

# Suffragan Bishops

House of Bishops Occasional Paper





## **FOREWORD**

### **REPORT ON SUFFRAGAN BISHOPS**

The office of suffragan bishop is one which tends to be taken for granted in the Church today. Suffragan bishops have been unfairly described as 'episcopal curates' or even as 'pastoral anomalies'. This timely theological study, commissioned by the House of Bishops' Standing Committee from the North West regional group of bishops, will hopefully serve to increase understanding of this ministry, which is fundamental to the exercise of *episcopate* in the Church of England.

The report was warmly received by the annual Bishops' Meeting – comprising all diocesan, suffragan and full-time assistant bishops in the Church of England – in May 2002 and had subsequently been considered by both the House of Bishops' Theological Group and the Faith and Order Advisory Group. I warmly thank Bishop Martyn Jarrett and his colleagues for their work and am happy to commend it on the House's behalf to the Church for reflection and study.

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(Chairman of the House of Bishops' Standing Committee)

January 2004



## **Preface – Report on Suffragan Bishops**

This report was firstly produced for the North West Regional Group of Bishops. The latter had been asked by the Standing Committee of the House of Bishops to produce a paper on the rôle of suffragan bishops following responses on that subject from the various regional bishops' meetings. The North West Regional Group thought it wise to entrust the detailed work to some of its members.

In subsequent discussion with the North West Regional Group, some wondered if this Report might have had a wider scope. We might have, for instance, in our historical background, offered substantial examples of auxiliary bishops being used in specific missionary situations to which we referred and then have produced imaginative proposals for the Church of our day. We might have commented on the desirability or otherwise of suffragan bishops combining their ministries with that of archdeacon or some other office. We might have expressed a preference for there being more or less suffragan bishops than there are at present. While we would be happy if our Report were to stimulate such discussion we are also sure that such is not within our terms of reference. We have sought to show that the office of suffragan bishop is well rooted both historically and theologically in the life of the Church. There is no need to apologise for the ministry of the suffragan bishop as so often has been the case. We argue, therefore, that suffragan bishops should be permitted by the Church to exercise fully the responsibilities which flow from being within the episcopal order.

In writing our report, we have been particularly helped by the work and insight of our secretary, the Reverend Stephen Ferns. At various times we have been grateful to consult Dr Mary Tanner, the Right Reverend Christopher Hill and Monsigneur Michael Quinlan, all of whom have given valuable assistance. We are also appreciative of the help of the various people who gave of their time in providing informed views of attitudes taken towards suffragan bishops within the Anglican Communion.

We trust our Report will further the understanding of the ministry of a suffragan bishop, as of all bishops, in the Church of God.

†Martyn Beverley  
November 2001

## Suffragan Bishops

### Chapter 1: Introduction

- 1.1 In 1990 *Episcopal Ministry: the Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate*<sup>1</sup> was published. This Report was soon to be known, almost universally, as *The Cameron Report*, taking its name from that of the chairperson of the group, Sheila Cameron. The Report carried out a wide-ranging review of what the Church of England understood to be the nature of episcopal ministry.
- 1.2 Following the Report's publication and subsequent debate by the General Synod, the House of Bishops' Theological Group identified three issues arising from the Report, which required further study. The three issues identified were: the Collegiality of Bishops, Apostolicity and Succession, and Suffragan Bishops<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.3 Apostolicity and Succession was subsequently addressed by the Faith and Order Advisory Group (FOAG) and its findings published as an Occasional Paper of the House of Bishops in 1994.<sup>3</sup> This work was subsequently followed by another FOAG report considering the Collegiality of Bishops and, again, the House of Bishops approved its publication in 1999 under the title of *Collegiality in the Service of the Koinonia of the Church*.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.4 The House of Bishops' Theological Group undertook some work on the rôle of Suffragan Bishops in 1993<sup>5</sup> and, following that work, the House of Bishops' Standing Committee agreed to convene a group of suffragan bishops to prepare a paper reflecting theologically on experience of shared episcopal ministry<sup>6</sup>. The proposed group, however, was never brought into being.
- 1.5 Following the completion of FOAG's work on collegiality in 1999, the House of Bishops' Standing Committee considered the appropriateness of undertaking the remaining work identified by *The Cameron Report*, namely the consideration of Suffragan Bishops<sup>7</sup>. While not convinced of the need to give priority to such work, the Standing Committee decided, as a first step, to invite bishops' regional groups to discuss the issue and report back.
- 1.6 The House of Bishops' Standing Committee duly considered the responses and invited the Northwest Bishops' Regional Group to give further consideration to the various responses and to produce a paper which the Standing Committee might wish to share with the House of Bishops. The Northwest Bishops' Group, in turn, decided to appoint a working party from its membership, which would first produce a report for the Group's consideration. It was thought important that the working party include within its membership those with experience of a variety of forms of episcopal ministry. Some of those appointed to the working party were subsequently translated or retired but all have contributed to this work for the Northwest Bishops' Group.
- 1.7 The working party's membership consisted of:
  - The Right Reverend Martyn Jarrett, Suffragan Bishop of Beverley, formerly Suffragan Bishop of Burnley (Chairman)
  - The Right Reverend David Gillett, Suffragan Bishop of Bolton
  - The Right Reverend Ian Harland, formerly Bishop of Carlisle, formerly Suffragan Bishop of Lancaster
  - The Right Reverend Rupert Hoare, Dean of Liverpool, formerly Suffragan Bishop of Dudley
  - The Right Reverend John Packer, Bishop of Ripon & Leeds, formerly Suffragan Bishop of Warrington
  - The Reverend Stephen Ferns, Domestic Chaplain to the Bishop of Blackburn (Secretary)
- 1.8 The working party took note of two significant reports relating to episcopal ministry, which were published after the group had come into being. *Resourcing Bishops: The First Report of the Archbishops' Review Group on Bishops' Needs and Resources*<sup>8</sup> was helpful, not only for the Appendix by the Right Reverend Professor Stephen Sykes entitled *A Theology of Episcopacy*<sup>9</sup> and that on *The Legal Rôle of Bishops*<sup>10</sup> by Peter Beesley, but also for the chapter in the Report entitled *Theological Background*.<sup>11</sup> In *Working with the Spirit: choosing diocesan bishops, a review of the operation of the Crown Appointments Commission and related matters*<sup>12</sup>, the Bishop of Rochester, the Right Reverend Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, contributed a significant chapter entitled *Towards a Theology of Choosing Bishops*.<sup>13</sup>

- 1.9 The working party's Report has five chapters. The chapter on *The Historical Development of Suffragan Bishops* seeks to rebalance the somewhat limited perspective of *The Cameron Report* in regard to Church history as it relates to suffragan bishops. We note that some further liturgical work needs to be undertaken given the position of suffragan bishops in the life of today's Church.
- 1.10 The Chapter on *Episcopacy in the Anglican Communion and other Churches* notes the current situation in regard to the use and understanding of suffragan bishops elsewhere in the Anglican Communion and other episcopally-ordered churches. The concept of collegial oversight is explored in an ecumenical context and we suggest that the recovery of an appropriate understanding of collegiality would help formulate a better understanding, also, of the relationship between a diocesan and his suffragan. In a church in which ministerial teams are increasingly encouraged, it is particularly important for bishops working together within a diocese to be exemplary in modelling such ministry.
- 1.11 The chapter entitled *The Office and Work of a Suffragan Bishop* is perhaps a more tentative part of this report. We explore afresh what it might mean to be a suffragan bishop and the potential that resides in that ministry to make a distinctive contribution, complementary to that of the diocesan bishop, to the life of the Church.
- 1.12 The chapter on *Models of Suffragan Bishops and Implications for Future Development* reviews the various models of being a suffragan bishop within the Church of England, which were outlined in *The Cameron Report*. While in no way seeking to undermine the position of the diocesan bishop as ordinary, we explore ways in which the suffragan bishop can better exercise an authentic ministry in the Church of God. We particularly note the need for suffragan bishops, by virtue of their order, to be consulted on doctrinal issues being considered in the House of Bishops. We note that in a Church where the further multiplication of dioceses seems very unlikely, and, arguably, undesirable, the questions raised by suffragan bishops are not going to be resolved by repeated appeals for the re-introduction of monepiscopacy. We also note the implications for the issues we have been considering on those who serve as assistant bishops.
- 1.13 It will be seen that our conclusions suggest some matters on which further work might need to be undertaken. The modest nature of the working party and resources available to it have meant that we are not qualified specifically to suggest how, for instance, liturgical practice should be amended if the viewpoint of the Report were to be endorsed by our brother bishops. For the same reason, we do not offer detailed suggestions as to how suffragan bishops might be more structurally involved in doctrinal matters under consideration by the House of Bishops. If our premises are held to be correct then it is for others to take such practical matters further forward.



## Chapter 2: The Historical Development of Suffragan Bishops

2.1 *The Cameron Report* devotes several pages to the evolution of the concept of suffragan bishops within the Church of England<sup>1</sup>. The material provides some historical background required for an understanding of current practice. Nevertheless, the Report is by no means exhaustive in its treatment of suffragan bishops. Further work needs to be done in four areas:

- a) The Report, being committed to the principle of monepiscopacy, does not examine historical evidence which might shed light on developing new patterns of exercising *episcopate*. Such an examination could have a bearing upon our understanding of how suffragan bishops might operate;
- b) The Report contains an underlying assumption that suffragans are something of a 'theological anomaly' within the life of the Church, rather than a development which is arguably as ancient as monoepiscopacy itself;
- c) While the Report gives full treatment to the development of suffragan bishoprics during the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, its discussion of the Twentieth Century, when suffragan bishoprics proliferate, is somewhat thin;
- d) Attention needs to be paid to the liturgy for ordaining suffragans and what the present liturgical arrangements suggest about the ministry of a suffragan bishop.

We do not seek to replicate the useful historical work already contained in *The Cameron Report* but, rather, attempt to address some of the areas which the Report did not consider.

### Alternative Patterns of Episcopate in the New Testament.

- 2.2 There are varieties of understanding as to how the three-fold ministry emerged from the patterns found in the New Testament. The ministry of the Apostles, in part unique and unrepeatable, especially their eyewitness experience of the Lord's death and resurrection, was in other ways continued and transmitted to others in, for example, leadership, teaching, and discipline. In the Acts of the Apostles and the Pastoral Epistles we see patterns of this transmission to apostolic delegates such as Timothy and Titus, as well as new leadership in Paul and James. Alongside such personal oversight the Acts of the Apostles and the Pastoral Epistles also witness to the collegial ministry, especially in the groups or councils of presbyters.
- 2.3 There are a number of theories as to how the three-fold ministry, centred on episcopacy, emerged in the immediate post-New Testament era. One view maintains that there was a more collegial pattern in the west, whether those exercising such ministry are termed bishops or presbyters, and in the east a more personal focus on a single bishop, the two eventually coalescing into the three-fold ministry. Another view argues that churches of Gentile background were led by single bishops; those of Jewish background copied a pattern of a Jewish council of presbyters, the two eventually coalescing. It is important to note that within such diverse origins the apostolic nature of the ministry was still emphasised within the Western tradition by such ministries as that of the prophets mentioned in the New Testament or the apostles of the Didache. A more recent thesis<sup>2</sup> takes seriously recent research on the earliest New Testament house churches. The earliest house churches, still with apostolic oversight, had local leaders called either bishops or presbyters. When later there was a number of such house churches in a city those within the collective leadership were called presbyters, and in the final stage, when there is no apostolic leadership, the presiding presbyter in a city came to be known as bishop. If this theory is correct, it provides an understanding of episcopacy rooted in collegiality and a collaborative way of exercising personal oversight. However, the coming together of collegial and personal oversight in the other earlier theories equally emphasises that the origins of personal episcopacy are bound up with collegial ways of working together. This will have its effect of any understanding on the theology and rôle of suffragan bishops.
- 2.4 The earliest history of the Church in these islands offers a pattern which is complementary to a purely territorial understanding of episcopacy. Care needs to be taken in assessing the evidence of episcopal practice in the Anglo-Saxon period, for example, in making too sharp a contrast between a so-called Roman model established by Augustine and furthered in the North by Wilfrid, and a Celtic/Northumbrian model as practised by Aidan and Cuthbert. The Roman model of episcopacy may have been more concerned with establishment of a diocese



than the Celtic which was based in religious communities of which the bishop was not necessarily the head. Both, however, were concerned with mission and this was tribally rather than territorially based. St Chad was not appointed as Bishop of Mercia but as Bishop of the Mercians. Augustine himself was directed by Pope Gregory to the English peoples rather than to a precise territory, just as Cyril and Methodius were directed by the same pope to the Slavs. The bishop was the bishop to a group of peoples bound together by kinship. Based in monasteries rather than cathedral towns, he was a missionary bishop who travelled around from community to community. What is particularly interesting about this model of *episcopo* is that it moves away from rigid territorial boundaries to being a missionary bishop to a particular groups of people. In today's Church this could have helpful implications for relating bishops to natural communities, whether social, cultural, or professional.

