some women) have to grapple with new imagery and challenges - and one which offers us rich promises.

28. There were four other comments made by New Zealand in response to the Primates' Statement from Toronto which we believe important to summarise as significant data for our own work. The first comment concerns decision making processes. While the Constitution of the Province provides unbreakable links with the Anglican Communion, it also holds that the supreme governing body of the Province is the General Synod and all acts must be assented to by representatives in the houses of bishops, clergy and laity. This is important because decisions about the consecration of women as bishops are not just made by bishops but by the whole Church represented in the Synod. 'For us episcopacy is not just the concern of bishops'. The submission from New Zealand goes on to say:

The Lambeth Conference while respected as a body of insight and leadership cannot be seen as a decision-making body on such an issue as the consecration of women to the episcopate, for not only is it not representative of those other sections of the church, but crucially important on this issue, it is totally male. New Zealand Anglicans are slowly beginning to realise, because of their experience, that it is very unwise for any group of men to attempt to speak for women, or offer a 'women's point of view' on anything and this issue is surely one which crucially requires such a perspective.

Secondly, New Zealand suggests, 'there is implied in the Primates' Statement a distinction between theology and practice which is unsustainable. If as more Provinces now assert that "there are no theological objections" ...to delay the implementation of them for "practical reasons"... is to make a clear statement about our commitment to the stated belief.' The report continues to suggest that the issue focusses something about God and thus implies that to refuse to ordain or consecrate women is actually refusing to testify to something true in the nature and being of God.

Thirdly, New Zealand questions the assertion of the Toronto Statement that the 'bishop is consecrated for the whole Church and the opening of the episcopate to women appears a more serious step than ordination to the priesthood'. Surely they say, the priest also is ordained 'for the whole church'. Already there are incidents of non-recognition of ministries within the Anglican Communion. The Primates' suggestion that 'new questions of authority' would be raised overlooks the fact that these questions have already been raised by the ordination of women to the priesthood. And, further, women have brought new ideas of authority to the priesthood. The Church in New Zealand is richer for that. Another suggestion

in the Primates' report is that if a woman were consecrated then 'the episcopal office might become a focus of disunity'. But, New Zealand comments, 'for many the office, because of its exclusive maleness is already a focus of disunity. The admission of women ... will make the office more a symbol of unity'.

Fourthly, in commenting on the ecumenical issues the New Zealand report says:

The ecumenical issue is always raised in the conflict of relationships with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, overlooking the fact that the Protestant Church on the whole would welcome our admitting women to the episcopate. The Orthodox Church seems unlikely to countenance any movements towards women and there seems to be little chance of dialogue there at all; the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church must be set against the reality that Rome still does not accept our male priests and bishops and seems to be still a long way from doing so. The advice that our New Zealand Commission on the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood received was to the effect that it was better to deal with Rome (on this and other questions) from a position of strength and commitment than to wait around for Rome to change its mind. This has certainly been the experience of our Province; progress on ARCENZ has not been hindered by the fact, or presence, of a priest who is a woman; probably it has been enhanced.

(x) **The Episcopal Church of Scotland**

29. The Working Party received two papers from Scotland on the ordination of women which had been called for by the General Synod. The first paper, prepared by a small working group led by the Bishop of St Andrews, argues in favour of the ordination of women. The second paper puts forward the view that such ordination would represent a 'fundamental change of doctrine'. This paper was prepared by a small group led by the Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness. Neither paper is intended to be taken as the official position of the House of Bishops.
30. The paper contributed by the Bishop of St Andrews sets out to share a vision of the way in which a sacramental priesthood inclusive of both men and women would enrich the life of the Church. It examines how the ordination of women contributes to a deeper understanding of God; a more inclusive interpretation of the Incarnation; a more effective ministry in a broken world and relates to authority in the Church. The fourth section contains a paragraph relating particularly to the work of our Working Party:

The model of church life which allows a concensus to develop out of initially pluriform practice such as the dynamic growth of a family or a wider network of human belonging. Such a network is held together not by intellectually accepted agreement but by bonds of affection. The alternative, inherited from the old imperial constitution may have a logic and coherence but ultimately can only be imposed by threats ... There is a fundamental dissonance between Christ and his Church when doctrinal issues become a power struggle.

31. The second paper received by our Working Party sets out seven reasons why women cannot serve as bishops and as priests. They are in the areas of authority, Bible, early church, headship, the status of women, ecumenism, the particularity of the Incarnation. In introducing these issues the report says:

We must in fairness state that we regard them (the seven reasons), taken together, as being so conclusive that if those who think otherwise were to cause the Scottish Church to take any action implying that she believed herself entitled to admit women to these two Orders of Ministry, then they would, in so doing, inevitably cause a Disruption, with all the unhappy consequences - ecclesiastical, pastoral and perhaps even legal - which that word calls to mind for Scottish churchpeople.

32. Further in a covering letter the Bishop of Moray writes:

If women 'bishops' were made before Lambeth 1988 and invited to attend, some of us could NOT attend Lambeth, for to do so would be to concede the very point that they would be 'bishops' to be accepted collegially. Such a doctrinal judgement is not possible for us.. This is a very serious doctrinal point for us and has to do with conscience and belief and is stated with sadness and honesty and in no sense at all is meant to be either 'threatening' or 'blackmail'. We are just trying to be utterly open.

(xi) The Province of the Southern Cone

33. The Right Reverend David Evans wrote to the Group:

A number of years ago we took the determination not to be pressurised into debating other people's issues, especially as a young and tender provincial plant. And we can say that the basic issue of the admission of

women to the presbyterate is not (or is not yet) a live issue in our Province.

Further, the Province expressed 'disagreement with the procedures involved which isolated bishops and deprived the church of the opportunity to express its opinion on the subject'.

(xii) The Episcopal Church of the USA

34. The Working Party notes that resolutions of the House of Bishops and of the General Convention on the question of the ordination of women to the episcopate need to be seen against the growing experience of women in ordained ministry in the USA. There are now approximately 800 women priests out of a total of approximately 12,000 priests. Some of the women have as much as 10 years experience in ministry. By 1986 all but 15 of the 108 dioceses had ordained women. Although it is acknowledged that it is more difficult as yet for women to secure senior posts there are women Rectors of leading parishes, women Archdeacons, and a woman serves as a Dean of a Cathedral. Although there continues to be some opposition to the ordination of women within the Episcopal Church, yet clearly the majority is in favour and recognises the contribution to the wholeness of ministry brought by women and believes that the mission of the Church demands the ordination of women. Amongst the House of Bishops there has been a gradual acceptance of women in the presbyterate. About 16 bishops currently holding jurisdiction are said to remain opposed. None of this takes account of those Anglicans who have split from ECUSA over this issue as well as other issues. It is usually thought that ten years experience in the priesthood is a necessary prerequisite for consideration for the office of a bishop. Now that women are celebrating 10 years in ministry, the idea of a woman bishop has become an actual possibility.
35. The General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1985 set up a special committee 'to study and make recommendations concerning the ecumenical and ecclesiological considerations involved in the election and ordination of women Presbyters to the Episcopate'. The special committee is to report to the House of Bishops in September 1987 and to the Lambeth Conference. A very careful explanation was given for the setting up of the special committee:
- (1) The resolution is not meant to imply that there are canonical impediments to the Ordination of a woman Presbyter to the Episcopate; the canonical question was decided at the 1976 General Convention.

