

REPORT

1. The ministry of the Church derives from the ministry of its risen and ascended Lord, who is at once the great High Priest, the Chief Shepherd, and the Eternal Word. Priest Pastor and Prophet are one in him and in his priestly, pastoral and prophetic ministry it is the duty and privilege of all Christians to share. This is the total ministry of the church.

2. Within this total ministry there are some Christians who are called by God and authorised by his Church to exercise a special ministry, commonly known as "the ordained ministry" or "the ministry".

3. The New Testament indicates that this work was carried on by the Church of the first century to provide shepherding, oversight and evangelism. Different names may have been used and functions may not always have been identical but the intention is clear.

4. No one particular definite pattern of the ministry emerged within New Testament times. Nevertheless there are evident in the New Testament certain forms of ministry such as apostles, presbyters, bishops (or presbyter-bishops), deacons and what is commonly known as a charismatic ministry (i.e., the exercise of a particular gift such as healing or teaching).

5. In the New Testament behind the life of the local churches there is the apostolic order in that whatever self-government they possessed was exercised under the supervision of the apostles.

6. In the second century we find that the charismatic ministry has declined, and that, as a general rule, the offices of bishop and presbyter have become distinct, emphasis being placed on the bishop as the centre of unity and the symbol of continuity with the apostles' faith and teaching.

7. This position was reached in local churches at varying periods and in somewhat different fashions and was caused by different factors, but the bishop does emerge as the chief liturgical minister, the guardian of the faith, the shepherd of the flock, the representative of the whole church to the local church and of the local church to the whole church.

8. To emphasise the continuance of these functions in the church the phrase "apostolic succession" has been commonly used. This means that (a) the bishop is committed to the apostles' teaching and example and to proclaim, teach and guard what the apostles taught. (b) He links Christians together in unity in the local church and links the local church to the whole church. (c) There should be a lawful succession in office and order.

9. Historically the form of church government known as "monarchical" or "mon-episcopacy" began to prevail in the second century and was universally recognised within a very short period.

10. In the early Irish Church, based on the monastic system, the bishop generally took second place to the abbot. He ordained, and performed other liturgical duties but the responsibility for exercising discipline and jurisdiction lay with the abbot.

This is but one example of how different times, situations and environment influenced the nature, type and practice of episcopacy and often there were regrettable features. For example, the autocratic princely prelate was a corruption of the true nature of episcopacy.

11. At the Reformation the Church of Ireland retained and continued the orders of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, and the Anglican Communion is committed to this threefold ministry as being:

- (a) in harmony with the teaching of Holy Scripture,
- (b) historic, in the sense of being universally recognised as the pattern of the Christian ministry from a very early date. In fact this pattern was not seriously in question during the first 1,500 years of the Church's life,
- (c) contemporary, in the sense that it is the ministry which is adhered to by the vast majority of Christian throughout the world to-day. It is also interesting to note that most schemes for re-union proposed to-day incorporate episcopacy. Even the Australian scheme for unity between Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Methodists introduces episcopacy.

12. It must be emphasised that while the Anglican Communion believes in and commends episcopacy it does not define any particular theory of it.

13. Furthermore the Anglican Communion recognises that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit episcopacy must be exercised in such a way as will render it most effective for the total witness and service of the Church in a changing world.

14. In its essential nature the office and work of a bishop symbolize and express :—

Sec. (1) *Episcopate or pastoral care and oversight.*

This includes :

- (a) The preaching of the Word and the guardianship of the faith,
- (b) the ministry of the Sacraments, since the bishop is the chief liturgical minister of his diocese. He ordains the priests to whom the direct charge of the flock is delegated, and he confirms those who by baptism have been admitted into the Church.
- (c) the administration of his diocese through synods and councils and the exercising of shepherding and discipline over clergy and people as a father-in-God.

Sec. (2) *Unity*

- (a) The bishop is the centre of unity for all his people in the diocese.
- (b) His office symbolizes unity in place since the bishop represents his own diocese in the wider councils of the church, and represents the universal church in his own diocese.
- (c) His office symbolizes unity in time as expressing the oneness of the church to-day with that of past generations, and of those yet to come.

15. The bishop should have the foremost place as minister of the Word, whether it be from the pulpit, public platform, in writing or through the mass media. On him rests the prime responsibility for relating the Christian faith to the

contemporary situation and for giving a definite and courageous lead on vital issues confronting society. In this the need for personal contact with his clergy becomes obvious and regular study with them in small intimate groups is a prerequisite of shared truth by the understanding of each other's minds.

16. The bishop as leader in liturgical worship and in devotion, has the responsibility to ensure not only that public worship within his diocese is conducted "decently and in order", but also to keep himself sensitive to the need for liturgical experiment and revision.

Normally, when the bishop visits a parish in his diocese it should be customary for him to celebrate the Holy Communion.

As the minister of Confirmation, the bishop should consult with his clergy in both the preparation of the candidates and in their post-confirmation instruction and encouragement. Greater contact with those whom he confirms and also with their parents will help to prevent an erroneous view of Confirmation as an isolated incident and will provide a marked opportunity for pastoral care and edification.

