

## COMMISSION ON EPISCOPAL NEEDS

## REPORT 1976

Since the publication of our Interim Report, representatives of the following dioceses have come to meet the Commission :

Cashel, Emly, Waterford and Lismore	Tuam, Killala and Achonry Killaloe, Kilfenora, Clonfert and Kilmacduagh
Dublin, Glendalough and Kildare Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh	Limerick, Ardferf and Aghadoe

We have also received written submissions from the following dioceses :

Armagh	Ossory
Clogher	Ferns
Meath	Leighlin
Derry and Raphoe	Cashel, Emly, Waterford and Lismore
Down and Dromore	Cork, Cloyne and Ross
Connor	Limerick
Kilmore	Ardferf and Aghadoe
Elphin and Ardagh	
Tuam, Killala and Achonry	

Similarly a number of written submissions were received from interested individuals.

We are most grateful for all of these submissions, and in particular for the way in which they all, although deeply felt and forcefully presented, were nonetheless invariably put before us in a way which showed a willingness to submit to necessary change and a sympathetic understanding of our problems. As a result of these submissions we have decided to alter some of the proposals in the original draft Scheme. We propose that the Church be organised into the following eleven dioceses, each under a single Bishop :

**Province of Armagh**

Armagh  
Clogher  
Derry and Raphoe  
Down and Dromore  
Connor  
Tuam, Killala, Achonry, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh

### Province of Dublin

Dublin and Glendalough  
 Meath and Kildare  
 Cashel, Waterford, Lismore, Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin  
 Cork, Cloyne and Ross  
 Limerick, Emly, Ardfert, Aghadoe, Killaloe, Kilfenora, Clonfert and  
 Kilmacduagh

We have paid careful attention to the wishes of the people in the various dioceses concerned but it is perhaps too much to hope that the scheme will please everyone. To those who may not be satisfied with these proposals we would appeal to consider whether they are not the best which can now be put forward for the Church as a whole, even if they do not and cannot meet the individual requirements of every Church member. If anyone feels he has worked out a scheme which he considers better than ours, we believe we can say with some confidence that it is probably one that has been considered already, but found to be subject to flaws which may not be readily apparent to anyone who does not have the vast amount of information and assistance which was so generously given to us.

### Assistant Bishops

In the Interim Report it was stated that 'a ministry of assistant or suffragan Bishops is neither justifiable nor compatible with the concept of the Church of Ireland Episcopacy'. Because the Commission did not give any reasons for this opinion, it has been widely, but wrongly, assumed either that we did not have any reasons or that we had not considered the matter fully. The Commission was, and still remains, firmly of the view that suffragan, auxiliary or assistant Bishops should not be introduced. We have been gratified to hear that since the publication of the Interim Report the diocesan council of Connor, the diocese in which most *other* dioceses wished to place an assistant Bishop, has rejected the idea and has asked instead for the continuation of the office of full-time Archdeacon of Connor. The large Church of Ireland population in this diocese is served by 111 parochial clergymen at present. The Commissioners' principal reasons for their opinion are :—

1. The report on the Office and Work of a Bishop (1970) repeatedly emphasised the role of the Bishop as pastor of *his* clergy, and father-in-God to the clergy and people of *his* diocese. He is not simply an administrator, and indeed, following the example of the Apostles as recorded in chapter 6 of the Acts of the Apostles, he may leave administration to others. He is not only a dispenser of Confirmation or an ordainer of new ministers. Above all he is the centre and focus of the local Church in a Christian community. This is exactly the role which would be weakened by the creation of assistant Bishops.

2. We are clear in our own minds that the assistance which a diocesan Bishop might need does not require a clergyman in episcopal orders. Help in administration or in the theological training of Auxiliary Ministers or Lay Readers could be given by Archdeacons or by priests with theological learning and teaching skill. An assistant Bishop whose only episcopal function would be an occasional Confirmation would simply deprive the diocesan Bishop of opportunities of contact with his people.

3. The contemporary trend is away from assistant Bishops.

- (a) As an outcome of the Commission on Clerical Manpower of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales, the Bangor Diocesan Survey (242 pages) was published in 1973. It contains a discussion on the organisation of a diocese and emphasises that in each diocese there are three levels only—Bishop, priest and people—with archdeacons and rural deans exercising some part of the Bishop's oversight of the clergy and people of his diocese. The diocese of Bangor, which is one of the six dioceses of the Church in Wales, has 126 clergy in 116 parishes. There is no assistant Bishop and no proposal for one.
- (b) The system of suffragan Bishops in the Church of England has not worked easily, and has caused frustration. The current practice there is to sub-divide the larger dioceses into areas of individual episcopal responsibility in which each Bishop or suffragan Bishop can be a true father-in-God to the clergy and people of his area.

