

The perichoresis of day-to-day work and priestly ministry: A critical analysis of what self-supporting ministers can learn from the European worker-priest movement.

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Abstract

This paper conducts a critical analysis of the European worker-priest movement, considering whether it may be a useful model for English self-supporting ministers working in secular employment alongside a parish role. Following an overview of the worker-priest movement, arguments are presented for and against this being a useful model for self-supporting ministers today. It is concluded that while there are some similarities in terms of priests being embedded within the workplace, with opportunities for incarnational mission, the worker-priest movement is not necessarily a helpful model. This because of some of the reasons the worker-priest movement was considered unsuccessful, as well as significant social, political and ecclesiological differences between the two contexts. Further analysis drawing on the Trinitarian concept of perichoresis additionally highlights lack of integration between the priests' roles in the workplace and the Church. The paper ends with implications for self-supporting ministry, drawing in particular on a perichoretic model. The paper is adapted from a final year dissertation

submitted in 2019 as part requirements for a degree in Theology, Ministry and Mission undertaken at St Mellitus College.

Introduction

The rite of priestly ordination is the same throughout the Church of England,¹ with the pre-requisites standardised across the Anglican Communion.² However, there are many different ways in which priests live out their vocation, including as prison, military or healthcare chaplains, within religious orders, and as parish priests. For example, almost a third of Church of England clergy below retirement age are not paid by the Church and instead work according to other models of ministry.³ Such clergy may be referred to as self-supporting ministers, non-stipendiary ministers, or associate priests; those concurrently working in secular jobs may be called ministers in secular employment. Others refer to tentmakers, drawing on the scriptural examples of Paul, Priscilla and Aquila who supported their ministry through making tents (Acts 18:1-3). While all these terms have limitations, such as being defined through what they are not,⁴ the term 'self-supporting minister' (SSM) will be used throughout this dissertation to refer to an ordained priest who is not paid by the Church and has a concurrent secular job.

As the UK's biggest employer,⁵ it is perhaps unsurprising that there are a number of SSMs working as healthcare staff in the National Health Service (NHS), generally alongside a parish role. Unlike hospital chaplains who are

¹ Church of England, "Common Worship Ordination Services," <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/ministry/common-worship-ordination-services>

² The Anglican Communion, "Theological Education," <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/108798/PriestsGrid110406.pdf>

³ Church Times, "We're More Than Just Ecclesiastical Polyfills," 20 October 2017

⁴ John Lees, *Self-Supporting Ministry: A Practical Guide* (London: SPCK, 2018), 10

⁵ The Telegraph, "NHS is Fifth Biggest Employer in World," 20 March 2012

specifically employed to provide spiritual and pastoral care,⁶ SSMs are employed in roles such as doctors,⁷ dieticians⁸ and managers.⁹ If employers and colleagues are aware of their SSM role, this is likely to be seen as something quite separate from their healthcare role. Following my ordination, this will form the pattern of my ministry, initially as a deacon and then as a priest, working in a parish setting as well as in the English NHS as a pharmacist and a manager. This raises important questions around how to integrate these roles, and whether there are existing models that may be helpful in this respect.

One such model is the European worker-priest movement, initiated at the end of Second World War by the French Roman Catholic Church, in which priests were freed from parochial commitments to take up jobs in places such as factories. The aim of this paper is therefore to conduct a critical analysis of this worker-priest movement, considering whether it may be a useful model for Church of England SSMs, particularly those working in the English NHS alongside a parish role. Following an overview of the European worker-priest movement, arguments are presented for and against this being a useful model for SSMs in the NHS today. It is concluded that while there are some similarities in terms of priests being embedded within the workplace, with opportunities for incarnational mission, the worker-priest movement is not a helpful model. This because of some of the reasons the worker-priest movement was considered unsuccessful, as well as significant social, political and ecclesiological differences between the two contexts. Further analysis drawing on the Trinitarian concept of perichoresis additionally highlights lack of integration between the priests' roles in the workplace and the Church. Implications for my own future ministry are then identified, drawing in particular on a perichoretic model.

