

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Indian Journal of Theology* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_ijt\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ijt_01.php)

# The Honorary Ministry\*

MICHAEL R. WESTALL†

## 1. Introduction

It is necessary, first, to say that this paper has been written in considerable haste amid many other preoccupations. It makes no claim to originality, nor does the writer claim to have acquainted himself with more than a portion of the relevant literature. It is hoped that it does provide some material which may form the basis of discussion.

Before proceeding further, a word should be said about the scope of this paper. The very title of this form of ministry has been the subject of considerable debate: "Voluntary", "priest-worker", "supplementary ministry", "auxiliary parochial ministry", "non-stipendiary clergy", have been only some of the terms used. Perhaps the most appropriate term is "honorary ministry". "It is positive; it is brief; it is less crudely financial than 'non-stipendiary'; unlike 'supplementary', 'supporting' and 'auxiliary', it has nothing remotely 'second class' about it."<sup>1</sup>

Broadly, then, we are considering clergy who do not receive a stipend from the Church; who have employment otherwise paid for and who perform their ministerial functions in an "honorary" capacity. Here too it is necessary to restrict the field. In discussing those "who do not receive a stipend from the Church", we do not intend to include

\* A Paper presented at a consultation on the Diaconate and related questions arranged by the CNI Theological Commission, held in Delhi on October 1, 1982.

† The Revd. Michael Westall was until recently Principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta and Editor of *IJT*.

1. W. H. Saumarez Smith, *An Honorary Ministry*, London: ACCM Occasional Paper No. 8, p. 8.

those who receive a salary from a secular agency for the exercise of knowledge or skills which are closely related to their ministerial training—theologians paid by universities, hospital or prison chaplains on government salaries (where these are provided for) and so on. We are in this paper concerned with two categories: (i) clergy who after ordination enter secular employment which requires knowledge or skill which is quite distinct from that acquired in their ministerial training; (ii) men (or women) in secular employment who remain in the same employment after their ordination and who continue to support themselves and their family by this employment.

## 2. The New Testament

It is necessary before proceeding further to remind ourselves that the full-time paid professional ministry is by no means a universal phenomenon in the history of the Church. In the New Testament we find a fluid situation. The main distinction in ministries seems to be between those of an itinerant nature and ministers in-charge of local congregations.<sup>2</sup> Presumably the latter were in many cases not full-time. As is well known, even Paul, with his demanding ministry, according to the author of Acts did at least sometimes earn his keep by working as a tent-maker (Acts 18:3), and I Corinthians 4:12 refers to labouring, "working with our hands". On the other hand, in 1 Corinthians 9:3ff. Paul insists that the apostle has the right to his keep and in v. 9 he quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 (in a somewhat strained exegesis) to support his case: the same text is quoted in 1 Timothy 5:18 with reference to the (local) elders. 2 Corinthians 11:18-19 refers to Paul's needs, when he was at Corinth, being supplied from Macedonia. Thus, "The New Testament certainly permits a minister to work as a professional, receiving his salary from the Church with a good conscience, but it also permits a minister for evangelical reasons to take an occupation which is not paid by the Church, in order to continue

2. See e.g. Eric James, "Voluntary and Part-time Ministries", *Lambeth Conference 1968, Preparatory Essays*, produced for private circulation by SPCK, London, p. 273.

to serve a specific community, which cannot or will not support him."<sup>3</sup>

### 3. The Early Church

There is ample evidence that, in the early Christian centuries, presbyters were expected to support themselves as far as possible. For example, inscriptions from tombstones mention "Dionysius, presbyter and physician" (from the catacomb of Callixtus which was used especially A.D. 197-314); "Theodorus, a presbyter and silversmith" (tombstone from Galatia); in the third century, one Hyacinthus was a presbyter in Rome and an officer in the imperial household. Tertullian was perturbed at the admission of idol makers not only into membership but "even the ecclesiastical order".<sup>4</sup> Even bishops sometimes supported themselves. Spiridion, who was Bishop of Trimituntis in Cyprus at the time of the Council of Nicaea, tended his own sheep there.<sup>5</sup> Zeno at Gaza "by pursuing his own trade of weaving linen, continued to earn the means of supplying his own wants and of providing for the poor. He never deviated from this course of conduct till the close of his life, although he attained... a very great age, and though he presided over the richest and greatest church of the province".<sup>6</sup> So too, Chrysostom paints an idyllic picture of the rural bishops of Antioch :

