

VII

What Happens in Hong Kong

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IN a sense all the Ministry of the Church of God is auxiliary to our one Chief Minister and Great High Priest. Every Christian is a full-time member of that full-time Ministry of the Christian life, whether scrubbing floors, governing a nation, teaching children, healing men's bodies, or in that vast ministry of our daily bread which is called industry and commerce, or in the never-ending work of evangelism by the witness of love and spoken word.

Similarly every ordained priest is a full-time priest, whether he is a Diocesan Inspector of Schools, the Home Secretary of a Missionary Society, a Bush Brother or the Vicar of a vast urban parish.

With this background I can bring you, I hope, safely into Hong Kong Harbour where you will find on either side of you, first the island of Hong Kong and then the promontory of the Kowloon Peninsula, which is to Hong Kong island what Southwark is to London. In Hong Kong and Kowloon you will find eleven men who have been ordained to the priesthood under a special Canon of the Chinese Church. Here is the Canon—

'CANON XIXa—ORDINATION IN SPECIAL CASES

'1. If a candidate for deacon's Order be over thirty-two years of age, and have adequate means of his own for his support, and have been assisting without pay in the work of the Church for not less than three years, he may be dispensed from all examinations except—

- (1) The Bible in general.
- (2) Two or three specially selected portions of the Old and New Testaments.
- (3) The Contents and Use of the Book of Common Prayer.

'2. Such a candidate may be ordained deacon provided that—

- (1) He is not to receive a salary for his work.
- (2) He may not receive a letter of transfer to another diocese except on the written request of the bishop of that diocese.
- (3) He may not minister within the bounds of any parish or mission unless he is licensed thereto by the bishop, and requested to do so by the priest-in-charge.
- (4) The method of procedure for the ordination shall be in accordance with Canon XVIII (of the Ordination of Priest).

'3. A deacon so ordained after serving two full years as deacon may, under conditions similar to those laid down under Section 2 of this Canon, be advanced to the priesthood as provided in Canon XIX, except that the subjects for examination shall only be the office and work of a priest, and two or three selected portions of the Old and New Testaments.'

You will notice that in fact the knowledge required is similar, though perhaps more complete, than is normally required for a diocesan lay reader. But the need for these 'Ordinations in Special Cases' is not the same as that for which lay readers are trained and licensed. Our need is for regular and reverent celebration of the Lord's Supper, so that the people may receive the Holy Communion regularly and from the hands of someone who knows them and belongs to them.

THE GROWTH OF THE AUXILIARY MINISTRY IN THE
HONG KONG DIOCESE

Twenty-six years ago nearly every Chinese priest in the diocese visited during each month four different churches.

Up country this meant journeys of two to three days' duration every week.

Our first steps to change this pattern was, whenever possible, to reduce the pastorate to one city or market town, where the pastor could be *every Sunday with his own people*. This localized priesthood was supplemented by a few travelling priests who visited once in two or three months the smaller places.

In the towns the problem of reverent administration was

aggravated by numbers. The traditional Chinese Churches' monthly Communion Service at 11 a.m. meant anything from 100 to 200 or more communicants, administered to generally by only one priest.

At this time Canon XIXA had had its first reading and was waiting for the next General Synod for confirmation. But the House of Bishops gave us authority to meet our urban problem by licensing laymen to administer the chalice. To my surprise this was not acceptable to the laymen and laywomen of the diocese. Diocesan Synod asked me to discontinue it. Their feeling was: 'This service is most sacred and most solemn. No man, priest or layman, however saintly his life, could ever be qualified by *his own goodness*, even with the bishop's licence, to administer the sacred elements in Christ's name. This function must be reserved for those who have been ordained for the special function of the priesthood.'

Since the passing of the Canon twenty years ago, thirteen men have been ordained under it in the diocese of Hong Kong. Eight of the thirteen are schoolmasters with university degrees; of the other five two are university graduates.

During these years our regular full-time Ministry in Hong Kong has grown from four to seventeen.

All our new full-time priests are university graduates, but of the older men, none are; though they were very thoroughly trained in the old Union Theological Seminary in Canton, and are in fact now well above the average intellectually and academically. Our auxiliary priests are therefore considerably unlike some lay readers in English parishes, who can be and often are, men of devout character and integrity who have failed to reach the academic standard required for ordination.

This fact is, I think, important. For ordination is not a permanent inoculation against sin. As ordained men get older they tend to get more 'difficult' and are not always ready to accept the new ways of the young. The frequent psychological insecurity of the type of lay reader who has failed to be accepted for ordination through lack of adequate intellectual capacity, so often leads to exactly this dangerous kind of compensation when a new young vicar arrives to find such an one already entrenched with traditional rights in his parish church. But if, as in our case, the

auxiliary clergy are men 'secure' in their psychological selves, they are less likely to fall victims to obstinate self-assertion in old age.