(c) In 1974, the Committee for the Review of Diocesan Boundaries in the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales published its report 'Ground Plan'. The report recommended the sub-division of the existing 19 dioceses into 37 new dioceses, each with its own Bishop. The existing 19 dioceses are served by a total of 35 diocesan, coadjutor and auxiliary Bishops. A Roman Catholic theologian commenting on 'Ground Plan' says, 'There is the tacit by-passing of the system of auxiliary Bishops. The increase in their number over the last twenty years has not eased the burden of work on the diocesan Bishops'.

4. We have tried to avoid giving too much or too little importance to the financial aspect of our proposals, but an assistant Bishop must either have or not have an incumbency or other position of his own apart from his episcopal one. If he has such a position, the episcopal aspect of his work might become subsidiary, and thus demean the Order. If he has no such post, the charge upon the funds of the Church would in practice be as great or very nearly as great as for a diocesan Bishop.

### **The Bill**

The Statute of 1974 requires us to "prepare and publish a Final Scheme to be submitted as a Bill to the General Synod at its Ordinary Meeting to be held in the year 1976", and we have prepared the Bill and it will be introduced at the Synod. By Section 7 of the 1974 Statute, the power to consent to alteration of diocesan boundaries, which is normally vested (by Chapter I Section 30 of the Constitution) in Diocesan Synods, has been transferred to the Commission, and the Commission has, by Resolution passed on the 28th day of January, 1976, consented to the alterations proposed in this Bill. By Chapter I Section 30 of the Constitution also the consent of the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin is required for the transfer of any diocese from one Province to the other, and both Archbishops have consented to the proposed transfer of Meath from Armagh to Dublin.

The Bill is in three parts, the first of which sets out the groupings of dioceses and adjustments in Provincial boundaries which the Commission has recommended, and which will be achieved when all of the proposed unions have come into effect.

Part 2 sets out the steps by which these new groupings are to be achieved. Broadly it provides that where any two dioceses or groups of dioceses which are now separate are to be united, the union shall take place as soon as a vacancy occurs in either See; but in the case of Bishops who were appointed to their present Sees before May of 1968 the area of their own jurisdiction cannot be altered without their consent, and accordingly transitional provisions have also had to be made to meet the situation which would arise if any such Bishop did not consent to the alteration to his jurisdiction. In that case, the Archbishop of the Province may make interim arrangements for the vacant diocese, and may with the consent of the Standing Committee convene an Electoral College to elect a new Bishop to that diocese, who would then automatically succeed to the other diocese when it becomes vacant.

Part 3 contains some necessary consequential provisions, relating to the composition of Episcopal Electoral Colleges, Diocesan Synods, and other organisations which would be affected by the proposed changes. These cannot be too detailed in the Bill for two reasons. Firstly, a Bill is to be proposed to the 1976 General Synod for altering the arrangements for Episcopal Electoral Colleges, and therefore final arrangements, for such matters as the number of electors to be allotted to each diocese in a new union, cannot be made in our Bill because we do not know exactly how Episcopal Electoral Colleges will be constituted after the close of the 1976 Synod. Secondly, any matters such as re-organisation of Synods and financial schemes are best worked out by the Diocesan Synods and Councils concerned, where necessary in co-operation with their new colleagues, under the supervision of the Standing Committee, and could not appropriately be included in the Bill. Part 3 therefore confines itself to the principles according to which the re-organisation should be carried out, leaving the details to the Standing Committee and to those concerned.

### **Other Recommendations**

Although not strictly within our brief, there are two other recommendations we would like to make, as they formed part of the thinking which led to our Scheme:

- (1) We hope that arrangements will be made for a close relationship between Dublin/Glendalough and Meath/Kildare including if possible arrangements for a single diocesan administration. We do not however feel it is our province to specify these arrangements in detail, nor to attempt to impose them.
- (2) We also believe that the maintenance of a full-time Archdeacon in the diocese of Connor is essential.

### Conclusion

Finally, we express our very sincere thanks to our Secretary, Mr. Robert H. Sherwood of Church of Ireland House, whose labours were unflagging, and whose contribution often went beyond the secretarial. We also received a great deal of assistance from other members of the staff of the Representative Church Body, particularly Mr. John Buttimore, and for this too we are most grateful.

