

Ministers-at-Work

The Journal for Christians in
secular ministry

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To help ourselves and others to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in our work, and to see and tell the Christian story there.

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At the Editor's Desk

It is a pleasure and a privilege to follow Dorrie Johnson as Editor of “Ministers-at-Work”. The ‘tour de force’ of the last edition showed just how much ground has been covered since the “Newsletter” first appeared, and how able the successive Editors have been. It will be quite a challenge living up to my predecessors.

The foundations of “Ministers-at-Work” are well established. We have a great deal to look back on with satisfaction, but we should always look forward to what still needs to be achieved. Here I outline how I see the next few years.

Dorrie highlighted the degree of independence that the Editor has, and the CHRISM Committee decided, on her recommendation, to form an editorial board. The intention here is that “Ministers-at-Work” should closely reflect CHRISM as an organisation, and that the weight of producing each edition should not fall on any one person. If you would like to be involved in this way, please contact me (details on the inside rear cover).

We also agreed that “Ministers-at-Work” should be as responsive as possible to the views and needs of the readership. It started as a forum for and support to Ministers in Secular Employment, lay or ordained, and that remains its primary purpose. It aims to inform, encourage and advocate those in this ministry. What *you* have to say and contribute is therefore vitally important. Therefore please write to or e-mail me with your comments, contributions, and – above all – your views on what “Ministers-at-Work” and CHRISM could or should be doing.

I intend that about half the editions should be thematic. Sometimes this can arise from a happy coincidence of material, so this edition centres on the International Worker Priest movement, with items on the Annual Conference, in London, last year, and its history. Readers will soon become aware of the difference in perspective between European

Worker Priests and ourselves. The European movement is very much inspired by liberation theology and Marxist social analysis. We may not always agree with the analysis but I for one find myself in sympathy with their aims.

Coincidentally there has recently been published the story of Britain's first Worker Priests by one of them, Keith Mantle, and Keith Holt contributes a comprehensive and sympathetic review of this important work. A book review will be a regular feature, as will items on the experiences of Ministers at Work. Graham Cornish contributes an engaging article from his experience as President of the Library Association.

Future themes intended include: Readers and Lay Preachers, the Faith & Work movement, and editions to link in directly with CHRISM Conference themes. If there are any other areas you would like to see covered, or can contribute to, I am open to suggestions! This is **your** newsletter; please help me never to forget that.

Finally, many thanks to all those who supported and encouraged me to take on the role of Editor, and to all who have contributed wisdom and energy to this edition. Four years as Secretary was enjoyable, and my very best wishes go out to Phil Aspinall as he takes over that particular hot seat.

Rob Fox

LIVING ON THE EDGES

REFLECTIVE WEEKEND : FEBRUARY 23 – 25 2001

**HOLLAND HOUSE, CROPTHORNE,
near Pershore , WORCESTERSHIRE**

Many of you responded to the flyer that appeared in the previous edition of the Journal and have already reserved your place at Holland

House. More places are still available and new bookings can be made on the enclosed form.

Whilst there was very positive feedback about our last weekend at Holland House, requests for time for *reflection* have been carefully noted in the preparation of the programme for February 23 - 25. This weekend is not intended to duplicate our annual conference, which usually has a very busy schedule. Instead we hope that we can create plenty of space for sharing conversations, silence, relaxation and worship.

Where focussed discussion is included, this will feed into other aspects of the weekend. For example, we will be invited to consider some of the insecurities and uncertainties of our working lives. Phil Aspinall will be co-ordinating these sessions, in collaboration with Margaret Joachim and Rob Fox, who will be preparing our worship. This will include meditation, silence and eucharistic celebration, inviting participation from all of us, through the contribution of something which represents our work situation.

Further details of the programme will be forwarded in advance to all participants, so that there is an opportunity for reflection even prior to arrival.

There is still time for you to make a booking if you haven't already done so. If you want to know anything else about the weekend, especially practical points about location, travel or accommodation, contact Sue Gibbons [full contact details given on the booking form].

Introducing: Sue Gibbons

Sue was elected a Moderator of CHRISM at the 2000 AGM (she will therefore be the Presiding Moderator, 2001/2).

When I was ordained in July 1992, my husband gave me a beautifully crafted copy of one of my favourite poems by R S Thomas. The final lines of 'Emerging' state that

“... as form in sculpture is the prisoner
of the hard rock, so in everyday life
it is the plain facts and natural happenings
that conceal God and reveal him to us
little by little under the mind's tooling.”

At the ordination ceremony in Worcester Cathedral, I wore a diaconal stole that had been designed by a neighbour in Bricklehampton, where I live. The stole depicted a sculpture, which stands in the grounds of Queen's College, Birmingham, where I completed three years of part-time ministerial training. Sculpted in metal, the cross is described as both simple and complex: on the left hand side it is clearly defined, with sharp, smooth edges, but on the right hand side, although the outline is still recognisable, the metal is multi-faceted, uneven and seemingly moving in every direction.

The stole was created from raw silk and dazzling gold threads, by a colleague with whom I had worked for nearly 20 years. My workplace is literally woven into my vestments, just as life Monday – Saturdays is woven into Sundays.

When I attended a ministerial selection conference back in 1989, one of my interviewers said he would have been very unhappy to consider me as a stipendiary parish deacon. What the church needed was more people to remain where they were and recognise their experience of the workplace more readily within the life of the church. Then we could more fully discover and affirm our experience of God *wherever* we happened to be.

Since 1974, I've been working full-time in a comprehensive school in Redditch, just south of Birmingham. I'm an assistant headteacher, with responsibility for post 16 education. Until recently I was licensed to a rural parish, consisting of a group of villages near where I live. From 1992, until April of this year, I gained a great deal of valuable experience in the company of an outstanding stipendiary priest, a very able lay team and diverse congregations who all shared a wonderful sense of humour.

