

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

Why the Christian priesthood is male

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THE CHURCH LITERATURE ASSOCIATION

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WHY THE
CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD
IS MALE

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I. The Tradition

1. This work contains a statement of the position that the maleness of its priesthood is an inherent characteristic of the Christian Church and its religion. On such a view no temporary difficulties in staffing its ministry nor any alleged theory of social progress should lead the Church to change its fundamental character by opening its official ministry to women.
2. The demand for women to be admitted to the 'major' or 'holy' orders of the ministry has not arisen until this century. It is now voiced by a very small number of men and women in the Anglican Church. The call for a female ministry has been made and occasionally met by a tiny section of the Reformation churches and in some of the English Non-Conformist bodies, but in all these communions it has not been responded to by any widespread practice. There is hardly any such movement at all in the rest of Christendom, Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic. The question presented by this situation is whether the exclusively male priesthood is merely traditional in the sense of holding on to what is age-long but should now be reversed, or whether it is traditional in the sense of incorporating the very essence of an institution a departure from which will make it something entirely other.
3. Advocates of the admission of women to holy orders agree with their opponents that such a step would be revolutionary and a defiance of an original, long and strong tradition accepted until now throughout Christendom. Advocates do not deny that the tradition is against such a step, but they want it altered. Their case is that to debar women from holy orders is to misunderstand the scriptures or to fail in distinguishing between essentials of the ministry and its detachable historical accidents; that it is due to sociological associations of the Church with patriarchal society and with a denigration

of women; that it resists a hypothetical process of social evolution which is making for an allegedly complete parity of women with men in all spheres. They are convinced that an exclusively male priesthood is not in the unfathomable decree of God; it must therefore be due to ignorance or oversight on the part of Christ or to followers failing to divine his intention; or due to the Church being tied up with limitations on the sphere of women's vocation of a purely historical and modifiable kind. More fundamentally still, those who contest for the addition of a female ministry to the male one believe that what they take for the spirit of the Age (*Zeitgeist*) is identical with the Holy Spirit (*Heilig geist*) who always gets invoked in support of what one likes to believe!

4. The very provincial nature of the demand for women priests — provincial in time and space — accounts for the fact there has arisen no theology of the question. The Early Church confronted female priesthoods in certain heterodox movements only, such as *Monatism* in the second century and the *Collyridians* in the fourth. It never regarded the apostolic order of Deaconesses as a branch of Holy Orders. In the thirteenth century the matter was discussed in the kind of way theological disputations thought of every conceivable objection to the belief and practice of the Church, in order to present the faith by answering such objections. There is no evidence that the questions (*Summa Theologica* II a II ae, Q 177, a 2; III, Supplement, Q 39, 1a) in which Aquinas deals with the possible priesthood of women, arise out of anything in the nature of a church movement in its favour.¹ One need not be convinced by any or all of the grounds on which S. Thomas rejects female priesthoods, in order to appreciate the point that the movement for it did not come from any serious urge within the life of the Church.

5. In fact the practically complete absence in the tradition of any positive justification of an exclusively male priesthood is in itself a strong reason for regarding it as an essential element. Justifying arguments often imply suspicion of doubt. So the lack of theo-

¹ It should be noted that the sense in which woman being in subjection is used in the *Summa Theologica* as a reason for not having women priests does not imply moral or spiritual inferiority. 'Since in matters pertaining to the soul woman does not differ from man as to the thing (for sometimes a woman is found to be better than any men as regards the soul) it follows that she can receive the gift of prophecy and the like, but not the sacrament of orders.' (Part III, Supplement, Q39, 1a, ad 1 obj.)

logical argumentation for an exclusively male priesthood may indicate that to ask 'why' is just as senseless as to ask 'why' God created a world. Its meaning can be expounded, but a reason cannot be given. It is therefore quite legitimate to say that the exclusion of women from Holy Orders is just part of the nature of things, in this case of the nature of the Christian Church. The fact is plain enough. In contrast with the religion of Israel, where to say 'he is a priest' meant 'he is a male member of one of the existing Jewish priestly families', the Christian tradition, detaching the priesthood from family and tribal limitations, asserts in its canon law that any baptised male could validly receive ordination if other conditions as to vocation are fulfilled. Also for the valid reception of the Sacrament of Orders it is necessary that the minister be a bishop and the recipient a baptised person of the male sex.