- (2) Nor is the study intended to suggest a reconsideration of theological issues already dealt with in preparation for and at the 1976 General Convention; the scope of the proposed study is a limited one: namely, as the title of the resolution indicates, the scope of the proposed study is limited to ecumenical and ecclesiological considerations involved in ordaining women Presbyters to the Episcopate.
- (3) The resolution calls for a study, in order that the Church (and especially the Bishops and Standing Committees, which must give consent to the Consecration of a Presbyterian elected to the office of Bishop) may prayerfully and unhurriedly reflect upon whatever ecumenical and ecclesiological considerations there may be.
- (4) The study is, in part, a response to a 1978 advisory resolution of the Lambeth Conference of Bishops, requesting prior consultation by any Province of the Anglican Communion considering the election and Ordination of a woman Presbyterian to the Episcopate; and the study is also intended to be a resource to Standing Committees.
36. The 1985 'mind of the House' resolution of the House of Bishops needs to be seen in this context:
- that the majority of the members of this House do not intend to withhold consent to the election of a Bishop of this Church on ground of gender and we call upon the Presiding Bishop-elect to communicate this intention to the Primates of the Anglican Communion and seek the advice of the Episcopate of the Anglican Communion through the Primates at the earliest possible date.
37. A further resolution relating to women and the episcopate was passed by the House of Bishops in September, 1986.

Be it resolved, that the House of Bishops reaffirms the action taken at the 1985 General Convention of this church advising that we would not withhold consent to the consecration of any person as a bishop on the grounds of gender alone and

Be it further resolved, that the House of Bishops notes with gratitude that the consultation with the Anglican Episcopate throughout the world requested in that resolution is now in progress through the Primates of the Anglican Communion; and

Be it further resolved, that while recognising the right of any diocese to proceed with episcopal elections the House of Bishops acknowledges the concern of the Primates for restraint in proceeding to the consecration of a woman as a bishop before the 1988 Lambeth conference; and

Be it further resolved, that this action is in no way intended to imply that any Lambeth Conference could decide such a matter for any autonomous province.

The resolution was passed by a vote of 78 - 50. The relatively large number of negative votes seems to have represented the coming together of three groups: those bishops who support the ordination of women as priests but who have reservations about the ordination of women to the episcopate; those bishops who are opposed to the ordination of women to the presbyterate and the episcopate; and yet a third group who did not feel it necessary to delay the possible consecration of a woman bishop until after the Lambeth Conference. Reservations were expressed in a paper presented to the House by Bishop Clarence Pope. During the debate on the resolution Bishop Pope spoke for a number of bishops who because of their love and devotion to the Episcopal Church had remained faithful to the Church and not followed the path of schism. Bishop Pope asked whether there was:

a way we can maintain a covenant of fellowship even though we must differ fundamentally on this issue concerning the episcopate? Is there a way of satisfying the consciences of all parties and trespassing upon none while keeping lines of communication and bonds of common service open? Is there a way of laying the foundation of good will which will greatly ease future reconciliation once the mind of church in this matter has been made clear to us all? Could not solutions grounded in pastoral principles be seen as a gift from God which would greatly enhance Anglican comprehensiveness, and the siege mentality of the past decade, bring peace, and strengthen the Church's witness? It is our hope that you will help solve this great problem and that we undertake to manage and control events rather than to be managed by them in the heat of emotion.

38. Three points seem to the Working Party of particular interest in these developments in ECUSA. The first is the firm conviction of the bishops that consent to the consecration of women as bishops on the ground of gender alone would not be withheld. This is a clear affirmation that in their opinion, there is nothing inherent in being a woman that makes it

inappropriate for women to become bishops. At the same time, however, it appears to allow for the possibility that other reasons, ecclesiological or ecumenical, may call for restraint. Secondly, what is happening in ECUSA shows a sensitivity to the need to consult and listen, both within the Province but also with other Provinces of the Anglican Communion. Both autonomy and interdependence have to play their part. But this is not, as the bishops clearly stated in 1986, 'intended to imply that any Lambeth Conference could decide such a matter for any autonomous Province'. Finally, we draw attention to the importance of the letter of Bishop Clarence Pope. The Bishop, while himself opposed to the consecration of women seems to be suggesting that, as in the case of the ordination of women to the presbyterate, pastoral principles might be drawn up to satisfy the consciences of all parties in this issue while the mind of the Church is being formed. We return to this at the end of our report.

(xiii) The Church in Wales

39. The Anglican Church in Wales has proceeded to ordain women to the diaconate but not to the priesthood. In response to the statement of the Primates meeting in Toronto the Primate of Wales submitted to the Working Party the opinion of the Bench of Bishops:

Whatever difference of view there may be amongst our number as to the rights of ordaining women to the priesthood and episcopate, we are in total agreement with the Primates (and indeed the 1978 Lambeth Conference) in their call for consultation and restraint. Notwithstanding the autonomy of each Province of the Anglican Communion, we believe that the difficulties surrounding the issue of women in ordained ministry (the Church in Wales already ordains them to the Diaconate) will be accentuated if women bishops are consecrated. The reasons are given by the Primates. We have been able to hold together as a Communion, although some only of our Provinces have ordained women to the priesthood, but the effect of ordaining women to the episcopate will be more direct and damaging. The plea for caution is therefore, in our view, amply justified.

(xiv) The Church of the Province of West Africa

40. Archbishop George Browne of the Church of the Province of West Africa wrote:

The Bishops of the Province of West Africa have just completed one week meeting ... when the subject of Women and the Episcopate was raised, the majority opinion was

that at this time this is not an African agenda, and would prefer postponing discussion on it for the present.

41. The following resolutions were passed by the meeting of the Conference of Anglican Provinces of Africa in July 1987 held in preparation for the Lambeth Conference. In the section on Mission & Ministry:

Ordination of Women

This conference urges all Bishops not to ordain women until such a time as the ordination of women is accepted by the whole Province.

