'Hell's Kitchen' Yesterday and Tomorrow: Towards a New Vision of Commonweal

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Arrivals and Departures

IN 1886 WALTER RAUSCHENBUSCH, after an extended and exemplary school and university education in the United States and in Germany, arrived in the west side section of New York on the edge of an area called *Hell's Kitchen*, to serve as minister to the Second German Church. 'Here he came face to face with the terrible effects of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, disease and crime on human life. He began to suspect that something was wrong with a socio-economic system that allowed such terrible wrongs to go unchecked'.[1] In contrast with that arrival some hundred years ago, in 1982 Canon Eric James, Director of Christian Action, wrote a series of articles and letters in the national press about the dereliction of the inner city and about the withdrawal of significant people and agencies, including the churches, from that inner city.[2] He asked for the setting up of an Archbishops' 'Staying There Commission'. At roughly this same time, a number of dioceses of the Church of England, looking at future budgets in the light of inflation and anxiety about increasing income, contemplated (as they have done before), as the first victims of budgetary cuts, those few and small specialised ordained ministries many of which are involved in the urban-industrial sector. So departures from that sector are signalled for the not too distant future. Whereas Rauschenbusch (and the Social Gospel movement of which he was to become so significant a leader) was concerned on his *arrival* in New York to relate Christian faith to the difficult socio-economic issues of modern industrial society, so a hundred years later we can discern actual and potential symbolic *departures* from the very heart of that industrial society to which Rauschenbusch was to direct so much of his social energy and so much of his theological creativity.

The Problem and the Possibility

In this lecture I shall argue that the Church of England, and probably many other churches too, have seriously and significantly, over a period of more than a hundred years, and despite significant exceptions, withdrawn from engagement in and with a society defined ever more by institutions, by collective tendencies, collective problems and the need for collective decisions. I argue further that

at the present time we stand in a particularly critical and significant phase of the development of urban-technological society in which many former hopes have not been realised and in which many severe problems, certainly not open to analysis and solution in an individualistic manner, are not receiving satisfactory scrutiny and response at the collective level. I believe it can be shown that, in this whole development, the greater body of Christian thought and action has evinced a failure of understanding, of sympathy, or presence which is not only damaging to that society thus neglected, but is also distortive of the very meaning of the Gospel which the churches have the responsibility to proclaim. I shall, by way of conclusion, make some tentative proposals concerning the establishment of an intellectual undertaking which I call *public theology* and of an activity which I call *public ministry*.[3] In formulating these ideas I shall draw upon the history and content of the Social Gospel movement, not as something to be naively imitated, but as a body of motivations and commitments, often subsequently misunderstood, which can provide broad criteria and standards to undergird and provoke contemporary thinking.

Causes of Withdrawal

In order to understand the scale and gravity of the contemporary dilemma, it is worthwhile to draw attention to some of the historical factors which have contributed to this withdrawal by the churches from significant attention to society. Despite the unsettled debate which has surrounded the notion of 'secularisation', I am disposed to use that concept in a broad sense to indicate the kind of social movements which have affected the thinking and activity of the churches over the last 200 years.[4] Here I use the concept of secularisation not to argue for some decline in religion as such, but to point to significant changes which have taken place in respect of the locus, thrust and expression of Christian belief and activity. I have in mind the well-known propositions about the rise of autonomy,[5] referring to society's decreasing dependence upon theological and metaphysical frameworks; the elimination of Christianity as a major presupposition for significant social institutions such as education and the law; the contraction of the churches' moral claims upon society; the rise of the religiously neutral or religiously plural State; the tendency of faith to withdraw to the private, individual, internal sphere;[6] the restriction of Christianity, following upon powerful processes of rationalisation, to an existence as only a sector of life, and that sector outside the spheres of work and government, primarily located in the sphere of residence and in the span of leisure; the fragmentation and loss of earlier vocabularies held in common by which intimations and convictions about ultimacy in human affairs could be publicly expressed and understood.[7] To talk in this way is of course to refer to a complex set of interconnected historical and social phenomena. Which issues may have been more apparent to the Unitarian and Liberal Christian inheritors of the tradition of Radical Dissent.