II. Two effects of Christianity

6. Two important features of the Christian Church should make clear that its adherence to an official priesthood of the male sex only is not an oversight, nor an atavistic attachment to earlier modes of thought, nor due to any idea that woman is an inferior kind of Christian person. The first of these features is the deliberate inclusion of women along with men in the wider priesthood of the whole Church. This priesthood represents the mystery of the Church's inner life, the exchange and commerce between its members whereby the Body of Christ is built up organically as a 'Holy temple in the Lord', to be a 'habitation of God in the Spirit' (Ephesians 2. 21-22). There is only one ultimate priesthood in the Church, that of Christ himself, but this invisible priesthood has visible instruments and organs. These are the whole church militant on earth and its specific ministerial priesthood whose instrumental agents were first called presbyters or priests or overseers. There is thus a general priesthood of the whole people of God, comprising men and women, and a specific priesthood known as the Church's ministry. It is this specific priesthood which is confined to male ministers. From the second century each organised Christian community of both sexes had its threefold order of ministers, its bishops, presbyters and its deacons.¹

¹ For Anglican treatises, see: Bishop J. B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (excursus in Commentary on Philippians); R. C. Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, For a Free Church exposition: T. W. Manson, *Ministry and Priesthood*.

These three were later designated the 'major' or 'holy' orders and were confined to men. In this technical phrase 'Holy Orders' the adjective 'holy' is not to be taken as implying that minor orders or lay ministers have a secular, profane or worldly character. The major orders have a certain authority, and there is subordination within them, but this in no wise implies superiority or inferiority in gifts or attainments. S. Augustine wrote to Jerome: 'Although according to titles of honour which the practice of the Church has now made valid, the episcopate is greater than the presbytery, yet in many things Augustine is less than Jerome' (Epist. 1xxxii). Moreover subordination in our ecclesiastical hierarchy carries no implication of defective membership in the Body of Christ. That all the baptised, male and female, are equally one in Christ is the emphasis of the passage 'there can be neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male and female; for ye are all one in Christ' (Galations 3. 28) — a passage often misinterpreted to support the ordination of women, as if ordination were the mark of a full Christian and lay membership some kind of low-gear Christianity. On the contrary, the wider priesthood of the *Laos* (to use the original term for the whole body, which conveys a more corporate sense than the English 'laity' or 'layman') indicates that if the ministerial priesthood is composed only of males, this is in the divine decree as much as the existence of the Church itself. The official ministry could so easily have been enlarged to include both sexes if only secondary difficulties were in the way.

7. The second feature is of the same kind. The Christian religion was of revolutionary influence in many respects, including a greatly heightened esteem and value accorded to women. Jesus speaks in public to the Samaritan woman to the scandal of the Jews; a wife is entitled to the sexual fidelity of her husband as much as a man to the chastity of his wife. S. Paul speaks of women as the equals of men. Women 'labour much for the Lord' (Romans 16). Christianity indicated a way in which the individuality of both man and woman could be cultivated and the worth of the individual recognised without this recognition depending upon personal dominance. While retaining a divine father-figure derived from Israel, it softened its authoritarian character and became a brotherhood and sisterhood religion. And Christendom has had more teaching, religious thought, devotional insight, organised communities with contemplative and active roles, from its women members than any other religious culture in the world. In other words the Gospel and the church which proclaims

it had from the start no hesitation in departing from custom and prejudice. The maleness of the Church's priesthood must therefore have deeper grounds than mere conservatism or a poor estimate of woman's feminine nature.

III. Christianity and the Religions

8. That the very nature of the Christian religion demands a male priesthood is further indicated by the place of Christianity among the world religions and by the specific character of the Christian revelation.