Now it's time to think about what happens next. At school the demands upon my time and energy have greatly increased, along with the relevance of the CHRISM vision 'To help ourselves and others to celebrate the presence of God and the holiness of life in our work....'. My newly realised thinking time is directed at the way in which MSEs are licensed, in order to facilitate and develop their roles as MSEs. I suppose 'permission to officiate' is a kind of non-stipendiary [self-supporting] ministerial sabbatical.

I became involved in CHRISM whilst in training at Queen's College. In my 'sabbatical' months, as ever, the contact with other MSEs is creative, challenging and supportive. I'm also re-discovering the importance of ensuring good quality time for family and friends - we can see the Malverns and Bredon Hill from our house and it's time to start walking on them again. And of course Worcestershire has some excellent micro-breweries, producing some excellent real ales....

(..... it certainly has! Ed.)

What others say about us.....

“The insights of the worker priest experiment are being furthered in England by the National Association of Ministers in Secular Employment (CHRISM.....)”

Initiatives, A publication of the National Center for the Laity, Chicago; June 2000.

“The number one goal of CHRISM ... is to “do theology”. Tentmakers are in a unique and important position to discern, bring to awareness and reflect on God’s presence and activity outside the institutional church, in the world of work, both paid and unpaid.”

NASSAM newsletter, USA.

About the CHRISM web site:

“If you are looking for possible resources, there is a good publications section. Good also, if you want to know what being an accredited minister in your place of work is all about”.

LINK 2000, Newsletter of ICF

CHRISM meets with POs and Tentmakers

The 13th Annual PO Meeting – London

Friday 9th – Monday 12th June 2000

The annual meeting of the European **Prêtres Ouvriers** was held at St Katherine’s Foundation in E London, coinciding with a meeting of CHRISM at St Paul’s Cathedral. It also provided an opportunity for a joint evening with visiting **Presbyterian Tentmakers** – Charles and Joan Ayres from Kansas and William and Lois Dodge from New York State. This was a unique occasion providing an insight into what might be possible if we ever achieve a truly international meeting of ministers – priestly and otherwise.

There were about 25 in attendance, Roman Catholics and non- Roman Catholics. Julio and José from Madrid with John and Margaret from London shared the front of the meeting. We talked within the compass of the Pentecostal Celebration, committed to working in the world and following in the footsteps of our brother Jesus.

There was a good, lively and noisy atmosphere – from the buzz of assorted social and professional conversations. The opportunities to meet and talk are largely due to Ron and Celia Swann of St Katherine’s and their friendly and helpful staff who created a welcome and a buffet which gave what was necessary to wind up the day. The liquid refreshment imported by special couriers (Michael Ranken and John Sherrington, who had made the arduous but important cross channel journey for supplies) generously lubricated the occasion.

John Sherrington and Margaret Joachim had spent in liaison with PO colleagues in Spain and elsewhere making the arrangements for the weekend. As CHRISM rep. at the meeting I felt something of a spare part and merged into the wallpaper. On the Saturday I was torn between having to decide whether to commit myself to go to the St Paul’s meeting or to stay with the PO group which was simultaneously being divided up to visit particular groups and situations in East London.

Group visits

The group visiting a Hackney project run by the Little Sisters of Jesus were taken a tour of the locality, learning of the local mafia and survival strategies within a tempestuous local environment in and around Bethnal Green. Other small groups visited immigrant centres and were entertained by Kurdish refugees. There were also visits to Hackney – where John is based – and Newham, to a community centre providing education and facilities of the diverse multinational local residents. Margaret took parties on the tube and walked them around local sights seldom seen by the tourist.

Pentecost

Sunday morning was another highlight. John Sherrington led a Pentecostal Eucharist – inviting me to concelebrate. We danced into the chapel and we danced out again – we spoke with diverse tongues and we shared in a celebration that emphasised common purpose and hopes.

Little Sisters of Jesus and Sisters of Mercy participated in the service and throughout the weekend – making a significant difference to the running of the meetings, often with simultaneous translations between French, German, English, Spanish, Dutch, Flemish, Catalan and Italian speakers.

The agenda and attendance

The essence of the weekend was positive about trying to define humanity, our relationship with the church and the church we would like to be, although there were issues which some of the members wanted to have discussed but which were side-lined. Women's priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church being one such topic. The Germans produced a banner challenging the scandal of the gap between the "Überfluss" and the "Mangel" – those who have more than enough and others with very little.

The meeting began by explaining whom we are, what we do and where we come from. Shop assistants, home helps, telephone engineer, building materials salesman, rag merchant, kitchen porter, trade union representative, medical materials worker, alcoholics counsellor, social worker, university teacher, social work with women ex-prisoners, health worker, leisure wear manufacturer, family workers, peace movement promoters and canteen workers. Many branches of society – supported by a common spiritual base, taking and using what evangelists and the church can offer. We were gathered to review our personal and collective situations and to address questions related to evangelisation and its relevance to society. We discovered that evangelisation was expressed through our relationship with others. We

were seeking this kind of affirmation and action points that we could adopt for our individual and collective ministries.

Historical and contemporary messages

There we were: seated in the City of London within the East End and within sight of the wealth of Canary Wharf and the neighbourhood of Cable Street – just opposite St Katherine’s - where fascists and the locals fought in the 1930s.

The communities of the Docklands have since been translated and those who toiled to maintain the business of commerce exporting and importing have either transformed into technological wizards, moved on or died. New wealth has come with different lifestyles and affordable, subsidised housing is now in tower blocks a bus ride away. You do not need to scratch any surfaces to find the social stress symbolised by bolted and barred windows, graffiti and the stories people shared.