These men you may see sometimes yoking the oxen and driving the plough, and again ascending the pulpit and cultivating the souls under their care ; now uprooting the thorns from the earth with a hook, and now purging out the sins of the soul by the word.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, in reality it was not always quite so ideal as that. Secular occupation could interfere with ministry. Certain occupations were early forbidden to the clergy,

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

4. For the above example, see W. G. B. Beam, "The Support of the Clergy in the First Five Centuries AD", *The International Review of Missions*, Vol. XLV, 4 (Oct. 1956), p. 421.

5. G. Every, "Some Historical Considerations," in *Part Time Priests ?*, ed. Robin Ienniston, London : Skeffington, 1960, p. 30.

6. Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.*, Bk. 7, c. 28, quoted by Every, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

7. *Hom. ad pop. Antioch* 19, quoted by Beam, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

those of soldier, barber, surgeon and worker in iron.<sup>8</sup> (The reason for the ban on the last three was apparently because the barber and the surgeon were concerned with blood-letting, while the iron-worker made their instruments.) But the biggest problems came in relation to trade. Cyprian complains of bishops who "relinquished their chair, deserted their people, strayed into other provinces, hunting the markets for mercantile profits, trying to amass large sums of money, and multiplying their gains by accumulated usuries".<sup>9</sup> The third Canon of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) sums up the dissatisfaction with this kind of ministry :

It has become known to the holy Council that some members of the clergy from base covetousness hire other people's goods and contracts for secular business, disparaging the service of God, while gadding about the houses of secular people and taking over the management of property for love of gain.<sup>10</sup>

The conclusion of Beam from all this seems indisputable: "It seems clear that in the early Church there was no necessary connexion between office and salary. Offices were created as required and their holders only received help as required."<sup>11</sup>

Various factors intervened to make the practice of the self-supported minister gradually disappear at the end of the age of persecution.<sup>12</sup> There was the sheer increase in the number of the faithful and, therefore, of the church business for the clergy. The immunity granted by Constantine from onerous civil burdens to the clergy led to their number being defined and limited. This also had the effect of making the ordained presbyter busier. Further, the gradual growth of a celibate ministry, especially in the West, made it easier for churches to support their priests and deacons entirely on offerings.

8. Beam, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

9. *De Lapsis*, c. 4, quoted in Every, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

10. Quoted by Beam, *op. cit.*, p. 423.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 427.

12. See Every, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-35.

#### 4. Professionalisation

It might be added in passing that even where a ministry fully supported by the Church has developed, it has not always regarded itself as a profession, requiring training and professional skills. Anthony Russell has traced the development of the idea of the clerical profession in England during the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> This was the century in which the theological colleges were opened to provide a specialised training for the clergy. There are several indications of the professional consciousness which had developed in the clergy by the end of the century—for example the number who were by then subscribing to at least one theological ("professional") journal. However, in some respects the ministry never has been fully professionalised and there are those who urge a greater degree of professionalisation.<sup>14</sup>

#### 5. The Move Towards An "Honorary" Ministry

All that has been said above is not intended to prove that any particular form of ministry is desirable. Certain forms of biblicism sometimes lead people to insist on the need to return to an honorary ministry and to disparage stipendiary clergy. On the other hand a rigid (and rather uncritical) view of tradition as developing under the guidance of the Spirit can lead to precisely the opposite conclusion.