⁶ Department of Health, *Religion or Belief: A Practical Guide for the NHS* (London: Department of Health, 2009)

⁷ Church Times, "NHS Religious Data Suggests Higher Religious Affiliation," 14 September 2018

⁸ Lees, *Self-Supporting Ministry*, 61

⁹ Wikipedia, "Sarah Mullally," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Mullally

The worker-priest movement

While there are earlier examples of priests in paid secular roles,¹⁰ the European worker-priest movement had its main roots in the Second World War, when French workers were conscripted into German munitions factories from which chaplains were banned.¹¹ In response, priests disguised as workers were sent to minister to the deported French civilians.¹² Around the same time, there was also recognition of a gulf developing between the increasing numbers of people working in factories, often under conditions of extreme hardship, and the French Roman Catholic Church. Priests were seen as bourgeois,¹³ set apart through the sacrament of Holy Orders and their vows of celibacy, and living in a presbytery or monastery in very different conditions from those of the workers.¹⁴ Working-class people had effectively left the Church, likely due to a combination of secularising social factors and the Church's inadequate response to these. Recognising this issue, the Archbishop of Paris commissioned a report into the relationship between the Church and the working-classes, which subsequently likened workers to "pagans in need of a missionary approach".¹⁵ This led to the *Mission de Paris* being set up in 1944, drawing on priests' experiences working in the German factories to send young priests to work in factories on the outskirts of Paris.¹⁶ Other French dioceses adopted similar initiatives.¹⁷ About 100 priests were involved in total,¹⁸ with the aims of mission to working-class people and bridging the gap between them and the Church.

¹⁰ Emma Bell, "Towards a Critical Spirituality of Organization," *Culture and Organization*, 14:3 (2008), 300

¹¹ Gregor Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, trans. Isabel and Florence McHugh (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), 40

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Oscar Arnal, *Priests in Working Class Blue: The History of the Worker-Priests 1943-1954* (New York: Paulist, 1986), 51

¹⁴ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 3

¹⁵ Bernard Wall, "Introduction," in Henri Perrin, *Priest and Worker: The Autobiography of Henri Perrin* (London: MacMillan, 1965), 5

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5

¹⁸ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 319

These priests lived in typical workers' housing, were freed from parochial duties, and worked full time in the same way as any other worker. The term *prêtre-ouvrier* [priest-worker] was introduced by Henri Perrin, a Jesuit priest who had been part of the German mission. His autobiography,¹⁹ compiled from his writings after his death, provides his perspective on this movement. During his time in Germany, he was struck by how different the workers' lives were from what he increasingly saw as a cloistered and largely irrelevant Church, whose liturgy he described as having lost all meaning.²⁰ Drawing on the parable of the leaven (Matthew 13:33), he wrote that "the leaven which should be intimately bound up with the bread is at present excluded from it".²¹ He concluded that priests must instead live among the people, get to know their needs, and share their suffering and joy. He therefore campaigned to leave what he described as the "ghetto"²² of the Church to be a worker-priest, subsequently becoming employed in a Parisian factory in the late 1940's and then as a construction worker on the Isère-Arc dam in 1952.²³

The worker-priests aimed to be incognito, especially in relation to factory managers, revealing themselves as priests only if questioned directly.²⁴ This was partly to avoid initial mistrust and suspicion, and partly to avoid any suggestion that the Church was depriving others of jobs.²⁵ One account describes a priest being delighted when a foreman, assuming him to be illiterate, read a label out loud to him, suggesting such deception had become an important goal.²⁶ In contrast, others subsequently used their abilities in organising, speaking and writing to become spokesmen in leading

¹⁹ Henri Perrin, *Priest and Worker: The Autobiography of Henri Perrin*, trans. Bernard Wall (London: MacMillan, 1965)

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 36

²¹ *Ibid.*, 92

²² *Ibid.*, 46

²³ *Ibid.*, 169

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 105

²⁵ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 173

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 214

negotiations between workers and management as well as strikes.²⁷ The priests' roles thus evolved over time, as they got to know the workers, their living conditions and their needs.

