

The apostolate, the ministry, and the sexes

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APOLOGIA

"It is evident to all men diligently reading Holy Scripture and the Ancient Authors". So begins the Preface to the Ordinal in the Book of Common Prayer. I must confess to having only the most sketchy acquaintance with patristic writings, and a woefully limited knowledge of the most fashionable methods of dissecting Holy Scripture. *Mea Culpa!*

Nevertheless the habit of listening to the Sunday lessons for nearly half a century, reinforced by over thirty years daily reading of the Prayer Book Offices (and attempting to follow the Lectionary through the jungle of revision) — these basic activities seem to have left a deposit in my mind which is frequently re-agitated by the weekly attempt to relay some of the message of the Scripture to the faithful.

The sudden realisation that the proposal to ordain women to the priesthood in the Church of England, far from being a remote academic matter, is within striking distance; and that the voting in local synods indicates the probability (humanly speaking) of its being passed through many diocesan synods and then through the General Synod in the not very distant future: this realisation with all the implications that it brings to the consciences of those who believe in the Catholic nature of Anglican Orders, has provided a disturbance of cataclysmic proportions; and out of the disturbance have emerged the thoughts which I have committed to the following paper.

It will no doubt be argued that many other things have been stirred up from the unconscious as well, which this paper is an attempt to rationalise. I shall not attempt to deny this (a) because I should not be believed in the quarters where the objection would be raised (b) I am aware of at least some of the psychological background of my resistance. Psychological motivation is a very two-edged weapon to bandy about as those who deal with it well know. However I cannot resist remarking on what an odd lot the writers of Scripture must have been, since they never refer to God as anything but "He".

Since raising the matter publicly in the church press, I have received much interesting and encouraging correspondence, including a number of articles which show that abler theologians than myself are applying their skills to the matter. I am very grateful for their encouragement. I would also wish to close by acknowledging the support and encouragement with which my wife has upheld me.

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MAURICE NEWMAN

THE APOSTOLATE, THE MINISTRY, AND THE SEXES

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IN the heated debate concerning the proposed ordination of women to the priesthood, a great deal of weight seems to have been given to the influence of sociological changes on our thinking. Briefly, it is argued that in the Jewish society amidst which the Church was born, women played only background parts, and their role was strictly domestic. Hence it would have been inexpedient for Jesus to have selected women followers to be Apostles. It may also be thought the Christian opposition to the mystery cults it encountered in pagan society — in which priestesses frequently played a part — helped to harden the line of male exclusiveness which has persisted and been regarded as the norm throughout Christendom until comparatively recently. By the same line of reasoning, the growing acceptance of women's equality in modern society should be reflected in the unbarring of the priesthood. Progressive churchmen feel the taunt and stigma of belonging to the last major body which practises sex discrimination with regard to its 'top' professional positions.

At the outset, I would suggest that this line of reasoning needs a caveat. It is a generally accepted belief among Christians that the purposes of God are revealed in the processes of history. Nevertheless it does not follow that this revelation is immediately open to inspection. For instance a contemporary observer might have drawn a very different conclusion from the growth of Babylonian power from that which was disclosed to the prophet. The immediate conclusion of the religious man might have been that the gods of Babylon were stronger than Yahveh; while the sceptic might have reached the same conclusion as Napoleon — 'God is on the side of the big battalions'. It took the prophet's eye to see in the apparent national disaster a purpose of purging and regeneration. It may be suggested that the urge of the *zeitgeist* is not necessarily to be equated with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

When such a critical step as the admission of women to Holy Orders is proposed to a relatively inexperienced decision-making body such as the General Synod of the Church of England one cannot but experience some alarm. 'This house sees no theological objection to the ordination of women . . .' The Anglican laity are not

noted for their preoccupation with the niceties of theology; and although this may be thought to bring a certain air of freshness and simplicity to their deliberations, one does wonder whether the implications or perhaps the dimensions of the proposed step have been understood.