One of the little Sisters, Marleine, who works as a cleaner in a large enterprise in Germany spoke of Apartheid by Lift. The immigrant service staff were excluded from the elegant lift used by bankers in the 63-storey building where they worked together. It was described as a ‘Tower of Babel’ – and like a burning bush, a place where God is to be found. In Docklands too and the East End at large God is being revealed – as Renzo from Italy and Michael from Britain explained – Jesus walking just a few steps ahead of us.

Retired delegates

So we identified conflicts, inequalities, injustices and marginalisation. The French POs are predominantly represented by retired priests who have been active in industries which have either disappeared or been transformed into workplaces totally different from what they experienced 20 or 30 years before. These remain active and concerned. They add a new meaning to being ‘en retraite’ (retired) and reveal prospects for new directions. Some continue with parochial

commitments but others take on new responsibilities and become involved with pension funds, continue working for unions, chaplaincies, welfare groups, international aid or work for solidarity.

The role of retirees – what do POs and MSEs do when they retire? Those retired from industry have assumed new roles – more a change of direction derived from changed circumstances – age increase is incidental. These positive approaches to age provide valuable lessons.

Next year

Strasbourg in 2001, an expensive venue which is causing some head scratching and heart searching. The French POs have launched a raffle to help cover the cost. The meeting is intending to attract groups from beyond Europe to gather and to discuss issues crucial to the future role, well being and involvement of the Church of God. It was suggested that the retirees should meet separately – they are able to spend more time at conferences and should perhaps have topics upon which to reflect which can be added to the main two-day forum of the working POs. This would be another profitable contribution by those en retraite with time to share their collective wisdom.

Conclusion

This was my fourth PO conference. Over the years I have made good friends but I had to explain to the meeting that I felt they were to some extent adopting a King Canute attitude – seeking to turn the tide. The tides have changed, there is an inevitability about the way in which society and industry is different – some say moved on. Others argue that the issues of malpractice, injustice, marginalisation and class division are endemic. The Worker Priests of Europe have much experience in fighting for the rights of workers in the face of capitalism. The old socialist / communist campaigns have been destabilised and demonised. A new credibility is required for industrial situations governed by new generations of professional staff and a technology that has supplanted much of the brain and muscle power of previous times. If there are to be new generations of POs then they have to be part of

these new industrial revolutions. They will need to adopt the tenacity and vigour of their predecessors and match it with the contemporary skills required to represent those who are part of the systems which exploit and the environments which they stress and which others have to live with.

Stan Frost

**CHRISM Contribution: Meeting of the European Worker Priests,
London, June 2000:
*ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY, or
FAITH AND ALTRUISM TO SAVE THE WORLD***

Environmental Sustainability is a major international concern. It is frequently misunderstood and often variously interpreted. It is part of an international vocabulary, which, inevitably, is frequently interpreted into and linked with economic sustainability. It is a phenomenon, an understanding about the state of the world and its links with how we live our individual lives. It is also about how our lives are controlled by society. How does society, local, international and political, recognise a need for sustainability. And once recognised what does it do to provide for it?

An element of altruism needed. A less greedy attitude is OK for you and me but as a body – as a community and a society - we have a collective greed which governs what any outcome will be. Ghandi noted several generations ago that there is sufficient for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed.

The wearing of a green ribbon is marking Rogationtide – green ribbon Sunday, to show solidarity with farmers. They are suffering the effects of Globalisation, at the sharp end, subject to market forces and bearing the brunt of investment, capitalisation and debt arising from insufficient revenues to meet the bank loan interest. Sustainability of food production is jeopardised by de-stabilised economic circumstances.

This corresponds to the debt being faced by nation states across the world, where investment in materials, machinery and armaments is with money borrowed on the international markets. The environment in the form of land, has, in many places been mortgaged to produce food for export – for sale through food brokers and supermarkets across the globe. Product and price are governed by the wholesalers who recover their costs and profit from the sale price whilst the producer is paid the minimum or whatever the local market price might be.

We are all part of this system. Many are deprived of any alternative; most have lost any skill that might enable them to escape by growing their own food. For most it is cheaper to buy a supermarket cabbage than to prepare the soil, sow and wait for one to grow. We are governed by convenience – farmers in different parts of the world are already paying the real price. Many are unable to make a living on over exploited land. The consequence will eventually become apparent as time passes and we begin to recognise and feel the effects of the real costs associated with wholesale purchasing and the transportation of foods around the world.

Stan Frost

Worker Priests International

A loose translation from the French (par M. Renard)

(The following is an account of the history of the international movement, providing insights into its growth, motivations and work).

1982. Worker Priests of other countries are present at the national convention of the French Worker Priests and at the invitation of the latter's national committee. They opt for specific meetings to bring together delegations of each country. These meetings will commence in 1985 and meet thereafter annually.

1985. An assembly of 17 Worker Priests. The German-speaking delegation (Germany, Switzerland, Austria) represents the workers' community of some 40 members, of which several are Worker Priests. The Belgian delegation represents 36 Worker Priests; the Spanish number about 100; France 600; Italy 240, of which 140 are from within the collective; Portugal 10; Quebec 25. At the assembly is a French Worker Priest who has worked in Japan (10 Worker Priests) and India. It is an "International" of a little over 1,000 Worker Priests, slightly more than the 800 in 1995.

The method of working: simple, effective.

One delegation acts as facilitator, and the host country provides the hospitality. It is an occasion for underlining the quality and warmth with which we have been welcomed in each country. The welcome given by the hosts includes visits, food typical of the host country, and reflects the popular culture of the region or country.

To see, to judge, to act.