### Further Developments: Collaborative Episcopal Ministry

- 2.5 For much of the Church's life, there have existed suffragan bishops or their equivalents and their ministry has been a practical necessity in the provision of *episcopo* with the Church for the better furtherance of its mission. The problem with monoepiscopacy was clear from the outset: a single bishop could not hope to serve the increasing number of congregations in disparate geographical locations. The solution was straightforward. Either dioceses had to be divided into a more manageable size or diocesan bishops would have to delegate some of their functions.
- 2.6 Initially in Syria and parts of Asia Minor, and subsequently through Europe, the Church opted for the second of these options. This led to the appointment of *chorepiscopoi*.<sup>4</sup> *Chorepiscopoi* were literally 'country bishops' ordained to supervise the scattered flock in rural districts. Described as *vicarii episcoporum* by Isadore of Seville<sup>5</sup> we hear about them as established institutions in the East early in the Fourth Century. The *chorepiscopoi* were permitted both to sit and vote in the Councils of the Church, as is recorded at the first Council of Nicæa and the Council of Ephesus.<sup>6</sup> The Tenth Canon of Antioch (341) indicates that they might be ordained by one local bishop alone, rather than the customary minimum of three<sup>7</sup>, and that the *chorepiscopoi* might ordain to the minor orders, but not to the diaconate or the presbyterate without the leave of the bishop under whom they served.<sup>8</sup> The *chorepiscopoi* can be seen as the precursors of suffragan bishops. The evidence from antiquity is of *chorepiscopoi* acting collegially with their diocesans in synods and councils. St Gregory Nazianzus, for example, though ordained to the title of Sasima, in fact acted as auxiliary to his father who was also Bishop of Nazianzus.
- 2.7 In the very early history of the Church it is not always easy to discern what constituted a province as opposed to a diocese. Thus, historians such as TG Jalland<sup>9</sup> and, more recently, Eamon Duffy<sup>10</sup>, have even described Rome as being overseen in its early days not by one bishop but by an episcopal college, reflecting perhaps the pattern that we have already noted as being suggested in the New Testament. How far the other bishops were independent from their president is not clear.
- 2.8 At the beginning of the Ninth Century, the appointment of *chorepiscopoi* in the Western Church was suspended. The reason was twofold. During the political and social instability which characterised the Frankish kingdom in the Seventh Century, the *chorepiscopoi* often became a law unto themselves, wandering around ordaining clergy without any reference to diocesan bishops. Church order was being abused.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the Church began to question the way *chorepiscopoi* were ordained and the validity of their orders, since they were ordained by only one bishop.<sup>12</sup> The result was that from the beginning of the Ninth Century *chorepiscopoi* were abolished within the Western Church.
- 2.9 The practice of appointing auxiliary bishops to work in a diocese under a diocesan bishop was put on hold until revived by the Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 as a matter of 'urgent necessity'.<sup>13</sup> One of the canons (of nine), interestingly, makes provision for episcopal ministry for those of a different language within a diocese (a cultural episcopal ministry); another (ten) for the situation where there is too heavy a workload for a single bishop or in an emergency, such as war. However, the Canons of the Council were careful to avoid the problems associated with the *chorepiscopoi*. The auxiliary should be consecrated as bishop using the same ordinal as that for the consecration of any other bishop. The auxiliary should exercise strict obedience to the diocesan bishop and was to deputise for him when he was ill or outside the diocese.<sup>14</sup> During the Medieval

period diocesan bishops were often absent on state business. Of the nineteen royal Chancellors in England between 1401 and 1529, seventeen were bishops or archbishops.<sup>15</sup> Auxiliary bishops were clearly perceived as essential with occupants of larger dioceses always having one or two suffragans on a permanent basis to help out with the performance of episcopal duties. To cope with the situation, a variety of episcopal assistants, such as Welsh and Irish bishops, and later one abbot of a religious house duly ordained as a bishop, were employed by absent or overworked diocesans.<sup>16</sup>

- 2.10 The Break with Rome in the 1530s led to an increase in the process of placing ecclesiastical affairs under parliamentary statute. The Suffragan Bishops Act of 1534 is important because it provided suffragans with a recognised position in the structure of the Church of England.

“Albeit that since the beginning of this present Parliament good and honourable ordinances and statutes have been made and established for elections, presentations, consecrations, and investing of archbishops and bishops of this realm ... as by sundry statutes thereof made more at large is specified; yet nevertheless no provision hitherto has been made for suffragans, which have been accustomed to be had within this realm for the more speedy administration of the sacraments, and other good, wholesome, and devout things and laudable ceremonies, to the increase of God’s honour, and for the commodity of good and devout people...”<sup>17</sup>

Following this preamble, Parliament went on to make provision for the establishment of suffragan bishops in twenty-five named towns. Ironically the 1534 Act turned out to be the swansong of the suffragan bishop. The changes brought about by the Reformation gradually rendered his office unnecessary and, by the end of the Sixteenth Century, the English suffragan had all but disappeared. The reason for this was a lessening in the need for additional episcopal ministry. There were, for instance, fewer clergy and so fewer ordination services. Diocesan bishops were now expected to be resident in their dioceses and fully available to perform episcopal duties.<sup>18</sup> The use of suffragans lapsed from the Seventeenth to the late Nineteenth Centuries, even though there were still cases of absenteeism, particularly in Wales.

- 2.11 It was with the appointment in 1870 of the Bishops of Nottingham and Dover that suffragan bishoprics were restored to the Church of England. The rationale behind this decision was clear. There was a pastoral need for more episcopal ministry than the hard-pressed diocesans could deliver.<sup>19</sup> This need was particularly generated by the revival of the practice of Confirmation. Ease of travel by railway and subsequently by motorcar increased both availability and demand. However, the creation of suffragan bishoprics was not across the board. Some dioceses had to wait well into the Twentieth Century before they had suffragans. Some of the smaller dioceses still do not have such provision.
- 2.12 The historical evidence suggests, certainly in larger dioceses, that if we did not have suffragan bishops we would have to invent them. Such were the demands for and upon episcopal ministry, it clearly became unrealistic to expect a single bishop to fulfil those demands single-handedly.

### **Evidence from the Twentieth Century**

- 2.13 While an historical survey of the development of the suffragan bishoprics in the Sixteenth Century and their revival in the Nineteenth Century is of interest for tracing the antecedents, the period which is particularly germane to any analysis of contemporary practice is the Twentieth Century. It was during its course that suffragan bishoprics multiplied to such an extent that there are now many more suffragan bishops than diocesans. By 1928 there were 26 suffragans to 43 diocesans. In 1947 there were 41 suffragans. In 2001 there are 66 suffragans. It is important to note why this development occurred and how the rôle and expectations of suffragan bishops changed during the period.
- 2.14 A major factor was the way suffragan bishoprics were financed. In the late Nineteenth Century and well into the Twentieth Century, most suffragan bishoprics were tied to wealthy Livings. The suffragan bishopric of Burnley is a good case in point. In 1890 the Burnley Rectory Act was passed, which allowed for some of the income from the benefice of Burnley to be used to constitute a suffragan bishopric and which necessitated the bishop to be also Rector of Burnley. Bishops of Burnley remained Rectors of Burnley through until 1987<sup>20</sup>. It was usual practice throughout the Church of England for suffragan bishops to hold another ecclesiastical office

which provided sufficient income to underwrite the expenses associated with the bishopric. These suffragan bishops were essentially priests in episcopal orders, who helped out with confirmations and episcopal duties as required.

- 2.15 This model gradually became less the norm within the Church of England during the 1950s and 1960s when a whole raft of new suffragan bishoprics was founded, which were free standing, financially independent, and not tied to any other form of ecclesiastical office. This change in strategy towards full-time suffragans came about as a result of some major reflection within the Church as to what could reasonably be expected of a diocesan. There was considerable debate about the nature of episcopacy and what should be the proper episcopal charge<sup>21</sup>. There was concern about the size of dioceses and the wide variations in population from diocese to diocese. It was clear that in a large urban diocese the diocesan bishop could not hope to get round sufficiently and that his engagement with his clergy and his outreach to the laity was likely to be fairly limited.
- 2.16 The enormity of the task was coupled with an greater expectation of what was required of a bishop. The expectation was increasingly that the bishop should be available to his clergy and laity as a high profile leader and that pastoral oversight was his primary task. There was a desire for more bishoping within the Church. As in earlier times, the only way of meeting the expectations was either to carve up the dioceses into smaller units or to create more suffragan bishops who would provide greater episcopal pastoral oversight. The former solution of dividing dioceses, which happened in 1926-27, was thought impractical in the 1960s and 1970s because of the financial implications. It would also quite simply have exhausted the legislative energies of the Church for a decade and have embittered it with local battles over the reduction of the size of dioceses<sup>22</sup>. Increasing the number of suffragans was considered the simplest and most effective solution. In some cases, like London and Oxford, the choice was starkly between a break up of the diocese or an increased number of suffragan bishops with considerable delegated authority organised in an area system. Both London and Oxford chose the latter option.<sup>23</sup>
- 2.17 As the expectations placed upon bishops has continued to grow, so has the variety of duties expected to be undertaken by suffragan bishops. The development of area schemes and other such models of exercising episcopal ministry by suffragan bishops is particularly addressed in Chapter Five. Nine suffragan bishops are now elected to serve in the House of Bishops, giving some recognition to the fact that they are members of the episcopal order. Recent suggestions that the number of suffragans in the House of Bishops should be reduced in number gained little support in the July 2001 meeting of the General Synod. Given the increased demands placed upon archbishops and bishops it was even thought appropriate in October 2000 for a suffragan bishop, the Right Reverend Frank Weston, Bishop of Knaresborough, to represent the Archbishop of Canterbury as principal consecrator of the new Bishop of Kurungala, in Sri Lanka, for which the Archbishop of Canterbury still retains metropolitanical responsibility.

### **Emphases within the Ordination Liturgy**

- 2.18 While the Church of England was making significant developments in its pattern of exercising episcopal ministry, by contrast little, if any, of this new thought was reflected within the Ordinal. It is instructive to compare the two currently authorised ordination rites for the consecration of bishops, the rites of 1662 and those of 1980.
- 2.19 In the Ordinal of 1662 there is no reference to bishop as leader. It is the people's duty to follow but it is the Word which the bishop preaches that they are to follow and not the bishop himself:

*"Give grace, we beseech thee, to all Bishops the pastors of thy Church, that they may diligently preach thy Word, and duly administer the godly discipline thereof; and grant to the people that they may obediently follow the same..."<sup>24</sup>*

In other words, it is the bishop's work of preaching the Word of God and administering the discipline it enjoins that is marked out in that first collect in the 1662 Ordinal. The bishop is to point beyond his own office to the Word of God, which the people are enjoined to follow.