Thus, the ordination of a Priest is (according to the Anglican rite) 'to the office and work of a Priest *in the Church of God*' — bearing the implication that this order claims to be valid throughout the whole Church, and is not limited to its function amid the Anglican minority. One is, of course, aware that the validity of this claim is not officially accepted by the Roman and Orthodox majority; but the claim is nevertheless lodged on historical and theological grounds, in that the conditions for the ordination of a priest are fulfilled.

How many of the Synod's members are concerned to realise that in taking the proposed step they will either be claiming to alter the constitution of the Universal Church, of which Anglicans form a relatively small part, or alternatively, abandoning our claim to be part of the historic Church and to have an historically 'Apostolic' ministry. There would seem sufficient reason to pause and reflect on the dimensions of such a decision; are we claiming a special revelation of the Holy Spirit when in fact we are in the grip of the zeitgeist.

In this paper we shall ask whether there is anything in the basic nature of the gospel, and in the relationship of God—in—Christ with the Church, which is appropriately represented in the exclusively male apostolic ministry.

Of all figures which represent the Gospel relationship of God to his church, I would select that of New Birth. The Sentence which immediately springs to mind is the joyous outburst of I Peter 1, verse 3;

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living
hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'

and a few verses further on (verses 23 & 25b);

You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of
imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God . . .
That word is the good news which was preached to you.

These verses lead us on to the theme of new life in the Johannine discourses. From the Good Shepherd discourse John 10:

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly (verse 10) and more explicitly to Nicodemus:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew (or from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3 verse 3, also verse 5 — 8).

This discourse leads up to the statement:

. . . as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only (only-begotten — A.V.) Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. (verses 14 — 16)

It does not seem inappropriate to link these references to Christ as God's agent of New Birth with those in which he appears as the *Bridegroom*. Thus when John's disciples wonder at the crowds that are drawn to Jesus, the Baptist avers: (John 3, verse 29)

He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full

In his rebuttal of the Pharisee's strictures on fasting Jesus insists:

Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?
As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.
(Mark 2, verse 19 et al)

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins Jesus obviously refers to the Messiah under the figure of the Bridegroom (Matthew 25, verses 1 — 13), and equally obviously in that of the king's Marriage Feast for his son. (Matthew 22, verses 1 — 10)

At the other end of the spectrum we find marriage imagery in the Apocalypse (Revelation 21, verses 9 — 11):

Then came one of the seven angels . . . and spoke to me, saying 'Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb! And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.'

a passage which amplifies the earlier statement of verse 2:

I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.'

In the final verses of the Book, which herald the approaching con-

summation we read (ch 22 verse 17):

The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'. And let him who hears say 'Come'. And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.'

(ibid, verse 20):

He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming Soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Whatever doubts may be thrown on the canonicity of the Apocalypse, it is not unreasonable to infer that the imagery displayed in these passages would have been familiar among contemporary Christians.

Marriage symbolism appears much earlier in the apostolic writings. Ephesians ch. 5 shows that S. Paul saw the marriage—mystery as bound up with the Christ — Church relationship to a degree which is almost beyond expression (verses 21 — end). He links the primal marriage statement of Genesis (quoted by Jesus), and says: (verses 31, 32)

'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one'. This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the Church.

Paul rebukes the vagaries of some of the Corinthian congregation in terms also derived from marriage symbolism:(II Corinthians 11, verse 2)

I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I bethrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband.'

From observing at least some of the marriage imagery which appears in the New Testament outside the Gospels, it is worth returning to Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus (John 3, verses 1—17) to note that this passage in which Jesus declares himself as God's *life-bringer* follows the chapter which describes (a) the marriage feast at Cana (b) the entry into Jerusalem at which Jesus cleanses the existing temple and is alleged to prophesy the raising up of the new temple ('the temple of his body' — John 2, verse 21) within three days. We recall that the Baptist's reference to Jesus as the Bridegroom also falls within this extended passage.