The conference further urges the Provinces of the Anglican Communion not to rush to consecrate women into the Episcopate until such a step is accepted by the whole Communion.

In the section on Ecumenical Affairs:

Ordination of Women

This conference declares that ordination of women is not a top priority in Africa compared with many other concerns which face the Church.

The conference strongly recommends that Provinces not Dioceses should make decisions on matters of Faith & Order such as this so as to preserve our Anglican unity.

(xv) The Church in the Province of the West Indies

42. The Archbishop of the West Indies reported that the House of Bishops of the Church in the Province of the West Indies planned to have a thorough discussion of the subject at its meeting in Jamaica in August 1987.

THE REPORT OF ACC-7

43. The section on ministry at ACC-7, meeting in Singapore, May 1987, decided (because of the urgency of this particular issue) to consider the ordination of women to the priesthood and their possible consecration to the episcopate from a long list of issues relating to ministry. The reflections of the section on theological issues are prefaced by the following remarks:

We take the most immediate concern to be the holding together, while recognising the autonomy of each of the

members of the Anglican family, particularly as we move towards the 1988 Lambeth Conference. Whether we see a woman bishop before or after the conference, the possibility creates greater pressures on our relationships within the Anglican family than were experienced in 1978. A bishop is a focus of unity in the Catholic order of the Church, is a member of the collegial episcopal fellowship and validly confers the ordained ministry. We would not wish to underestimate the problems caused for our ecumenical relationships with those other churches that have preserved the historic Catholic order. Indeed, that concern is for many Anglicans still opposed to, or uncertain about, or even generally in favour of the ordination of women, of primary importance. Yet, as already indicated, we feel the most immediate pressure to be on unity within the Anglican Communion.

44. After reflecting on what were considered the major theological issues raised by the question of womens' ordination - namely headship, representation of Christ in the church, development in faith and order, the report contains a section on 'maintaining the unity and our Communion' which has particular relevance for the consecration of women to the episcopate.

As already indicated we believe that the major question for the Anglican Communion today is how we maintain our unity as each Province continues to discern the will of God for its life and mission in the consideration of the ordination of women. As the process continues both within the individual Provinces and collectively in the Communion, how are the opinions/convictions of both sides accommodated? When a Province decides to ordain women how are those who disagree held within the family of that Province? If a Province decides against the ordination of women or if it is still in the process of making that decision, how might that Province recognise the total ministry of one that has proceeded with the ordination of women?

We believe the Anglican Communion in its struggle with this issue is in a period of its life that is willing to live with its disagreements, but we raise the question as to how long this period will last before the disagreements are accepted as part of the diversity within the Communion. The reality of our diversity must be faced and the respect for the integrity of both positions recognised.

45. The report follows this up by suggesting recommendations to help maintain unity, including a section on Women and the Episcopate. The consecration of women to the episcopate the report suggests would raise the following questions:

- (a) Would other bishops within a Province and those in all the Provinces of the Communion recognise and accept a woman bishop?
- (b) Would ordinations and consecrations by a woman bishop be held valid in the diocese, in the Province and in the other Provinces of the Anglican Communion?
- (c) Would unacceptability of consecrations and ordinations performed by a woman bishop raise the question of the impairment or validity of the episcopal orders of those who consecrated the woman bishop?
- (d) Would consecration of a woman bishop in any Province of the Anglican Communion jeopardise the continuing negotiations with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches?
- (e) Would it fracture the Communion should some dioceses or Provinces not accept a woman bishop?

In response to such questions it may be hoped that, just as the Communion has survived the entry of women to the three fold order at the level of the diaconate and presbyterate, so would it survive the entry of women to the episcopate. The same may be the case with the future of the relationships with the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. This will require great sensitivity on the part of all concerned. When new pressures are felt within a family, truthfulness and concern for the deep feelings of all its members are equally essential, if it is to hold together.

In the first place the Communion will have to develop the same kind of response of tolerance as it did in the case of women priests, then of understanding and eventually, of universal acceptance for the enrichment and fulfilment of the historic three-fold order of the sacred ministry.

46. The resolution passed by ACC-7 on the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate was as follows:

THAT this Council:

- (a) commends the section of the report entitled Ordination of Women to the Priesthood and Episcopate to the Provinces and to the relevant Section at the Lambeth Conference;

- (b) encourages all Provinces to be sensitive to one another in this matter;
- (c) encourages all Provinces to be sensitive to ordained women and to women whose hopes for ordination cannot be realised;
- (d) expresses its appreciation and support of the Archbishop of Canterbury in his role of encouraging the consultative process between the Provinces;
- (e) requests the Secretary General to obtain and circulate to the Provinces information on the state of the debate in Provinces where women have not been ordained to the Priesthood and the degree of reception where they have.

REFLECTIONS BY THE WORKING PARTY ON THE RESPONSES RECEIVED

47. When the responses of the different provinces of the Anglican Communion are brought together in 'a community of interpretation' it is evident that on this particular issue the Provinces are at very different points in their thinking. The cultural and interfaith context of a Province affects the way Christians in that Province react to the idea of women in the episcopate. This suggests that even if the Communion as a whole were to uphold the consecration of women, there might well be some areas in the world where it would not be appropriate for women to be bishops at the present time.
48. For some Provinces the question of the consecration of women to the episcopate is immediate and pressing: for some it is hardly an item on their agenda at all. While some Provinces already have a long and positive experience of women in ordained ministry, others have little experience of women in professional ministry whether ordained or lay. Moreover, the responses reveal a range of opinion on the issue. There are some who argue against proceeding on theological grounds: there are those who agree in favour of proceeding also on theological grounds. However, it is not a simple matter of those in favour clamouring for immediate action and those against threatening a rupture in communion and demanding the issue be dropped. Amongst those against there are some eager for further discussion and exploration and even a suggestion that it may be possible to provide pastoral guidelines which would make it possible for those in favour and those against to remain in communion: amongst those in favour there are differing views on the appropriate time scale for action.