- 2.20 The Ordinal of 1980 has a rather different emphasis. In the prayer which accompanies the laying on of hands at the point of the ordination of a bishop there is a specific reference to the bishop's leadership rôle:

"Fill your servant with grace and power, which you gave to your Apostles, that he may lead those committed to his charge in proclaiming the Gospel of Salvation. Through him increase your Church, renew its ministry, and unite its members in a holy fellowship of truth and love." <sup>25</sup>

- 2.21 Both Ordinals are used, without variation, for the ordination of both diocesan and suffragan bishops. It could be assumed, however, that the traditional office and work of the diocesan bishop is what the 1980 Ordinal has in mind, particularly in its description of the work of a bishop:

"A bishop is called to lead in serving and caring for the people of God and to work with them in the oversight of the Church. As a chief pastor he shares with his fellow bishops a special responsibility to maintain and further the unity of the Church..."<sup>26</sup>

The final prayer brings pastoring and leading together:

"Look with favour on your servant, whom you have chosen to be a pastor over your Church; and grant that by word and example he may lead the people committed to his charge..."<sup>27</sup>

- 2.22 Liturgical forms, particularly the Ordinal, have a dual function. Firstly, they give expression to ecclesiastical order in ways which have legal and juridical significance. Secondly, they express theological convictions and positions. The 1980 Ordinal predates such recent consideration that has been given to the episcopal office. Not surprisingly, there is an absence of the kind of terminology associated with many of the reports produced by the Church of England itself and in ecumenical partnership with other churches.<sup>28</sup> Key words such as *collegiality* and *collaborative* are not to be found. The present ordination service seems out of step with the way the Church of England increasingly wishes to give expression to its understanding of *episcopate*. In the forthcoming revision of the Ordinal due emphasis should be placed on the collegial and collaborative nature of the single episcopal order.

- 2.23 The historical evidence points to the way in which the Church of England has developed its use of suffragan bishops as a practical response to pastoral need. However, the historical evidence also points up the need for more theological work to reconcile a vigorous theology of moniscopacy with the practice of having suffragans. The practical development of the episcopal ministry of suffragans has been rapid but it is true to say that the theology underpinning it has struggled to keep pace. Even as late as 1985 the Church of England could observe in its reflections on the Lima Text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* some hesitation that ordaining suffragan bishops might be out of step with its understanding of episcopacy:

"Indeed the current use of episcopacy by the Church of England with bishops suffragan outnumbering the diocesans by 64 to 44 is at variance with the theology of the office set out in its own official rite as well as with the arguments it has used to commend episcopacy to other churches." <sup>29</sup>

By contrast, this Report seeks to argue that such a response is needlessly negative and to highlight suffragan bishops as a valid development in the Church's understanding of episcopacy.

### Chapter 3: Episcopacy in the Anglican Communion and in other churches

- 3.1 The Church of England's understanding of *episcopate* has been developed by its interaction with the wider church. Within the Anglican Communion, the Church of England contributes to and receives from an ongoing exchange of experience and insight. Another important factor has been the Church of England's increasing engagement in ecumenical discussion where focusing of issues of convergence and divergence has helped to identify more clearly the Church of England's own position. The importance of ecumenical agreements is recognised by *The Cameron Report* which sets aside two sections on Ecumenical Convergence and Ecumenical Progress.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter we consider the experience of the Anglican Communion, reflect on the practice of other episcopally-ordered churches, and examine the growing ecumenical convergence on the understanding of *episcopate*. Our specific focus will be to consider whether such evidence from these three sources might point us towards developing a more theologically-coherent understanding of the rôle of suffragan bishops within the Church of England.

#### The Experience of the Anglican Communion

- 3.2 The provinces of the Anglican Communion differ in their arrangements for episcopal ministry. There is little uniformity but a sense that the concept of collegiality between all bishops is being taken more and more seriously as a crucial basis of episcopal ministry, whether within a diocese or throughout a province.
- 3.3 Some provinces of the Anglican Communion, whether for theological, geographical, or demographic reasons, have no suffragans or their equivalent. One province, Rwanda, has recently excluded them from its constitution while others, such as Kenya and Central Africa, which had previously used suffragan bishops, have now opted for the creation of new dioceses as their preferred way of providing episcopal care and leadership for their churches. A number of provinces such as Scotland, Ireland, Japan, and the United Churches of Pakistan and Bangladesh, seem to feel they have an adequate episcopal provision without needing to add to it.
- 3.4 The re-establishment of suffragan sees within the Church of England has led, in turn, to the introduction of suffragan bishops or their equivalents in many parts of the Anglican Communion. Such provinces which have introduced suffragan bishops can be grouped in two broad categories: there are those who have generally maintained the same approach to suffragan bishops as has been the case for much of the Twentieth Century in the Church of England, and there are also those provinces which have undertaken some radical changes in their thinking and practice as they have wrestled with the issues raised by the consecration of bishops other than for the ministry of a diocesan.
- 3.5 Among the former grouping might be listed such provinces as Australia and Wales. The Welsh Assistant Bishop is appointed as an assistant bishop to the Archbishop and is not a member of the House of Bishops. It should be noted that this arrangement for providing an assistant bishop to the Archbishop was in place and in use long before present provision for the Assistant Bishop to have the particular care of those in Wales opposed to the ordination of women. In Australia the *Assistant Bishops Canon* of 1966 makes the appointment of an assistant bishop (the term 'suffragan' is not used in this specific sense in Australia) totally dependent upon the diocesan although, in practice, confirmation is often sought from the Diocesan Standing Committee. Assistant bishops are not members of the House of Bishops. The emphasis in this model of suffragan bishops is very much on having a deputy who can undertake certain episcopal sacramental functions but who has little responsibility *per se* as a bishop in the Church of God.
- 3.6 Among the latter grouping might be listed such provinces as those of Southern Africa (CSA), the United States of America (ECUSA), the Southern Cone of America, and the Anglican Church in Aetearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (ACANZP). The CSA had first sought to go down the line of creating new dioceses but has encountered the difficulty that some "cannot maintain themselves". This had led the CSA to move away from the concept of the bishop suffragan as an assistant or "second grade" bishop towards that of being a regional bishop. Bishops suffragan are elected by the Diocesan Assembly and are members of the CSA's House of Bishops. Similarly, in ECUSA a suffragan bishop is elected in the same way as a diocesan or co-adjutor. The diocesan may ask for an election but the diocese must then ratify that request. The decision to hold an election

and its outcome, must be further ratified by two-thirds of the diocesan and co-adjutor bishops, together with two-thirds of the standing committees of the dioceses. Suffragan bishops are members of the House of Bishops but, given that, for example, they have no vote in ratifying episcopal elections, would seem at times to be junior members. Suffragan bishops are usually sought in dioceses that have large numbers of congregations and communicants and where the diocesan bishop recognises the need for more episcopal ministration than he can provide. Most dioceses give certain canonical responsibilities to suffragans but retain oversight of those responsibilities.

- 3.7 In the Province of the Southern Cone, Northern Argentina provinces an example of almost parallel episcopacy, defined largely by language rather than location, within a single diocese. A suffragan bishop is appointed with particular responsibility for those across the diocese whose language and culture differ from that of the majority. The bishops often act together and the region and language are more significant than any hierarchy. It is known who the diocesan bishop is, but the fundamental concept is that of bishops acting together as servants of God and of the people.
- 3.8 Perhaps the most imaginative initiatives with regard to the use of non-diocesan bishops have come from ACANZP. Prior to the 1980s, assistant bishops operated in the Province in a similar way to suffragan bishops in many other parts of the Communion. In the 1980s significant changes were enacted by the General Synod. Assistant bishops were now to be voting members of the House of Bishops, both at General Synod and Diocesan Synod level. They were to be elected by an electoral college which must include not only the diocesan but other bishops in the diocese. The revised Constitution of 1992 provided that all active bishops could attend the General Synod. All bishops, and not just diocesan bishops, were eligible to be appointed to the office of Primate. When that office was vacant, or the holder was unable to act, then the duties should be carried out by an Acting Primate who would be the senior bishop in full-time episcopal ministry, seniority being determined by the date of episcopal ordination. Thus bishops other than diocesans could function as Acting Primate.
- 3.9 In 1992, the Diocese of Waiapu enacted a new canon giving legal provision for regional bishops and listing their specific duties. The diocesan bishop would have responsibility for a region within the diocese, as would the assistant. In 1999 the Diocese of Waikato established a similar scheme.
- 3.10 As far back as 1928 a bishopric was created in the Maori part of the Church. That bishop was named a suffragan of Waiapu with the title Bishop of Aotearoa, and usually appointed an assistant bishop in the other dioceses of New Zealand. In 1978, the Bishop of Aotearoa ceased to be a suffragan of Waiapu and became attached to the Primate with the right to engage in episcopal duties among the Maoris in each of the New Zealand dioceses. The Canon of 1992 provided for those who wished to be ministered to by the Tikanga Maori. In effect, a non-territorial archbishopric has been established for the Bishop of Aotearoa and provision has been made for the election of a number of bishops to exercise episcopal jurisdiction in relation to the Hui Amorangi, which are the Maori equivalent of dioceses. This means that there has to be careful consultation and collaboration between bishops of different categories who are reckoned, nevertheless, to be bishops of the Church with equal status within its life.
- 3.11 It would appear that ACANZP has committed itself towards a policy of bishops working together in collaboration and sometimes overlapping geographical areas rather than pursuing the line of dividing dioceses and the restricting of one bishop to ministry solely in one geographical area. These developments point to a vast variety of patterns for the exercise of a suffragan's ministry, as well as a diocesan's, and strengthen the argument for flexible patterns in exercising episcopal ministry.
- 3.12 A significant development within the Anglican Communion was the decision to invite all suffragan bishops as well as diocesans to the Lambeth Conference of 1998 as full voting members. Arguably, the principle had already been conceded a decade earlier when many area bishops were invited. In a forum, specifically gathered to express the collegiality of all Anglican bishops, suffragans, without juridical responsibility, were given full opportunity to discharge their episcopal responsibility together with diocesan bishops.



## The Experience of other Episcopal Churches

- 3.13 There is evidence in other episcopal churches of the need to provide some form of 'assistant bishop', 'suffragan', or 'auxiliary'. While the Roman Catholic Church has always been episcopally ordered, the manner in which individual bishops exercise this *episcopate* in their local churches often varies, with the use of auxiliary bishops, vicars general, episcopal vicars, or combinations of all three.<sup>2</sup> Auxiliary bishops are appointed by the Pope in the same way as other bishops, emphasising their inclusion within the episcopal order. By contrast, vicars general and episcopal vicars (which despite their title are not necessarily in episcopal orders) are appointed directly by the diocesan bishop without reference to Rome. Perhaps, partly for this reason, there has been some decline in the use of auxiliary bishops. By a greater use of vicars general and episcopal vicars a diocesan bishop can make immediate appointments of his own choice without the time delay necessarily involved in seeking a nomination from Rome and, of course, no final say as to whom the successful candidate for an auxiliary see might be. Moreover, since Confirmation may be delegated to a priest, the need for a colleague in episcopal orders proper is less. It is, however, stressed that the bishop is the ordinary minister for confirmation and attempts are being made to recover this emphasis.
- 3.14 What is striking within Roman Catholicism is its understanding of collegiality. Collegiality in the Roman Catholic Church is an activity involving the whole body of bishops teaching together or gathering together in a Council. At such gatherings, there is no distinction between diocesan bishops and auxiliary bishops. Prior to the Second Vatican Council only diocesan bishops were permitted to participate in Councils. Bishops without jurisdiction were permitted to attend as a privilege and not a right but, if present, were given both the right to speak and to vote. Such remained the situation in Roman Catholic Canon Law until the revision of the latter following the Second Vatican Council, when all bishops were given the right to participate by virtue of their order<sup>3</sup>. This decision reflected the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that all bishops in communion with the Pope were members of a single apostolic college.<sup>4</sup> Within this collegiality there is an exercise of personal primacy by the Bishop of Rome who has a particular form of *episcopate* as head of the college of bishops.
- 3.15 Since the Second Vatican Council some new experiences of *episcopate* have emerged which are increasingly collegial and communal. The advent of Episcopal Conferences has meant that the auxiliaries, as well as the diocesans, participate. Their right to be present is now safeguarded in Canon Law. Their voting rights vary from Conference to Conference. In England and Wales they vote on matters of faith and order.<sup>5</sup> In larger dioceses a bishop may have a number of auxiliary bishops and hence exercise his *episcopate* in a more collegial way within the local church. In some large cities, such as Rome, Brussels, and London, it has not proved any more practical to divide into smaller dioceses than it has for the Church of England. An appropriate understanding of collegiality is key to the practice of shared *episcopate*.
- 3.16 Four principles, pastoral need, unity in governing a diocese, episcopal status, and a close working relationship between a diocesan bishop and his auxiliaries, provide the basic frame of reference within which the rôle of auxiliary bishops can be understood within the life of the diocese. All auxiliary bishops are appointed to the service of the diocese and not to the person of the diocesan bishop. Occasionally an auxiliary bishop is appointed with special faculties in order to assist a diocesan in poor health or with supra-diocesan responsibilities which limit his ability adequately to carry out diocesan duties. The code of Canon Law does not say that such auxiliaries are appointed necessarily at the request of the diocesan bishop. Such auxiliaries with special faculties are to aid a diocesan bishop in the entire governance of the diocese and to take his place if he is impeded or absent. They are to be appointed vicar general and the diocesan bishop is to entrust to them before others those things which by law require a special mandate. They and the diocesan bishop are to consult one another on matters of major importance. Since their faculties restrict the rights of the diocesan bishop those faculties must be strictly interpreted.
- 3.17 Within the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyatira and Great Britain, as in some other Orthodox dioceses, it has been necessary for pastoral reasons to appoint a number of titular bishops. This practice has continued over a period of time despite pleas that monoepiscopacy should be the norm. While some Orthodox theologians have criticised the appointment of titular bishops to seemingly bureaucratic posts there has been a broad acceptance of such appointments to meet real pastoral needs.