It is also important to take note of tendencies in the churches themselves which may or may not be the direct products of the major social tendencies just referred to, but which reinforce those tendencies in a powerful way. For example the comprehensive clericalisation of the Catholic church in earlier times—a clericalisation which has been carried through into the post-reformation era much more strongly than Protestants are normally willing to admit—which has limited the self-understanding, initiative, and self-development of the laity as those, in theory, most actively and directly involved in the life of society. Again, the strongly androcentric character of the Christian tradition, as comprehensively disclosed by modern feminist theology, has severely repressed, with its instinct for hierarchy and domination, innovative forces for social change.[8]

In the case of the Church of England attention must also be drawn to the ethical and societal consequences of being an *established church*. The relative deference towards the established political order leads to a lack of curiosity, criticism and initiative towards that order and encourages the church to be pre-occupied with its internal affairs. But such a remark refers to symptom more than to cause. Can we probe further back? A serious and worthwhile attempt has recently been made by Professor Stephen Sykes to deal with a not dissimilar subject, namely the neglect of systematic theology in Anglicanism.[9] Can one trace any parallels or connections between the neglect of systematic theology and the neglect of a theological engagement with the wider society?

First, it is true to say that as the Anglican Reformation lacked the doctrinal definiteness of, say, Lutheranism, so too it lacked a definite and distinctive social-ethical stamp such as that which was given by Radical dissenters like Richard Price and Joseph Priestley. Second, just as it was part of the 17th century apologia that Anglicanism did not insist on a formulated system of doctrine as such had emanated from the Council of Trent, so it may be argued that on the same basis no formulated sociological self-understanding was forthcoming. Third, Sykes argues vehemently that 'English Anglicans have been mesmerised by the false idea that their ecclesiastical arrangements are of a purely practical character, and neither have, nor require, any merely theoretical justification. And this proposal . . . rests on a view of the nature of English society and of an occult entity known as 'the English mind' whose roots lie no deeper than the Industrial Revolution and the period of colonial expansion'.[10] There is an indirect connection here with our theme in that the practicalist English temper referred to has withdrawn certain major questions from sustained ethical scrutiny, e.g., the Church-State relationship in England, precisely on the grounds that it *was* a happy practical arrangement not really susceptible to theological analysis.

This period of extensive theological neglect of society coincided with one of the most decisive periods of social, political and economic change in the West. At the end of the Middle Ages 'as the economy became more complex, with the rise of commerce, finance and industry, and the breakdown of feudalism, Christian thinking did not keep pace with the changes'.[11] Why was this the case and why was the relatively better theological success of the later 19th century not *really* effective in influencing theological thoughts about economics and society? Munby sees three reasons: the Christian social reformers of the 19th century failed properly to see the problems with which economists were faced; they failed to do justice to the necessary role of the business man; they were not active in the world of affairs.[12] But this kind of diagnosis still prompts the question 'why were they not active?' Why in the period concerned was the majority of the Church of England happy about the economic and social developments which were taking place, and saw no great difficulty in squaring them with Christian conscience?

H. Richard Niebuhr in *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* directly confronts the question how such a state of affairs comes about. Niebuhr lays heavy emphasis upon the consequences for the church of a close relationship with the state. 'From this time onward the ethics and, in part, the doctrine of Christianity came decreasingly to be the presentation of the teachings of Jesus and increasingly the religious formulation of prevailing social ideas. And this formulation could not escape the fact of whatever culture it represented and sanctioned'.[13] In this the church differs from the sect. 'Churches are inclusive institutions ... membership in a church is socially obligatory ... and no special requirements condition its privileges .... The church as an inclusive social group is closely allied with national, economic and cultural interest ... by the very nature of its constitution it is committed to the accommodation of its ethics to the ethics of civilisation'.[14]

In another part of his discussion Niebuhr argues that a characteristic of national churches is 'their tendency to restrict the application of Christian ethics to the more individual phases of human conduct or to social conduct within the bounds of the family'.[15] A similar point is made in the context of remarks about the religious ethic of the middle class in which 'a very high regard attaches to the ethics of family life'.[16]