In the ethos of New Testament (Jewish) society, it is highly probable that the primary connotation of 'Bridegroom' would be less that of a social life-partner than that of the hoped-for male who comes to enable the waiting bride to fulfil her expected role of motherhood. The expectation of society, and of the bride, (con-

ditioned of course both by social pressures and her own deep needs), hails the bridegroom as the one who will initiate the procreative process, and thus ensure the life of a new generation. As the bearer of life-giving seed he appears in the role of a saviour of the race. (Note — Whatever one's views on the authenticity of the Gospel Birth narratives, it is interesting that in response to the Annunciation, Mary's exultation contains the expression '... my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour' — (Luke 1, verse 47).

We are not far from this line of thought in referring to the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13), who is represented as scattering life-giving seed on the earth. The same chapter contains the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, and in his interpretations Jesus makes it clear that he himself is the Sower, and the 'good seed is the word of God.'

In this connection we also recall the old-fashioned use of the word *husbandman* to describe the relationship of the farmer to his land. The word is used in this context by Jesus in his teachings, but perhaps the most picturesque illustration of the sense is derived from the Old Testament. In Isaiah chapter 62 verses 4 and 5 the prophet exults over the revival of fertility which the returning exiles will bring to the land:

For as a young man marries a virgin,
so shall your sons marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.

This theme of life-giving seed can be said to reach its climax in Jesus' reference to his forthcoming death in the presence of the enquiring Greeks. This is found in S. John chapter 12, which begins with Mary of Bethany anointing his feet: 'for the day of my burial' (verse 7). It continues with the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, on which the evangelist comments in the words of Zachariah:

Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold thy king is coming,
sitting on an ass's colt! (verse 15)

The account of the Greeks' visit follows close upon this episode; the Greeks communicate with Jesus through the intervention of the apostles Andrew and Philip (a miniature of the apostolic mission?), and Jesus recognises that the great hour of crisis has come with its challenge to the life-bringer:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (verse 24)

The divine Voice intervenes proclaiming the glorification of God's Name; then Jesus speaks again:

Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all men to myself. (verses 31, 32)

The evangelist comments:

He said this to show by what death he was to die (verses 33) and the episode concludes

When Jesus had said this, he departed and hid himself from them. verse 36b)

In fact this episode may be said to bring Jesus 'public ministry' to a close; there is a kind of parting discourse in which he reaffirms his mission (verses 44—end). The next chapter (13) opens the Passion Narrative with the scene set at the Last Supper.

We draw attention again to the presence, in the section just discussed, of the elements of the Waiting Bride (daughter of Zion), the dying and life-giving Seed and the apostolic mission which stems from Jesus' own apostolate:

He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me (verse 44) . . . For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. (verse 49)

This brings us to consider the extension of Christ's life-bringing mission through space and time by the agency of the Apostolic mission. Jesus himself is referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews as

The apostle and high priest of our profession (Hebrews 3, verse 1) and he also referred to in 1 Peter 2, verse 25, as 'The Shepherd and Guardian (Bishop — AV) of your souls.

These two passages are quoted not as proof-texts, but for the suggestion that they reflect their authors' awareness that the ministry they were exercising was linked organically with that of the Lord Jesus, reproducing it by organic extension, rather than by official delegation. I shall concentrate on the apostolic ('sent forth') nature of our Lord's ministry, which seems to be expressed in this series of Johannine sayings:

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that *he had come from God* and was going to God . . . John 13 verse 3)

I came (Came forth — AV) from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.' (John 16, verse 28)

and to his disciples

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you *should go and bear fruit* . . . (John 15, verse 16)

In the 'High Priestly Prayer'

This is eternal life, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ *whom thou hast sent*. (John 17, verse 3)

As thou *didst send me* into the world, even so *I have sent them into the world* (ibid, verse 18)

and in the Upper room after the Resurrection;

Peace be with you. As the Father *has sent me*, even so *send I you* (John 20, verse 21)

It seems to me that there is a very powerful undercurrent of suggestion in those passages that the 'Apostolic Mission' should not be thought of simply as a 'mission' (a sending) but that it carries the overtones of e—mission (i.e., a sending—out).