At all events, it is observable that in the present century there has been a move away from seeing the full-time paid professional ministry as the only model of Christian ministry. In 1930, the Revd. Roland Allen, a missionary in China, published *The Case for Voluntary Clergy*.<sup>15</sup> In this, and in earlier works, he was severely critical of the traditional pattern of the ministry, at least as it applied in China. He argued that the majority of the clergy should not be a paid, separate and highly trained class: in the

13. Anthony Russel, *The Clerical Profession*, London: SPCK, 1980.

14. See, c.f., Fidelis D'Lima, "Professionalisation of the Ministry and the Training of Ministers," in *Ministries in the Church in India*, ed. D. S. Amalorpavadass, New Delhi: CBCI, 1976, pp. 401-407.

15. Summarised in *The Ministry of the Spirit*, ed. D. Paton, London: World Dominion Press, 1960.

New Testament men were never invited to offer themselves for the ministry : their qualifications were mainly moral and spiritual, not intellectual. In parts of South America, some of the Protestant churches, especially those which have grown rapidly, have made wide use of honorary ministers.<sup>16</sup> "Older" churches have also found themselves considering the honorary ministry as an alternative pattern. The 1968 Lambeth Conference found as follows :

In order that the Church may be continually renewed for mission, there is a need for a greater diversity in the exercise of the ordained ministry. Parochial and non-parochial, full and part-time, stipendiary and honorary clergy are all needed.<sup>17</sup>

The Anglican Church in Hong Kong had been using honorary clergy before this,<sup>18</sup> and by the mid-seventies, there were over a hundred honorary clergy in the Church of England.<sup>19</sup>

## 6. The Economic Imperative

It seems clear that honorary clergy have in fact been used for at least two distinct reasons—economic and theological or ecclesiological. In his survey of honorary ministers in South America, Douglas Webster found that such clergy had arisen because of economic necessity, not because of any theological principle :

Where the Church is unmistakably growing and spreading out through the testimony of believing Christians, this part-time ministry has been the only feasible way of pastoring newly created congregations.<sup>20</sup>

In India, part-time clergy have not been so extensively used. However, in rural areas where there are a large number of congregations, there is a strong case for some-

16. D. Webster, *Patterns of Part-time Ministry*, London : World Dominion Press, 1964.

17. *The Lambeth Conference 1968 : Reports and Resolutions*, London : SPCK ; New York, Seabury Press, 1968, p. 102.

18. R. O. Hall, "What Happens in Nong Kong", *Part Time Priests ?* pp. 60-64.

19. Saumarez Smith, *op. cit.*

20. Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

thing on the lines of an honorary ministry. For example, in their survey of Lutheran congregations, Bergquist and Manickam found that only 23% of the functioning ministry was ordained.<sup>21</sup> This lack of ordained ministers leads to the situation analysed by S. W. Schmitthenner in *Renewal of the Ministry in Andhra Pradesh*.<sup>22</sup> The conclusion of his survey of Lutheran churches in Andhra Pradesh was as follows :

The nurture, care and receiving of sacraments in a congregation is directly in proportion to the nearness to the residence of the pastor. The further away from the pastor a village is, the less care and less frequent the administration of the sacraments.<sup>23</sup>

This led to the conclusion that it was necessary to have a fully authorised person in each congregation. Catechists or other unordained church workers did not solve the problem. In fact as Douglas Webster says of such workers, "It is hard to see where any advantage lies in this widespread system; on the contrary, there is every disadvantage, for it has produced a semi-clerical caste, neither flesh, fowl nor good red-herring."<sup>24</sup> Thus the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches passed the following resolution :

In order to facilitate every worshipping community to partake regularly in the sacraments, there should be one in *each* congregation who is either ordained or licensed both to preach and administer sacraments to worshipping communities who have recommended them for this said purpose.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, the Andhra Pradesh Consultation on the Ministry recommended a pattern of a largely full time preaching-teaching ministry which would be fully trained

21. J. A. Bergquist and K. Manickam, *The Crisis of Dependency in Third World Ministries*, Madras : CLS, 1974, p. 48.

22. S. W. Schmitthenner, "The Need for Rethinking about Ministry", in *Renewal of the Ministry in Andhra Pradesh*, Hyderabad : ACTC and APCC, 1974, pp. 20-37.