9. In the history of the faiths the monotheistic religions have male priesthoods only. Female priesthoods belong mainly to the nature religions associated with the earth mother, a cult reaching from the sphere of the palaeolithic mother goddess of fertility to the religions of ancient near eastern civilisations. Female priests are combined with male ones in various polytheistic religions. Many of the nature religions and polytheisms have male priesthoods, alone or along with female priesthoods. Sometimes, as in the cult of Sybele, a male priest serves a female goddess, usually in a sacred marriage; priestesses in ancient Egypt who at first served the goddess Hathor later served male gods. It is, therefore, not simply the case that religions with male deities have male priesthoods and those with female deities have female priesthoods. Moreover, some cosmic and monistic spiritual religions, like the dominant ones in India, have none but male priesthoods.¹ One definite conclusion, however, emerges from the vast and complex evidence: it is that none but male priesthoods belong to the monotheisms, in which the godhead transcends the created order and, as their lord, stands behind nature and history and society, as well as acting in them. This is entirely the case with Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The significance of this correlation may seem irrelevant to the question of admitting women to Holy Orders in the Christian Church. Canon Howard argued from the nature religions of a matriarchal type that male priesthoods are one-sided.² But Miss Thrall holds that as the objects of worship in the

1 cf. M. Eliade, *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, ch. vii, and *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, ch. vii; Rachel Levy, *The Gate of Horn* (Part 1); E. O. James, *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*; H. Frankfort and others, *The intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Pelican edition, *Before Philosophy*).

2 R. W. Howard, *Should Women be Priests?*

nature religions are idols and not the true God, the fact of early female priesthoods is irrelevant.¹

10. The Christian Church with its background in the biblical view of

God and his relation to the world has without question or scruple or argument adopted a male priesthood. This feature it shares with Brahmanism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Olympian Greek cults, and with the religion of the Hebrews, although in most fundamental respects Christianity represents a revolutionary force in the religions of the ancient world. The question before us amounts to deciding whether this feature of a male priesthood can be modified by the addition of female priests without altering the essential character of the Christian ministry and the psychic effects of the Faith. The answer is that the force of a religion is in the living impact of a concrete religious culture, composed of beliefs, rituals, organisations, hidden psychic dispositions, bents of soul, below the level of conscious beliefs. The maleness of the official ministry is one manifestation of this concrete religious culture. To isolate it and claim that it is accidental and replaceable is possible only to the abstract intellect which divides the substance of a living religion. Therefore to have a twin priesthood of males and females could be more disruptive of the Christian Church than any doctrinal heresy or moral deviation. That is because we are here dealing not only with the conscious, intellectual and ethical side of Christianity but with the deep hidden roots from which religions and their distinctions spring.²

IV. A Logos Religion

11. To the anthropological and sociological considerations there can now be added a more theological one. The Christian religion has as its centre faith in the Incarnate Word of God; this Word reveals God and as incarnate reconciles men to him in a vicarious sacrifice. It is a Logos religion. And in so far as we can use gender imagery for

these things the Logos is a masculine principle. In spite of some confusion in the biblical imagery and in speculation among theologians, in general the Logos is the active, manifesting, creative-destructive, redemptive power of the godhead, and has commonly been regarded at this level, as a masculine power. This is not to say that the Deity has sex or maleness. Theologians, mystics and seers have revolted against the idea that God is male. For many of them here is the problem of 'The Missing Feminine.'¹

12. If we are pressed to see in the doctrine of the Trinity some clue to the sense that gender, as a conspicuous element in the created order, must have something corresponding to it in the God-head, one would find in the unconditioned Unity of God something like the feminine in creation, while the differentiated Persons, on the other hand, have each a masculine denomination. This attribution of femininity to the undivided unity, and of masculinity to the threefold divine energy, is not found explicit in the Church's teaching traditions. But the relation of the Unity to the Trinity has many exponents. The First Person is Father only in virtue of his begetting the Son.² Ruysbroeck speaks of the essence (or being) and also of the outgoing differentiated Persons. Ignatius Loyola distinguishes between the Divine Being or Substance and the Three Persons.³ If we are to say that femininity no less than masculinity has a divine prototype, more systematically than in Julian of Norwich's confusing but splendid imagery, then this notion of the original One and the manifest triad is the best expression of the contrast. And if we are to stretch intellectual concepts further so as to find a feminine principle *in* the triad, corresponding to the masculine Logos, then the nearest we can get to it is, paradoxically, to call it the Father. This is because, though known as the Father begetting the Son, the First Person is, apart from the Son and the Spirit, the unknown and unmanifest origin. In

1 M. E. Thrall, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood*.

2 'We have no proof that religious structures are created by certain types of civilisation or by certain historical moments. All one can say is that the predominance of this or that religious structure is occasioned or favoured by a certain kind of civilisation or by a certain historic moment. . . . Judaic monotheism was not the creation of a certain type of civilisation: on the contrary, like every other form of monotheism it had to struggle against contemporaneous forms of religion' — Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, p. 178.