Accounts also suggest changes to the priests' liturgical practices, reported to include omission of the daily Mass and breviary required by the Roman Catholic Church.²⁸ Others described aspects of the liturgy changing or taking on new meaning, such as reciting the daily office amid the monotony of the production line,²⁹ saying a more informal Mass in the evening to allow workers to attend after their shift, and the ritual lavabo prior to Mass being replaced by scrubbing with a nail brush after a day's work in the factory.³⁰

Reports from the priests confirmed previous perceptions of a gulf between the Church and workers' lives. The Church was seen to be very middle class in terms of both its messages and its practicalities in relation to hours, styles and places of worship, thus implicitly excluding the working-classes.³¹ In contrast, the workers' world was described by Perrin as a "foreign land"³² about which he previously knew nothing: "I have entered a new world which is unknown to the Church - a real mission field [...]. Why do Christian laymen never tell us how foreign the world, that we live side by side with, is to us?"³³ Others note workers' comments such as "If only they were all like you",³⁴ suggesting the worker-priests to have been perceived very differently to the rest of the Church.

However, in spite of the priests' sense of the value of this approach, the movement was not felt to have been a success by the wider Roman Catholic

²⁷ Perrin, *Priest and Worker*, 185

²⁸ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 185

²⁹ Arnal, *Priests in Working Class Blue*, 102

³⁰ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 185

³¹ *Ibid.*, 43

³² Perrin, *Priest and Worker*, 148

³³ *Ibid.*, 106

³⁴ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 57

Church; reasons for this will subsequently be explored. There was also opposition from businessmen and industrialists, as well as from the police. Amid concerns of a public scandal, in the winter of 1953, Roman Catholic priests were therefore forbidden from taking on manual work of any kind, closely followed by a specific request from the Vatican to recall all worker-priests from their roles.³⁵ Following lobbying by the worker-priests, a small number of French cardinals met with the Pope, resulting in a compromise in which worker-priests had to be specifically chosen and suitably trained, with increased accountability to their bishop.³⁶ They were limited to three hours of manual labour per day to allow time for daily celebration of Mass and other “priestly duties”.³⁷ They were also prohibited from trade union activities and required to live in a community of other priests rather than on their own.³⁸ The title of the role was changed from *prêtre-ouvrier* [priest-worker] to *prêtre de la mission ouvrière* [priest of the mission to workers], to further highlight the reduced emphasis on being a worker themselves.³⁹ However in spite of these new requirements, many priests continued as before, believing that working alongside others in factories and building sites to be the more important vocation. An estimated two thirds of the worker-priests therefore remained in their jobs,⁴⁰ and many left the Church.⁴¹ For example, at this time of his accidental death in 1954, Perrin was reportedly carrying a letter written two weeks previously but not yet posted, in which he was asking to be laicized because his desire to be alongside the people was greater than his desire to remain a priest.⁴²

³⁵ Ibid., 72

³⁶ Bell, “Towards a Critical Spirituality of Organization,” 301

³⁷ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 74

³⁸ Ibid., 74

³⁹ Ibid., 4

⁴⁰ Bell, “Towards a Critical Spirituality of Organization,” 301

⁴¹ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 328

⁴² Perrin, *Priest and Worker*, 245

Having summarised the main features of the worker-priest movement, the next section will consider arguments for, and then against, this being a useful model for SSMs in the English NHS.

The worker-priest movement as a useful model

There are some obvious similarities between worker-priests and SSMs. Both involve priests being employed in secular roles. They therefore share the same work-related joys and challenges as other employees, and generally live in similar settings. In the case of the worker-priests, the witness of the priest living in a worker's flat rather than a presbytery was seen as particularly important, such that the priest was present in the workers' community.⁴³ In both cases, priests are also attempting to provide a bridge between Church and working life, two worlds often seen as separate by Christians and non-Christians alike.⁴⁴ Opportunities for an incarnational form of mission⁴⁵ arise, based on genuine presence within the community.⁴⁶ In each case, it may also be that these priests are the only priests their colleagues get to meet.