17. One of the primary functions of a bishop is to ordain and give continuing personal oversight and pastoral care to his clergy. He is "pastor paritorum", "pastor of pastors". For this reason a diocese should be sufficiently small in numbers and in geographical area for the bishop to know his clergy intimately. He should be in a position to guide and encourage them in their pastoral ministrations which are his responsibility as well as theirs and to take an active part in sharing their prayer life, study and personal problems.

This might well mean an increase in the number of bishops in the more populous areas. Such an increase could be achieved without multiplication of diocesan office machinery if there was planned co-operation such as already exists in the case of Down and Connor. Most members of the committee do not believe that the use of suffragans is consistent with a right understanding of the office of a bishop.

It should be noted that all decisions regarding size of dioceses should depend on the number of clergy, people and

the geographical area in relation to the pastoral office as outlined above. All other considerations are secondary or irrelevant in diocesan reorganization.

18. It is the bishop's responsibility to exercise discipline in his diocese, not as an autocrat but because of his pastoral relationship with his clergy and people. He is called to exercise such discipline firmly but always with compassion.

19. The bishop, as leader in his diocese will necessarily be involved in administration, both central and diocesan.

The danger of over-involvement needs to be carefully examined. In his diocese the bishop ought, *ex officio*, to be chairman of policy making bodies, but the chairmanship of other committees might be delegated to others, clerical or lay.

20. The bishop should maintain and promote the unity of all congregations in the diocesan family.

Once again the relevance of the size of the diocese is obvious. If people do not know their bishop he has a poor chance of promoting their unity.

An extension of his diocesan work for unity will be the building up of the world-wide fellowship of all Christian people. In this the bishop represents the Church to his diocese, and his diocese to the Church. His commitment to the furthering of ecumenism, both inside and outside his diocese will arise primarily from the fact that the search for unity in Christ is inherent in his office, and not because he may happen to find it a congenial personal interest.

21. The bishop should be a leader in interpreting the meaning of Christian service. He should indeed be the servant of the servants of God.

In order to give this leadership of service it is necessary for him to live in close relationship with people, following the example of Our Lord.

In this respect careful consideration must be given to the bishop's mode of living, especially in regard to features which may have been inherited and perpetuated without question as part of the Church of Ireland's involvement in the social history of the country. While it may not always have been recognised outside and indeed inside the Church of Ireland,

we would emphasise that there has been a welcome trend towards simplicity of living combined with the disappearance of the "prelacy" mentality.

We wholeheartedly endorse the following passage from the Lambeth report 1968 (Resolution 41):

The Conference recommends that the bishops, as leaders and representatives of a servant Church, should radically examine the honours paid to them in the course of divine worship, in titles and customary address, and in style of living, while having the necessary facilities for the efficient carrying on of their work.

22. Consideration should be given to the possibility of having an earlier retirement age for bishops. Sixty-five years was mentioned as a possible retiring age when a bishop might relinquish the work of a diocese and return, if he so wished, to the parochial ministry or to some other form of service in the church.

23. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of limiting the tenure of office of a bishop in the same diocese to a period of, say, ten years.

24. The committee considered the present method of selecting a person for the office of bishop and were of the opinion that the present procedure could be improved. The following suggestions are offered:

- (a) That the diocesan synods should ensure that not more than half the number of episcopal electors are over the age of sixty years at the time of their election.
- (b) voting in the episcopal electoral college should be by orders and that a two third majority of both clergy and laity be necessary to secure election.
- (c) the house of bishops through their representatives should give a definite lead to the college by submitting and commending to the college a list of not more than three names, any of whom they would consider suitable for election to the vacant bishopric.
- (d) from time to time, when an election is not pending, there should be a conference for episcopal electors to

consider the present needs of the church and individual dioceses, and to discuss the lines along which their thinking should proceed.

- (e) the consecration of a bishop should normally take place in the diocese to which he has been appointed.

APPENDIX 1

1. Some members of the committee felt that there should be one pension scale for both bishops and clergy. The present arrangement whereby bishops and bishops' widows are entitled to higher pensions than clergy and clergy widows is held by these members to be based on the false assumption that the bishop's standard of living should be higher than that of other clergy, and that he should be enabled to sustain this in his retirement.

2. On the question of the election of bishops the following views were expressed :—

- (a) The choice should always be left to the house of bishops.
- (b) The diocesan synod of the vacant diocese should select four clergymen, at least two from outside the diocese. The house of bishops would then choose a bishop from the list submitted to them by the diocese.
- (c) The diocesan synod of the vacant diocese should be supplemented by the electoral college and they would meet together to choose a bishop. Voting would be by orders.

3. In connection with the optimum size of a diocese and number of clergy in it some members felt that the following view should be stated as a supplement to section 17 of the report :

- (a) The number of clergy and people should be sufficient to provide the necessary scope for the bishop to exercise the functions which rightly belong to his office.
- (b) This number should not be so small as to endanger that proper degree of detachment which is so essential for effective oversight and influence.

APPENDIX 2

The discussion of episcopacy by this committee has raised many important and crucial issues closely related to the subject under review, for example methods of election, age of retirement, diocesan reorganisation etc. It is acknowledged that in the time allotted the committee have not been able to give to some of these questions the consideration they require. It is left to the General Synod to decide whether or not further and more detailed study of these matters should be undertaken.