1 cf. V. A. Demant, *Christian Sex Ethics*, ch. 1; Victor White, *Soul and Psyche*, chs. vii and viii.

2 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, vii. 1; Aquinas, *Summ. Theol.* I. Q 33.

3 For references, V. White, *Soul and Psyche*, ch. vii, 'The Missing Feminine', and notes; cf. 'This "enclosed Logos lives in the womb of God, like an embryo in the womb of a mother, and like the embryo develops and is eventually born, and so becomes expressed as the *Logos prophorikos*" — the externally expressed Word' (p. 125). For Bonaventura the unbegottenness of the First Person expresses the divine fecundity (p. 126).

some way the Father in the Christian Trinity quite replaces the mother in the ancient nature religions where she is, according to Pindar, 'the mother of gods and men.' In the later Old Testament there emerges the figure of Sophia, wisdom, having usually a feminine denomination and in significance some resemblance to the Logos. But Sophia's affinities appear to be originally with the nature powers. Moves to describe the Holy Ghost as feminine belonged to early Gnostic movements. In the Christian religion the Father is known through the Son; the Spirit testifies to the Son and is not to be confused with the human spirit's own deliverances.

13. The Christian Faith is a way to union with the Origin through the Logos. And it is congruous with this understanding that the very nature of the Christian revelation as a Logos-centred salvation religion naturally requires a male priesthood. Of course, this kind of interpretation will seem fantastic and absurd to the dessicated abstract intellect which conceives the Church to be a collection of uprooted believing *monads* without connections between them in an organic realm of nature and grace, belief and community.

V. The Movement

14. The movement for including women in the ordained ministry is supported by its advocates with three main arguments. It would make explicit what is latent in Christianity; it would be a necessary step in a process of social evolution removing a restriction which many regard as an injustice; and it would add a fresh and strengthening element to an enfeebled and maimed all-male ministry.

15. Firstly, then, the ordination of women is regarded as the logical outcome of a steadily growing recognition of women's full humanity and of their expanding place in the public life of society. It would, on this view, be the late emergence of something latent in the Christian axioms about human life from the start but held back until this century by social inertia, reaction, prejudice or undeveloped feminine personality. The abolition of slavery at a recent period is frequently offered as a similar example of the eventual working out of a force for freedom and equality inherent in the Christian view of human personality. There is, however, no parallel here, for freedom and equality are in some respects the proper embodiment of human rights deriving a religious impulse from the Christian recognition of the value of each human being. To be in holy orders, however, is

not a right at all but an ecclesiastical and spiritual function. Still less is it a social reward or a personal distinction.

16. By far the strongest influence behind the movement for the ordination of women is the assumption of a steady march of social progress in which women are more and more desirous of parity with men in all spheres; that their exclusion from most departments of public life has been due to a sex prejudice which is becoming obsolete by social evolution; that the fields in which women participate with men are being multiplied; and that where women seem at present unfitted for certain kinds of public life it is only a question of training and experience in them for the handicaps to be removed. It is from this point of view that it seems absurd to confine the Christian ministry to the male sex and that the question is posed in the negative form, why should women be excluded therefrom? It is said that man 'has lost his monopoly of most occupations at nearly all levels of responsibility' and that it is not logical to differentiate Holy Orders from other spheres where women take the leadership with men.¹ While the movement has undoubted support from a few women in the community of the Church out of a general concern for its pastoral ministry, it has as its background the so called feminist movement which regards it as due to women that they should be entitled to fulfil the same roles as men. A number of its advocates, with no attachment to the Church, encourage the movement for women's ordination because the continued monopoly of the priesthood by males constitutes one of the last hurdles to be overcome in the struggle for sexual parity.