Some of the challenges are also likely to be similar. These include a potential issue around the extent to which to make their priestly role explicit in the workplace. The worker-priests endeavoured to remain incognito, at least initially, even if this meant some degree of deception. SSMs in secular organisations may face different but related challenges in not being able to be explicitly Christian in their responses. For example, one SSM working as a high school teacher suggests his students sometimes need overtly Christian pastoral care, but the secular nature of his role precludes this.⁴⁷ Like the

⁴³ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 201

⁴⁴ Armand Larive, *After Sunday: A Theology of Work* (London: Continuum, 2004), 2

⁴⁵ Samuel Wells, *Incarnational Mission: Being with the World* (London: Canterbury Press, 2018)

⁴⁶ Paul Keeble, *Mission With: Something Out of the Ordinary* (Watford: Instant Apostle, 2017), 38

⁴⁷ John Roop, "Tentmaker Priest," (2015) <http://anglicanpastor.com/tentmaker-priest/>

worker-priests, he refers to himself as a “priest incognito”.⁴⁸ A further challenge in common may be that of maintaining the commitment to Morning and Evening Prayer⁴⁹ or equivalent, alongside long working hours.

Arguments against the worker-priest movement being a useful model

In spite of the above similarities, it is important to note that the worker-priest movement was not deemed a success. Drawing on this as a model would therefore have to be undertaken with caution. The next section explores reasons why the movement was perceived to be unsuccessful, together with the extent to which the same issues are likely to apply to SSMS in the NHS today.

Reasons for the perceived failure of the worker-priest movement

The Roman Catholic Church saw the worker-priest movement as a failure, describing it as an unsuccessful experiment in which the “risks to the Church were greater than the benefits”.⁵⁰ The Church’s concerns were four-fold.

First, there were concerns about the priests becoming overly assimilated, resulting in what was seen as dereliction of their priestly duties. Siefer’s sociological analysis suggests that gradual institutionalisation of the worker-priests resulted in similar problems to those the initiative was intended to address, namely class antagonisms and a gulf between the Church and the workers, with the latter increasingly including the worker-priests. He describes the priests as “going native”, seen as a form of apostasy by an institutional culture that required conformity,⁵¹ resulting in their rejection by the Church.⁵² It is therefore important to consider whether this may be an issue for SSMS. However, in contrast to the worker-priests who were deliberately removed

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Church of England, “Canon Law.” C24

⁵⁰ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 294

⁵¹ Ibid., xiii

⁵² Ibid., 9

from parishes, SSMs generally have some form of parish role,⁵³ and therefore have connections and support from their parish and wider faith community. The later requirement for worker-priests to join a community of priests and/or be attached to a parish⁵⁴ is therefore more in line with the SSM model, although the associated restriction to work for only three hours a day is likely to have precluded many forms of secular work and to have set the worker-priests apart from other workers. A further difference is that SSMs are generally working in their secular roles prior to ordination. For example, I have already worked in the NHS for nearly 30 years, rather than being sent to work in the organisation *de novo* which may be associated with some sense of having to assimilate into a new context.

Second, there were concerns in relation to the priests' involvement with trade unions. Unions play a greater role in France than in the UK; this was even more pronounced in the post-war period when it was assumed that every worker would be in a union.⁵⁵ An estimated 95% of worker-priests joined the largest union, the *Confédération Générale du Travail* [General Confederation of Labour].⁵⁶ This had strong links with the Communist Party, which created a tension with the Roman Catholic Church who had ex-communicated anyone associated with the Communist Party in 1949.⁵⁷ Interestingly however, commentators suggest that the Church's main concern was that the priests would be converted to communism, without considering that others might be converted to Christianity.⁵⁸ It also seems that some of the worker-priests saw part of their role as effecting change by supporting a workers' revolution.⁵⁹ The different social context means these issues are less likely to arise in

⁵³ Lees, *Self-Supporting Ministry*, 3

⁵⁴ Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 74

⁵⁵ Wall, "Introduction," 7

⁵⁶ Andre Collonge, "The Dispute," in *Priests and Workers: An Anglo-French Discussion*, ed David Edwards (London: SCM, 1961), 45

⁵⁷ Wall, "Introduction," 8

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 12

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6

today's NHS, with unions less militant than those of post-war France and with other staff already representing staff rights and providing union leadership.