49. What is clear however from the responses is the value every Province places upon consultation and listening to other Provinces and consulting and listening to sister churches. Many of the responses call for ongoing consultation. Listening means really attempting to understand other views and experiences and being sensitive to them. There is also a general acceptance of restraint, at least in the period before the Lambeth Conference of 1988. It is also accepted that the Lambeth Conference itself cannot decide the matter and legislate for the whole Communion. New Zealand suggests that the Lambeth Conference is inadequate as a purely episcopal conference to decide on a matter which involves the whole church, bishops, clergy and laity. The further point is made concerning the inappropriateness of an all-male body debating and determining an issue relating to the place and role of women in the ministry of the Church. The issue of the ordination of women has raised questions about how the Anglican Communion makes up its mind.
50. What is clear is that preserving and maintaining the unity of the Anglican Communion is the concern of all who responded. It is generally emphasised that the episcopate is related to the 'nerve-centre' of that unity. Bishops 'hold the communion together' and thus, anything that might lead to non-recognition of episcopal ministry would inevitably mean an impairing of communion. What is hard to bear in regard to the presbyterate would appear to be even more threatening to unity in relation to the episcopate. However, the responses show that the debate about whether a woman should be consecrated to the episcopate is not a debate between those for whom unity is a fundamental concern and those who deny the primacy of unity and communion. On the one hand there are those who sincerely believe that unity would be threatened by such an action: on the other there are those who hold that the depths of unity will be more fully realised and visibly expressed when women bring their different but complementary gifts to the exercise of the ministry of oversight. Both groups are concerned with the unity of the Church. We note that the ACC is hopeful that just as the Communion has in fact survived the entry of women to the threefold order at the level of the diaconate and presbyterate, so it would survive the entry of women to the episcopate.
51. The consecration of a woman bishop is recognised by Provinces as having implications for the wider fellowship of the Churches. Some Provinces are particularly concerned about relations between Anglicans and the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. However, it is suggested that the situation with our Orthodox sisters and brothers is not exactly parallel to our relations with the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, the debate within the Roman Catholic

Church on the question of the ordination of women is already taking place and is also one of the subjects on the agenda of ARCIC-II. Some of the responses refer also to the importance such a move in the Anglican Communion would have for the Protestant Churches where women are in some places already in positions of oversight.

52. The general acknowledgement of the need for caution and restraint does not conceal the conviction in some Provinces that there is no reason why a woman should not be consecrated a bishop solely on the grounds of gender. There is also clear indication of the positive doctrinal reasons for consecrating women. Some replies also suggest that the complementary gift of women and men exercised in episcopacy would create a deeper unity within the life of the Church and witness to unity in a divided world. Further, the mission of the Church is seen in some areas of the world to demand that this witness to a deeper unity be manifested.
53. In reflecting on these responses from the Provinces the Working Party has identified five issues which are crucial to the debate:

is the ordination of women to the threefold order of ministry a legitimate development of the theology and the practice of ministry?

the episcopal ministry and its relationship to the communion or fellowship of the Church

the process of consultation and decision-making in the fellowship of the Anglican Communion

the process of consultation and decision-making when there is division in the universal Church

the nature of the Church and of the unity we seek as a credible sign of the Kingdom in a divided world.

Any Province deciding to go ahead to consecrate a woman as a bishop would need to have considered at least these five areas.

PART B**FIVE ISSUES**

- I** **Is the ordination of women to the threefold order of ministry a legitimate development of the theology and practice of ministry?**
54. Before a Province of the Anglican Communion proceeded to consecrate a woman as bishop it would need to have satisfied itself that to admit women to all three orders of the historic ministry was not fundamentally to change the character of that ministry. That is to determine that, it does not belong to the nature of the ordained ministry, either to the diaconate, presbyterate or episcopate that it be necessarily male.
55. The debate on the ordination of women has mostly been concerned with ordination to the presbyterate. It has very often been assumed that what applies to the presbyterate applies also to the episcopate and that to decide on the one is to determine the other. This ought not necessarily to be assumed to be the case. The entry of women into the threefold order does not necessarily imply they should be ordained into each of the three orders. Certainly, before deciding the question of women and the episcopate a Province would need to have satisfied itself on the question of women and the priesthood, and to have considerable experience of women serving in the presbyterate.
56. Important features of the debate are its complexity, the close inter-relationship of the issues which are involved, and the varying weight those issues carry in the minds of those who are trying to form an overall judgement. The view taken on Scripture and Tradition underlies the whole debate and will to a very great extent determine the relevance or not of other issues and be decisive in the overall judgement made. Moreover, the cultural context of a particular Province will affect the way the issues are perceived. Theology is never done in a vacuum. Each Province needs to consider not only its own context and experience but also the different contexts and experiences of other parts of the Communion. Even if it is determined as right for a number of Provinces to proceed to ordain women to the presbyterate, and even to the episcopate, it cannot be argued that it would therefore be appropriate to do so in every Province. However, if the theological arguments in favour are strong and no break in the continuity of the apostolic ministry were thought to be implied the cultural context could rightly be challenged by such a development.

57. The debate on the ordination of women is not static. Different arguments both for and against carry different weight in the light of new perspectives. This is well illustrated in the recent correspondence on the subject of the ordination of women between the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope and Cardinal Willebrands. Important issues in the current debate include the following:

- (i) the representative character of the priestly ministry particularly in the representation of Christ to the people and in the representation of the people, through Christ, to the Father.

Can the presence of Christ be appropriately represented by a woman priest? This involves determining what is the particular significance of the maleness of Jesus in the economy of salvation and how that is related to the ascended Christ in whom, as our High Priest, the whole of redeemed humanity is presented to the Father. If the priest can be said in any way to represent Christ, is it the historic Jesus or the risen, ascended Christ? This entails determining the relation between the significance of the maleness of Jesus and the self-revelation of God in Christ and through the ages.

- (ii) the significance of male and female in the created order and in the Body of Christ.

What are the differences between men and women and do they have any significance for determining who can and who cannot be ordained? What does the Bible suggest about the differentiation of the sexes? In particular what interpretation is to be placed upon the early chapters of Genesis and those New Testament texts which, echoing Genesis, speak of man as 'head' of woman and of the 'subordination' of women to men? Has this implications for the exercise of a priestly ministry which is to lead the community and exercise authority in the community?

- (iii) the question of ministerial authority and women priests.

One function of ordination is to show beyond doubt that the person so ordained has authority to act as a priest in the Anglican Communion as part of the universal Church. Is it possible while the Church remains divided upon the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood that women can be recognised as able to exercise priestly authority on behalf of the Church of God?

(iv) the significance of the ordained ministry as a sign and instrument of communion

In what way would the ordination of women to the priesthood make it significantly more difficult for the ordained ministry to be a sign and instrument of communion?

(v) the discovery of gifts exercised by women and in particular the contemporary experience of women in ministry in some churches.