Whether explicitly (as at the Basle meeting, where the Catalans were facilitators) or implicitly a consensus was established and has always been maintained. We begin from the real-life situation of each country and analyse it to get the programme originally suggested off the ground. Before the annual meeting, each country is invited to make its contribution on proposed subjects, agreed as common concerns at the previous meeting. These contributions are preserved as precious expressions of the concrete commitment of the Worker Priests to the working classes, in Europe and across the world.

"Our Working Classes". This was starting theme for the group in 1985. An immediate and unanimous observation was that the working classes of every country are paralysed by and caught up in economic crisis. The following year (1986), each delegation examined the distance between trades unions, worker management relations and the effects of the crisis. By the third (1987) and fourth (1988) assemblies

the picture is clear: the outlook is bleak. The working classes live in the midst of profound changes: economic and social (unemployment and job insecurity).

Eurocepticism.

At the start of the assemblies Manuel (Portugal) was missing, imprisoned for going on strike. Released, he made us aware in 1988 of the infringements in his country of work legislation (freedom to make workers redundant). Alert! In 1982, the European Community opens its markets; domestic products in the most underprivileged countries in Europe can be coveted by others. From 1989, for four years, the Worker Priests focussed their research on Europe: a new Europe for the Workers? A Europe truly for all? Having met in France each year at the time of the French Worker Priests meeting, the delegations met each year in a different country: Turin, Basle, Angers, Barcelona. Year after year it becomes clearer: Europe does not honour its promises. Euro 92 sees an increase in job insecurity in all countries. The worker organisations of the world, on the European and international level, seem out of step and unprepared for this new dimension and the exclusion from power it generates.

A whole world: 1993-6.

The round of assemblies continues to traverse Europe: Setubal, Angers, Waterloo, Rome, and the vision grows. On the one hand: “all the world changes”, breaking into rich and poor, rational economic and irrational social. On the other hand, a new observation: everywhere in the world, and not just in Europe, appears a new apartheid, constituted of large collections of children, the young, the aged, women, immigrants, the homeless, the long-term sick, the world of prisons, the world of prostitution, the last resort of the hopeless.

In a world perverted by capitalism, what future is there for humanity? What type of humanity can be built together? This is the aim of research in 1997-2000.

Involvement.

This separation of our working classes in world-wide apartheid, by way of the European market, allows us to test the density of many fields of presence, experiences, practical work, involvement, the struggles of Worker Priests. Is the “presence and action” of Worker Priests’ aimed at creating a new culture of solidarity (1990)? Do they set out to seek greater justice? Are they consistent with the new militancies? (social economy, self-organisation, ecology; 1994)? Are they integrating with the new forces of resistance to capitalism (1997) or are they building an alternative (1998)? Two agendas are present at each stage: to integrate the forces in place – or create them where they do not exist – to rejoin the excluded, or to leave the workers organisations to be faithful to the essential values of the workers battle. The two tracks are often questioned and often in opposition.

Our roots in the sun.

In the face of the changes which have occurred in the working class, and the numerous facets of exclusion – world-wide – since 1988, the assemblies decided to lay bare (to the sun, like the olive tree in Italy) our convictions, our spiritualities, our theologies. Where are we looking for, fundamentally? Resistance, liberation? Or a logic of incarnation? It is true the examination of the “profound transformations” of the working class, of Europe, of the world, makes the delegates vent their pessimism, their scepticism, even helplessness. But these changes have pushed our research further: human hope and/or Christian hope? Do we rest, lulled by the image of progress, of the Exodus, or are we ready to learn the lessons of an “Exilic” situation (1993)?

The olive blossoms once more. The same delegation that invited us to expose our roots to the sun informed us in 1999 that the olive blooms once more. The delegations and their collectives have continually questioned themselves about their effectiveness and about the future. What is the hope that is our support and which we reveal to the poor?

What stage have we reached? Thanks to God, echoed in the presence of graces in warm, fraternal eucharists, celebrated in all languages and confessions. Let the people proclaim it! Let it be proclaimed in the churches!

International Worker Priest Meeting Pentecost 2001 in Strasbourg

The October issue of the CHRISM Journal contained information on the international conference of Worker Priests taking place in Strasbourg over the Pentecost weekend. Several people have expressed an interest in attending – so CHRISM and UK MSEs will be represented.

IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO APPLY. Please contact Phil Aspinall if you would like to know more about the event, or wish to join us in Strasbourg, June 1 - 4, 2001.

We have been asked to prepare our thoughts on two topics to further discussion during the conference:

- Living in the community
- Insecure work

Support for the International Worker Priest Conference

You are invited to help provide financial support for the conference. Many of our European colleagues work in low paid jobs and so rely on other funding for the conferences to enable them to attend.

The French community are organising a raffle to promote fundraising and we have been asked to support this initiative. Please let me know if you would like any raffle tickets to buy for yourself or to sell. They are available in books of 10 tickets for sale at £ 1 per ticket. The draw will be made during the conference – so there is plenty of time for you to sell tickets.

If you do not wish to use the raffle tickets – please support the fund raising by making a contribution by a donation. Thank you.

Phil Aspinall, 139 Wiltshire Court, Nod Rise,
Coventry. CV5 7JP. 024 7646 7509

We shall allow some time during the CHRISM Reflective weekend in February to reflect on these themes. But please also send us any thoughts or contributions you may have before then.

Book review:

“Britain’s First Worker-Priests

(Radical Ministry in a post-war setting)”

John Mantle, SCM Press, 2000, £14.95; ISBN 0 334 02798 5

This is the story of the courageous few who chose to become “worker-priests”, as defined by the author, usually following the way of “presence”, after the French model. It is an excellent historical account, but there is much more to it than that. The chosen focus could suggest that Mantle has doubts about the arrival of non-stipendiary ordained ministry, but that tension is part of the account of the continued struggle for a radical ministry, the main theme of the book.