Again, Niebuhr argues that 'the nationalist churches must regard [war] as part of that relatively divine order of nature which has been instituted in a world of sin .... Their attitude toward social customs is in general that of acceptance. They are not prone to seek reforms; they are most often the bulwark of political conservatism ... This conservative attitude is fortified by a theology and an ethics which draw a clear distinction between the realms of grace and sin, [and] regards the social order as belonging to the latter realm'.[17]

The doctrine of the Two Kingdoms as this has evolved in Lutheranism has similar effects.[18] Particularly noticeable is the tendency in that Kingdom which is concerned with the political order to be essentially charged with the prevention of chaos, and the avoidance of disorder, and therefore to see itself essentially in negative terms. These outlooks are found often implicitly in political and ecclesiastical orders which do not necessarily mirror the Lutheran doctrine in a thoroughgoing way. Characteristic of many of these different outlooks, as prompted by the movement of secularisation in the west, is the rise of individualism[19] which was probably reinforced by the Protestant Reformation. This religious individualism, closely combined with emerging political, economic and social individualism, has exercised a very profound impact upon the development of Christian beliefs, e.g., the notion that God saves human beings one by one, an outlook significantly opposed to much of the Biblical witness. Not surprisingly, faced by the three realms of society—the technical-economic realm, the realm of polity, and the realm of culture[20]—the church in fact progressively confined itself to *culture* where individualism could still be afforded scope, and where the *personal* claims of Christian faith still seemed to be meaningful.

For of course in and even before the Industrial Revolution, the technical-economic sphere, dealing with the organisation and allocation of goods and services, had become rapidly more impersonal and vast as the market model held sway in theory and practice. Likewise the realm of polity, with the tasks of legitimating social justice and the use of power, became ever more collectivist and at the mercy of political and military machines. So the Christian gospel of transformation seemed unable to adjust itself to these new modes and dimensions, and, as noted above, moved into the realm of culture. Its ancient symbols rapidly became historical heirlooms, as they lost their convictional power and their depth of social context.

But a paradox appears. In line with the development just indicated, church and clergy moved into a safely fenced reservation in which clergy would nurse congregations, congregations would confine their existence to the face-to-face personal and interpersonal sphere, and the church would work out reasons of Christian principle for fighting shy of the technical-economic realm and the realm of polity. This process has continued as many clergy have converted themselves into semi-professional counsellors, into skilled impresarios of worship, into guardians of the world of dying and death, into leaders of dance and play, into enablers of charismatic feeling, into servants of the gospel of 'small is beautiful'. But alongside this ludic cheerfulness and emotional intensity in the groves of *interiority*, another tendency gains ground. As church and clergy cease to witness to transforming power in the technical-economic realm and in the realm of polity, so a tendency to *imitate* the mores of those realms arises in respect of the *exteriority* of church and clergy. Thus the church can be viewed in terms of patterns of management

and the clergy as managers. In modes of government, churches take over secular forms, and the patterns and habits of modern party political life grow apace in the church. The church begins to behave as a business corporation. Clericalism takes over aspects of the secular 'expert'. Androcentric priesthood takes over the dominative and exploitative aspects of government. And spiritualisation re-inforces the modern contrast between secular, public neutrality and value-laden private choice. So the forms and values which cannot be transformed are absorbed by church and clergy as the external frame-work within which personal values are internally emphasised and cultivated.

In other words, as with dismay or satisfaction church and clergy celebrate the death of God who is the God of total *society*, so church and clergy quickly introduce into the *church culture* a pan-theon of lesser gods[21] who are allowed to flourish there within strictly defined limits by those who control the technical-economic realm and the realm of polity. Those secular controllers are neither troubled, nor challenged, let alone transformed, by the new little gods.