Many women, already exercising diaconal ministry, are asking for their vocation to the priestly ministry to be tested. Congregations are affirming that call and asking the Church to test their call. And in some Provinces the positive experience of women presbyters is confidently affirmed. What questions does this contemporary experience pose in respect of the tradition of an all-male priesthood? What effects would a decision not to ordain women have upon the mission of a Province? And, even in those areas of the world where the challenge does not come from the position of women in society should the Church challenge the society by the role of women in ordained ministry?

58. For a Province to have proceeded to ordain women to the presbyterate would assume that at least these issues had been weighed and that such ordination was reckoned to contribute to the wholeness of the ministry.
59. Each of these issues has a bearing also on the question of the episcopate. It is, however, the second issue which has particular relevance for the consecration of women to the episcopate, namely the question of male headship. There are those who are happy for a women to be ordained priest as long as she is not given sole charge of a parish, any other position of exceptional authority or the authority of jurisdiction which belongs to a bishop.
60. Arguments relating to headship are complex and involve wrestling with extremely difficult biblical texts including the early narratives of the book of Genesis and a number of difficult sayings in the New Testament epistles, some of which lean heavily upon a particular interpretation of the Genesis texts themselves. These texts need also to be interpreted in the light of the burden of biblical thought on the relationship of the sexes and in the realisation that the exercise of ministerial authority is always grounded in servanthood. The matter is bound up with our understanding of

the authority of Holy Scripture and the relation of Scripture to Tradition and the place of development. Not all those who are 'biblically conservative' agree that the texts do in fact preclude women exercising a position of authority and leadership in the Christian community today. However, should a Province decide to consecrate a woman as bishop it would need to be satisfied that the biblical texts relating to headship do not preclude such action.

61. Any Province proceeding to consecrate a woman bishop would do so only on the basis of the positive experience of women in the presbyterate. In his letter to the Pope the Archbishop of Canterbury referred to the fact that 'those Provinces which have taken this step (of ordaining women to the presbyterate) have indicated that their experience has been generally beneficial. Nor have they yet heard compelling arguments to abandon this development'. The Anglican Church of Canada in its consideration of the question of the consecration of a woman to the episcopate is greatly influenced by the positive experience of women in ordained ministry and by the needs of the mission of the Church in that country. It is that which leads them to affirm that the Church was led by the Spirit of God to act. And, on the basis of the experience they consider that a deeper unity will be created when the fullness of God's gifts in men and women are received within the episcopate.

II The episcopal ministry and its relationship to the communion or fellowship of the Church

62. Unity and communion belong to the very nature of the Church. The inner fellowship or communion of the Church, through the reconciling power of Jesus Christ, is grounded in the life of the Holy Trinity. That communion has to be maintained and manifested in the visible life of the Church. The ordained ministry of the Church, an extension of the ministry of Jesus Christ, is one of the indispensable instrumental signs of the Church's communion. The Church cannot be seen to be one unless its ordained ministry is seen to be one, nor indeed can Christ himself be seen to be one unless those who are appointed to act in his name are at unity with one another. Ecclesial unity must always be seen within the context of that larger unity to which Christ calls us, namely the unity of a redeemed humanity.
63. The ordained ministry has a particular responsibility for maintaining and focussing the communion and unity of the Church. For one Church or Province to be in communion with another involves recognition of all its baptised members as members of a single community of faith: it also involves

mutual recognition of those who are called to be ministers of this communion of faith and love. The ordination of women to the presbyterate is seen by those who are unable to recognise such ordinations as impairing the bond of communion. However, for others the refusal itself to recognise such ordinations is the cause of the impairment of communion. The non-recognition of ministers is experienced by Anglicans on both sides of the debate as damaging to the unity of the communion. It is precisely because the ministry and the communion of the Church are so bound together that the unity of the Church is felt to be impaired where there is not full recognition or interchangeability of ministries.

64. What is for some a problem in relation to the presbyterate would be more acutely felt in relation to the episcopate. Differences in practice between Provinces and within Provinces can be contained at the level of priesthood, but it is not immediately easy to see how they may be contained at the level of the episcopate. For while the threefold ministry belongs to the universal Church bishops have a particular responsibility for maintaining and focussing the internal unity and communion of the Church. 'Bishops preach the Word, preside at the Sacraments and administer discipline in such a way as to be representative pastoral ministers of oversight, continuity and unity in the Church' (Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry, M29). In the diocese, or area, in which a bishop has pastoral oversight, he keeps the local church faithful to the apostolic teaching and mission of the whole Church. He is the principle link of communion relating the local christian community to the wider Church and the wider Church to the local community.
65. The consecration of a woman to the episcopate thus raises questions about the role of a bishop as:
- (a) sign and instrument of apostolic continuity,
 - (b) focus and bearer of authority,
 - (c) effective sign of unity.

The three are closely bound together. Moreover, they are all linked to the question of symbolism and representation and who may appropriately and fittingly represent and carry on the ministry of Christ in his Church.

- (a) The bishop as sign and instrument of apostolic continuity
66. A bishop, together with other bishops, has the task of keeping the Church faithful to the message and mission of the Apostles. The individual bishops and the college of bishops together, serve, guard and symbolise the apostolicity of the

whole Church. It is the whole Church which is in the apostolic succession and not merely the individual bishop. However, outward continuity in episcopal ordination is a sign of the apostolic ministry and the continuity of teaching and mission. Episcopal ordination is also an act of recognition by the other bishops who lay hands upon the bishop, and by the whole Church represented by the congregation, that a bishop is in continuity with the teaching and mission of the Apostles. Consecration involves a prayer that a bishop may be granted the grace to continue the orthodox apostolic teaching on which the Church was founded. When a bishop acts as bishop he is not issuing his own opinion but is called to proclaim the faith which the Church has received from Christ, through the Apostles and handed down through the ages.

67. The apostolic faith and mission was committed by Jesus to the Apostles and itself derives from the sending of the Son by the Father. Each bishop is called and consecrated to guard, express and symbolise the apostolic faith in the local church to which he is sent. In council (collegially) the bishops representing their local communities discover a common mind so that each may be strengthened and kept in catholicity and apostolicity and be better able to represent that catholicity and apostolicity to the local church and to the world.
68. Throughout history, and still today, women as well as men have been faithful servants and teachers of the apostolic message and have played their part in carrying forward the apostolic mission in the world. But, Jesus was male, the Apostles were male and their successors in the historic, apostolic ministry for two thousand years have been male. For some people this visible expression of the ordained ministry as male is fundamental: it symbolises what it is to effect, namely that unity offered and given through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The ministry is integrally related to the Church's basic message and mission, and is part of its 'givenness'. It is therefore for some people perilous to abandon, or to seek to change, the form lest the dynamic teaching which the ministry embodies should be lost or impaired.
69. Any Province proceeding to consecrate a woman as bishop would need to have satisfied itself that maleness is incidental to episcopacy and that a change in the sign of apostolic continuity would neither endanger the link with the past nor subvert the essential message of the Gospel. In other words is the particularity of maleness necessary to symbolise the apostolicity of the whole Church? Would a woman bishop and a mixed episcopal college be a more or a less effective sign of the Church's fidelity to the apostolic teaching and mission than a male bishop and an all male episcopate?