Third, there were tensions between worker-priests and parish priests, with worker-priests viewed with suspicion and criticised by parish priests for not wearing clerical clothing,⁶⁰ and parish priests critiqued by the worker-priests for their comfortable living standards.⁶¹ While other tensions may arise for SSMs, who are sometimes accused of shirking the weekday parish work,⁶² SSMs' parish roles are likely to facilitate greater understanding between themselves and other parish priests. There are also likely to be fewer differences in dress codes and living conditions between SSMs and other priests in today's Church of England.

Finally, there were concerns about the effectiveness of the approach. It was noted that even if some workers started attending evening Mass with a worker-priest, they were still not attending parish churches.⁶³ This does however raise questions around the definition of success in this context, and whether this was to bring people back to the Church or to bring Christ to the people. Poulat, previously a worker-priest, suggests that Christ was almost entirely left out of official reports on the movement.⁶⁴ Similarly, Collonge accepts that while some traditional sense of priesthood was compromised, the worker-priests were not unfaithful to their vocation to bring Christ to the people and vice versa.⁶⁵

As well as the Church's concerns, there were also anxieties from elsewhere. From the point of view of the factory managers, at least some worker-priests

⁶⁰ Arnal, *Priests in Working Class Blue*, 107

⁶¹ Siefert, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 144

⁶² Lees, *Self-Supporting Ministry*, 93

⁶³ ER Wickham, "Appraisal" in *Priests and Workers: An Anglo-French Discussion*, ed David Edwards (London: SCM, 1961), 126

⁶⁴ Emile Poulat, "Reflections," in *Priests and Workers: An Anglo-French Discussion*, ed David Edwards (London: SCM, 1961), 88

⁶⁵ Collonge, "The Dispute," 53

were seen as troublemakers due to their eloquence and confidence in speaking up for workers' rights. Some suggest that as single men with no family to support, the priests were prepared to take greater risks in terms of losing their jobs.⁶⁶ Worker-priests were also accused of being poor workmen, perhaps due to having less experience than other workers.⁶⁷ Similarly, factory owners felt threatened, perhaps exacerbated by challenges to previously held assumptions that the Church would be their ally in defending their rights over those of the workers,⁶⁸ resulting in letters of objection to the Vatican.⁶⁹ Although not explicitly discussed in analyses of the movement, the priests' initial deception as to their priestly role may have also affected the workers; this may account for some workers perceiving the priests as "spying on them".⁷⁰ There were similar tensions with the state, at least partly due to the worker-priests' support for Algerian immigrants at a time of tension between Algeria and France. From 1952 onwards, all worker-priests were reportedly spied on by the police, with the goal of proving vows of celibacy to have been broken, which would then have required action on the Church's part.⁷¹ Some of these tensions seem to have arisen due to the priests being more educated and confident than their fellow-workers, and more willing to speak up. This disparity is likely to be less pronounced in today's NHS with its more diverse but generally well-educated workforce, with SSMs less likely to become involved in a workers' revolution.

While many of the reasons for the perceived failure of the worker-priest movement may not immediately apply to SSMs in today's NHS, a fundamental issue remains. This is that instead of providing a bridge between the worlds of Church and work,⁷² the worker-priests became quite separate from the rest of the Church community, to the extent that many subsequently

⁶⁶ Siefert, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 63

⁶⁷ John Mantle, *Britain's First Worker-Priests* (London: SCM, 2000), 63

⁶⁸ Wall, "Introduction," 7

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7

⁷⁰ Bell, "Towards a Critical Spirituality of Organization," 300

⁷¹ Siefert, *The Church and Industrial Society*, 67

⁷² Lees, *Self-Supporting Ministry*, 28

left the Church to remain full-time workers. One possible reason for this is that the worker-priest movement was initiated to meet the needs of the Church rather than the workers, but the priests then became focused on the needs of the workers to the detriment of the needs of the Church, creating an irreconcilable tension.

The very different social, political and ecclesiological contexts also create challenges in identifying what might, and might not, apply to SSMs in the English NHS today. For example, class distinctions are less acute than in post-war France, trade unions have a lesser role, and the family and living situations of Church of England clergy are more akin to those of secular workers. Furthermore, the worker-priests saw their ministry as being specifically to the working-class,⁷³ in contrast to SSMs working in more socio-demographically diverse organisations such as the NHS. It is therefore concluded that the European worker-priest movement is not a helpful model for SSMs working in the NHS today, and that an alternative model is required.