In a variety of ways, therefore, the responses of the churches to the humanist and reformist challenges of the 18th century Enlighten-ment were for the most part thoroughly negative and undiscriminat-ing. Instead of recognising and deepening the new claims for a relative autonomy of humankind amid the historical and natural order, with the prospects of significant and beneficial social change which this autonomy brought with it, there was instead a withdrawal to static notions of revelation and authority,[22] a withdrawal which of course only fed the more anti-religious tendencies in the Enlighten-ment spirit. In consequence it is significant how little thinking in doctrinal theology or in social ethics has been focused upon the increasingly important sphere of collective action, common decision, corporate planning, and social-ethical norms. It is a commonplace to remark nowadays upon the high degree of inter-dependence which belongs to an industrialised and industrialising world, yet it is pre-cisely that arena which Christian theology and Christian ministry finds it so difficult to appraise, to penetrate, and to measure against the yardsticks of Christian insight. So the church's preoccupation with a largely private space in *culture* as the Christian place-to-be is both unrewarding and unconstructive. For there is *no route through culture* to a point of departure for the transformation of the tech-nical-economic realm and the realm of polity,[23] without whose transformation the unity and solidarity of human life in God can never be realised.

The Social Gospel

What is the significance of the theological movement known as the Social Gospel for these considerations? Until very recently the received judgement[24] of the theological consensus has been that the Social Gospel Movement had capitulated to the norms of 19th century liberalism, had espoused a doctrine of the Kingdom of God which was too this-worldly by far, had an overly optimistic view of human nature, and was tempted comprehensively to read into the New Testament the values and virtues of the new 19th century North American urban democracy. These deficiencies were subsequently 'corrected' by the new movement of Christian realism represented by the two Niebuhrs, John Bennett, and by several continental writers. It is however now becoming more widely recognised that this as-tringent estimate of the Social Gospel is itself false in many significant respects. The critics among the Christian realists were interpreting the theology of the Social Gospel against inappropriate criteria, were failing to appreciate the *genre*[25] to which the writing of Walter Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden and others belonged, and were failing to appreciate the sharply self-critical theological sen-sitivity of Rauschenbusch both against the prevailing theological currents of his time and in respect of the currents of ideas then pre-vailing in the wider society.

When we examine Rauschenbusch's writings in the light of these criteria it is clear that he is offering something both immensely more sophisticated than the critics supposed, but also much simpler than the theological pundits might demand.[26] The movement of the Social Gospel, which in many respects did not belong to any of the theologically radical extremes of the time, was concerned with offering a critical presentation of the central truths of Christian gospel in such a form that Christian vision, Christian insight, Christian principles and Christian action could assist the transition of the United States from an agrarian frontier, through a small town society, to a new urban and metropolitan economy. The purpose of the Social Gospel was not simply to reflect that change but to assist it, and to promote it along the right lines. In pursuing this goal it had to recognise a very great diversity of competing theological outlooks, from those more radical than itself to those of high Biblical conservatism, and at the same time to respond to the mani-fold political ideologies and ideals which were being promoted in the political social maelstrom of this turbulent time.[27]

The question of the *genre* of the Gospel is an important one since we have to appreciate that Rauschenbusch and others were not writ-ing for a technical theological coterie, not even wholly for a theologic-ally literate clergy and laity, but not least for those who were Christ-ians, or who were sympathetic to Christianity, and could be persuaded through their relative openness of mind to understand afresh and then live out the claims of the Christian gospel in the new environ-ment in which they found themselves. It was therefore important that the literature of the Social Gospel appear in a form which both responded to and incorporated afresh the Gospel claims but also which paid heed to those principles and tendencies of the time which were moving in roughly the directions of which the Social Gospellers

approved. It is therefore no surprise to notice that some of the most interesting documents of the Social Gospel were in fact novels.[28] But the kind of writings for which Rauschenbusch, Gladden and others were responsible sold in huge numbers, made an immediate and sometimes enduring impact, and were received not as theological masterpieces (which they were not) but as more popular tracts appealing to a relatively popular audience. This was significant because this kind of *genre* attempted to induce not passive contemplation but urgent Christian conviction and actions. Though this interpretation of the Social Gospel material is in no sense attempting to excuse its shortcomings, nonetheless detailed studies of various themes and various writers has shown that the standard received criticisms fall short of the mark. Rauschenbusch, for example, in no way promulgated an over-optimistic view of the human condition. His writings on the theme of sin are powerful and perceptive.[29] The significant point, however, is that he does not confine his attention to sin as of sin in its collective and corporate aspect.