The 284 pages deal with the context and focus for radical ministry in industry, the origins and collisions of the first worker-priests, the evolution of an organisation, and the relationship between worker-priests and non-stipendiary clergy. They include also: a useful index, extensive notes to pages, and valuable appendices. Appendix 3 (1959) should in particular resonate for CHRISM folk with its emphasis on incarnation.

The second chapter provides a *tour de force* of developments in both France and Britain. There are several pages on the Sheffield Industrial Mission, and something on the theology which underpinned it. To highlight one point (p.94): “John Robinson and Ted Wickham, both as early as 1957, had talked about the Kingdom standing in question, even judgement, over the institutional church.” Chapter three is a fascinating account of the experience, and difficulties, faced by those who chose to become worker-priests, while chapter four has a section on the part played by one of the speakers at the 2000 CHRISM Conference, Tony Williamson.

For those who trained on the Southwark Ordination Course, chapter five offers a tactful yet revealing account of the tension between that

Course and the worker-priests during the 1970s. There are other gems, such as the reference to the unpublished Anglican report on MSE (what was that about a Freedom of Information Act?). We also learn of the MSE Conference of 1968, inspired by the William Temple College, well before the first National Conference of Ministers at Work, at Nottingham, in 1984.

Mantle certainly covers the ground he outlines in the Introduction, but what conclusion does he reach? As the Archbishop's Advisor for Bishop's Ministry the message could have an unusually influential audience. In fact, one of the most simple, but powerful, points is made in the Preface (p.xxix): "I also knew, in a funny sort of way, that the story of Jesus Christ somehow lived on – and lives on still, often unknown – in the humanity of ordinary men and women, employed and unemployed ...". Pointedly, the Introduction ends with significant words, referring to the Faith in the City report of 1985: "The story of Britain's worker priests and their families and supporters – which began in the 1940s – has been one of the judgements on and challenges to such ubiquitous institutional rhetoric". The hope expressed early (p.52) "... that there would emerge, as in France, a quite different view that would utterly shatter the received notion that the territorial parish was the only base for ministry and mission" is recognised as unfulfilled. The epilogue contains personal reflections, but also challenges the ecclesiology of the church view of God. Rather, says Mantle, "in mission and in Christ he goes ahead of us into Galilee The fundamental questions are about the future of Christian faith in Britain and in Europe". Mantle seems close to the stream of recent theological thinking that sees 'salvation' through the whole of life, not just the church. For CHRISM readers, and for all prophets, there is ample recognition that the road to radical ministry is hard.

This truthful and realistic book offers a challenge to the church and to those who try to follow in the steps of the worker-priests. I recommend it to you with great confidence.

Keith Holt

Books and information for MSE

A CHRISM working group was charged last year with drawing up a core list of books about MSE: not an easy task! Listed below are the most available, including the most important in recent years. Some are now out of print, but may well be found in the second-hand sections of Christian bookshops. If you know of others, send in the details, with a brief review if possible.

Ed. James and Leslie Francis,

“Tentmaking: Perspectives on self-supporting ministry.”

Hugely informative collection of extracts from the literature in this field. A seminal work.

Gracewing, 1998, ISBN 0-85244-369-2

Tiller, John (1983),

“A Strategy for the Church's Ministry.”

CIO Publishing for ACCM. What should have shaped the CofE's policy on Non-Stipendiary Ministry.

Hodge, Mark (1983).

“Non-Stipendiary Ministry in the Church of England.”

CIO Publishing, London. What did.

Vaughan, Patrick H (ed.) (1983).

“Training for Diversity of Ministry.”

University of Nottingham, Dept. of Adult Education.

Schillebeeckx, Edward (1985).

“The Church with a Human Face: A New and

Expanded Theology of Ministry.”
SCM Press, London .

Schillebeeckx, Edward (1981).
“Ministry: A Case for Change.” SCM Press.

Baelz, Peter and Jacob, William (1985).
“Ministers of the Kingdom: Exploration in Non-Stipendiary Ministry.”
CIO Publishing, London.
Now dated, but still useful on basics.

Fuller, John and Vaughan, Patrick (Eds.) (1986).
“Working for the Kingdom:
The Story of Ministers in Secular Employment.”
SPCK, London. Again dated, but still informative.

Hacking, Rod (1990).
“On the Boundary: A vision for non-stipendiary ministry.”
Canterbury Press, Norwich.
More on NSM than MSE, but useful.

Grove Books:
Ian Bunting (1993),
“Models of ministry.”
Graham Dow (1994),
“A Christian Understanding of Daily Work”

ABM Policy Paper 8
“Stranger in the Wings.”
CIO. Review of LNSM in the Church of England
Robin Greenwood
“Transforming Priesthood.”

SPCK . incs. how the ordained MSE figures from the Church perspective.

Mark Greene (1994,1997)

“Thank God its Monday”

Scripture Union. Mostly faith and work, but a little on MSE.

Richard Higginson

“Mind the gap: connecting faith with work.”

CPAS, (1997). Workbook; largely faith and work.

“Called to Account”

Eagle,1993. Majors on faith and work but contains relevant info. for MSE.

Personal recollections and reflections of the CHRISM weekend at Oxford – Friday 15th – 17th September, 2000.

The weekend, at Plater College, began with a meditation on Julian of Norwich and her famous hazelnut. “The core of God is in each one of us”. This reflected my meditations on “Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name”. During the weekend we heard Tony Williamson, one of the first worker priests of this country. His ministry began on the factory floor and moved to roles such as Mayor of Oxford and Diocesan Director for Education in Oxford. He said that the first worker priests were all graduates, all eventually shop stewards of their workforce yet he felt the title of worker priest was now out of date as manual labour was a reduced area of work. I found this view disappointing. Any attempt by ministers and priests to fathom out the theology of work from inside the workplace is for me an activity worthy of the title worker priest. To think that non-manual labour – white collar work – is not within the same category is to demean that type of work and to misunderstand the definition of ‘work’. It is to fall

into the trap of thinking that only manual work is ‘real’ work and not to be thought of as having the same esteem as manual work.