### STATUTES AFFECTING THE CONSTITUTION

#### Preamble and Declaration—1870.

The General Synod—1870, C. i; 1871, C. ii; 1873, Co. i, iv, viii; 1878, C. ix; 1900, C. iv; 1913, C. ii; 1915, C. i; 1917, C. i; 1921, Co. i, x; 1933, C. i; 1935, C. iii; 1937, C. iii; 1945, C. vi; 1959, C. i; 1965, C. vi; 1967, C. i; 1968, C. iii; 1969, C. ii; 1971, C. x; 1972, C. iv; 1976, Co. ii, ix.

Dioceses and Diocesan Organisation—1870, C. i; 1871, Co. iii, v, viii; 1872, C. x; 1875, C. iv; 1878, C. ix; 1921, C. v; 1924, C. i; 1928, C. vi; 1932, C. i; 1934, C. iv; 1937, C. iii; 1943, C. vi; 1967, C. ii; 1968, C. i; 1969, C. iii; 1971, C. ii; 1974, C. viii; 1976, Co. vii, x.

Parishes and Parochial Organisation—1870, C. i; 1871, Co. vi, ix; 1873, Co. vi, xi; 1875, C. iv; 1878, C. ix; 1883, C. i; 1894, C. iii; 1912, C. ii; 1918, C. i; 1921, C. ii; 1927, C. iii; 1928, C. ii; 1935, C. ii; 1947, C. v; 1953, C. ii; 1957, C. iii; 1964, C. iv; 1969, C. vi; 1971, C. ii; 1973, C. iii; 1975, Co. ii, vi.

Appointment to and Tenure of Cures—1870, C. iii; 1871, Co. vii, viii, xi; 1872, C. vii; 1873, C. iii; 1877, Co. iv, xxi; 1878, C. ix; 1890, C. v; 1897, Co. ii, v; 1900, C. iv; 1903, C. i; 1909 (Note); 1920, C. iii; 1920 (Special Session), Co. vii, viii; 1921, C. xii; 1922, C. iv; 1923, C. i; 1925, C. iv; 1926, C. vii; 1931, C. iii; 1934, C. vii; 1942, C. iii; 1943, C. iv; 1946, C. vi; 1948, C. iii; 1949, C. vii; 1951, C. ii; 1970, C. ii; 1971, Co. ii, v, xiv; 1975, Co. ii, iii, iv.

Stipends—1920 (Special Session), C. i; 1921, C. iii; 1925, C. iii; 1948, C. i; 1949, C. iv; 1957, C. i; 1962, C. vi; 1963, C. iv; 1965, C. iv; 1969, C. v; 1971, C. iii; 1972, C. vii; 1973, C. v; 1974, C. iv; 1975, C. v; 1976, C. viii.

Light Duty Parishes—1920 (Special Session), C. iv; 1925, C. iii; 1937, C. ii; 1971, C. ii; 1976, C. vii.

Proprietary Churches—1886, C. v.

#### Archbishops and Bishops.

Election of Bishops—1870, C. iii; 1871, C. i; 1886, C. i; 1897, C. iv; 1900, C. i; 1920, C. i; 1922, C. v; 1939, C. i; 1940, C. i; 1941, C. iii; 1945, C. iii; 1949, C. ix; 1956, C. ii; 1959, C. iii; 1961, Co. iii, vii; 1971, C. vii; 1972, C. iii; 1976, C. iv.

Vacancy of See—1940, C. iv; 1943, C. iii; 1972, C. iii.

Resignation of Bishops—1885, C. iv; 1897, C. i; 1918, C. ii; 1922, C. iii; 1935, C. iv; 1937, C. i; 1940, C. iii; 1941, C. i; 1958, C. i; 1959, C. iv; 1964, Co. vii, viii; 1970, C. iv; 1971, C. xii; 1972, C. iii; 1973, C. vi; 1976, C. vii.

Augmentation of Incomes of Bishops' Widows—1941, C. i; 1972, C. iii; 1976, C. vii.

Cathedrals—1871, C. x; 1872, C. ii; 1878, C. ix; 1906, C. iv; 1964, Co. iv, v; 1970, C. iii; 1976, C. vii.

Archdeacons—1906, C. i; 1926, C. x.

St. Patrick's, Dublin—1872, C. v; 1873, C. v; 1915, C. iv; 1925, C. v; 1926, C. ix; 1927, C. vii; 1930, C. iv; 1943, C. v; 1960, C. vi; 1970, Co. iii, vii; 1971, C. xiii; 1974, C. vii.