- 3.18 Among the Oriental Orthodox Churches there is a wide variety of forms of episcopacy, chorepiscopi still continuing to be appointed though in some cases not ordained to the episcopate. In the Coptic Orthodox Church within the last twenty years sector episcopal ministry has been developed. There is, for example, a Bishopric of Social and Public Affairs, the bishop concerned not being a territorial, diocesan bishop.

### The Experience of Ecumenical Convergence

- 3.19 Important to any theological discussion of *episcopate* is the Lima text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, which states that the ordained ministry should be exercised in a personal, collegial and communal way and that such a pattern operates at every level of the Church's life:

"It should be personal because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by the person ordained to proclaim the Gospel and to call the community to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness. It should also be collegial, for there is a need for a college of ordained ministers sharing in the common task of representing the concerns of the community. Finally, the intimate relationship between the ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community's effective participation in the discovery of God's will and the guidance of the Spirit." <sup>6</sup>

The difficulty has been in the definition of the words *personal*, *collegial*, and *communal* and in particular the word *collegial*. The report *Bishops in Communion* spends several pages seeking to define *collegial*.<sup>7</sup> The issue of collegiality is central to an understanding of how *episcopate* can be shared whether with our ecumenical partners or within a diocese between a diocesan and his suffragan.

- 3.20 The Reuilly Common Statement between the French Protestant Churches and the Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland (1999) makes the point that different churches give different weightings to the three characteristics of oversight:

"The exercise of the ministry of oversight differs among our churches, however. They give varying degrees of importance to the personal, collegial and communal elements in the overall exercise of oversight. All our churches are churches in change: all are in the process of considering the particular balance between these dimensions." <sup>8</sup>

It is important that the three dimensions – *personal*, *collegial* and *communal* – are kept together. As BEM says, in various churches one or another has been overemphasised at the expense of the others. Each church, including our own needs to ask itself in what ways its exercise of ordained ministry has become unbalanced in the course of history.<sup>9</sup>

### Collegiality in the Church of England

- 3.21 The report *Bishops in Communion*<sup>10</sup> gave a substantial account of the Church of England's understanding of the way in which its bishops acted collegially at a national level. The Report noted, nevertheless, that there was some ambiguity about the representative position of elected suffragans within the House of Bishops and that the House itself had called for further work to be undertaken in the ministry of suffragan bishops following the General Synod debate on *The Cameron Report*.<sup>11</sup> It was argued that the annual Bishops' Meeting together with the regional meetings of bishops might be a more appropriate way of expressing a wider collegiality while the House of Bishops would then be restricted to those who held jurisdiction within a diocese. It was noted that, even then, there would be an anomaly in that area bishops who exercise some delegated jurisdiction would not be included.<sup>12</sup> It might be added that, on such a narrow definition of exercising jurisdiction, the recently established right of the Bishop of Dover to be a member of the House would also be open to question. By contrast, the argument of this Chapter suggests that all suffragan bishops exercising episcopacy in the model appropriate for their particular dioceses would be seen as performing equally acceptable modes of episcopal ministry. It may well be that the resulting size of the House precludes the inclusion of all suffragan bishops within its membership, though we note that this has not proved a difficulty in some other parts of the Communion. We note, too, the already mentioned inclusion of suffragans as well as diocesan bishops as full members of the recent Lambeth Conference. It is manifestly wrong that those given specific responsibilities for

the faith and order of the Church at their episcopal ordinations are then excluded by the Church from exercising those responsibilities. In recent years even such major debates in the House of Bishops as that on *The Mystery of Salvation*<sup>13</sup> have been undertaken without consultation of all the suffragan bishops. Some may still wish to argue for abolition of all but diocesan bishops but as long as the Church continues to consecrate bishops suffragan they should not be impeded from exercising the duties entrusted to them at their episcopal ordination.

## Chapter 4: The Office and Work of a Suffragan Bishop

- 4.1 At this stage in the Report, we ask our readers to pause and take a step back from both the historical development of suffragan bishops and present practice around the world. We now offer an account of Christian ministry as such, by way of a theological reflection arising out of the experience of being suffragans in today's Church of England. We address some fundamental truths about the ministry, in order to focus on the particular ministry of the suffragan bishop. Our aim is to show that that ministry is not in fact an anomaly but, rather, a quintessential expression of the ministry God gives to his Church. The calling to be a suffragan bishop, as it comes to terms with the theological, ecclesiological, practical and legal realities of ordained ministry in the Church of England at the beginning of the Twenty-first Century, is not a peculiarity embraced by the Church solely out of practical necessity but is *an office and work* at the heart of what Christian ministry is about. In his lack of jurisdiction, except in delegated form, the suffragan bishop has today the freedom, the privilege and the responsibility of modelling ordained ministry in a diocese in an exemplary way and of playing a leading rôle in the Church's mission to the world.
- 4.2 Christian ministry, whether lay or ordained, is focussed both on God and on humankind. In its orientation towards God Christian ministry always points away from the one who is exercising it, and towards the being and love and judgement of God as known in Jesus Christ. In its orientation towards people, whether individual persons, groups of persons, societies or nations, it seeks to serve them, by sharing with them the love and the judgement, the blessing and the summons, it has itself received from God. In this ministry, ministers come to know and to be known by those whom they serve, but their ministry must always point away from itself and towards the love and judgement and justice of God. This pointing towards God and God's Kingdom, whether beyond, within, among, beneath or above us, is of the essence of all ministry. It is thus always and essentially a ministry from God and to God, and through it are constituted the People of God.
- 4.3 The only minister, priest and prophet, who points both beyond Himself to God, and at the same time to Himself in his own person, is Christ, Prophet, High Priest, and Servant King. But, even in the case of Jesus Christ, it is as the Revealer of God that He invites people to focus on Him. The glory He reveals is the glory of the only Son of the Father, a glory made known paradoxically on the cross. There is both a revealing and a covering of his divinity; he remains paradoxically the stranger, who goes on ahead and calls us to follow him. As such he is the shepherd and the lamb who was slain; the victim as well as the high priest. Both as the Word made flesh and as the one who makes intercession for us, he is the archetype, author and perfecter of all Christian ministry which finds its inspiration, foundation, and goal in him. All Christian ministry is orientated on him, the Good Shepherd, who knows us and is known by us. He is our lover, our reconciler, healer, teacher, servant, overseer, guide, and judge.
- 4.4 All these epithets are needed to describe Christ's work, running from *lover* to *judge*. If one were to look for one word that includes them all, one might choose the term we find in St John's Gospel: *paraclete*. The Jesus of the Fourth Gospel, says the Father, will send *another paraclete*, implying that he is himself a *paraclete*, an encourager, comforter, advocate, one called alongside, translated notably by Rudolf Bultmann as *helper*<sup>1</sup> – the term we are to use to summarise Christian ministry, as seen from the experience of the suffragan bishop.
- 4.5 To move to the ordained ministry, the latter is charged by God and the Church to recall the people of God to their divine calling, in mission, discipleship, and ministry, and to do so always and only in the name of Jesus Christ. In so far as it does so, it has the inestimable privilege and responsibility of sharing in Christ's work. To use the words we have used before, it is to share in his work of knowing his people, loving, reconciling, healing, teaching, serving, overseeing, guiding, and judging the people of God. In this sense, it can be said to *reflect* the High Priesthood of Christ.
- 4.6 This sharing in the ministry of Christ is by no means exclusive to the ordained ministry. Lay people find themselves again and again placed in such ministry. Ordained people, however, are charged and mandated to live and work in that way and to that end, always in Christ's name, and not in their own, always pointing away from themselves, and towards him. It is only in martyrdom embraced with no thought of personal reputation or



status, but purely pointing to Christ, that martyrs paradoxically draw attention to themselves without seeking so to do.

- 4.7 From within a knowledge of the people of God with whose care they have been charged, the ministry of ordained people is essentially one of helping, encouraging, teaching, enabling, but it also includes as and when required guiding, challenging, confronting, judging. To summarise this ministry we use the term *helper*. In all these ways it is a ministry of helping the people of God to be the people of God, in ministry, and mission, and in their discipleship of Christ. Central to this ministry of help and encouragement is the preaching of the word of God, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of the ministry of reconciliation. It also implies oversight over the people of God, in differing degrees, for how otherwise can it recall the People of God to be the People of God? Oversight is exercised in the service of and for the sake of the people of God. II Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 5 applies, at all times: *It is not ourselves that we proclaim; we proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus's sake*. The question has been raised as to why we do not in this report simply have recourse to the well established language of *servant*, but instead speak of *helper*, which is indeed referred to in I Corinthians Chapter 12 verse 28. This verse includes a specific category of ministry called *Helps* (AV); *Ability to help others* (REB). We are using the category *Helper* in a broader sense, though recognising the truth implied by St Paul's inclusion of the term, namely, that some are particularly gifted in fulfilling the rôle of helping others. This word *helper* implies more than being a servant. It includes within it helping another person or community to become something, to grow, to be true to his or her calling, and that a 'nurturing' rôle is not necessarily in a servant's brief.
- 4.8 We come now to the exercise of jurisdiction in the Church. Within this ministry, there are some to whom is given additional, specific, ministerial responsibilities in relation to oversight and the exercise of judgement in the Church's life. They do so in the name of Christ, and not in their own name. However, because Christ is not himself directly and immediately present on earth and within the people of God, but indirectly and mediated in Word and Sacrament, these particular ministers are entrusted, within rules which are recognised and agreed by the People of God, with speaking and making judgements in His name, in order to determine action from time to time on the part of the People of God, individually and corporately, and, within recognised procedures, from time to time to administer discipline.
- 4.9 This exercise of judgement, guidance and discipline is inherent in the ministry, but is to a large extent focussed in particular ministers, pre-eminently in the diocesan bishop and the archbishop of the Province. Its description and delineation belongs to theology and ecclesiology, but also to canon law to which we now have, briefly, to turn. Canon law has provided the Church with a terminology, a legal framework and practice, which have in their turn affected the theology and practice of oversight. It is in this area that the differentiation between diocesan and suffragan bishop is most acutely felt.
- 4.10 In terms of the exercise of *episcopate*, personal, collegial, and communal, the focus has therefore been on the personal ministry of the diocesan bishop in his diocese, as the *ordinary* within that diocese, ie the ecclesiastic exercising:
- "the jurisdiction permanently and irremovably annexed to [the] office [he holds]. Such jurisdiction extends over his rights of teaching, governing, adjudicating and administering the Sacraments." <sup>2</sup>
- But canon law uses the diocesan bishop in a more fundamental way even than that; for it is the bishop that, in his office within his diocese, identifies the local church.
- "The basic unit of the church is the diocese with the bishop at the head of it... [This] puts the theological emphasis in the right place, namely on the Diocese; *ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia*. The parish priest, though now possessed of many rights, is in origin only the deputy of the bishop who, as Incumbent Paramount, has the care of all the souls in his diocese." <sup>3</sup>
- 4.11 Thus the diocesan bishop defines the local Church, for the purposes of canon law. He is thus very different, in this legal account of the Church's ministry, from any suffragan he may appoint, even though they will both have been ordained bishop using the same ordinal. In English canon law the diocesan bishop has no need to appoint a suffragan: *If a diocesan bishop wishes to have the assistance of a suffragan bishop, he petitions the Crown...*<sup>4</sup>

"The bishop further has an unfettered discretion to appoint any bishop, (for example a retired bishop) as assistant bishop. But neither a suffragan nor an assistant bishop takes any more authority than the diocesan bishop chooses to bestow on him." <sup>5</sup>

4.12 The same point can be made by drawing attention to the bishop's see. In the service of consecration of a diocesan bishop within the Church of England, the Sovereign's mandate refers to the diocesan see within which the bishop has been given jurisdiction, and spells out what is entailed in that see, while the Sovereign's mandate to a suffragan bishop refers only to *such a see as is most convenient for this purpose*. In the case of area (suffragan) bishops in the Church of England, their see does have some significance. In the case of other suffragans the choice of see is a matter of convenience only, and in some cases is to all intents and purposes fictitious. It is this legal use of see in canon law, used in relation to the exercise of jurisdiction, which gives to the suffragan bishop the note of anomaly often felt to be associated with his position, rather than *the office and work of a bishop*, which has been entrusted to him.