(b) The bishop as focus and bearer of authority

70. A bishop does not exercise his own authority. There is only one ultimate authority in the Church, the authority of Jesus Christ entrusted to the Church. The bishop, together with other bishops, is a steward of the ever-present authority of the Lord in his Church. The pattern and model of the exercise of episcopal authority is that of Christ: it is a service in which sacrificial love, humility and gentleness are enshrined.
71. There are those who would maintain that in order for it to be evident that the authority exercised by the bishop is indeed the authority of Jesus Christ in the Church, it is only fitting for men to exercise such delegated authority. Against this some would suggest that the very characteristics of gentleness and nurturing which are to characterise the Christ-like exercise of authority are qualities which, at least today, are sometimes categorised as 'feminine' and most appropriately exercised by women.
72. For others the issue of episcopal authority is rooted in a theology of humanity which they understand as given in the biblical teaching on headship in some of the Genesis texts and also in the Pauline use of the Old Testament texts. However these texts are notoriously difficult to interpret and have been used both by those in favour of women exercising authority as well as those against. Further, the view of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission is that presbyters are already joined with the bishop in the exercise of oversight in the Church and that 'deacons also assist in oversight'. This might suggest that wherever women are already deacons and presbyters they already share, to some extent, in the exercise of authority and oversight. The question then becomes whether a distinction ought to be made between those who share a delegated oversight (deacons and presbyters) and those who exercise the fulness of (episcopal) oversight.

(c) The bishop as effective sign of unity

73. In his person the bishop is called to be an effective sign of unity. He is first of all the centre of unity for a local church. It is the eucharist which expresses and builds up the unity of the local church: the bishop is primarily the one who presides at the eucharist and in so doing acts as the visible centre of unity for the local church. In all of the letters of Ignatius of Antioch there is constant repetition of the word 'one' and this is continually connected with the bishops ministry.

74. The bishop then symbolises the unity of the local church gathered around the eucharistic table. As a member of the college of bishops he relates the unity of the local church to the whole Church and conversely represents that wider unity back to the local church. The bishop brings the faith and witness of his local church to the council of bishops. The shared oversight of the faith in council is a way of strengthening the catholicity and unity of the local church through the collective ministry of the bishops. It is thus the local bishop who symbolises in his office the unity of the Church as well as the college of bishops joined together.
75. If a woman were consecrated a bishop and her orders were not recognised by the presbyters, deacons and people of her diocese it might be argued the bishop would cease to be the effective sign of unity. Similarly if her orders were not recognised by the members of the college of bishops the unity of the college would be impaired. There would also be the further affect on the unity of the ministry if the orders of those ordained by a woman bishop were not recognised within the diocese, Province or Communion. Some might also go on to question confirmations conducted by a woman bishop. Provinces would need to have considered such questions before proceeding to consecrate a woman.
76. However, the matter is more complex than this. It has also to be asked what is the unity that a bishop is called to symbolise? It certainly has to do with unity in faith, unity in sacramental life, unity in ministry, unity in mission. The bishop as an individual bishop and the college of bishops together also symbolise the unity of the community of all the baptised. In baptism women and men are drawn into a fellowship in which, while distinctions remain, they are no longer a cause of division. There are those who argue that for the episcopate to be an effective and credible witness to that unity and communion of the community of women and men baptised into Christ, the Church needs both male and female bishops. It is argued by some that an episcopate, inclusive of men and women, would be a more effective symbol of communion and unity than an all male episcopate. Further, the continuing existence of an all male episcopate has become for some a sign of disunity and not of unity. It is also argued that in a world of destructive divisions between races, nations and sexes, the Church has a responsibility to make clear by those it calls and authorises to represent it that the unity given by God in Christ is a unity which transcends inherited, destructive human divisions. Would an inclusive male and female diaconate, priesthood and episcopate be a more appropriate prophetic sign to the world of the unity of women and men given in Christ, than an all

male episcopate? Would a fully comprehensive and complementary ordained ministry witness more appropriately in mission and also point more faithfully to the coming of the Kingdom? Those opposed to the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate need to address such questions.

77. In all that has been said about the relation of the bishop to the apostolicity, authority and unity of the Church it is not simply what the bishop does but what he is called to be that is important. He is called to be a sign of apostolicity, a focus of authority and a sign of unity. In all of these the bishop's ministry is closely bound up with the ministry of Christ in Christ's Church. The apostolicity, the authority and the unity with which the office and work of a bishop is concerned is that which flows from the crucified and risen Lord and must serve to keep his Body the Church true to its essential nature. At the heart of the debate on the consecration of women to the episcopate is the question whether to change the 'sign' of the apostolicity, authority and unity of the Church, is to endanger the apostolicity, authority and unity itself. How far is gender fundamental to the episcopate and indispensable to the safeguarding of apostolicity, authority and unity? Would an inclusive episcopate be a counter sign and distort the truth of the Gospel, or might an inclusive episcopate enhance it?

III The process of decision-making in the fellowship of the Anglican Communion

78. One of the important characteristics of the Anglican Communion is the delicate balance that exists between the autonomy of the Provinces and the interdependence of the Provinces. Some issues can appropriately be settled by an individual Province acting alone. Other issues which relate to the unity of the Communion in matters of faith and order might more appropriately be determined by the Provinces together. During the last 50 years the structures that express and maintain the interdependence of the Communion have been evolving and under pressure of issues like the ordination of women to the priesthood are being put to the test. These structures are both expressive of the inner life of the Communion and also serve and maintain the Communion.
79. Personal (the bishop), collegial (the corporate episcopate and the bishop with his presbyters) and communal (synodical) structures have emerged which function at a local, regional and international level. These are not unique to the Anglican Communion. They have their roots in earlier church history and are also found in other churches. At the level of the diocese the bishop acts as a personal focus of unity. He exercises his responsibility collegially with the ordained ministry, and communally through gatherings of synods. At a

regional, or Provincial level, the personal is evident in the role of primatial figures, the collegial in meetings of a House of Bishops and the communal at synods, or councils, which bring together ordained and non-ordained. At the international level the Archbishop of Canterbury is freely recognised as a personal focus of unity: he enjoys a primacy of honour, not of jurisdiction. Being in communion with the See of Canterbury is one of the marks of belonging to the Anglican Communion. Collegiality is expressed in the Lambeth Conference and in the more recently established Primate's Meeting. The communal dimension at the international level is expressed in the Anglican Consultative Council. There might also be said to be a communal dimension entering into the Lambeth Conference with members of the ACC attending the Conference. The communal dimension may also be expressed in Anglican gatherings such as the Pan-Anglican Congresses of 1908, 1954 and 1963.