All three of the Synoptic Gospels record Jesus' choice of the Twelve, and of his sending them out with authority to preach, to heal, to cast out evil spirits; the injunction to shake off the dust from their feet as a witness against those places which did not receive them hints that they were invested with a critical, decisive character, and in milder vein, so does their greeting of peace, and its power to 'rest' or return. From S. Luke's Gospel we derive the information that Jesus designated the Twelve as Apostles — 'men sent out'. The title of Luke's other work takes up the theme of the Apostles and the post-ascension Church. Their initial transaction in making up their number after the fall of Judas, reveals then as conscious of being a definite group, although the total community appears to have been ten times their numbers (Acts 1, verse 15ff).

S. Paul traces his apostleship to the direct call of Christ, presumably that which he experienced on the Damascus road (Galatians 1, verse 11 end) though in his attempt to address the mob (Acts 22, 17-21) he appears to describe a 'commissioning' experience which had taken place in Jerusalem which contains the words 'I will send you (exapostelo) far away to the Gentiles.' He also describes himself as the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11, verse 13; 15, verse 16; Galatians 1, verse 7-10). His association with Barnabas is well known, and they are described as apostles in the incident at Lystra

(Acts 14, verse 14). Barnabas has previously been sent (Greek — exapesteilan) from the Jerusalem centre to Antioch, to enquire into the conversion of Gentiles there (Acts 11, verses 19–26). The journey in which Paul and Barnabas are both described as apostles began with the laying on of hands with prayer amid the Church at Antioch. (Acts 13, verse 1–4).

Scripture thus seems to bear witness to the existence of a seminal group within, but distinct from, the total body of the Church, the body which is denoted by the name 'Apostles'. They were conscious of their own position and authority, and this was accepted by the remainder of the Church, though not necessarily without dialogue (e.g. the proposal to delegate the work of distribution; Acts 6, verses 1–6; 'And what they said pleased the whole multitude . . .') They were conscious of their overall responsibility not only for the life-begetting seed of the Gospel, but also for propagating the propagating function. In using the body-language that is so familiar among Christians, one might describe the Apostolate as the reproductive system of the Church. I think it important to use this form of language at the present time, because a good deal of confusion seems to have crept into our thinking from the widespread use of language such as 'lay apostolate', 'the ministry of the laity', 'the priesthood of all believers' (with all due respect to the distinguished ancestry of the latter phrase). I venture to assert that these phrases are highly apposite in their proper context, which is the discipleship of the individual Christian, but that they are all too easily capable of inducing a serious degree of doublethink about the question of Holy Orders.

It is particularly noteworthy that when S. Paul introduces the language of the Body into his writings, it is as much to emphasise the diversity of function, as it is to teach corporate unity. Thus, in I Corinthians 12 we have the familiar assertion

By one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and were all made to drink of one Spirit (verse 13) (cp Galatians 3, verse 28, 'neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus')

I think it right to include the Galatians passage here, with its 'neither male nor female', for it seems to me that the unity proclaimed needs to be understood in the context of diversity of function; as S. Paul proceeds to insist. Returning to I Corinthians 12 he underlines the obvious:

If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing?
If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?
(verse 17)

The whole passage is a commonsense refutation of the fallacy that equality of person it to be equated with uniformity of function. The utter sterility of the notion is laid bare in this maddeningly simple statement.

Positively, S. Paul proceeds with a very definite statement of diversity: verses 28–30

'God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles . . . etc . . . Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?

This insistence on diversity springs from the equally insistent proclamation of organic unity:

'Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it'. (verse 27)

The same point of diverse unity is made in Romans 12, verses 4–6.

'For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function . . . etc.'

Finally in Ephesians we have the well-known passage:—

'When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men . . .