23. *Ibid*, p. 24.

24. Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

25. *Renewal of the Ministry in Andhra Pradesh*, pp. 26-27.

and a sacramental-pastoral ministry. A sacramental-pastoral minister "will have a short-term training and... will provide for the usual worship life of a local congregation including the sacraments... He will probably be a person who gains his livelihood from some other source and who serves the church voluntarily in this capacity."<sup>26</sup>

A few comments are in order about the use of honorary clergy in the kind of situations described.

First, Christian communities which are deprived of the sacraments and regular nurture, while mainly to be found in villages, are not exclusively to be found there. A survey conducted by the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guntur showed that many Christians were so far removed from the nurture of the Church as not to know to which denomination they belonged. The survey indicated "that practically half of the Christians in Guntur are unchurched Christians living in the outlying slum areas."<sup>27</sup>

Secondly, where an honorary ministry has been introduced for economic rather than theological reasons, it is, at least sometimes, seen as being by no means an ideal pattern. Douglas Webster discovered many in the South American Churches who were dissatisfied with the honorary ministry. In Brazil, the comments made included the following: "The part-time ministry is one of the handicaps in our country. We are fighting to get rid of it." "Part-time ministers may understand people outside the Church but not those inside—because they cannot visit." "It is better to have one pastor shared by two churches than to have two part-time ministers."<sup>28</sup> Webster found in South America that those Churches which had a part-time ministry were tending to move away from it, while those Churches which had never known anything but a full-time ordained ministry were beginning to have thoughts about the desirability of a part-time ministry. His tentative conclusion was as follows:

When a church is rapidly expanding, at its growing points and in its early stages the part-time

26. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

28. Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

ministry must be regarded almost as an imperative; but at the points of consolidation and in the later stages of church growth... a teaching ministry becomes an imperative also, and this will usually mean a greater emphasis on trained and full-time pastors.<sup>29</sup>

It is almost certainly unrealistic to see honorary ministers as temporary phenomenon, a type which can be superseded when the Church has consolidated itself. There clearly are areas where the Church never will be able to support a full-time paid ministry with adequate salaries in anything like the numbers necessary for proper pastoral and sacramental care. But it is the case that where the honorary minister has been regarded as supplementing the parochial, home-based ministries of stipendiary clergy, certain limitations and tensions have been felt. The survey of honorary clergy in the Church of England found that, while the honorary clergy were usually fully occupied with church work on Sundays, they had little time for the kind of work which the full-time clergy spent much of their weekdays doing, such as taking the occasional offices (Baptisms, weddings, funerals), pastoral visiting and sick visiting.<sup>30</sup> This survey drew a distinction between honorary clergy who felt that their primary sphere of ministry was their place of work and those who saw the parish where they helped as being the place of ministry. It found that many in the latter group felt a tension between their work and their ministry and several thought of becoming full-time paid clergy eventually. The following were among the comments received from honorary clergy. "In the distant future I am considering the prospect of a full-time ministry. I find my present is rather frustrating because of the limited time which I have available; there are so many things which can only be dealt with briefly and time does not allow for a follow up." "I feel the time will come when I may be called to choose between the stipendiary ministry and the non-stipendiary... To try and do two jobs, both of which are

29. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

30. Saumarez Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

in their own right full-time, but worlds apart in many ways, is at times very testing."<sup>31</sup>

Thirdly, it does seem clear that, in a pattern such as the one outlined in the Andhra Consultation with a preaching-teaching full-time and fully trained ministry and a sacramental-pastoral honorary and slightly trained ministry, it is essential that the full-time clergy should see themselves as the enablers of ministry in the Church as a whole and particularly as enablers of ministry for the sacramental-pastoral clergy. In the scheme as envisaged in Andhra, the full-time clergy were expected to help with training of the local pastors.<sup>32</sup> If this is to work in practice, it is essential that the full-time clergy should encourage the emergence of leadership: this does not always happen since some clergy see the emergence of other leaders as a threat to their own position. It also means that the full-time clergy must themselves be equipped to train others. It sometimes appears that clergy do not have any concept of training except in the sense of imparting a fixed body of knowledge and certain mechanical skills.