Equally, Rauschenbusch's espousal of late 19th century American evolutionism has been much misunderstood. It is clear that Rauschenbusch was not a thoroughgoing evolutionist but adopted some tendencies of that outlook into his own ways of thinking partly to capture and put to the service of the gospel the dynamic inherent in that evolutionism, and partly to use a framework which was an emotionally and intellectually comprehensible linking concept for his audience.[30] Those writers therefore who have stressed the multiplicity of motifs in Rauschenbusch's writing.[31] who have in other words perceived a remarkable theological and sociological complexity in a relatively simple *genre* have done the most justice to Rauschenbusch. (It is worth observing, in parenthesis, that the most pressing negative criticism which really treats Rauschenbusch as hardly a theologian has simply failed to notice the high significance of his German academic sojourn in which he came into contact with much of the best German scholarship of the day and drank deeply at these sources[32] before his return to America for an active pastoral ministry and later for an academic career in Rochester Theological Seminary, for most of the time as a church historian of a very broad and generous disposition).

Towards a Public Theology

We are much more accustomed than heretofore to recognise the different types of literary *genre* which are to be found in the Biblical writings. This same distinction of *genre* can of course be posited of different types of theology, e.g. dogmatic theology, pastoral theology, moral theology, symbolic theology, ascetical theology, etc. These distinctions have often not been taken very seriously, at least in the English tradition, and there has been a tendency to regard either Biblical theology or systematic theology as norms in relation to which the others are rather inadequate deviants. We now need to ask

more precisely what is the subject-matter of a particular *genre*, what is its audience, and what is its intention. Questions of this kind will also be alive to further questions about the sources from which that *genre* derives its material and how these are significant for the aim and consequences of the *genre*. Attempts have been made in recent times to challenge the dominant *genres* of Biblical and systematic theology, often structured with a strong component of philosophical theology, to challenge these in such a way as to reflect different intentions and different audiences. This would be true of the 'secular' and 'radical' theology of the 1960's; it would be true of situation ethics; it would be true of liberation theology in South American, African, Asian and other forms. In a number of these cases however, it is far from clear that the *genre* questions about purpose, audience, resources, have been asked with sufficient precision, with the result that the theology is weak and may be lacking in powers of serious self-maintenance. As we have seen, the Social Gospel *genre* is deliberately multi-motifed. It has at its disposal the mainstream resources of the Christian tradition as well as the guiding principles of the age, however discriminatingly these have to be appropriated.

What therefore are the distinctive and appropriate resources which shall serve the formulation and identification of a so-called public theology today? Recent forms of Biblical study, not least redaction criticism and the even more recent preoccupation with the social milieu of the early Christian writings, have enabled us to explore more fully the intentions of those who framed these gospels and the particular religious-social-economic-political environments to which they were directed.[33] This fullness of context is very important when we enter into interpretative dialogue with these writings in relation to *current* questions and preoccupations. Similarly, important work bringing out the historicity of dogma, that is to say that the genesis and evolution and self-modification of dogma occurs in the midst of a living historical process, has made us much more aware of the interplay between text and context, tradition and environment, in classic theological writings of the past.[34] Again, this kind of analysis, which is not simply literary, but goes beyond to the historical and sociological dimensions while including the literary, has an important bearing upon the resources which are available to us today for dealing sensibly and appropriately with a *corporate sociological context,* an individual *totality of history* (to use Troeltsch's phrase),[35] which goes beyond the individually existential, which goes beyond that kind of theology which is purely reactive to the social circumstances of the time.