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers . . .'
(Ephesians 4, verses 8, 11, etc)

It seems worth a comment that S. Paul should mention evangelists (preachers of the gospel) separately from Apostles. Unless this is a rhetorical quirk it would seem that he saw a distinction between the apostolic function and the evangelistic one, although preaching the gospel is the most apparent way of reproducing the Church. Equally obvious S. Paul was deeply committed to the preaching of the Gospel 'Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel' — I Corinthians 9, verse 16). Thus it appears that his apostolic consciousness embraced other functions; such as for instance, the entrusting of Timothy with the oversight of the church at Ephesus (I Timothy 1, verse 3), with instructions about the laying-on of hands, presumably in ordination. (ibid chapter 5, verse 22). Here, then may be seen an example of 'propagating the propagators' as suggested previously

Looking at apostolic writings we can observe that the Christian experience of re-birth into 'newness of life' was reflected in the apostolic consciousness of having 'fathered' regeneration as instruments of Christ. Thus, in the Letter to Philemon we read 'I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whose father I have become (AV — have begotten, Greek *egnessa*) (verse 10) in my imprisonment': and in I Corinthians 4, verse 15 we find this rebuke to the contentious members: 'Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for I became your father (AV — begat you; Greek *egnessa*) in Jesus Christ through the Gospel'. Note that in both passages the verb refers to the fatherhood of procreation, not of status, as might be inferred from the text of RSV and NEB. Again, II Corinthians 12 verse 14, 'Children ought not to lay up for their parents but parents for their children.'

The regenerating nature of the Gospel is glimpsed again in the epistle of James: 'Of his own will he brought us forth (Greek *apek-cusen*) by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures; therefore . . . receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.' (James 1, verse 21 — see page x)

In the Johannine Epistle the image of new birth from God's begetting action is reflected in various passages (e.g. I John 3, verse 9; 4, verse 4, 7; and 9). The writer's address to the Church is full of paternal affection as well as authority. It is clear that he knows that the rebirth of his people springs from God's action; but also like S. Paul he knows that he, the Apostle, is the agent through whom God has acted.

We return then to the basic relationship of Christian believers to God given by rebirth in Christ through the Gospel. The quintessence of this relationship is expressed in the unforgettable words of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel.

' . . . To all who receive him, who believe in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (Greek *Theou egennethesan*) (John 1, verses 12, 13)

Jesus is the first Apostle of the Gospel, and the whole meaning of the apostolic ministry is an extension of his ministry.

It may be thought that the rebirth element in Christianity has been here emphasised at the expense of the caring ministry, which is more congenial to the social atmosphere of the 1970's. I would assert that in the view of the New Testament writers the caring ministry of the church is an outcome of the new life which is

experienced in rebirth, and cannot long continue without it. This view is clearly expressed in the 1st Epistle of S. John, especially as a strand running through the third chapter (see verses 1, 9, 10, 14); in verses 16—18 we are taken from the heights of life-giving sacrifice to the day-to-day business of relieving poverty. But it is clear that in S. John's understanding it is in the experience of new life that we discover brotherhood, and that the sincere act of brotherhood is the acid test of having shared in the new life.

It would be utterly untrue to the spirit of the New Testament to denigrate the nature of the Church as a caring brotherhood. This caring concern takes such a prominent place in Jesus's teaching that it is popularly supposed to contain the whole. The Acts of the Apostles and all the apostolic writings bear witness to the truth we have discussed above. The Acts of the Apostles links the founding of a specifically caring department of ministry (diaconate?) with the day to day problems of fulfilling this family function. (Chapter 6, verses 1—6). Whatever weight is given to the connection between this crisis and the emergence of the diaconate as an order, it seems to demonstrate that in face of the crisis, the apostles recognised that there was a distinction between their ministry of the life-giving Word and the caring function of the New Community.

We return then to consider the distinctive roles of male and female in human life as embodying the relationship between Christ and his Church. Here I suggest it is necessary to concentrate on the basic roles and partnership in the procreation and nurture of human life, for these roles are both fundamental and necessary to the maintenance of the human race, and they are also universal to mankind; whereas it is only in a technologically developed and affluent area of mankind that increasing choice of roles becomes possible.