17. But the whole philosophy of social evolution making for this kind of equivalence of women with men is delusive, and most women know it is, even those without any historical, philosophical or religious theory to back their insight.

18. There is no general advance in the position of women as time goes on. Many primitive cultures are matriarchal and their return is sighed for by some people today.² In the ancient western world scholars find societies where women were held in high regard, where

¹ *The Question of Women and Holy Orders*, Report of the Anglican Group for the Ordination of Women (1963), ch. ii.

² e.g. Gordon Rattray Taylor, *Sex and Society*.

they had liberties and dominant influence.¹ In many periods and regions in the Middle Ages women's position was a strong one. They could influence secular society from their personal positions and from their official ones in the religious orders. Medieval popular literature, like that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is spiced with tales of men being bullied by their wives. Many Renaissance women won great esteem for their learning and leadership. And all this without any movement for women's rights. The denigration of women is not an age-long habit which has lately been cured by historical advance. Some of the most vicious and derogatory views on women were expressed as late as the last century and this. Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Strindberg regarded women as inferior creatures. Ibsen depicted them as such even with his theoretical belief in their emancipation. P. J. Mobius wrote of *The Psychological Debility of Women* as if they were entirely moved by instinct. Otto Weininger in *Sex and Character* (1926) appealed to Immanuel Kant for support in his polemic that woman is infrapersonal. And all this in an age also influenced by J. S. Mill's *The Subjection of Women*! The conclusion is that recognition of women's powers, abilities and influence is not the result of a historical progressive movement but comes and goes with certain cultures and attitudes.

19. What is more, the 'feminist' movement is not now going from strength to strength. Rather it is waning and began to do so in the nineteen thirties. 'Am I just imagining things, or are we women a bit of a flop thirty-six years after we got the vote?' is the keynote of much journalistic comment from women today. Intelligent and capable women are complaining that there is a growing indifference among younger ones to things feminism fought for and a rising sense that women's inmost fulfilment is not to be found in public life.²

20. Any idea that women's inclusion in the full ministry would be the logical climax of growing esteem for women is demolished by religious history. In the orphic cults women took a prominent part but were little honoured outside the cult. In ancient Japan women were public figures and today when they have acquired more independence their place in the cult has diminished. Degradation of women in many societies was quite compatible with their priestly office.

¹ e.g. Charles Seltman, *Woman in Antiquity*; J. Cercopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, ch. iv.

² Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*.

The practice of Christendom is evidence that esteem for women is compatible with their not being in the official priesthood.

21. Again, the actual movement within the churches for the ordination of women is showing signs of belonging to a past generation. The societies working in this cause find that their membership has diminished and that it is not being recruited from the younger women. Whatever justice the movement may claim, it certainly cannot justify its aims on the ground that it is in line with the trend of events.

VI. Polarity and Aptitudes of the Sexes

22. More and more it is becoming understood that Western civilisation is showing a brittleness due to the hypertrophy of masculine aptitudes. At the rise of the 'feminist' movement it was hardly suspected that this movement was not a remedy for that disease but in fact an extension for it, for it sought to bring women into the characteristic masculine ways of handling life. The over-masculinity of our civilisation has now a large literature. Charles Seltman writes: 'The male half of humanity has perhaps moved too fast and too far in recent centuries; the female half has retained a richer rhythm and has recovered — with ancient freedoms now regained — a better grasp of reality.'¹ The first part of this statement is correct; the second is in error, for in the Anglo-Saxon world the feminist movement caused women to jump on to the masculine band-wagon. Gerald Vann more wisely discerns that 'the feminine psyche, with its potentially deep intuitive wisdom, is called as never before to redeem the harassed, restless, neurotic masculine world of today.'² If the general human sense is correct, each sex has characteristics which are more valuable than those of the other in *one* respect, and it will be defective in other respects. Therefore the characteristics of the two sexes must be regarded as complementary. It is now understood, with the backing of psychological knowledge, that maleness and femaleness are not identical with men and women, and that each has some elements of the opposite sex in him or her, in varying degrees and depth. On the whole the female psyche is consciously female and so with the male, the opposite element being a shadowy figure. The shadow-opposite in one's own sex can be in harmony with one's

¹ Charles Seltman, *Women in Antiquity*, p. 172.