The author of the first book on Britain’s worker priests, John Mantle, also felt that only manual worker priests should be given that title as to widen it would diminish the pioneering role of those first people. Again I tended not to agree as I can think of no better way to acknowledge their contribution to the cause than to continue the title with a wider definition adapted for today’s society. It shows a constancy of church action in society amidst an ever-changing world.

We also heard from Ken Howcroft – Methodist Director of Training. He said that the Methodist axiom is that the church exists for worship and mission and that one is impossible without the other, and that the church exists in dispersia as well as in collection and community. The Christian in dispersia is not simply a Christian but is church. In this definition ministry is not a third entity but a description of the way we do worship and mission. Discipleship is the engagement in that ministry. Lay discipleship is the most important method, with some being ordained to the lesser, smaller, focus ministry. People are ordained to hold:

Christ up to the church
Christ up to God
Church up to the church
Church up to the world
World up to the church

..... both in community and in dispersal.

(Perhaps MSEs fit into the last two categories as ministers are being in the stead of the church in the world and the world in the church.) Christians and possibly more so ministers, are representative, reflective and reflexive of the one to the other. For Methodists the corporate precedes the individual, which is contrary to post-modernism.

Methodist Conference stations local ministers, gives permission and requires accounts from ministers, to whatever type of ministry they have. Ken said that sector ministers do not live sacramentally. I wonder if this is true and I think emphasises the importance of redefining what is meant by sacramental to include things of the workplace. This may be an issue for further CHRISM discussions. Not clericalising the workplace but just living the life and using the theology of “I’m ordained so that you (colleague Christians in dispersia and the church in community) can do the work and the theology”.

In contrast to Ken, the Church of England Director of Ministry, Gordon Kurht, had a very different outlook on ministry. He maintained that parochial clergy already spend a lot of their time in non-church contexts including schools, hospitals, OAP homes etc. He felt that the future of church lay in the redefinition of existing structures. The PCC, the Synod have been laicised over the last eighty years and the process should continue in PCCs *with an ever increasing questioning by the laity of how to change the structures and purposes from pastoral to missionary [Editor’s italics]*. The future of ministry should be approached from outside as well as inside “To make the church accept the world as it is” (Schuard).

Gordon’s apparent refusal to listen to what colleague MSEs were trying to say did no good for the relationship between CHRISM and the ‘establishment’. Fortunately John Mantle, who is the Bishops’ training director, was more responsive and promised to put the issue of MSEs on the bishops’ agenda.

At the end of the weekend I feel that ministry is the individual’s response to God in communion with others. This forms the whole body of Christ in and as mission to the world which results in and springs from worship.

Peter Johnson

ON BEING THE PRESIDENT: *an alternative experience!*

Graham P Cornish, President of the Library Association, 2000.
Copyright Adviser to the British Library.
MSE in the Dioceses of Ripon and Leeds and York

Background

I have been a chartered librarian for over 30 years and an active member of the Library Association (which accredits librarians under Royal Charter) for nearly as long. I have also worked in the same institution, The British Library, for the same length of time. I was ordained in 1984 and, although I have always played an active part in local parish life, my ministry was intended to be, and has always been, essentially work focussed. I was therefore thrilled, delighted and honoured to be elected President of the Association by its 25,000 members for the year 2000. It seemed to me that for a secular organisation to elect a priest as its President in this millennium year was an event of considerable significance.

What do Presidents do?

The President of a professional association such as the Library Association has essentially three roles to fulfil: ceremonial, political and professional. The ceremonial role is mostly to do with attending dinners and functions, making some after dinner speeches, presenting awards and prizes and generally attempting to be decorative in the right places! The political role is far more serious as it often involves leading delegations to meet senior civil servants and government ministers, attending Select Committee hearings at the House of Common or becoming involved in discussions with senior administrators in local government, academia or even the private sector.

The professional role is essentially one of encouraging members to develop their professionalism, improve standards, become involved in professional affairs and professional education and generally assure

them that what they are doing is worthwhile and significant in both the local and national context. The President also visits all the geographical branches throughout the United Kingdom and attends a number of specialist conferences on different aspects of library and information science. All this involves an enormous amount of speech making, usually of a general philosophical nature rather than dealing with highly specialised technical issue. Woe betide presidents who try to talk about the intricacies of cataloguing mediaeval manuscripts or the difficulties of administering a prison library to those who know far more about it than they do!

The Theology of the Situation

We live in a world that increasingly relies on symbols rather than words for communication. I long ago realised this in my secular employment and have always had a policy of appearing in the work place wearing my clerical collar on average once a week. The old saying, “once seen never forgotten” is very true in this context. Once people know you are an ordained priest they never forget it. It has also been obvious to me over the years that it is a symbol appreciated more by those not involved in church affairs than those who are. I therefore resolved to carry on this policy in my role as President of the Library Association. This meant that I always appeared wearing a collar at least once in every conference and on every occasion where I was making a single appearance. This is all part of my own personal theological perspective of ministry in secular employment where my primary concern is to claim the world for Christ. In that sense I do not believe in the division of the world into sacred and secular but have to accept this is the general view. This belief also underpins my enthusiasm for my own profession. I firmly believe that libraries and librarians, in whatever form they appear in the 21st Century, are nonetheless an intrinsic part of the revelation of God’s creation of the world. An essential part of that creation is the use of the creativity of the human mind and it is the role of the library to reveal this to whoever needs it in whatever place and in whatever format. Librarians have always done this without fear or favour either for the creator or the person needing access to the

creativity. This ongoing synergy is a crucial part both of my professionalism and my theology.