In searching for an alternative model, I noted that regardless of their setting, all priests are likely to have some role in liturgy, including presiding at the Eucharist. Liturgy, referring to public worship, is derived from the Greek λαός [laos; people] and ἔργον [ergon; work], and literally means “the peoples’ work”.⁷⁴ Specifically, the Eucharist involves bread and wine, both being work of human hands rather than the natural forms of grain and grape. This therefore suggests some intrinsic relationship between priesthood and work, in spite of the two often being seen as separate spheres. This led to my reflecting on the nature of such a relationship, and whether the Trinitarian concept of perichoresis may be helpful. I therefore decided to reflect on the worker-priest movement through the lens of perichoresis, and to consider whether this might be a more helpful model for SSM ministry.

⁷³ Arnal, *Priests in Working Class Blue*, 1

⁷⁴ Stephen Burns, *Liturgy: SCM Study Guide* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 5

An alternative model: perichoresis

Perichoresis is the term generally used to describe the relationship among the three persons of the Trinity, referring to mutual indwelling or interpenetration, rather than simple co-existence.⁷⁵ While Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct, they cannot exist in isolation.⁷⁶ Each of the three has specific roles, but all are the same substance and share equally in the life and purpose of God. Perichoresis thus results in a “community of being” in which the persons of the Trinity are shared, equal, united and mutually exchanged with constant interactions among them.

Based on John 17:21, it is often suggested that the Church should aspire to aspects of the Trinity. These include both relational and perichoretic personhood, among both Church communities and individual Christians.⁷⁷ However, using the Trinity as a model has its limitations as it may lead to theology being reduced to anthropology, or vice versa.⁷⁸ In exploring whether a perichoretic model is helpful in exploring the relationship between two roles held by the same person, it is therefore recognised that true perichoresis is found only in God. As Bevens suggests, models should be taken “seriously but not literally.”⁷⁹ It is also noted that a human person with different roles, such as mother, nurse and Churchwarden, is sometimes used as an analogy to help *explain* the Trinity. Like all such analogies, this has its limitations. In this case, the main problem is that the various roles may start and/or end at different phases of life, unlike the eternal nature of the three persons of the Trinity. This analogy could therefore be criticised for inferring modalism, suggesting that God operates in different ways at different times rather than being simultaneously three in one. In this case however I am exploring what

⁷⁵ Ralph Del Colle, “The Triune God,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 130

⁷⁶ John D Zizioulas, “The Trinity and Personhood: Appreciating the Cappadocian Contribution,” in: *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 167

⁷⁷ Miroslav Volf, *After our Likeness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 191

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 198

⁷⁹ Stephen Bevens, *Models of Contextual Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 29

one person with different roles can learn from viewing these roles through the lens of perichoresis, rather than using this as an analogy to help explain the Trinity. As Kilby argues, learning from God's ways is more appropriate than projecting human concepts onto God.⁸⁰ Gunton also points out that if humans are made in the image of God, this includes being perichoretic,⁸¹ albeit imperfectly⁸² and with the spacial and temporal limitations of being created beings.⁸³

Considering the worker-priest movement through the lens of perichoresis highlights three key issues. First, instead of exhibiting equality and mutual interpenetration, the priests' worker role dominated, to the extent that their Church role became secondary. While priests are to care for others, based on the example of the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), they are also ordained to "share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church, delighting in its beauty and rejoicing in its well-being",⁸⁴ an aspect that was somewhat neglected in the case of the worker-priests. Second, a related point is that the two roles became very separate, with little or no inter-relationship between them. As a result, the Church went so far as to conclude that the priest and the worker were contradictory roles that could not be reconciled.⁸⁵ For example, a senior cardinal stated that "to be a priest and a workman are two functions [...] it is not possible to unite them in the same person".⁸⁶ Third, many of the worker-priests adopted some degree of deception; the resulting lack of integrity would also seem at odds with the unity of perichoresis. It therefore seems that there was little evidence of perichoresis within the worker-priest model, at least as it developed in practice.