4.13 Thus in certain situations the diocesan bishop's jurisdiction involves the exercise of juridical powers in which any suffragan has no share. At that point another officer of the diocese is brought into play: the Chancellor. He is the judge of the Consistory Court.

"He is appointed by the bishop; but thereupon he becomes an independent judge in one of the Queen's Courts, deriving his authority not from the bishop, but from the law, and charged, like all judges, with hearing and determining impartially causes in which the bishop or the Crown may have an interest. He is thus not only independent, like all judges, of the authority appointing him; but, being in no sense a deputy, he is, like the bishop, an ordinary, and of course, no appeal lies from him to the bishop, but only to the appropriate appellate court." <sup>6</sup>

4.14 Thus the diocesan bishop shares jurisdiction, in certain juridical matters, with the Chancellor, who derives his authority not from the bishop, but (in English canon law) from the law of the land, the ultimate authority of which rests with the Monarch in Council. This legal fact points to the boundaries set upon the diocesan bishop's 'jurisdiction'. Even though he is 'the ordinary' within his diocese, to speak of his jurisdiction as if it were final, would be to fail to see his office as one which he holds ultimately from the Archbishop and the Monarch. And if we talk of jurisdiction, in the context of English canon law, we have to see it in the historical situation of the Reformation in which what matters was that *the Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England*.

"The King's Majesty hath the chief power in this realm of England and other his dominions, unto whom the chief government of all estates in this realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil, in all causes doth appertain and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign jurisdiction." <sup>7</sup>

4.15 Historical circumstances change, and have indeed changed momentarily since the Reformation – not to speak of the centuries before it in which an English canon law for the English Church was already in place. So, too, theological emphases and understandings change and the ecclesiastical situation, in terms not least of the divisions between the different parts of the Church of God, also change. And thus canon law will also change for it is only *a subordinate legislative authority*.<sup>8</sup>

4.16 To return to our account of the ordained ministry: these additional specific ministerial responsibilities are found both in presbyteral, episcopal and archiepiscopal ministry, but they find their focal expression in the ministry of the diocesan bishop who, although operating within a synodical structure, is in his own person vested with juridical authority in specified areas of the life of the people of God. This exercise of juridical authority, held together with the Chancellor of the diocese, is one additional element within the more general ministry of oversight exercised within a diocese as a whole such as reflects the essential work of ordained ministry as outlined above.

4.17 The diocesan bishop's jurisdiction necessarily raises the question of the nature and location of power in the Church. To turn to the early Church for a moment, in his major study of the exercise and location of power in the Church, Stephen Sykes has argued that power came to be focused on the rôle and office of the (diocesan)



bishop, in a way which appears to run counter to that essential pointing away from one's self that we have argued is characteristic of Christian ministry. Sykes quotes Troeltsch's view of episcopacy:

In a concrete way the episcopate was substituted for the earlier faith in the exalted Christ and the Spirit. It is the successor of Christ and the Apostles, the bearer of the Spirit, the extension and externalising of the Incarnation, a visible and tangible proof of the divine truth and power, the concrete presence of the sociological point of reference."<sup>9</sup>

Even were this view of the historical developments to be disputed, Troeltsch's statement underlines the way in which it is possible to hold that the moniscopate is the sole possessor of both power and authority within the Church. Sykes comments on Troeltsch's language: *The bishop is the 'concrete sociological point of reference', and as such is the natural focus of power.*<sup>10</sup>

- 4.18 The authority perceived in the one to whom, as 'ordinary', jurisdiction in a diocese is given could suggest that episcopal ministry is to be identified primarily with these juridical responsibilities, and only secondarily in the ways outlined above. This view runs the risk of focusing attention on the bishop himself, including his consciously or unconsciously allowing attention to be directed towards himself because of his rôle as ordinary within the diocese rather than on his overriding ministerial responsibility to point away from himself and towards Christ. Jurisdiction as ordinary, and the specific responsibilities of adjudicating, licensing, and disciplining in particular circumstances brings with it for the diocesan bishop's office a theological and spiritual challenge and temptation for both himself and for his diocese, namely, to focus on him himself (in his rôle), rather than on Christ and God, as is the case in all other Christian ministry.<sup>11</sup> He, too, remains essentially a *helper* of the people of God in his ministry.
- 4.19 Suffragan bishops, not having these additional ministerial responsibilities that go with jurisdiction as ordinary, except in so far as it is delegated to them by a diocesan bishop, are therefore free of this particular tendency or temptation, as are assistant curates within the parochial system. They are helpers in two senses; helpers in the general ministerial sense outlined above, and helpers specifically of the one in whom jurisdiction as ordinary, and juridical authority in specific areas of the life of the people of God is vested.
- 4.20 Their office gives them the responsibility and privilege of carrying out the essential work of ministry to the fullest degree, in support of the ministry of the diocesan bishop. They are archetypally *helpers* of the people of God, in their preaching the Word of God, presiding at the Eucharist, carrying through Christian initiation in Baptism and Confirmation, and ordaining ministers to continue the ordained ministry. In their freedom from the responsibilities of the ordinary, they have the time to get to know the people of God, and to be known by them, and to share that knowledge with a diocesan bishop as they share together in the ministry of oversight within a diocese.
- 4.21 In their collaborative work with the diocesan bishop, we believe it to be right to speak of their collegiality with him, within the diocese in which they serve. Moreover this collegiality of bishops within a diocese can act as a balance to that concentrated focus on the diocesan bishop that is unavoidable when the diocesan bishop is on his own. Suffragans also share in the wider collegiality of bishops within a province, led by the Primate, and indeed also in the collegiality a diocesan bishop has with his clergy within his diocese. We are aware that there are differentiations to be made between these three uses of the term *collegial/collegiality*, but regard the essentially shared relationships involved in these different aspects of the one ordained ministry to merit the use of the term in all three cases
- 4.22 Our deliberations, arising out of the practice of collegial episcopal ministry within a diocese, have however led us to add as a question for consideration at a future date the following: might there come a time when, in the Church of England, jurisdiction might more usefully in some dioceses be exercised corporately, so that suffragans would share in it, as in a corporate episcopal body, by right, rather than by delegation? There are examples of such corporate exercise of jurisdiction in the secular world. There are also indications of a movement towards such a position in the rôle bishops play within diocesan synodical government, where they act as one 'House'<sup>12</sup>. The argument of this chapter is that such a development would have disadvantages as well

as advantages, in that it would deprive the suffragan of the very freedom from the exercise of jurisdiction which gives his office and ministry its special importance in today's Church.

- 4.23 A temptation to which suffragan bishops are prone, a temptation too for the people of God in relation to them, is to compare themselves with their bishop who has jurisdiction, and to regard themselves as therefore lacking in respect of an essential element of oversight. The crassest expression of this view is found in the reputed words of a diocesan bishop to his suffragan: *When I'm out of the diocese, you're me; when I'm in the diocese you're no-one!* Prone to this temptation, they are likely to find their *raison d'être* in their delegated jurisdictional authority, for example as area bishops, or by assuming a large number of diocesan and managerial responsibilities. The result can be that they lose sight of the special opportunity and responsibility entrusted to them: to 'model' ordained ministry (in the episcopal office) to the end of pointing away from themselves and towards God and God's Kingdom; to be helpers in the Kingdom of God, in the fullest possible sense. In other words, they have the opportunity and responsibility of enabling the people of God to engage in mission, by the freedom inherent in their office.
- 4.24 If the foregoing is correct, the Church has a 'ministerial profile' for choosing suffragan bishops which will focus on particular gifts to do with the practise of ordained ministry as outlined above. The suffragan bishop should be chosen for the abilities or gifts required to fulfil this specific rôle as helper in the episcopal office, and not in any sense as a quasi-diocesan bishop or even as a diocesan bishop-in-waiting. While the suffragan bishop certainly needs wisdom and resilience, he does not necessarily need to the same degree the gifts or talents that are required by a bishop to whom jurisdiction is given. A bishop exercising jurisdiction will require both wisdom in the application of moral theology for the people of God in today's world, and the spiritual insight and resilience to withstand the temptations and problems related to being vested as ordinary in his own personal ministry with jurisdiction.
- 4.25 By its affirmation of the Lima Statement on baptism, eucharist and ministry, the Church of England has accepted the description of episcopal ministry as being exercised *in personal, collegial, and communal ways*.<sup>13</sup> The view of (diocesan) episcopal ministry as being defined primarily by reference to jurisdiction tends to reinforce the widely held *de facto* view of *episcopate* as a ministry exercised exclusively by one bishop, 'personally'. In all dialogues in which the Church of England has been involved subsequent to Lima, it has repeated the threefold description of the exercise of episcopate, namely as personal, collegial, and communal.
- 4.26 All three aspects are to be given due weight. There is a personal ministry involved in the exercise of *episcopate* – not just in acting as ordinary, but crucially in the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments and in the work outlined above. The suffragan bishop has a special opportunity and responsibility to exercise a personal episcopal ministry.
- 4.27 The ministry of oversight is also a collegial ministry, in two ways. There is collegiality firstly with other bishops, both within a diocese and with the other dioceses within the Province or Communion within which the diocese is situated, and secondly with the presbyters and deacons within the diocese. All together, collegially, are *helpers* of the people of God, as they seek to exercise their mission, ministry and discipleship in the world. They are also *helpers* of the bishop in whom the whole ordained ministry of the diocese finds a focus – but only and always a focus which points beyond itself to God as known in Christ. Suffragan bishops have a special opportunity and responsibility to express and build this collegiality, both within the diocese, and more widely in the province. In this collegiality the specific responsibilities of the diocesan bishop as the ordinary within his diocese recede into the background, and the episcopal office as such, shared by all bishops, becomes uppermost. Within the province or, in the case of the Church of England as a whole, the two provinces of Canterbury and York, the Meeting of Bishops (diocesans, suffragans, and assistants together) can serve the central task of the exercise of episcopate as outlined above while leaving to the House of Bishops specific matters relating to the exercise of jurisdiction, as ordinaries within their dioceses.
- 4.28 Episcopal ministry is also seen as having a communal dimension to it, in that it is exercised within a synodical structure, and involves lay people in all spheres of the governance of the Church. Specifically in the exercise of jurisdiction, the diocesan bishop shares his responsibilities with his legal officers, in the first instance his

Chancellor. Suffragan bishops are frequently given a special opportunity and responsibility to share 'oversight' in a secular setting, with lay colleagues who may or may not be Christian in the secular, wider, community. They can 'model' and express the manifold episcopal rôles that are sought for by people in secular positions within society today.