80. This developing structure which services the Anglican Communion is an important way in which the interdependence of the Communion is lived out. It has implications for decision making and authoritative teaching in the Church today. Decisions taken on fundamental matters of doctrine or order of the Communion have to be taken with due regard for the wider Anglican fellowship.
81. Should a Province decide to consecrate a woman bishop it would need to consult widely in the Anglican Communion and make the results of such consultation widely known. It would also have to consider what effect consecrating a woman as bishop would have on the working of those structures which serve the Communion beyond Provincial level. If a woman bishop were not recognised by the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council or the Archbishop of Canterbury that would surely affect the bonds that hold the Communion together? Any Province wanting to proceed would need to give particular weight to this.
82. There is, however, another matter that ought at least to be raised in relation to the collegial and conciliar structures of the Communion. The collegial and conciliar structures, particularly at the international level, provide an opportunity for issues facing all the Provinces to be reflected upon in a broad and representative community. Balance and depth of insight often emerge when an issue of faith and order is developed within a broad community of interpretation, when the perspectives and experiences from many cultures are brought to bear on a particular subject. Women are becoming more involved in synods of the Church. It still needs to be asked whether a balanced and harmonious understanding can emerge from any group if half the human

community is excluded from the reflective and decision making process. Some Christians would argue that there is a complementarity, a depth of understanding, a wholeness brought to a subject when the perspective and experience of women is included in the community that reflects and decides. This seems also to be the testimony of many in those Provinces which have already ordained women. If this is true then to exclude women from any part of the decision making processes, more significantly to exclude them from the point at which direction and leadership is given, for example, from the episcopal college, might be considered detrimental to the life of the Church. It might be robbing the Christian community of a richness and balance which is part of the gift of creation and necessary to a life in fullness.

83. The dynamics of change in the Anglican Communion today necessarily depend on the insights and initiatives of Provinces undertaken in their world situations for the benefit of the whole Communion. Provinces face different situations with differing requirements for mission. The rest of the Communion through the variety of consulting bodies that have developed, and are still developing (eg Lambeth Conference, Anglican Consultative Council, Primates' Meeting) provide that wider 'Council' of the Church, which, in the fragmented life of the world church today, cannot be called together. When Provinces can give counsel and encouragement to one another, through the emerging consultative processes of the Anglican Communion, they can enable Provinces in particular and the Communion as a whole to respond to and temper the insights and initiatives of particular parts, and enable the body to grow in that communion (koinonia) which expresses the love and truth of Christ.

IV The process of decision making when there is division in the universal Church

84. There are those matters of faith and order affecting the life of the communion of the Church which a Province ought not to decide upon in isolation: matters which touch the wider fellowship of the Anglican Communion. There is also the wider context of the fellowship of sister Churches to be considered. Anglicans have consistently claimed to have continued the ministry of the universal Church. Moreover, Anglicans committed to the unity of the Church in each place look to the recognition and reconciliation of ministries. Any development in the ministry ought therefore to be undertaken with reference to the wider Christian community. This is particularly the case at a time when there is an increasing degree of shared ministry and even of shared oversight amongst the leaders of the various Churches. There are those who would argue that a decision on women and the episcopate

affects not only the Anglican Communion but the universal Church. The argument continues that any decision ought therefore to wait until it can be taken in the fellowship of all the Churches in a truly ecumenical council. Some who put this argument see the need for some kind of representative conciliar gatherings to consider issues like the ordination of women even without the possibility of calling a truly ecumenical council.

85. However at the present time if a decision is to be made the only effective level at which it can be made is at Provincial level but with due regard given to consultation with all the Provinces through the ACC and the Lambeth Conference and with due listening to sister churches. Should a Province, after due consultation proceed to consecrate a woman as bishop then that decision would still have to be tested in the universal Church. As with other developments of faith and order such a development would have to be affirmed by the people of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A long range and far-reaching process of reception by the whole Church would lie ahead. Until a process of reception is reasonably settled the issue of the ordination of women to the episcopate, as indeed the ordination of women to the presbyterate, would remain open to discussion. A continuing discussion between Provinces and between churches in the ecumenical movement would be appropriate. We are already in bilateral and multilateral conversations with our sister churches and look forward to exchanges on the subject. It might be possible for some who remain agnostic, or who are even opposed to the consecration of women to remain in communion within Provinces that consecrated women, and even to share collegially with women, providing all understand the practice within the perspective of such a continuing and open process of reception. However, it needs to be recognised that there is a very particular problem when what is being put to the test in the reception process is not just a doctrine to be discussed but a doctrine that is already embodied in persons which touch and affect the very bond of communion.

IV The nature of the communion and unity we seek as a credible sign of the Kingdom in a divided world

86. Concerns for unity and truth are not separable in the faithful mission of the Church. A Province proceeding to consecrate a woman bishop would need, to be convinced that the practice of the Church in its locality demanded such action. As part of its mission, the Church is called to act as a prophetic sign to the world. The kind of communion and unity which Christians exhibit must point to the coming

Kingdom and be a credible sign of what human community redeemed in Christ can be like. If a Province were to consecrate a woman as bishop it would have to have satisfied itself that for oversight in ministry to be exercised only by men would be an incomplete sign of the true unity that belongs to men and women created and redeemed in the image of God. The risk of impairing the unity of the Anglican Communion has to be weighed against the risk of failing to sign to the world the depth of true unity and communion that belongs to those baptised into the life of the Holy Trinity.