There is however a double irony here. Firstly, for 17 years I have specialised in Copyright Law on which I advise the whole profession; secondly the presidential medal is inscribed with the motto 'Ingenia hominum res publica'. This means, broadly translated, the creativity of the human mind is public property - a sentiment with which I could hardly agree in my role as a copyright advisor! However, from a theological point of view I think it is a crucial statement. The irony is that when I wear the medal with my dog collar above it I am aware that the medal itself actually contains an image of the Goddess Athena! Sacred and secular, Christian and pagan all rolled into one.

The opportunities for Ministry

One important role of the President is to make speeches and public addresses that are generally consonant with the aims and objectives of the Association. As both a Christian and a librarian I would strongly hold the principle that it was essential to maximise access to human creativity in all its many formats. Therefore it was quite reasonable to say this in public without actually drawing some of the underlying theological conclusions from a specifically Christian point of view. This was not ducking the issue as some might say but rather using the combination of words and symbols to convey the combined message. Many people actually remarked that they accepted the concept but understood that I might be coming to it from a different perspective. I never felt the necessity to state that different perspective, as it was self-evident.

One of the liveliest discussions on this topic came with a colleague of many years standing who is a classical Marxist. We have often found that we have many areas of agreement from a professional point of view. There were also a number of opportunities to explore the concept of the integration of society whilst retaining the individuality of both its separate members and ethnic, cultural and economic groups. This was a

particularly useful platform when I spoke at the Conference on Black Librarianship, in which it was important to assure members of the different ethnic groups in the profession that their contribution was as valid as anybody else's and brought distinctive insights which are often overlooked because of their much smaller numbers. Again this did not have to be done from a specifically Christian standpoint but was understood as such by all those present.

There were also particular opportunities to speak to individual people about their professional concerns in the context of their faith. Knowing they had a Christian President often enabled them to speak of issues which they otherwise felt were inappropriate in a purely secular meeting. This in its turn released other people in the meeting to raise ethnical and social concerns which they otherwise had felt inappropriate. One phenomenon which I noticed, trivial in itself perhaps, was that on almost every occasion I attended a lunch or dinner I was asked to open the meal with Grace. Some may dismiss this as a sort of folk religion but we should use every opportunity given to us to emphasise and affirm our faith, however superficial it may seem to many people present.

Specifically Christian events

I was very fortunate in being involved in three specifically Christian events for librarians during my year of office. The first was as the speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Christian Librarians Fellowship. This was the first time that the President had spoken at this event and was much appreciated. This was followed by an invitation to speak to a similar group during the Annual Library Convention in Chicago. A 7:30am breakfast, followed by an 8:00am speech felt more like taking an early communion for the Anglican church in which I minister!

Finally, and probably the pinnacle from my spiritual point of view was the opportunity to preach the sermon at the Christian service for the International Librarians Conference in Jerusalem. To preach in Jerusalem at all is a great thrill and honour! To preach in Jerusalem in

the year 2000 to your professional colleagues was an almost unimaginable honour and delight.

The reaction of the Church

The reaction of the Church to this considerable professional honour was very interesting and very mixed. My own diocese, Ripon and Leeds, publicised the fact in their diocesan newsletter and it was much appreciated by many of the clergy. However, all attempts to get this honour mentioned in the National Anglican Press failed, despite both major newspapers being invited to the President's reception in London where they would have got a very adequate free dinner (and drinks)! My own perception is that this is typical of the Church's reaction to MSE. They are very pleased you do it and they are sure it is a good thing but they don't really know how to handle it. 'Church people doing churchy' things is worthy of acknowledgement but major secular achievements are rarely worth acknowledging.

Conclusion

Being elected President of a professional association should indicate that colleagues regard you as highly competent and well-informed member of their own profession. This was a major opportunity for me to demonstrate that, if I was considered a competent and reasonable professional colleague then my Christianity should at least be taken seriously even if it was not believed by many of those who met me, heard me speak or read my papers. They could not ignore my Christian commitment neither could they ignore my professional status. I hope that the latter did something to move the former forward into the minds and thoughts of many of those with whom I came into contact in this very exciting year.

This sort of opportunity comes once in a lifetime to someone and I very much appreciated the opportunity of having been able to exercise a Ministry in this unique context. Whilst I hope that my Ministry may have touched some people in a new and exciting way for them, I also hope that I will have done something to show the Church that it cannot

exist in splendid isolation, that it needs to be intimately and inextricably involved in the business of society as a whole.

“Challenging the Churches”

Why are we doing it? How are we doing it?

In addition to CHRISM’s national committee, elected at the annual conference, there are two working parties, each focussing upon a major agenda item. ‘Challenging the Churches’ has been the focus of one such working party during the past year and has involved a series of meetings in Oxford.

It rapidly became clear to us that before we could challenge anyone else, we had to challenge ourselves. We had to identify our aims and objectives and practical ways of realising them. It was at this point that Margaret Joachim created an invaluable strategic plan, enabling us to structure our ideas and prioritise our targets.

A lot of progress has been made, via the plan, in establishing *what we are trying to do*:

- Increase the visibility of MSE and MSEs
- Increase acceptance of MSE as a valid and valuable contribution to the scope of ministry in the Christian church
- Enable MSEs to be involved and proactive in discussion and practice of changing patterns of lay and ordained ministry
- Establish CHRISM as the recognised authority on MSE

We have also enjoyed wrestling with a form of words, which encapsulates *our message* :

- As Ministers in Secular Employment we live out our vocation through meeting God at work.

- By choosing to share the daily experience of our work colleagues, we celebrate the presence of God, and see and tell the Christian story.
- The affirmation of God's concern for every aspect of creation is an essential part of the ministry, mission and life of the church.