Finally, it must be stressed that the question of selection of such local ministers is of paramount importance. Of course, it is not impossible that some who are ordained as honorary clergy for a pastoral-sacramental ministry might eventually be fully trained and become full-time ministers. What is important is that people should not be selected for the local ministry who see this as a stepping stone towards what appears to them as a more important form of ministry. In fact, people should be selected not because they appear to have potential academic ability, but because they already are exercising a ministry in their community. Michael Harper has pointed out that the Church has been too prone to train people *for* ministry rather than to recognise ministry. "Men are trained so that they may become ministers rather than trained because they are ministers who already possess and are

31. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

32. P. Victor Premasagar, "Renewal of Ministry in Andhra Pradesh", in *Ministries in the Church in India*, p. 341.

exercising their charismatic gifts in the Church and the world."<sup>33</sup>

## 7. The Theological Imperative

We move now to an entirely different rationale for honorary ministry: This relates to situations where, although there may be economic forces or recruiting problems which help to make the honorary ministry appear desirable, the basic motivation is theological and ecclesiological. It is possible here to trace two distinct thrusts:

(a) *Obstructions in patterns of growth*: David Wasdell, the leader of the Urban Church Project in London, has analysed the way in which congregations grow in an urban setting. His results show that, in the traditional "monarchical" pattern with leadership concentrated in one minister, congregations have a self-limiting size of about 175, regardless of the size of the population. Beyond this point members tend to leave the congregation as rapidly as new ones are added.<sup>34</sup> "As numbers of people per parish rise, so the available pastoral care per person decreases... Pastoral care then becomes inevitably selected, some receiving more attention than others... The more members of the congregation there are the more they have to compete with each other for the pastor's attention and time. A certain amount of jealousy and envy gets built in."<sup>35</sup> As David Watson puts it: "The vicar or minister is usually the bottle-neck, if not the cork, of his church: nothing can go in or out except through him. No meetings can take place unless he is the leader or chairman. No decisions can be made without his counsel or approval... This bottle concept of the church makes growth and maturity virtually impossible."<sup>36</sup> David Watson describes how as the congregation of his

33. Michael Harper, *Let My People Grow*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977, p. 320.

34. *Let My People Grow*, London: Urban Church Project, Workpaper No. 1, 1975.

35. *Divide and Conquer*, London: Urban Church Project, Workpaper No. 2, 1976, p. 11.

36. David Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978, p. 246.

own church grew in size, he was unable to meet all the needs of the whole church. Clearly, leadership had to be shared: a system of elders and area group leadership emerged.<sup>37</sup> David Wasdell also regards it as essential to move towards shared leadership in a "multicentre parish" if the self-limiting constraints of the traditional parish organisation are to be overcome.<sup>38</sup> It is against this background that one can understand the following resolution of the Nottingham Evangelical Anglican Congress of 1977:

Clerical professionalism has greatly inhibited the proper development of the diversity of ministries. We deplore the prevalent pattern of "one-man ministries," which are good neither for the man nor for the parish, and we call on parishes to work towards shared leadership.<sup>39</sup>

This takes us into the field of the structure of the congregation and lay leadership which is being covered by another paper at this Consultation. However, it should be noted here that the development of an honorary ministry can be a step towards shared leadership. Some "parish-oriented" honorary clergy see themselves not only as sharing in leadership, but pointing towards an even greater degree of shared leadership. One honorary priest puts it like this: "I see one of my main tasks as being that of drawing out the ministry of the congregation, educating them to exercise their own ministry, getting them to accept that ministry is vested in the whole body of Christ, not just in the one individual."<sup>40</sup> The fact that the honorary minister clearly exercises a ministry in virtue of his ordination and yet remains one of the people by retaining his secular job, enables him to function as a sign of shared leadership.