For the same reason all our auxiliary clergy are normally diocesan clergy, available for service in any parish or school or other institution: though from time to time one or more may be appointed to temporary charge of a parish.

THE VALUE OF THIS SPECIAL MINISTRY

In the now dwindled size of the diocese of Hong Kong and Macao we have only three village churches. Two of these have no full-time priest. Auxiliary clergy, one a schoolmaster, the other an officer in the Government Medical Service, are each in charge of these congregations and travel the twenty-five miles or so nearly every Sunday to lead Sunday worship. They arrange for a lay reader to take their place when they do not go themselves. This means that the same priest always presides at the Holy Communion service and does the bulk of the regular Sunday teaching. These are small congregations growing rapidly through the activity of local laymen and laywomen, but we are not yet able to afford either men or money to provide a full-time priest. When we can do so for these parishes, we expect more similar new beginnings in other places will call for similar service from our auxiliary ministry.

A second supreme usefulness of this ministry in all our churches is in the administration of Holy Communion. The old tradition of one great service a Sunday to which, thank God, the whole family of the parish comes, still survives and grows. On one or, sometimes, two Sundays a month this great family service is a Holy Communion service, which means in these days anything from 200 to 400 communicants. In addition now in nearly every parish a weekly service of Holy Communion is becoming customary on Sunday mornings and sometimes on Sunday evenings, for special groups such as those who work all day Sunday.

Without our auxiliary ministry we should not be able to maintain the reverent celebration of these Holy Mysteries. Holy Mysteries? Yes. For though we Chinese are not in the common sense of the word mystical, but intensely practical, unwillingness to accept lay administration of the consecrated elements, was due

to the deep sense that herein is the holiest of mysteries, and to the conviction that its essential supernaturalness and Christ's-presence-ness must be most faithfully guarded.

Thirdly, the preaching and teaching ministry of our auxiliary priests is quite outstanding.¹ Here their university background and consequent capacity for reading and continued intelligent study of the Bible and of theology is important.

This is supplemented by a now well established Friday night tradition when from 6.30 p.m. to 9 p.m. groups of auxiliary clergy, lay readers, youth workers, Sunday School teachers, and Day School teachers, come for varying courses of instruction. You would call these 'tutorial classes,' but Chinese imagination has called these Friday night courses 'Ming Hwa College,' 'Ming Hwa' being the bishop's given name, and also meaning, more appropriately for the classes than for the bishop, '*Light for China*.' The bishop, whenever he can, takes one or more courses himself in Ming Hwa College, though his usefulness is limited by his inability to speak Chinese. All the really effective work is done by senior Chinese clergy with special knowledge and gifts of teaching, including two auxiliary priests one of whom is a remarkable student of Christian doctrine, the other a master of Church History and Prayer Book and the author of a *Life of Christ* in Chinese.

CONCLUSION

The moral to all this is perhaps that our particular needs and conditions in Hong Kong have led to so many 'Ordinations in Special Cases,' under Canon XIXA of the Chinese Church. These particular conditions especially perhaps the high educational standard of those ordained should be given due weight in any diocese considering whether or not our experience can be of help to them.

¹ I now hear that an auxiliary priest is to be Assistant Bishop of Borneo. He was till two years ago superintending engineer of one of the largest wharves in Hong Kong.

VIII

Deacons, Priests and Minor Orders

JOHN PORTER

IN the event of it being decided to institute some form of part-time ministry within the Church of England, one of the major points to be decided would be the form that such a ministry should take. It is important that any decision made as to the form of this ministry should be justified theologically and not just decided on practical grounds. Thus if we were to say that a part-time minister could not be a deacon because a deacon cannot celebrate the Eucharist, however desirable it might be for him to have this power, it would be wrong to settle the issue solely on that type of ground. It is important too that the issue should be decided on the basic function of that particular type of ministry, this being a problem that arises particularly in connection with the diaconate. The original function of the deacon was to be one who serves—and about the only thing that a modern deacon serves is his title.

There are three main possibilities which should be considered for this type of ministry, the first of these being minor orders, like the old subdeacons, lectors, cantors, etc. These have been absent from Protestant ministries, at any rate in theory, since the time of the Reformation, although they are still to be found in the Eastern Churches and the Roman Church. However, the Anglican office of lay reader differs very little from the other types of minor order and it could probably be claimed that it is such an order in all but name, the major difference being that lay readers are of the laity, while those in minor orders have always been considered to be of the clergy and to have clerical privileges. This is only a minor difference of status, a difference so small that even if lay readers were given official clerical status it is doubtful whether the change would be either effective or noticed. There seems to be no theological objection to members