Towards a Public Ministry

As far as the Church of England is concerned—and in this lecture I do not pretend to deal with other churches, though I suspect

that similar stories can be told—there has been of course a very close relationship between what has been possible in theology and the nature and role of the ordained ministry in the period under discussion. Though early in this lecture I drew attention to the adverse effects of clericalism, it is important not to undervalue the significance of the clergy in relation to theological and churchly developments. For however much attention is given to the theology and function of the laity, it still remains that in churches with an ordained ministry, that ordained ministry will be profoundly symbolic for the way in which the church acts, and is perceived to act, as a whole. By and large in the Church of England in modern times the clergy have acted as parish priests, in residential parish areas in the sphere of *culture*, and have had little or no symbolic or actual involvement in the other two realms of society—the technical-economic realm and the realm of polity. In fact, so normal has this become that the ordained minister and the parish priest have been regarded as synonymous, and any exception to this rule has been treated as deviant indeed (with one or two notable exceptions).

All this is brought out very clearly in a passage from the 1961 Report *Supplementary Ministries* (unpublished); 'Because so many ordained ministers are parish priests, there is a tendency to equate the ministry with the priesthood and the priesthood with the parish priesthood. On reflection it is clear that there is here a double error. There are Christian ministries outside ordination, and, within ordination, there are ministries other than parochial. This erroneous tendency is, moreover, of comparatively recent date, at least in its present strength. In the middle ages the learned professions (as we should now term them) were manned exclusively by clerks, and, though not all clerks were priests, many were. It was this monopoly of learning on the part of clerks which gave rise to the over-sharp dichotomy between the *ecclesia docens* and the *ecclesia discens*, a dichotomy which there is still a tendency to perpetuate, though it has long since lost much of its justification. At the Reformation there was some reaction against what was regarded as the excessive secularization of the clergy, and this reaction is reflected in the Ordinal where the ordinand is exhorted to draw all his cares and studies this one way. But, even so, until quite recently clergymen were found in large numbers outside the stream of parochial life, and expecially in schools and universities where they taught all manner of subjects. Though they had ceased to be practising lawyers, civil servants and ministers of the Crown they still in the mission field practised medicine, and nowhere was it thought incongruous for them to study and teach any of the arts or sciences. This attitude is, we believe, something which we should try to regain. 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament telleth His handiwork', and, provided that sight is not lost of the ultimate divine goal, all our cares and studies in any branch of learning can truly be drawn this one, Godward, way, and should be so drawn. We believe that the Church

lost something when ordination came in practice to be regarded as primarily the commissioning of parish priests and when other occupations were thought of as somehow inconsistent with a vocation to the priesthood'.[36]

Amid all the debate about the ordained ministry which has gone on in the Church of England in recent times (*Theological Colleges for Tommorrow*, 1968; *A Supporting Ministry*, 1968; *Women in Ministry*, 1968; *Doing Theology To-day*, 1969; *Ordained Ministry To-day*, 1969; *Bishops and Dioceses*, 1971; *Specialised Ministries*, 1971; *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood*, 1972; *The Place of Auxiliary Ministry, Ordained and Lay*, 1973; *Deacons in the Church*, 1974; *Ministry and Ordination*, 1973), it is surprising how little attention has been given to the matter here under discussion. A notable exception was the Report *Specialised Ministries*[37] which referred to priests in full-time specialised ministries who are paid for performing that ministry. It excluded clergy who are paid primarily for doing a secular job. The Report presented a strong case for specialised clergy as a necessity in the church on the grounds that the church must have a ministry to the structure of our contemporary which by no means coincide with parish boundaries. The Report noticed that the ministry involved is pastoral in the sense that it is ministry to people, but also to people in communities. For example the priest working in a hospital has a special orientation which enables him to know and minister to, for example, the particular tensions of doctors, nurses and patients. The Report insists that a specialist ministry is incomplete if it is concerned with ministering only to the ecclesiastical needs of the faithful. It was however noticeable that this Report was never seriously discussed nor its recommendations adequately considered, let alone implemented.