(b) "*Clerical alienation*": I put this heading in inverted commas, since some might question the reality of what it suggests. However, it is the case that another theological or ecclesiological rationale of the honorary

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 291 ff.

38. *Divide and Conquer, passim.*

39. Quoted in Eddie Gibbs, *Urban Church Growth*, Nottingham: Grove Booklet on Ministry and Worship, No. 55, 1977, p. 15.

40. Quoted in Saumarez Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

ministry is seen in terms of overcoming a gap, supposed or real, which exists between full-time clergy and society in general. Bishop F. R. Barry puts it like this :

My interest in a supplementary Ministry is thus primarily theological. If some of these laymen who are sharing in the priestly ministry of the Church through their secular professions and avocations were ordained to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, that would—I suggest—provide an important object lesson in what is really meant by the Church. It would emphasise the sacramental values of an incarnational religion. It would help to bridge the fatal gulf not only between clergy and laity but also between the sacred and the secular, worship and work, religion and daily life.<sup>41</sup>

This feeling of the full-time, paid minister being somehow at a distance from society is not confined to western urban society : Douglas Webster found in Brazil younger ministers who wanted a part-time ministry "not primarily because of economic necessity, but because they are realising that it is vitally important themselves to be involved in secular work in order to understand what is happening and to know the problems and pressures to which their congregations are subject."<sup>42</sup> In such societies, it is sometimes the *security* of the full-time minister which is felt as a barrier : he is "divorced from the real worries and insecurities of today."<sup>43</sup>

But it is particularly in urbanized, secularised societies where life is based on the home to a much smaller extent than in more traditional societies, and where the "religious question" is not automatically asked, that a need for a form of ministry to complement the traditional full-time parish ministry is especially strongly felt. The full-time ministry, at least so some feel, is almost exclusively directed to homes and it is on the religious side of the

41. F. R. Barry, "The Case for Part Time Priests," in *Part Time Priests?*, pp. 13-14.

42. Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

divide in a secularised society. Eric James puts it like this :

...It is doubtful whether in a secular society the Church can serve and penetrate that society unless at least part of its ordained ministry earns its own living, gains entrance to, and contact with, society by undertaking secular occupations.<sup>44</sup>

The task of the minister in such situations has been well described by Michael Bourke :

As the task of the "worker-priest" is to undertake precisely this voyage of discovery. By being a priest he is firmly rooted within the ecclesiastical institution and the theological tradition ; and by being a worker he is forced to face the issues. His priestly task is to give some kind of recognisable leadership to his fellow-Christians in their lay ministry.<sup>45</sup>

The task of the worker-priest is to live at this frontier, to discover what faith is, and what it means to be a disciple, in the secular world, and to seek out the Church there—without denying the traditional Church back home.<sup>46</sup>

It is clear that some honorary clergy do in fact interpret their ministry in this way. One such person writes : "The non-stipendiary ministry should be built around the concept of the outreach of the Church into man's working life... It is a ministry of gentle confrontation. It helps Christians in industry to stand up and be counted."<sup>47</sup> An interesting and sometimes amusing example of this kind of ministry in practice is *Transport of Delight*<sup>48</sup> by Jack Burton, a Methodist minister who became a bus driver. One of the reviews of this book spoke of it as describing "what a contemporary spirituality is like if one fully embraces the world, its work and humour and sadness and glory."