## Chapter 5: Models of Suffragan Bishops and Implications for Future Development

- 5.1 The ministry of suffragan bishops within the Church of England operates in a variety of ways. We outline below an indication of the range of this variety and want to affirm this breadth of expression within episcopal ministry. Such diversity and variety is a feature throughout Anglicanism – different theological traditions, many approaches to parish life and mission, widely differing styles of priestly ministry and rich variety within our worshipping traditions. All this is considered part of the glory of the Church of England so long as such variety and comprehensiveness is not unprincipled. The issue of Anglican comprehensiveness and its limits was explored as recently as 1988 by the Lambeth Conference and the debate continues as the various Provinces of the Communion respond to *The Virginia Report*.<sup>1</sup> In the case of the episcopate and particularly the different models of being a suffragan bishop that flow from it, the important issues are whether these different models are consistent with Scripture, the Church's formularies, its inherited tradition and the current evolving challenges and opportunities.
- 5.2 Two factors are consistent with the ministry of a suffragan. First, each suffragan, in relation to *his orders*, is an ordained bishop who is commissioned to exercise a full episcopal ministry within the Church. Secondly, each suffragan, in relation to *his function*, is subject to the way in which the diocesan bishop defines the areas of delegated responsibility, whether the extent of that delegation be governed by Area Scheme or by some other instrument or agreement. These should include as a bare minimum, the performing of ordinations, confirmations, institutions and the visitation of parishes. While the Sovereign's Mandate for a diocesan and suffragan read at each consecration differs, the former specifically to a diocesan see with all that entails, and latter to *such a see as is most convenient for the purpose*, the ordination prayer is identical, as was emphasised in Chapter 2.
- 5.3 Thereafter, the practice differs from diocese to diocese. Other responsibilities are delegated according to the particular needs of the diocese and the interests and gifts of both the diocesan and suffragan bishop(s). The way in which such variety has evolved depends on a whole range of factors: the particular type of diocese, for example urban, rural or both; the personality and gifts of the diocesan bishop; the size of the diocese; the number of suffragan bishops within the diocese; the personality and gifts of the suffragan bishop(s); the cohesiveness or distinctiveness between the various locations within the diocesan area; the expectations of clergy and laity about episcopal ministry; approaches to collaborative ministry.
- 5.4 Many suffragan bishops chair major committees or boards and have special pastoral oversight of a particular group of clergy such as non-stipendiary ministers, or clergy working in particular areas such as urban priority areas. By contrast some suffragans do not chair committees and boards, but rather give priority to clergy, parishes and communities across the diocese or within a designated area. For the most part, diocesans and suffragans work closely together and divide up between them the tasks which need to be done. Because they have fewer national responsibilities it is often possible for suffragan bishops, perhaps particularly those who have an area responsibility, to develop more extensively the vital links between church, politicians and community leaders.
- 5.5 In the light of this variety within a continually developing tradition, *The Cameron Report* outlined, with varying degrees of approval, three possible theological models of being a suffragan bishop within the Church of England. Our approach is to work within the framework of these three models but, in the light of ongoing theological reflection which has happened in the wake of *The Cameron Report*, and the changing contexts in which bishops are called to serve, we offer both developments and fresh evaluation for each model.

### Model One: a theology of episcopal collegiality of the diocesan and suffragan bishops within the diocese

- 5.6 This first model presented is derived from a theology of episcopal collegiality of the diocesan and suffragan bishops within the diocese. The Cameron Report considers this *a novel extension of the concept of collegiality*.<sup>2</sup> The Report expresses an anxiety that this model could potentially compromise the primacy of the diocesan bishop:

"Collegiality of bishops in a diocese could at its worst be little more than committee episcopacy, with the diocesan bishop able to be outvoted."<sup>3</sup>

The Report, while not wishing to downplay *the collegial elements in the relationship between a diocesan bishop and his suffragans, related particularly to their common episcopal office within the diocese*<sup>4</sup> appears defensive of a particular version of monoepiscopacy with the implication of the creation of more dioceses which would, in turn, lead to a reduction in the number of suffragan sees. *The Cameron Report* viewed the concept of an episcopal team as a risky enterprise because of a lack of clarity about appropriate boundaries. We offer three factors to consider against the general hesitancy of *The Cameron Report*.

- i) Given that the early development of episcopacy took the Church in the direction of the diocese gathered around one bishop, and that the polity of the Church of England has normally held to this, there are fundamental approaches to shared *episcopacy* which give strength to the concept and exercise of a collegial episcopacy within the diocese rather than treating our inherited patterns in the way that *The Cameron Report* feared. These fears often congregate around the perceived damage that it could do to the concept of the bishop as a focus of unity. The personal dimension of the diocesan bishop's ministry is clearly central in the exercise of his episcopate (as it is in different ways for the suffragan) and the diocesan bishop is the personal focus for unity. However, this need not be solely an individualist model. There is diversity within true unity. Collaborative approaches to episcopal ministry offer a fuller and less one-dimensional view of unity. Such an understanding proclaims that there is unity at the centre of the diocesan family that joyfully encompasses divergence and difference. It provides a rich view of unity which hopefully reflects in some measure the fullness of unity within the persons of the Trinity. In arguing for a more collegial model we are not seeking to downgrade the importance of the personal character of the diocesan bishop's primacy within the diocese. Rather, we are advocating a dynamic and creative relationship between these two aspects of episcopal ministry. It is, in part, a response to the call issued in the recent House of Bishops' Report *Bishops in Communion*, which emphasised the need to reflect further, as Anglicans on the right balance between these three dimensions:

"In some churches, the personal dimension of the ordained ministry tends to diminish the collegial and communal dimensions. In other churches, the collegial and communal dimension takes so much importance that the ordained ministry loses the personal dimension. Each church, including our own, needs to ask itself in what way its exercise of ordained ministry has become unbalanced in the course of history."<sup>5</sup>

- ii) At a purely practical level, it is unlikely that more dioceses will be created, given the financial constraints, the decline in numbers of church members, the move towards regionalisation and devolved government, and overall issues related to economy of size. There is a greater need, consequently, to focus more on the presence of a number of bishops within a diocese that *The Cameron Report* envisaged. This could enhance the understanding and practice of episcopacy by exploring its strengths and potential, thereby leading to a more robust view of leadership in mission. We affirm that, rather than being merely a development that has happened over the past century because of population growth and growing demands upon episcopal ministry, the increasing deployment of suffragan bishops offers possibilities for a richer theology and practice of episcopacy in which theory and practice of episcopacy are better integrated. This is consistent with the tradition, not a rejection of it. *The Cameron Report* thought that the ideal would be an increase in the number of dioceses as the way to preserve our traditional understanding of the bishop within the diocese. We uphold that the best way forward would rarely be to create more dioceses but to develop the understand of sharing within the one episcopate within the diocese. This understanding was reflected in Dr Anthony Russell's sermon when he was enthroned as Bishop of Ely when speaking of the ministry he shares with the suffragan Bishop of Huntingdon: *Episcopacy in this diocese is a single function performed by two people*.<sup>6</sup> Under such a collegial understanding, the ministry of the bishop as focus of unity involves the diocesan bishop operating collegially with his suffragans in such a way that the quality of unity in plurality is demonstrated *within* the episcopal ministry of the diocese as it acts as a sign of this unity for the whole of the diocese.
- iii) In recent years, understandings of, and commitment to, collaborative ministry have rightly grown with benefits for the health and mission of the Church. This development has rightly emerged from a

theological understanding of the Church as *koinonia*, modelled on the Holy Trinity. This commitment to unity within a collaborative approach is as important for the ministry of *episcopate* as it is for all ministries within the Church. *The Cameron Report*, however, stopped short of a full acceptance of the implications of such a view for the episcopate. Its exposition of the theme begins encouragingly but ends in a way that leads to a particularly Eastern view of the Bishop as a corporate person being advocated in the Report as a whole:

"The co-operative Ministry of the Persons in the Godhead is to be reflected in the co-operative character of Christian Ministry in the church; and God's one will for the world's good is reflected in the ways in which the community is able to act as one through the representing and focusing function of the ordained ministry, and particularly through the episcopal ministry of oversight through the ages. The Bishop is focus of unity in Christ and at the same time in the sparkling diversity offered by the gifts of the Spirit. The Bishop is the *polupletheia* (the multitude) in his person, the many in the one."<sup>7</sup>

- a) In drawing upon this concept of *polupletheia* from Orthodox understandings of episcopacy<sup>8</sup>, *The Cameron Report* seems to suggest that, while collaborative working for everyone else within the Church means diversity within the unity of the many, it means something different for the bishop. The bishop, as a corporate person, focuses within his office the unity of the People of God. The Trinitarian concepts, however, on which this understanding of episcopacy is based, would seem more naturally to lead to more collegial and collaborative understandings of episcopal ministry than *The Cameron Report* advocates. The Report consistently follows the Orthodox understanding which sees the concept of the corporate person leading inevitably to a form of monoepiscopacy in which there is very little theological space for an understanding of the rôle of suffragan, area or assistant bishops. While the concept of *polupletheia* has certain resonances with western theology, particularly in the eucharistic ministry of a bishop, it is not one that always translates well into Anglican theology, especially at a time when we are attempting to discover the right balance between *personal*, *collegial* and *communal* dimensions within episcopal ministry.
- b) Moreover, the concept of *polupletheia* runs the risk of focussing attention on the bishop himself, including the risk of his consciously or unconsciously allowing attention to be directed towards himself because of his rôle as ordinary within the diocese rather than on his over-riding ministerial responsibility to point away from himself and towards Christ. Jurisdiction as ordinary, and the specific responsibilities of adjudicating, licensing, and disciplining (in particular circumstances) brings with it for the diocesan bishop's office a theological and spiritual challenge and temptation both for himself and for his diocese, namely, to focus on him himself (in his rôle), rather than on Christ and God, as is the case in all other Christian ministry.
- c) *The Cameron Report's* central concern, that such collegiality of bishops within the diocese would lead unwittingly to an obscuring of the primacy of the diocesan bishop or that the diocesan bishop could be outvoted by his fellow bishops is, we believe, to be unfounded. Clearly there is a fresh nuancing required in any such collegial model. It is not, however, an obscuring of primacy but a more well rounded view that includes *primacy within* as well as *primacy over*. Such a development relates to the way in which the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the basis for an understanding of *koinonia*, church and ministry. The debate on the relevance of Trinitarian theology to the practice of episcopacy was one of the most significant responses occasioned by the publication of *The Cameron Report*. In the General Synod debate of January 1991, Ruth Etchells (a member of the Archbishops' Group that produced *The Cameron Report*) spoke of the two Trinitarian theologies underlying the Report:

"The dominant theology was that known as the subordinationist theology, that is, of the ordered relationship of Father, Son and Spirit with God the Father as sovereign, as sole source of authority and initiative. Some members of Synod have already challenged the model of the episcopacy that seems to follow that, with its emphasis on headship, authoritative rather than co-operative, unitary rather than plural. However, another theology is present also, that of the interdependence of Father, Son and Spirit, so perfectly in mutuality 'that they will one will'. This points to a very different kind of leadership, one of mutual giving and receiving, of



interdependence. The truth is that neither theology would be complete without the other, because each safeguards a necessary truth, one of authority, one of mutuality"<sup>8</sup>.

We would wish to give due weight to both of these understandings of the Trinity. There is both order within the Trinity which governs the mutuality of working of the three persons and a full sharing in the divine nature which speaks of sharing and mutuality. The former equates to the necessity of order within the Church's threefold order while the latter supports the mutuality and collegiality within the episcopate which is the particular concern of the paper.

- d) In the decade since the publication of *The Cameron Report*, experience of working collaboratively has increased markedly within the Church and many more bishops have had good experiences of it, both within their present and former ministries. The same Synod debate referred to suffragan bishops at times experiencing life as *second fiddles in one-man-bands*. Such negative experiences are now less common.