Instead, over the period concerned, another development took place based on the Report, *A Supporting Ministry*, published in 1968.[38] The working party which prepared this Report was given terms of reference to be concerned with standards of men who are to be ordained without expecting to become incumbents of parishes. It should seek to encourage bold experiments in the recruitment and ordination of those who are truly called of God to this type of ministry, and to discourage unwise experiments. The Report should be concerned with ordination to parochial ministry. It should not deal with men who are ordained to non-parochial situations . . . although much of it may well in fact equally apply incidentally to these types of ministry. The outcome of the Report and of subsequent discussion was of course the introduction of Non-Stipendiary Ministry (NSM) also known as auxiliary parochial ministry (APM), or auxiliary pastoral ministry (APM). It was clear that the 1968 working party was inhibited and uneasy about its terms of reference. 'The Working Party felt from the start that its brief was a small section of a much larger canvas. The nature of the ordained ministry itself, the relationship between lay and ordained ministry, the

adequacy of the parochial system as it exists at present, the question of priests in non-parochial work, the place, selection and training of Readers, the ministry of women, and the nature of theological training—these issues, which were outside our terms of reference, constantly entered our discussions, and decisions relating to auxiliary ministries must inevitably be affected by the answers given to questions about the wider or related issues'.[39] In fact, the issue of non-stipendiary ministry was never treated in relation to these other wider questions, and schemes were implemented in due course which led to the present patterns whereby nearly all non-stipendiary ministers see their ministry in terms of helping in the parish church on Sundays and offering some pastoral work during the week in the parish.

The more searching questions which had been raised by the *Supplementary Ministries* Report of 1961 were also raised in the context of discussions about the worker-priest movement in France and its place on the English scene. Though there have in fact been very few worker-priests in England according to the French pattern, the debate which took place about these is of capital importance for the theme of this lecture. E. R. Wickham (until recently Bishop of Middleton) was involved in the earliest beginnings of industrial mission in Sheffield (later to become the Sheffield Industrial Mission). Though Wickham in a number of writings over the years has consistently rejected the case for the replication of the French pattern on the British scene, he has nonetheless perceived more clearly than most the underlying need. Thus in his 'Appraisal' in the volume *Priests and Workers*[40] he writes: 'In Britain too we need "cultural mission" capable of engaging and speaking into groups and situations impenetrable by the normal agencies of the Church. We too need specialized ministers to engage non-territorial expressions of community life in the industrial society—men in their industrial organizations, and the varied projections, managerial, technical and trade union, of industrial life. We too have had our industrial revolution, in its neo-technic phase, and its accompanying social revolution, not only in organized labour but in the new professional personnel—the technologists, technicians and research workers, the planners and managers, the small army of social workers manning the statutory services of a welfare state . . . Here are the new elites of a modern industrial society, at its controls and hot-spots, consciously or unconsciously the engineers of the New Society. At the end of the day's work they may commute back into the private life of suburbia, they may be good members of churches, but the Church's ministry to them there, in all but most exceptional circumstances, will not closely relate to their public and professional life—and yet it is from their public and professional life that the shape of modern society is projected. The territorial ministry was not designed for so fluid, dynamic or specialized a society as a modern viable nation must be—it is no disrespect to that ministry to say we need profes-sional ministers, specialized, with some technical knowledge of the appropriate secular disciplines, sensitively related to the typical institutions and functional groups of our society'.[41] It must be recognised however that over the last twenty years all the pressures, financial, ecclesiastical, theological and clerical, have been against developments in the ordained ministry of such a kind as to engage it seriously with the public sphere. Indeed, as I have already indicated, the pressures are such that the removal of such ministries is often highest on the list of cuts to be made when severe budgetary restrictions are necessary. Inevitably these kinds of attitudes have led to various sorts of mutual hostility and suspicion between the parochial clergy and specialised ministers, a suspicion and hostility which has only served to cloud even more the theological questions at issue.