It is a sheer fact of nature that the propagation of human life depends on the distinction between the sexes. Thus while we must insist fully on the equality of *persons* (and endeavour to recognise and allow for the prejudices which well up from the unconscious), it remains unavoidably true that discrimination between the *functions* of male and female is essential if life is to continue upon earth. Conception depends upon emission by the male and reception by the female. This discrimination of function remains valid even in the face of the ultimate possibility of 'test-tube babies'; it would still be necessary that the male sperm should reach and penetrate the female ovum for the propagation of life to take place. Modern science recognises the female part in providing the ovum, which was

not known in the 1st Century A.D; but the basic reciprocity involved in procreation remains unchanged.

If procreation is impossible without some form of male donation growth is equally impossible without the far more extended female part, stretching from the supply of the ovum, through prenatal nurture of the womb, the act of birth, nursing, and all the psychological connotations of motherhood. It remains true that is a woman cannot fertilise her own ovum, neither can a man bear a child, or suckle it after it is born, nor do as effectively many of the caring tasks which enable the infant's growth towards maturity.

On the other side of the picture it may be pointed out that no individual is either 100% male or 100% female. Male and female characteristics are mixed in varying proportions according to hormonal balance, and possibly also psychological conditioning. The possibility of sex change is known, and some amusing play has been made with the possibility of this happening to an ordained priest! But one assumes that there must be a critical point, or at any rate a critical area, on either side of which differentiation becomes evident.

It is at least possible to apply negative criteria, in that a man cannot bear or suckle a child, while a woman cannot beget one. These are not mentally generated prohibitions, but crude natural observations. So that these exciting speculations do not seem to affect the basic line of reasoning which we must now endeavour to crystallise.

The Christian Church seems to me to have two aspects. One is that of a society not vastly different from any other organisation. In this aspect we may see it as a community which aims to express caring Love in the highest possible way, both in its internal relationships and by carrying the same action of love into the service of people beyond its visible boundaries. In pursuing this activity it selects leaders and officials like any other society, and since it is conscious of the seriousness of its aim it will seek to choose suitable persons and train them in the special aptitudes and skills which it judges most useful to its task. As most members believe that this task is God-related and God-motivated, 'aptitudes' will naturally include both spirituality and a sense of vocation to service. On this level, seeing the church as a consensus of believers and men of good will, there is no reason why any of its offices should be barred to any man or woman who is seen to have the requisite aptitudes and motivation. It is beyond reasonable question that the Church already

owes a considerable share of its inheritance of spirituality to the devotion and vision of women, S. Theresa of Avila, S. Theresa of Lisieux, Mother Julian of Norwich, Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Gladys Aylward . . . and many others; beyond reasonable question too, that there is a great fund of leadership and administrative qualities among women, which past or passing social attitudes have held back. It seems particularly in line with the vision of the caring church, that women whose basic natural aptitudes turn this way should be enabled to use them to the utmost in its service.

Perhaps this aspect of the outward-looking, caring church has a special appeal in a period when organised religion, especially religious worship, is shrinking, when there is a serious man-power shortage, when buildings become more and more burdensome to maintain — as well as being claustrophobic to some. There is, I think a strong urge for the Church to seek its life in some form of Dispersion; to commend itself to the world at large by soft-peddalling the differences which mark it off from the non-believing majority, and above all by emphasis on works which are acceptable to the humanitarianism of the time.

However, I would assert that if the Church has no other *raison d'être* than this, if it does no more than reflect the best current trends and aspirations of human society, it has little to offer. I would go so far as to deny that the Church can be judged adequately in terms of its apparent relevance to any contemporary situation; but even if this stand-point is too extreme, I would stand firmly on the position that the whole relevance of the Church to mankind turns upon being the agent of 'newness of life'; of re-generation, of being born from above. Without this element Christ's teaching, faced in all its fulness, must have the impact of 'way-out' idealism, or a paralysing judgment on our conscience.