² Gerald Vann, *The Water and the Fire*.

active self by acting as its true hidden counterpart; or it can be in discord with it or pushed into the place of one's active self through resentment or a sense of failure. The opposite in us then appears delusively as a saviour. In the concrete, life mostly adjusts such possible discords if it is not too much cluttered up with theory. Men and women know pretty well what, for the art of living, are the male and female aptitudes. The feminine characteristics are seen as more valuable in one sense than the masculine ones because they are concerned with the foundations of life rather than its superstructure; the masculine ones more valuable for theory, conceptual, understanding, questioning, generalising, knocking things about for reconstruction often at the cost of weakening the bases of life. Mankind's general sense of the difference amounts to the notion that endeavour, history, creation and destruction, movement towards a goal, represent the masculine side of existence; and that protection, conservation, renewal by returning to the source, attachment to the particular and concrete, constitute the sphere of feminine aptitudes. Woman represents the values of being; man those of becoming and action.¹ 'It is almost true to say that while man developed specialised interests woman has carried the wholeness that man could not bear to live.'² Maleness is associated with law, order, civilisation, *logos*, clock time, and what Freud called the 'super-ego.' Femaleness is associated with nature, instinct, biological time, feeling, *eros*, and what Freud called the 'id.' Maleness stands for association, organisation and technique; femaleness for relationship, community and improvisation.³ These different characteristics imply no valuation of superiority or inferiority, but only complementariness.

1 Margaret Mead, *Male and Female*, chapters 2 and 3.

2 Florida Scott Maxwell, *Women and Sometimes Men* (Popular Library, New York; paperback), ch. iv.

3 For polarity of the sexes, see further: Geoffrey Sainsbury, *Polarity*; Laurence Hyde, *An Introduction to Organic Philosophy*; C. G. Jung, *Contribution to Analytical Psychology*, chapter 'Woman in Europe'; Emma Jung, *Animus and Anima* (The Analytical Psychology Club of New York); Florida Scott Maxwell, *Women and Sometimes Men* (Popular Library, New York); Gustav Thibon, *Love and Marriage* (Universe Book); G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World*, Part III, 'Feminism, or the Mistake about the Woman'; Eva Metman, *Woman and the Anima* (Guild of Pastoral Psychology, Lecture 71); Eleanor Bertine, *Men and Women* (*ibid.*, Lecture 60).

23. Because of this polarity of the sexes, and because it is not reflected in modern society with its standardising tendencies, many women are unhappy and think that their frustration is due to difficulties in the way of their taking up what have been masculine callings. Men too are increasingly unhappy in a new way through the displacement of personal and organic relationships by impersonal ones, and the attempt of women to adjust themselves by developing their masculine side makes things worse for both of them. The novels of Pearl Buck describe some of the inner unhappiness of Western women as compared with the more bearable external burdens and hardship by women in other and less emancipated cultures. This malaise has been described by C. G. Jung in *Woman in Europe*. It is not resolved but accentuated, inwardly, in women who extrapolate their *animus*, namely the shadow masculine side which is in every woman. They have not come to terms with their *animus*, and are ashamed of their femininity. Emma Jung writes, if the masculine principle in woman 'attains sole mastery, it threatens that field of woman which is most peculiarly her own, the field in which she can achieve what is most real to her.' Conversely, if a man's *anima*, the feminine shadow in him, becomes dominant, he shows signs of an internal and often a physical incongruity. The tragedy of the present day in our civilisation is that man looks to woman for deliverance from his burdensome over-artificial consciousness, and too often finds in her only the adolescent and noisy phase of that consciousness.

24. Practical differences arise out of the polarity. Man's creative activity is in the field of politics, economics, organisation and equipment. Woman's in the field of bearing, rearing, training and managing persons and households. It is not the case that women are entering most of the fields hitherto monopolised by men. There are countless good woman doctors, few woman surgeons; more women than men are drawn to nursing, they are as good as men in teaching. They have made splendid monarchs, peeresses, privy councillors, magistrates; doubtfully good advocates and judges; not really good parliamentarians. They can be good tenders of machines but seldom show interest in how machinery works. Women are constitutionally unsuited to certain kinds of impersonal role; they easily become too personally involved and touchy when things do not work smoothly. Hence the need of very firm and wise heads of women's monastic houses, which run not by the momentum of the institution but by the ability of the head. In an organisation of male or mixed members

ruled by a woman, those members are all right if they like the captain of the ship and are liked by her; but they can't appeal to rules independent of her.