PART C

MOVING AHEAD IN COMMUNION

Autonomy and Interdependence

87. In the previous section of our report we set out five issues which any Province would need to have considered and satisfied itself about before contemplating the consecration of a woman to the episcopate. Again and again we have been aware of the relation between the autonomy of the Provinces and the interdependence of the Provinces of the Communion. The delicate balance of autonomy and interdependence needs to be understood in relation to the theological understanding of the very nature of communion (*koinonia*). Communion implies a unity in faith which is itself expressed in, and maintained by, the ministry of the Church. Matters of faith and order are integrally bound together. Moreover, the episcopal ministry has a special role to play in serving, maintaining and focussing the unity of the Communion.
88. It is a fact that the 'bonding' of the universal Church and of our Anglican fellowship is 'impaired' whenever there is non-recognition, and therefore no interchangeability, of ministries. This is already to some degree the case with the ordination of women to the priesthood and might be even more acutely felt in relation to the episcopate. Non-recognition would be painful and disruptive for the women whose episcopal orders were not recognised as well as for the Churches to which those women belong: a bishop is not separate from the community. But it would also be painful and disruptive for those Provinces which out of conviction of belief were unable to recognise women ordained in other Provinces. Difficulties would be experienced by those on both sides of the debate. Further, sharing collegially, including sharing in the Lambeth Conference, would be a problem for those bishops who could not recognise a woman as a bishop. Equally, it would be a problem for others if the validity of the ministry of their sister bishops were to be denied. Moreover, the consecration of a woman bishop might also put into question in some people's eyes the validity of those ordained by her whether women or men. This might restrict even further that exchange of priests which properly belongs to churches in communion. On the other hand we cannot deny the possibilities for the enrichment and wholeness of the ministry which some people look forward to with women consecrated to the episcopate.
89. The ordination of women - and more particularly the ordination of women to the episcopate - has led to serious theological reflection on the nature of communion within the

Anglican Communion and the relation between autonomy and interdependence. What is the underlying unity of faith which holds us together as Anglicans and what is the relation of that faith to ministerial order? In such matters as the ordination of women to the episcopate, what channels and instrumentalities do Anglicans have for adequate consultation and shared decision-making? And, in a matter as fundamental to the life and unity of the church as the ordering of its ministry how can we express and live out faithfully the concept of 'mutual responsibility and interdependence within the Body of Christ' (Anglican Congress, 1963)? Our Working Party does not have answers to all these questions. It is, however, our belief that God, in a way perhaps not fully anticipated, is using issues relating to the ordination of women, such as the exercise of authority in the Church, as a means of encouraging Anglicans to reflect upon their own identity. It is also possible that through this issue we are being called to question more generally the role and position of women in Church and society as well as matters of injustice.

Reception

90. It is not in the remit of the Working Party to make recommendations either for or against the ordination of women to the episcopate. However, we have constantly been struck by the importance of the theological concept of reception. We note that in the case of the admission of Gentiles to the Church and the matter of circumcision Paul's actions in one part of the expanding Church were in advance of the decision of the whole Church. However, before this was determined to be right it had to be agreed by the 'Apostles, Elders and the whole Church' (Acts 15). Similarly, in the definition of orthodox teaching it took centuries before the mind of the whole Church was expressed by Councils in the formation of the Creeds. Nearer our own day the fruits of ecumenical dialogues, in particular the substantial agreements of the Final Report of ARCIC and Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (the Lima Text) are involving Anglicans, and all the participating churches, in a process of reception. Beyond the official response process involving the Provinces and the articulation of the mind of the Communion through the Lambeth Conference lies a continuing process of reception by the Church. Moreover, in this process what is affirmed in words has to be embodied in the life of the Church if the reception is to be credible.
91. 'Reception' is a long and spiritual process involving both official response by the synods and councils of the Church 'at the highest level of authority'. It also involves a longer and more widespread process of reception. Conciliar

or synodical decisions, themselves emerging from widespread consultation and episcopal guidance, have to be received. If in the course of time the Church as a whole receives a synodical decision this would be an additional or final sign that it may be judged to be in accordance with God's will for the Church (Final Report of ARCIC, Authority I, para. 6; Elucidation para. 3; Authority II, para. 25). The people of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have to be involved in forming the mind of the Church in matters affecting the faith of the Church. Within this process the authority of those exercising leadership, individually, and corporately, is not a formal or imposed one. It is an authority supported and accepted by the involvement of the whole fellowship.

92. Whenever a matter is tested by the Church there is necessarily an openness about the question. The continuing communion of Christians with one another in faith and worship maintains the underlying unity of the Church while the reception process is at work. The openness needs to be recognised and accepted by those on both sides of the debate. There needs to be openness to the possibility of the new thing being accepted by the Church or rejected by the Church. It also entails a willingness to live with diversity throughout the 'reception' process.

Reception is a long range and far reaching process in which the whole Church seeks to recognise and affirm confidently the one faith ... and confidently to lay hold of the new life which that faith promises.
(Gathered for Life: The Official Report of the Vancouver Assembly, WCC 1983).

The reception process cannot be hurried: it demands patience and listening by both sides and calls for generosity of spirit. Sensitivity and mutual caring is even more called for when what is in question is matters of faith embodied in the ministry of women and men. The ideal of unity and the quest for truth may both be pursued and upheld as the process of reception is worked out.

93. The episcopate is not the possession of an individual Province but belongs to the Church. Therefore any decision regarding the fundamental expression of the episcopate would need ultimately to be affirmed by the Church. Those Provinces which are convinced that it is right to consecrate a woman as bishop may wish to exercise restraint because of the possible disruptive effects upon the Communion. Alternatively, they may be persuaded by compelling doctrinal reasons, by their experience of women in ordained ministry and by the demands of the mission of the Church in their

region to proceed to the ordination of a woman to the episcopate. This would only be done with overwhelming support in the diocese concerned. Such a step could only be taken within an over-riding acknowledgment of the need to offer such a development for reception, or indeed rejection, by the whole Communion and by the universal Church and with care and support for the women so ordained.

94. Were a Province to ordain a woman as bishop:

- The development should be offered to the Anglican Communion in an open process of reception.
- The development could not be expressed as the mind of the Church until it were accepted by the whole Communion. Even then there would necessarily be a tentativeness about it until it were accepted by the universal Church.
- Consideration of the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate within the Communion would need to continue with Provinces listening to one another's thoughts and experiences, aiding one another in theological reflection and exercising mutual sensitivity and care.
- Debate in the wider fellowship of the Churches ought to be encouraged, particularly within existing bilateral and multi-lateral dialogues.

95. The Working Party believes it important that because the member Provinces of the Anglican Communion are not of one mind in the matter of the ordination of women to the episcopate, attention should be given to developing both channels of communication and also pastoral principles. Pastoral principles would help to uphold the communion of the Provinces during the process of reception. On this point the Primates' Working Party suggests that the Lambeth Conference itself may be most helpful to the Communion. The bishops at Lambeth might appropriately seek to guide the Communion by:

- Setting in motion an ongoing process of consultation.
- Commending to the Provinces pastoral principles for an interim period based upon mutual respect and love which could make a lasting contribution to the life and interdependence of the Anglican Communion.

MT/RA (BMU028)

10th August, 1987