Re-birth, 'birth from above' is a divinely initiated process, and it seems to me to involve the gathered Church (as distinct from the Dispersed Church) surrendering itself in occasions of renewal as the Bride of Christ. The occasions of renewal are basically sacramental: Baptism, Absolution, and the celebration of the Eucharist, the repeated celebration of Christ's nuptial feast. To these one would probably add preaching in its most sacramental sense — the solemn proclamation of the New Life. Confirmation, in whatever relation it is judged to stand to Baptism, is obviously another of these occasions, and, equally obviously, so is the renewal of the apostolic mission in Ordination. Unction again is an occasion of renewal, either in the sense of healing in the here and now or renewal in the life beyond death. Traditional teaching about the sacrament of

Marriage says that the ministers of the sacraments are the parties themselves, and this is accepted. It is however worth pointing out that the first step in the ceremony is the giving of the woman's hand to the officiating priest; is it too fanciful to interpret this as symbolising the incorporation of the human union into the great archetypal marriage of Christ and his Bride, the Church. Certainly the language of Ephesians 5, verses 21–33 seems very suggestive on this point.

It will probably be objected that, on the practical level, it has traditionally been accepted, and indeed urged, that in case of emergency any layman whether man or woman may administer one of the Great Sacraments, i.e., Baptism. I do not accept this as a valid argument, because it seems to me that what may be perfectly sound and valid when done in enforced absence from the gathered church is no guide to what should be built into the regular structure and functioning of the Body of Christ. What I would describe as 'desert island cases', may make interesting material for casuistry, but not for mainstream theology.

Far more importantly, I would reject any suggestion that the minister who presides over the Church's 'occasions of renewal' can be regarded adequately as doing so in virtue of functional authority delegated by or on behalf of the congregation. In that the Church is Christ's Body it shares corporately in the delegation of ministerial function; but this function can only be meaningful when it is seen primarily as an extension of the apostolic function of Christ, the Head, the Bridegroom, the Author and Saviour of the New Family.

If this is a true insight into the meaning of the Church's sacramental occasions, it seems incongruous that the presiding minister, who stands for Christ to the Body, should be other than male.

At this point I rest my case, but not without a word of regret for an unknown number of women who will feel that a door is being slammed to bar them from a fulfilment to which they believe themselves called, and a still larger number who will identify with them in feeling that their sex has been rejected. I fear that they will regard as easy platitudes any reiteration of the statement that the Church holds womanhood in the highest honour, that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the highest of God's creatures, that Mary Magdalen had the honour of beholding the Risen Lord before any other human, and that many a woman has exhibited spiritual leadership and left her mark in the life of the Church without having a place in the priesthood. They may feel that the traditional attitude makes bitter mockery of such statements, and that the whole argument is

an elaborate way of saying 'Back to the kitchen', or 'Back to the nursery' — another effort to patch up the crumbling wall of tradition and prejudice behind which men seek to defend their pretended superiority.

To deny deep-level motivation in the formation of attitudes would be unrealistic and unconvincing. Yet to reduce all argument to the status of by-products of unconscious motivation would be nugatory. I can only affirm that whatever motivation, I seem to discern a pattern in the Christ–Church relationship which indicates apostolic priesthood as essentially male. If this is correct, then the act of ordaining a woman would appear 'ultra vires', and in fact a cruel deception. II Corinthians 13, verse 8 'For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.'

The positive conclusion of any argument seems to be that since the Church is 'female' in relation to Christ, there ought to be a ministry in which women who feel called can represent the Church in this mode of its being, specifically as women. The forms in which vocation can presently be fulfilled (religious orders, deaconesses, parish workers) do not appear adequate to the contemporary situation, and I recognise that one must believe that those who complain of this inadequacy are indeed women who have been at pains and prayer to understand their own motivation. Nevertheless, I do not believe ordination of women to the priesthood to be the appropriate way. To seize it in haste (and 50 years in the life of the Church is haste) could mean missing something really new that women are being called to add to the whole pattern of the Church's life.

To close with another platitude: One's first reaction to a 'No Entry' sign may be one of frustration and anger, especially if one is in a hurry; however, the true solution is not to tear down the sign and enter, but to look for the entry which joins the positive flow of traffic. If this entry has not been indicated, that is the object to which we should direct our efforts.

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