We hope that other members might like to agree or disagree with us via :

- Written responses to the editor of the Journal
- Participation in CHRISM weekend or day conferences
- Attendance at CHRISM working party meetings
- Joining a regional CHRISM group and including committee/working party items on agendas.

In all that CHRISM does, there is a need to share ideas amongst the membership and this can occur in many different ways.

If you would like to become involved in CHRISM's current work and would like more information about any of the above, contact a committee member. Contact details are shown on the inside cover of this edition of the Journal.

Theology Resource Book Training Guide

We are pleased to announce the publication of a training guide to accompany the CHRISM Theology Resource Book: Ministers at Work. A copy is enclosed with this issue of the CHRISM Journal for members of CHRISM, and a copy will be sent to all those who previously bought the TRB.

The workbook has evolved from practical experience of using the TRB at conferences and seminars. It provides a guide, and the resource

materials, to enable anyone to lead and facilitate a workshop using the book.

The workshop aims both to provide an introduction to the method contained in the CHRISM Theology Resource Book, and to provide an opportunity for participants to explore the issues relevant to them. It can be used with groups from a variety of backgrounds in work-focussed ministry, and to encourage dialogue with others.

This workshop is divided into three sessions intended to be a minimum of one hour each, but these can be extended to allow the participants more time to develop their own personal worksheets at each stage and to discuss and share their findings. The sessions cover:

What is my ministry ?
Theology in work
What do I do differently ?

Each session is laid out to include worked examples and small group exercises, and to allow the facilitator to develop their own examples based on their own experience.

The sessions may be run as part of a weekend or, for example, three separate evenings. In either case it is helpful to allow the participants time between the sessions to work on their personal issues.

We would have liked to be able to provide the training guide free of charge to all those who have previously received the TRB. However we would also like to cover the costs of production. We are therefore inviting a donation of £2 a copy. (Further copies will be available for purchase at £4 a copy – please make use of the order form in the training guide).

We would obviously be interested to hear of events where the training pack has been used, and also to receive feedback on how the workshop worked for you.

Phil Aspinall

Web sites

The Southern Baptist Bivocational Ministers (or “bivos” as they call themselves) have set up a web site at:

<http://www.bivocational.org>

Their annual gathering is in San Diego, 27 – 29 April. If anyone is interested in attending contact the Editor, or e-mail

bivocational@bivocational.org

Also on the web are NASSAM, the Tentmaker Fellowship for Episcopalians. You can find it at:

www.episcopalservices.com/NASSAM/

Both organisations are particularly strong on support for those in accredited ministry who support themselves from secular jobs.

For those with a reasonable command of French, the Mission de France are at:

www.mission-de-france.com

Closer to home are:

www.imsy.freesevice.co.uk

the site of the Industrial Mission for South Yorkshire, which is packed with interesting information and sources, and

www.christiansatwork.org.uk

which has recently been upgraded and is again a very good source of information.

Have you been on the CHRISM website yet?

We are at:

Letters to the Journal:

“The latest Journal [Number 74, July, 2000] is really the most exciting one which has been published – the grassroots perspective – Andy Jolley’s contribution, and Phil Aspinall’s CHRISM Conference reflections – what a feast of vision for the future

“..... The Faith / Work research project was even more to the point, because three days after receiving the Journal I had a copy of our previous parish’s magazine, in which there is a letter from a man who is decreasing his workload so that he can serve God better in the parish!!! No idea work was that important.”

Douglas Banyard

The ice man cometh

A few winters ago a pastor in Finland decided he would draw closer to his flock by sharing some of their experiences. He knew that many of them enjoyed the traditional winter past-time of ice-fishing: sitting contemplating the world in the middle of a frozen lake, while tempting any passing fish with a hook and line dropped through a hole cut in the ice.

Our intrepid pastor suitably kitted himself out: thick coat, snow boots, fishing line, bait, stool and ice-saw. Bravely setting forth on to the ice he found a promising spot (even though it looked just the same as every other spot!) and started to cut a hole.

Suddenly a voice boomed out:

“There are no fish underneath the ice!”

The pastor reeled round but could see no-one.
So, shrugging his shoulders, he moved to another spot on the ice and started to saw.

A second time the voice boomed out:
“There are no fish underneath the ice!”
But of the speaker not a sign, just chill silence. By now a little
Worried, the pastor nonetheless moved further along the ice and set
about a third hole.

Again the voice refrained:
“There are no fish underneath the ice!”
Still he could see no-one. So, raising his eyes heavenward, the pastor
called out: “Is that you, O Lord?”

Came the reply: “No, I am the manager of this ice-rink”.

Diary dates

The **German Worker Priests** are meeting in Frankfurt, 16-18 March
and 19-21 October. Phil Aspinall has details.

In the USA the **Presbyterian Tentmakers** hold their annual meeting in
Houston, 26-28 October.

The **Ridley Hall Foundation** are running a series of conferences on the
following themes:

14-16 March: “The changing faces of loyalty”

23-25 May: “Business and sustainable development”

22-24 June: “Spirituality and the Workplace”

Further details can be obtained by contacting RHF on 01223 741074.

**** Stop Press ****

Celebrate Bastille Day with a difference!

The 2001 CHRISM AGM and Conference will be held on Saturday, 14th July,
At Carr's Lane URC Church, Birmingham,
(5 minutes walk from New Street station, by the side of Marks and Spencers).

The AGM will start at 11am, followed by lunch and our guest speaker, Bill Beaver.

Full details with the April Journal,
and on our website: www.chrism.org.uk.

Mark you diary now!

CHRISM

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*Our faith imposes on us a right and a duty to throw ourselves
into the things of the earth*

Teilhard de Chardin