⁸⁰ Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81 (October 2000): 432-45

⁸¹ Colin Gunton. *The One, the Three and the Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168

⁸² *Ibid.*, 166

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 170

⁸⁴ Church of England, "Common Worship Ordination Services."

⁸⁵ Siefert, *The Church and Industrial Society*, ix

⁸⁶ Collonge, "The Dispute," 50

A perichoretic view of an SSM's Church and secular work would instead emphasise both their interpenetration and their equality rather than one dominating the other, with full integrity. Each role would therefore contribute to the other, while at the same time enabling it to be distinct. For example, Lees describes the SSM role as a "bridge role", connecting a church community with the wider community, exchanging ideas between them and helping them make sense of one another.⁸⁷ Specifically, SSMs can keep their church community informed of the issues facing those in work, particularly in local workplaces, and can offer distinctive support to people in the parish facing work-related pressures. Within the workplace, even without any official status, someone known to be a priest may be approached for pastoral guidance, for encouragement or to ask questions (1 Peter 3:15). Morris, as an SSM, notes that people assume that he has a compartmentalised life being a priest at weekends and a tax lawyer in the week, but is keen to emphasise that he is both, all of the time.⁸⁸ However adopting the model of perichoresis, it could be argued that even this explanation does not sufficiently emphasise the potential for interactions between them.

Chan also explored the concept of perichoresis in a thesis on tentmakers within the Chinese Churches of British Columbia.⁸⁹ Drawing on interviews with five Church pastors who support themselves with other jobs, he suggests perichoresis as a model for integration of paid secular work, church ministry and family life.⁹⁰ He argues that these may otherwise be seen as three separate parts of Christian life, particularly within Chinese communities that tend to have a hierarchical culture and a strong work ethic.⁹¹ While he makes assumptions that all such individuals are married with children,⁹² his inclusion

⁸⁷ Lees, *Self-Supporting Ministry*, 37

⁸⁸ William Morris, *Where is God at Work?* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2015), 13

⁸⁹ Wilson Chan, "A Trinitarian Approach to the Integration of Ministry, Work, and Family in Tentmaking Ministry" (Bakke Graduate University: Texas, 2016)

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 11

⁹² *Ibid.*, 7

of family life as a third area further emphasises the Trinitarian model. His conclusion is that work and family have equal theological value with church ministry and that each reveals the other, although his analysis focuses more on their equality than their inter-relationship. He interprets the laws outlined in Leviticus 19:1-37 as referring to three groups of ethical teaching on religion, family and work, citing this as scriptural support of the integration of these three areas.⁹³ While it could indeed be argued that these three areas are covered in this passage, their integration is less clear. Nevertheless, sharp delineation of working and family lives may be a relatively modern phenomenon, with working lives in Biblical times much more closely linked to family life (eg Ruth 2; Acts 18:1-3).

A perichoretic approach would also view all of life as spiritual and part of God's creation, with no division between sacred and secular, or between work and worship. Interestingly, in contrast to the views espoused at the time the worker-priests were recalled, more recent Roman Catholic teaching sees both work and rest as sharing in the activity of God.⁹⁴ Understanding of the relationship between work and vocation has also shifted over time. While “vocation” was previously interpreted to refer specifically to the religious life, Luther’s understanding, for example, extended this to mean that all work can be a vocation. He referred to a double vocation of spiritual vocation and external vocation, with the latter being God’s call to serve God and others through being in the world.⁹⁵

It is therefore concluded that in spite of the limitations highlighted earlier, a perichoretic model may be helpful in learning from the challenges of the worker-priest movement and in exploring the nature of SSM ministry.

⁹³ Ibid., 73

⁹⁴ The Vatican, “*Laborem Exercens*”, Section 25

⁹⁵ Martin Luther, cited in Miroslav Volf, *After our Likeness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 97

Implications for ministerial practice as an SSM

Potentially valuable lessons can be learned from both the successes and failures of the worker-priest movement. In relation to its successes, it did highlight the disconnect between the Church and the working world and took some action to address it. The priests themselves saw working amidst other workers as vital in connecting with people who would otherwise have no relationship with the Church. It also provided an opportunity for incarnational mission and for addressing social justice issues. In terms of its failures, these included a potential imbalance between the priests' Church role and paid secular work with little integration between them, some degree of deception and lack of integrity, and that many worker-priests left the Church rather than providing an ongoing bridge between the Church and the workplace.