- e) In the General Synod debate on *The Cameron Report*, Dr Christina Baxter reflected the strongly individualistic notion of monoepiscopacy which the Report espouses:

"For me the question is whether the Creation observation that 'It is not good for man to be alone' (Genesis 2.18) applies only to the mutuality of the sexes or whether the Trinitarian life of God stands irrevocably against the secular pattern of having a single head of each institution. I believe that it does. The current pattern of suffragan bishops, bishop's research assistant or chaplain, a 'Bishop at Lambeth', all show that where the Church is taking seriously the heavy task that weighs on those who lead the Church, they find that, like God himself, it is better to share responsibility in a mutuality of love. For this reason I think there is much more to be said for plural leadership to which none of the group assent and for the model of episcopal collegiality within a diocese with which most of the group disagreed."<sup>9</sup>

- f) The House of Bishops' Report, *Bishops in Communion*, develops the ideas of the collegial, communal, and personal dimensions of episcopal ministry in a way that takes us forward from *The Cameron Report*. The issue of the ministry of suffragan bishops was not fully dealt with in that Report but its understanding of *personal* makes possible the development of the understanding of episcopal collegiality within the diocese which we espouse in this report.

"Just as the personal exercise of oversight safeguards the conciliar from being collective, so the collegial safeguards the personal from being individualistic. Bishops exercise individually a ministry which is shared by them as a body; collegiality is implicit in the nature of the ministry of oversight."<sup>10</sup>

- g) As *Collegiality* is the characteristic word to describe the ministry of bishops as a corporate body, it becomes the natural way of referring to the collaborative ministry of bishops within one diocese. It is the logical development of the wider understanding of episcopal collegiality now that we have more than one bishop in most dioceses in England.

"Collegiality reflects the fact that all bishops have received the same ministry through their ordination as bishops. They are guardians of the same faith and overseers in the one Church."<sup>11</sup>

- h) We agree with *The Cameron Report* that *collegiality* refers to the sharing of bishops provincially and universally with their fellow bishops, though we see its use within the diocese as a valid development within the tradition. Indeed, it is arguable that such a development of the concept of *collegiality* to the sharing of episcopal ministry within the diocese will enhance the experience of collegiality both within the House of Bishops and the Bishops' Meeting.
- i) We recognise, however, that there are some dangers as well as advantages in using the word *collegial* for this exercise of shared episcopal ministry within the diocese. We are concerned that, within a diocese, the word *collegial* should, at times, include reference to the deliberations of Bishops and Clergy together.<sup>12</sup> We recognise that there are some designations of shared ministry which can unintentionally revert to more distinctively hierarchical ways of leadership. For instance, the nomenclature of

*college/chapter of bishops* could lead to a new form of separation between bishops and those whom they serve. The main dangers are not in the destruction of a focus of unity – rather the opposite. A small group of bishops could draw all *episcopate* to itself, as if this were a ministry in which only one bishop could share with fellow bishops. But the ministry of *episcopate* is not the sole preserve of bishops. It is important to value highly the sharing of *episcopate* between bishops and others, the most obvious examples being within the senior staff of a diocese with rural/area deans, with specialist diocesan officers, and with clergypersons in their parochial ministry.

- j) Along with *collegial* we link the words *koinonia* or *collaborative* to express the joint ministry of diocesan and suffragan bishops within the diocese. In their difference and individuality they bring a *pleroma* to the episcopal ministry which is not possible for any one individual. They exhibit a oneness which can encompass difference, even disagreement, and this is the kind of unity that must exist within the church as a whole. In this way there is a positive advantage in such plurality within the unity of episcopal ministry. It is having to model the kind of unity which the rest of the church is striving to live out. There is still *one* episcopal ministry within the diocese but it is not individualistically focused.
- k) Dioceses are increasingly looking at what *collegial* and *collaborative* might mean in terms of the episcopate within the diocese. One diocese, where there is a diocesan and one suffragan bishop, expresses this approach using the following words in the Job and Person specification prepared before the appointment of the new suffragan bishop:

“Both bishops exercise their ministry throughout the whole of the Diocese and therefore there is a widely held wish that the new Bishop of [title of suffragan] should be complementary to the [title of diocesan] in his activities and gifts. [The gifts of the diocesan are then listed]. The job description below needs to be read in the light of these priorities and the Diocesan Bishop will want to review from time to time some of the specific functions of the [title of suffragan bishop] to enable a flexible approach to changing needs within the diocese.”

“The task is to fulfil the calling of a Bishop in the Diocese of [...] in close co-operation with the Bishop of [...] to exercise a ministry of episcopal oversight within the Diocese. [The principal functions are then listed].”

- l) Collaborative ways of working are best undergirded by a collegial understanding of the ministry of several bishops in the diocese working as the one episcopate of that diocese, under the primacy of the diocesan bishop.

### Model Two: a pragmatic solution – The Area System

- 5.7 The second model, the area system, receives a little more approval in *The Cameron Report* and is described as ‘a pragmatic solution’.<sup>13</sup> The advantage of the area system is that it clarifies the rôles between the suffragan and the diocesan and provides the suffragan with a well-defined geographical unit in which to operate. However, the Report is concerned that area systems could blur the focus upon the diocesan as the one who exercises primary *episcopate* within a diocese:

“Whilst area schemes have made a bishop more readily available to his clergy and people, the corresponding need to maintain a loyalty to the diocese and to the bishop of the diocese may lead to confusion as the area seeks to establish an identity and to give to its area bishop the recognition and network of support he may require.”<sup>14</sup>

- 5.8 The area system has much to commend it but, according to *The Cameron Report*, there are potential hidden dangers which need to be acknowledged. We would wish to emphasise more the advantages of an area system as one way of developing a collegial and collaborative approach to episcopal ministry where there is more than one, and especially where there are three or more, suffragan bishops.
- 5.9 A number of dioceses operate such area schemes, whether formal or informal: an informal area system being one which has never been turned into a firm legal framework, an informal scheme often being preferred by the diocese for the flexibility it gives in allowing for changing personalities and developing situations. The area systems involve a suffragan being responsible for a territorial area, usually an archdeaconry. The area bishop,

working closely with the archdeacon, is responsible to the diocesan bishop for the day to day care of the people and parishes in his area, giving priority to the pastoral care of the clergy and their families. The parochial clergy are expected to turn, in the first instance, to their area bishop for pastoral guidance and counsel on any matter concerning their ministry or personal life. The area bishop will usually take the lead in making appointments in his area. Ordinations are shared appropriately between diocesan and suffragan bishops. Confirmations, institutions and full day parish visits are largely undertaken by the area bishop but the diocesan takes his share as a continuing expression of his general oversight of the whole diocese. Area bishops will usually have some responsibility across the diocese which has value in avoiding the danger of the episcopal areas becoming mini-dioceses.

- 5.10 It was reported to us that one diocese which had a highly developed formal area scheme experienced some of the problems pointed out in *The Cameron Report*. The new incoming diocesan bishop discovered that if he followed its letter, he would take no part in appointments and never confirm or ordain except at the invitation of his suffragans. The solution in that diocese has been that, while the scheme has not formally been rescinded, it is now operating differently. New appointments to area bishoprics are designed to give bishops an area of responsibility, based upon a particular set of skills which they will exercise throughout the diocese. The hope is that by living in a closer proximity there might be a greater modelling of a collegial episcopal team.
- 5.11 Such an experience points to the dangers that lurk within this approach to collaborative episcopal ministry that are waiting to catch out the unwary. However, diversity within episcopal ministry need not lead to fragmentation. When carefully devised and reflectively employed, it can promote a fuller expression of unity in depth and diversity. The important factor is the way in which the scheme is arranged, affirmed and monitored within the diocese. In particular the ministry of the diocesan has to be considered afresh within the light of such an area system. His ministry can often be most fully developed if he does not have an area of his own as this can minimise his presence within the whole of the diocese. The diocesan bishop is likely to be more heavily involved in national affairs, both in Church and State, than his suffragan(s), which usually frees the latter to take a more hands-on approach in relation to the pastoral care of the clergy and as leader in mission. The task of being a leader in mission can be particularly strengthened by the very natural partnership which can exist between an area bishop and other leaders in the wider community within his area.
- 5.12 Ongoing reflection within the episcopal team, maybe with the help of external consultancy, will lead to developments in their ways of working which will hopefully lead to more effective and relevant forms of shared episcopacy. While such a profiling approach to rôles and functions shared between the bishops brings clear advantages to the fullness and breadth of episcopal ministry within the diocese, it is also important that the diocesan should be seen widely across the diocese exercising what could be called *core* episcopal rôles in relation to parishes.

### **Model Three: the suffragan as episcopal vicar**

- 5.13 The third model which *The Cameron Report* presents is *the suffragan as episcopal vicar*.<sup>15</sup> This is the Report's favoured model. The suffragan is to be the representative of the diocesan, undertaking tasks on his behalf. The term *episcopal assistant curate* is eschewed in favour of *episcopal vicar*<sup>16</sup> although in terms of cash value there seems to be little difference. This model is designed to assert the authority of the diocesan and to keep the suffragan firmly in his place. The Report even attempts to argue that the *episcopate* that the suffragan exercises is different in kind from that exercised by the diocesan. The diocesan exercises a 'general' *episcopate* whereas the suffragan exercises merely a 'personal' *episcopate*.<sup>17</sup> These distinctions seem to beg more questions than they answer. The Report tends to be on the defensive whenever it discusses suffragans and a theology undergirding the practice of suffragan bishops never emerges from the shadow of the particular form of monoepiscopacy espoused by the Report.
- 5.14 The important truth enshrined in this model is that there is one episcopate in the diocese. It is our view that such a concept is fully preserved in models one and two, which have the distinct advantage over this one that they also reflect the values of collegiality and collaborative ministry. Consequently, we do not believe that the



concept of *episcopal vicar* is theologically broad enough to be used as a model for the ministry of suffragan bishops.

### No model is absolute

- 5.15 It is clear that we are commending a diversity of models different from the Cameron Report, which put the emphasis on collegiality and collaborative ministry within the one episcopate in the diocese. There are no models that lack ambivalence, because of the divided state of Christendom. All models of episcopacy in our age are not only ambivalent but also open to the abuse of the humans who inhabit them. As Stephen Sykes reminds us:

"Precisely because *episcopate* involves exposure to the possibility of abusing power, and thus to the risk of further obstacles to the realisation of the gift of the Spirit, it is wholly appropriate that the 'increase' of the gift of the Holy Spirit be sought at this moment (*ie at ordination as a bishop*). ...The recovery in contemporary theology of the eschatology of the Church has enabled theologians of many denominations to recall ecclesiology from a triumphalism which seriously distorted the practice of *episcopate*. This recovery is the theological precondition for the admission of the idea of a dialectical process in relationship to the realities of power in the Church. It is not easy for those who hold power to perceive their own abuses of it. They have to be told, and the telling is not comfortable."<sup>18</sup>

- 5.16 Although, as we hope we have shown, the growth of suffragan bishoprics has been an outworking of theological principle, it is often seen as a purely pragmatic development. Consequently, it is not surprising that some bishops, both diocesan and suffragan, have failed to work out an adequate theology as they went along, or that the human temptations inherent in positions of power have influenced them more than they ought to have done. At times such temptations may have led a diocesan bishop to undervalue the person and demean the episcopal office of his suffragan colleague. Some suffragans, on the other hand, may have fought for power or built power structures around them which have exacerbated the dysfunctional nature of collaboration within episcopal ministry in the diocese.
- 5.17 Both human frailty and the eschatological dimension within collegial episcopal ministry requires that we redouble our efforts to be in continual renewal and development of our understanding of models of episcopal ministries in a way that will most serve, not the needs of individual bishops but rather the needs and priorities of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

### Assistant Bishops

- 5.18 Assistant bishops come in different guises. Many are retired bishops, some are stipendiary in non-episcopal rôles whether within diocesan structures or employed by other organisations, and some are stipendiary members of the episcopal team. What they all have in common is that they are appointed by the diocesan bishop from among people already consecrated bishops here or overseas rather than by the national church and state systems which respectively govern the appointment of diocesan and suffragan bishops. This clearly has various implications from the national point of view according to the type of assistant bishop in question<sup>19</sup>. We believe, however, that it is important that the diocesan bishop, on granting a licence to various categories of assistant bishop, should face the question: *what is this appointment saying about collegiality and collaborative ministry?* The practice and conventions in relation to retired bishops who are honorary assistants is reasonable clear and well accepted but, in relation to other kinds of assistant bishops, a host of subsidiaries follows: *is he a member of the House of Bishops at a Diocesan Synod; in what ways are his gifts included in the profile of the totality of episcopal ministry etc?* We believe that it is important to affirm the episcopal ministry of such people, especially as they are often still in the midst of active stipendiary ministry, often after years of service within another province of the Anglican Communion. Consequently, many have a very different and often complementary experience of episcopal ministry which can enrich the exercise of *episcopate* within the Diocese.
- 5.19 We believe that full use of already existing provision should be made in order that all assistant bishops, other than retired honorary assistant bishops, should be included within the House of Bishops in the Diocesan Synod. All such bishops should be full members of both of the Annual Bishops' Meeting and of the regional Bishops' Meetings and that they should also be included in all the wider consultations of the suffragan bishops' views.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