44. James, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

45. Michael Bourke, "The Theology of Non-Stipendiary Ministry," *Theology* Vol. LXXXIV, No. 699 (May 1981), p. 180.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

47. Quoted in Saumarez Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

48. Jack Burton, *Transport of Delight*, London : SCM Press, 1971.

It might be wondered whether it is necessary to have *ordained* people to close this gap between the Church and the world. What we have been describing is precisely the task of lay people and in any case ordained people can never be more than a token presence in such situations. As Kraemer put it, "If the laity of the Church, dispersed in and through the world, are really what they are called to be, the real uninterrupted dialogue between Church and world happens through them. They form the daily projection of the church into the world. They embody the meeting of Church and world."<sup>49</sup>

The point at stake here is that theology can never be done in the abstract and then applied to actual situations. And, whatever we may think of it, it is the case that both outside the Church and inside it, the clergy are seen as representing the Church. Thus, even though our theology of the laity suggests that laymen and laywomen should be the ones to close the gap between the Church and the world, the gap will not actually be closed unless some members of the ordained ministry earn their living in the secular sphere. Michael Bourke puts it well :

If the ordained ministers of the Church are for theoretical reasons restricted to the congregational sphere of ministry, then the Church's view of its mission will in practice be confined within a parochial perspective. The concerns of the secular world will not actually be taken seriously by the Church unless some of its ordained office holders are active within secular affairs and force the Church to pay attention to them... Conversely, the secular world will not actually perceive that the Church is committed to serve it and speak of its concerns if the Church is not prepared to ordain, and thus commit its full authority to, some who work entirely within that secular world.<sup>50</sup>

A word needs to be said about training for the honorary ministry understood in this way. As we saw, the

49. H. Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, London : Lutterworth Press, 1958, p. 170.

50. Bourke, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

honorary ministry, where it is a local pastoral-sacramental ministry, may require only a fairly brief training: at least it is not realistic to expect more. But the honorary minister, understood as one who will help to close the gap between the Church and the world, has a ministry which is quite as demanding as that of a full-time paid minister. It is clear that his training must be as rigorous. It need not be modelled too closely on established courses at theological colleges for full-time students. This work offers a new educational challenge and opportunity. A fully satisfactory course will take some considerable time to work out; the important point to note is the demanding nature of the training required.

### Conclusion

Concluding remarks will be brief, for this is the point where discussion should begin.

I would urge most strongly that, in our thinking about the honorary ministry, we make a clear distinction between those appointed to a local pastoral-sacramental ministry in areas where the full-time ministry is bound to remain inadequate and those appointed for more explicitly theological reasons, as a move towards a shared leadership or to try to close the gap between Church and world. To a degree, one will expect to see a need for such ministers mainly in rural areas, especially in areas of rapid Church growth. Provided that the functions of these ministers are clearly understood and defined, as has been already suggested, a fairly brief training will be adequate: they will continue to be trained by the "teaching-preaching" ministers. They will be selected mainly because of the ministry they are already exercising in their local congregations. It is probably the case that the Church of North India does have a need for this type of minister, especially in some of its rural areas. The CNI Constitution does already make provision for such Presbyters to be ordained "after a simple form of preparation."<sup>51</sup> This preparation needs to be spelt out in more detail.

51. *The Constitution of the Church of North India*, (1981) Part I, Chapter I, Section VIII, Sub-Section C, Clause 14.

In at least some of the cities, the Church of North India, I would think, is able economically (potentially, if not actually) to support a full-time paid ministry which can offer the pastoral and sacramental care which is required. Thus an honorary minister in such areas should be appointed for the kind of theological or ecclesiological reasons outlined above, not because of some temporary shortage of ordained clergy as an ad hoc measure. The training of such ministers should be equivalent to that which the CNI Constitution requires of the full-time ministry ("not less than three years in a recognized Theological Institution"<sup>52</sup>), although the training is likely to follow a different pattern. The question of the selection, training and deployment of such ministers is one on which, I believe, it is very important for the CNI to reach a common mind.

<sup>52</sup>. *Idid.*, Part I, Chapter I, Section VIII, Sub-Section E, Clause 21.