



TEA and CAKE

THE SCHEME for 'Transferred Episcopal Arrangements' ('TEA' for short) is turning into one of the worst kept secrets in the Church of England. It made the front page of the *Church of England Newspaper* just before Christmas and has been the subject of comment by daily newspapers and *New Directions*. The brain-child of the Guildford Group, who have been charged with working out how the Church of England can have women bishops and keep 'traditionalists' on board, TEA was allegedly discussed by the House of Bishops at the January residential meeting. There was such excitement about this meeting that somebody who works in the building where the bishops met stopped me excitedly to ask whether we had made the decision to have women bishops. (I think she must have been the one with the 'Ten Years of Women Priests' mug in the staff kitchen...)

People have reacted strongly to TEA. The Provincial Episcopal Visitors and Forward in Faith, for instance, convened the Forward in Hope gathering at Central Hall, Westminster in late January, to give people chance to say what they really want and what they really need. Is TEA what we really want and what we really need? I am not at liberty to discuss meetings of the House of Bishops and am always amused by accounts of the proceedings by those who – self-evidently – were not there. The House of Bishops rightly and properly conducts its business privately and, in my experience, PEVs are careful not to abuse their position by being indiscreet. What the PEVs *have* been saying – both in private and in public – is that proper arrangements should include:

1. secure provision by Measure;
2. a discrete order of bishops with jurisdiction;
3. a degree of independence from General Synod;
4. freedom of ecumenical action.

In my judgment, people on all sides of the argument have begun to understand the importance of 1. and 2., remain to be convinced about 3. and have not really begun to engage with 4. For 4. I offer the acronym CAKE: 'Catholics Advancing Knowingly Ecumenically'! So far the CAKE – like the TEA - is under-cooked rather than half-baked.

How far TEA meets these four criteria – or could be made to meet them – I am not at liberty for now to say but, coming from North of the Trent, there is nothing I like less than weak tea or tea that hasn't been given chance to mash properly. (So wide is the patch I serve that some of you will say 'brew' or even 'stew' instead of 'mash'). So, if you ask me what I think of TEA, my inclination is to say 'let's see what it looks like when its properly mashed'. Meanwhile there is no harm in continuing to stir the pot!

May God bless us as we seek to go forward in faith, in hope - and in love.

+ Andrew Ebbsfleet

The Bishop of Ebbsfleet
Bishop's House, Dry Sandford, Abingdon, OXON OX13 6JP
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 390746
www.ebbsfleet.org.uk