- 6.1 *The Cameron Report* undertook important work in enlarging the Church of England's understanding of the Episcopate. The subsequent debate generated by the Report pointed to the need for further thought to be given to the issue of suffragan bishops. A further report concerning the episcopate, addressing the issues of the collegiality of bishops, also noted the incompleteness of the work until the subject of suffragan bishops had been addressed.
- 6.2 This report maintains that there is no need either to apologise for, or to be embarrassed by, the existence of suffragan bishoprics. There may well be debate as to whether the Church of England has too few or too many, or as to whether they are appropriately distributed across the two provinces, but that is a secondary matter as to the theological soundness of their existence.
- 6.3 Monoepiscopacy, in the strict sense of that word, has always had to live side by side with other patterns of episcopal ministry. Sometimes episcopal ministries have clearly overlapped geographically. Ways have had to be sought in which episcopal responsibility has had to be shared, sometimes over the same territory.
- 6.4 Likewise, within dioceses and jurisdictions, arguably from the earliest days of the Church, there has often been some sharing of episcopal ministry with other bishops within those dioceses and jurisdictions. There is clear evidence, both in past centuries and in the present, that such suffragan or auxiliary bishops have usually been included within the collegial life of the episcopate, especially when matters of faith and order are under discussion. From this has stemmed an understanding that such bishops are full members of the episcopal order although they ultimately lack jurisdiction, except where the latter has been delegated to them. The Church of England, therefore, needs to develop appropriate ways in which the collegiality of all bishops can be expressed when reflecting on matters of faith and order.
- 6.5 The ministry of suffragan bishops is not only likely to continue but to be welcomed as a way of providing episcopal ministry in some ways different, but always complementary, to the ministry of the diocesan. The lack of direct jurisdiction can release suffragan bishops to model a different but equally valid form of oversight. This is particularly the case in a context where, for good reasons, the Church finds it inappropriate to create further dioceses.
- 6.6 The exercise of collegiality within a diocesan college of bishops will be different from that exercised provincially, given that the diocesan alone has jurisdiction. The appropriate sharing of episcopal responsibility, nevertheless, witnesses to the sharing of ministry which not only reflects the life of the Divine Trinity but also the shared nature of ministry which is being unceasingly sought for and practised at all levels of the Church's life today.
- 6.7 It could be argued that, in its exercise of *episcopate*, the Church of England has placed due emphasis on the personal and communal dimensions of oversight, but has tended to overlook the collegial dimension. The ecumenical evidence and, increasingly, that from the Anglican Communion, points the Church of England to the need to take the collegial dimension more seriously. An appropriate understanding of collegiality will provide a key to a new understanding of the relationship between a diocesan and a suffragan as they exercise their shared *episcopate* in the service of the people of their dioceses, and will also cause the Church of England to provide appropriate participation for suffragan bishops within the episcopal collegiality of the Province. A survey both of the Anglican communion and other episcopally-ordered churches suggests that suffragan or auxiliary bishops are common to many churches and provinces. The challenge is to incorporate such bishops more fully within the collegiality of the episcopal order.

## Notes

### Chapter 1

- <sup>1</sup> *Episcopal Ministry: the Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate* 1990, Church House Publishing, London, 1990
- <sup>2</sup> HBSC (99) 1
- <sup>3</sup> *House of Bishops Occasional Paper: Apostolicity and Succession*. GS Misc 432. General Synod of the Church of England, London, 1994
- <sup>4</sup> *Bishops in Communion: Collegiality in the service of the koinonia of the Church*, SS Misc 580, House of Bishops Occasional Paper, Church House Publishing, 2000
- <sup>5</sup> HBTHEO (93) 18
- <sup>6</sup> HBSC (93) M5
- <sup>7</sup> HB (99) 26
- <sup>8</sup> *Resourcing Bishops: the first report of the Archbishops' Review Group on bishops' needs and resources*, Church House Publishing, London, 2001
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p217 f
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p227 f
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid* p 15 f
- <sup>12</sup> *Working with the Spirit: choosing diocesan bishops, a review of the operation of the Crown Appointments Commission and related matters*, Church House Publishing, London, 2001
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p103 f

### Chapter 2

- <sup>1</sup> *Episcopal Ministry: the Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate* 1990, Church House Publishing, London, 1990
- <sup>2</sup> R Alastair Campbell, T&T Clark, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*, Edinburgh, 1994
- <sup>2</sup> H Kung, *The Church*, London 1968, p400
- <sup>3</sup> Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, Book iv Chapter 3
- <sup>4</sup> T Lathbury, *A History of the Convocation of the Church of England*, London 1853, p518
- <sup>5</sup> C Gore, *The Ministry of the Christian Church*, London 1889, p375
- <sup>6</sup> J Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticae or the Antiquities of the Church*, London 1843, Book II p 187
- <sup>7</sup> Gore, *op cit*, p372
- <sup>8</sup> Bingham, *op cit*, p185
- <sup>9</sup> T G Jalland, *The Church and the Papacy*, London 1944
- <sup>10</sup> E D uffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Papacy*, London 1997
- <sup>11</sup> Gore, *op cit*, p373
- <sup>12</sup> Lathbury, *op cit*, p519
- <sup>13</sup> Archbishops' Group, *op cit*, p182
- <sup>14</sup> LAS Butler, *Suffragan Bishops in the Medieval Diocese of York in Northern History*, XXXVII, December 2000, p49
- <sup>15</sup> D Smith, *Suffragan Bishops in the Medieval Diocese of Lincoln in Lincolnshire History and Archaeology Vol 17*, 1982 p22
- <sup>16</sup> *ibi d* p17
- <sup>17</sup> Statute 26 Henry VIII, cap 14, printed in H Gee and W J Hardy *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, London 1910, pp253 - 6
- <sup>18</sup> Smith, *op cit*, p22
- <sup>19</sup> Lathbury, *op cit*, p523
- <sup>20</sup> G Williams, *Viewed from the Water Tank: A History of the Diocese of Blackburn*, Preston 1993, p27
- <sup>21</sup> L Paul, *A Church by Daylight*, London 1973, p138
- <sup>22</sup> *ibi d* p140
- <sup>23</sup> *ibi d* p142
- <sup>24</sup> Book of Common Prayer (1662) *The Form of Ordaining or Consecrating of an Archbishop or Bishop*
- <sup>25</sup> Alternative Service Book (1980) p394
- <sup>26</sup> *ibi d* p388
- <sup>27</sup> *ibid* p 395
- <sup>28</sup> *Bishops in Communion*, House of Bishops Occasional Paper, Church House Publishing, 2000
- <sup>29</sup> *Towards a Church of England Response to BEM and ARCIG*, FOAG, Church House Publishing 1985, p37 para 95



### Chapter 3

- <sup>1</sup> *Episcopal Ministry* The Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate 1996, Church House Publishing 1990
- <sup>2</sup> Peter C Bouteneff & Alan D Falconer, *Episkope and Episcopacy and the Quest for Visible Unity*, WCC 1999 p 17
- <sup>3</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 339, Collins 1983
- <sup>4</sup> *De Ecclesia*, para 22, CTS 1965
- <sup>5</sup> *Canons 448 and 454*
- <sup>6</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* WCC 1982, para M26
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid* pp 28-32
- <sup>8</sup> *The Reuilly Common Statement* 1999, para 35
- <sup>9</sup> *op cit*, p 20
- <sup>10</sup> *Bishops in Communion: Collegiality in the Service of the Koinonia of the Church*, A House of Bishops' Occasional Paper, Church House Publishing, 2000
- <sup>11</sup> *Episcopal Ministry: The Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate*, Church House Publishing, 1990
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>13</sup> *The Mystery of Salvation: The Story of God's Gift, A Report by the Doctrinal Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England*, Church House Publishing, 1995

### Chapter 4

- <sup>1</sup> R Bultmann *The Gospel of St John: A Commentary*. Tr GR Beasley-Murray, RWN Hoare and JK Riches. Oxford 1971 p566-572.
- <sup>2</sup> The definition of 'ordinary' in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Third Edition, 1997, p1191
- <sup>3</sup> Ed Timon Briden/Brian Hanson, *Moore's Introduction to English Canon Law*, Third Edition, 1992, p17
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid* p19
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid* p19 (see also Peter Besley, Appendix E in *Resourcing Bishops: Archbishops' Review Group* 2001, p229f)
- <sup>6</sup> *ibid* p115
- <sup>7</sup> Article XXXCII of the Civil Magistrates: Thirty-nine Articles of Religion
- <sup>8</sup> *Moore op cit*, p7
- <sup>9</sup> Stephen Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity*, 1984, p63, quoting Troeltsch 'The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches' p92
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p63f
- <sup>11</sup> Stephen Sykes, *Resourcing Bishops*, on the issue of episcopal power, Appendix D, p226, para 29 (see also paras 26-28)
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid*, p226, note 35
- <sup>13</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Faith and Order Paper No 111*, WCC Geneva 1982, Ministry para 26. (NB this paragraph also refers to the ordained ministry as such, rather than specifically to bishops, though it has been commonly interpreted to apply to the ministry of oversight eg: the Porvoo Common Statement, para 44).

### Chapter Five

- <sup>1</sup> *The Virginia Report: The Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission in The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, Moorehouse Publishing, Pennsylvania, 1999, p15f
- <sup>2</sup> *Episcopal Ministry: the Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate 1990*, Church House Publishing, London, 1990, p194
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p195
- <sup>5</sup> *Bishops in Communion: Collegiality in the service of the koinonia of the Church*, SS Misc 580, House of Bishops Occasional Paper, Church House Publishing, 2000, p20
- <sup>6</sup> Ely Cathedral, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2000
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p9
- <sup>8</sup> The concept of *polupletheia* is developed by V Lossky in his discussion of *the corporate person* (Appendix 1) in *Mystical Theology in the Eastern Church* (tr, London, 1957). It is a concept also advocated in John Zizioulas' *Being as Communion* (London, 1985) where it is very specifically stated that the only form of episcopacy should be a monoepiscopal model which has no place for what he calls the Western innovation of assistant bishops.

- <sup>9</sup> Church of England Newspaper 30<sup>th</sup> November 1990. In the same article Dr Baxter reflected on the ambivalence which she saw in the concept of the bishop as focus of unity:

"The notion of the Bishop as the focus of the community is asserted throughout in a way which needs some serious questioning. First, there is the question of whether we mean the word *focus* as a lens in binoculars which helps us focus on something else; or whether we mean it as *the focus* - the thing upon which we are focussing. Any notion of episcopacy in the second sense must be resisted. If the Bishop operates as a lense through which we may more clearly see Christ then that tends to the extension of the kingdom. Second, even that must be asserted while recognising that bishops come fairly low down the list of what helps us to focus on Christ. I would at least want to include scriptures, the two gospel sacraments and prayer above bishops! *There are in several places claims for bishops, which seem to go far beyond any scriptural or confessional warrant, and beyond any experience to which I have been part*" (author's italics).

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p 28

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p 29

<sup>12</sup> This is a usage of the term which is also acknowledged in *Bishops in Communion* pp20, 40. However, to avoid confusion, it is helpful to use the word *communal* (or *conciliar*, *synodal*) for sharing between bishops, clergy and laity.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p197

<sup>15</sup> *ibid* p198

<sup>16</sup> *ibid* p199

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

<sup>18</sup> *Unashamed Anglicanism*, London 1995, pp189f

<sup>19</sup> For instance, which assistant bishops attend the national and regional meetings of Bishops.









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