Implications for practice therefore include ensuring that SSMs remain a tangible bridge between the Church and the working world, rather than focusing on one to the neglect of the other or seeing the two as being separate. Adopting a model based on perichoresis may be helpful here, in which Church and secular roles are seen as serving specific purposes, but with each sharing equally in the life and purpose of God and each mutually supporting and interpenetrating the other. This may form a useful basis for periodic reflection on the part of an SSM to explore whether these different aspects of their role are indeed in line with this model, with appropriate balance and interpenetration between them. Time for prayer, contemplation, and rest will be vital as part of this, as well as finding a routine that allows for Morning and Evening Prayer. Chan suggests the transitions between work, church ministry and family to be particularly important and that for some, such transitions represent a break akin to a Sabbath,⁹⁶ but I suggest that including an additional, separate time of Sabbath will also be required.

⁹⁶ Chan, "A Trinitarian Approach to the Integration of Ministry, Work, and Family in Tentmaking Ministry," 125

Second, it will be important for SSMs to maintain integrity between the different aspects of their lives, avoiding the deception adopted by many of the worker-priests. This will include being known as a priest alongside people in the workplace, being available to share their doubts and answer their questions, while neither proselytising nor being conformed to the pattern of the world (Romans 12:12). Sharing experiences with other SSMs is likely to be helpful in reflecting on practice, in line with the later advice that the French worker-priests attend a weekly chapter meeting, as well as a monthly day of reflection and a quarterly retreat.⁹⁷ In terms of accountability, SSMs are accountable to their Bishop and to their workplace line manager respectively, but with both aspects ultimately accountable to God.

Third, the worker-priest movement highlighted a potential role in advocating for social justice and giving a voice to those who otherwise have none. Bell describes the worker-priest movement as an example of Christianity challenging organisational oppression, in contrast to Christianity's historical role in support of many aspects of Western capitalism.⁹⁸ Similarly SSMs should consider issues of justice and speak truth to power when necessary. For example, some NHS employees, such as the many domestic and catering staff who do not speak English fluently, may have less of a voice within the organisation. An SSM may therefore feel they should speak out on their behalf if needed. However, it will be important to ensure that actions are aligned with Christian principles rather than other political ideologies, and to avoid assuming that an essential part of the SSM role is to take the place of lay leaders in advocating for workers' rights.

Finally, a key role for SSMs is to communicate to other Christians, most of whom spend far more time in work than in Church-related activities, how to live out their faith in the workplace as part of "whole life discipleship".⁹⁹ As well

⁹⁷ Patrick McLaughlin, "Priest or Clergyman?" In *Priests and Workers: An Anglo-French Discussion*, ed David Edwards (London: SCM, 1961), 109

⁹⁸ Bell, "Towards a Critical Spirituality of Organization," 295

⁹⁹ Church of England, "Setting God's People Free," 2017

as striving to do a professional and ethical job, this includes seeing their paid work as also being sacred and a source of spiritual meaning, while not having this as the sole aspect of their identity.

Conclusions

While there are some similarities between the worker-priests and SSMs working in the NHS in terms of being fully embedded within the workplace, with opportunities for an incarnational form of mission, it is concluded that the worker-priest movement is not a helpful model. This is partly due to some of the reasons the worker-priest movement was considered unsuccessful, including isolation from the wider Church, as well as significant sociological and ecclesiological differences between the two contexts. Viewing the worker-priest movement through the lens of perichoresis highlights specific issues around lack of balance, integration and integrity, and suggests that perichoresis may instead be a more helpful model. An important implication for SSMs is therefore not to see secular work and Church roles as separate, but as fundamentally intertwined. Periodic reflection on a perichoretic model of the different aspects of an SSM role may be helpful in striving to find an appropriate balance between them and to ensure they mutually support one another.

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