Therefore very little has been done to explicate in any detail what exactly might be the nature and function of the ordained ministry in the public sphere. Certainly there have been many instances where, by analogy with the parochial ministry, the specialised ministry has been interpreted in narrowly individual terms. Thus one hospital chaplain states that his responsibility is to do in the hospital exactly what the parish priest would be doing in the parish, namely the holding of religious services and the visitation of individuals. Similarly some versions of industrial mission concentrated very heavily upon the visitation of the individual worker in his or her immediate place of work. Thus when one speaks of ministry in the public sphere it is very hard to escape the stereotypes which belong to the parochial ministry. Certainly no possibility exists at the present time of giving a comprehensive and normative account of what would be involved for the ordained minister if he or she were to exercise a public ministry in the sense in which this term is developed in the present lecture. That however is not to deny that from industrial and other sources there is not a vast amount of information and experience which is relevant to the articulation of such a ministry. We can however see, as the French worker-priest saw, that a major ingredient of this ordained ministry is that of symbolic *presence*, especially where this presence is in an area not normally associated with the function of the ordained ministry. But, further, this presence is not simply an accepting and affirming one, but is also critical, not in some generalising manner but in relation to particular issues about the sphere in which presence is being maintained. Here we see how a public ministry has to reflect the character of a public theology as discussed above. The strength of the Social Gospel as a theological *genre* was that it tried to move with confidence to and fro between self-understandings of the gospel and understandings drawn, critically, from the society of the time. By analogy, a public ministry cannot conceivably work along the lines of such cliches as 'the church should/should not be involved in politics/economics'. Instead we are talking about the slow, painful and laborious development of a body of discriminating experience which learns how

to take risks and how to respond in a variety of ever new situations. It learns similar lessons about anonymity and self-advertisement, about pressing cases and about 'letting be', about working in isolation and about co-operation.

However, even conceived along these lines, immense difficulties face public ministry on two counts: first, because of the relative indifference of church and theology towards this ministry; and second, because the major issues facing our society in a national and international context at the present time make demands which far exceed the resources and expertise of public ministry currently available. As things stand one can only see the continuance of a pattern whereby relatively isolated individuals carry out isolated ministries with little support, exposed to both deliberate and unintentional ignorance and suspicion from the public sphere itself, and experiencing varying degrees of hostility and neglect from within the churches' primarily residential ministry. It is in this connection that one sees the need both for a public theology to strengthen, sustain, and enable those involved in public ministry and to bring about profound changes in the churches of which they are part, and also the need for some suitable institutional form which this public ministry may take so that it is more assured than it ever has been of resources, mutual learning, co-operation, and a sense of corporate purpose. A serious, but hardly considered possibility along these lines, is that of a *Society* of ordained ministers in the way this was mooted in the 1961 Report on *Supplementary Ministries* and was later taken up again in the *Paul Report*.[42] The model here is of a religious Order concerned with living in and ministering in a so-called secular context and yet having access to the resources, of various kinds, of the mainstream churches. The history of the French worker-priest movement may in fact afford little confidence about the success and viability of such an Order, so great a gap was disclosed in that connection between the Papal Curia, the French episcopate, and the worker-priests. But it may be that in a different context and in changed times some such Order, preferably of an ecumenical kind, could be considered a possibility. The price to be paid by an isolated, individual approach is too high. One of the primary difficulties about a settled church being able to enter into sympathetic understanding and support of a public ministry is that the latter does not, cannot, and ought not, to behave in the same way as a parish ministry. The parish ministry thinks in terms of meetings for worship, of ministerial visitations, of groups serving different types of activity, of forms of clerical dress symbolising and legitimating particular undertakings. The public ministry should not be called upon to imitate these phenomena nor even to approximate to them. It is here that the analogy of a religious Order or Society is useful by which various features which belong to the basic Christian life can be given particular attention in a way which matches the context of ministry. We might ask therefore what could be the corresponding

features to poverty, obediance and celibacy appropriate to a public ministry in the economic sector, (e.g. the City) and what particular outward forms these characteristics might take.

A Mutation?

Theology in its modern form dates from the late 18th century. Wrestling itself free from various impediments it has struggled to discover and abide by important canons of truthfulness, especially in historical accuracy and philosophical rigour. Those forms of integrity are highly commendable and have been much prized by liberal Christianity—but they are not enough. We must now seek to add in a new dimension of integrity, namely in theology's social implications and obligations and responsibilities. It is no easy task which lies ahead, seeking to fashion coherent and compelling discourse out of the plurality of theologies and the plurality of ideologies in the service of social change. But the aim is clear—to move from the cacophany and disorder of *Hell's Kitchen* to a new and plausible vision of commonweal.

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