25. Men court danger and have aggressive proclivities; women put preservation of life first and have defensive proclivities. Man's aggressiveness has a corrective — the awareness of rules and some sense of obligation to be co-operative. Women in impersonal spheres fight for causes with the same oblivion of rules as they do for man, home, children. When woman finds the need to be strong in a masculine sense, she storms the house, calling up the *animus* in her — and one's shadow is always a blind force. On the other hand she is too wise to be convinced by the objective consideration of an abstract proposition and wants to refer to life rather than thought. The introduction of women into a debating society, if they are effective, turns it into a fencing match. They live in a more real world than men and do not so much develop the unprofitable art of disputation. Because men are the more theoretical, their weakness is to be doctrinaire; because women are the more practical, their weakness is to be opportunist especially when confronted with opposition. Men make brotherhoods and achieve comradeship; women seek deeper and more committed relationships.

26. There may be some hit and miss in the above delineation of the masculine and feminine polarity, but its general significance is not destroyed by the fact that one sex can by training, effort and indoctrination behave, though grotesquely, very much like the opposite sex. And, if women think it is derogatory to be described in the qualities named as feminine, this is because an over-masculine civilisation has nearly conquered women: and the more wretched they are in this uncongenial situation the louder and more angry will be the snorts of the *animus* in those who would still resist society's contemporary rejection of the 'feminist' doctrine.

VII. The Ministry

27. The functions of the priesthood are teaching, sacramental and pastoral ministration (including ruling). In the teaching office the primary task is that of preaching, proclaiming God's word of salvation, of instructing in doctrine and the Christian way of life. While this is and can be done apart from the gathering of the faith-

ful in the regular worship of the church and, as such, does not require the minister to be in holy orders, there is an authoritative preaching ministry confined to priestly officers. A charismatic non-ordained ministry has been a frequent phenomenon in the Church. Preaching by the priesthood in the congregation is the work of presenting the word of God to his people; it includes outside teaching as well as pulpit oratory. It proclaims Christ's kingdom, teaches the faith, expounds the scriptures and instructs in doctrine and morals. In this teaching a distinction is made between its exercise as representing Christ to the congregation in public worship and its exercise by non-ordained members of the Christian *laos* acting as sharing the general priesthood of all believers. While the guardianship of doctrine is the responsibility of the ordained ministry, its impartation is not so confined. Much exegetical, doctrinal and ethical teaching is given by lay members of the church. There are lay teachers and scholars, some in theological faculties.

28. The specifically sacramental ministry is in part confined to those in Holy Orders. The minister of the Eucharist is necessarily a priest (bishop or presbyter) ministering Christ's mediatorial and sacrificial priesthood in the service, with its three main actions of offering the gifts, the consecration and the communion. The reconciling work of the ministry, declaring in God's name the terms on which pardon is offered, and the absolution of the penitent, are reserved to the two higher priestly orders. This is not contradicted by the practice of Abbesses presiding at 'the confession of faults' publicly before the community or received privately for publicly known faults. Baptism, though normally the responsibility of those in Holy Orders, in fact only requires that the minister be baptised. In marriage the ministers are the parties themselves and the witness need not be a priest. Confirmation and Ordination are reserved for priests in episcopal orders.

29. Thirdly, it is the duty of the priest to exercise *episkope* or oversight. This includes the magisterial (or ruling) and pastoral function of the priesthood. In it the priest acts as leader and shepherd. He is to warn, reprove, to encourage, fortify and console, in all ministering to the faithful the mercy and command of Christ. He ministers to individual members of the flock according to their particular needs. He exercises authority in furthering loyalty to the rule of faith and morals. The priesthood also guards corpo-

rately the doctrinal and moral requirements of church membership; it acts in legislative and judicial capacities. Bishops and parish priests and heads of orders have administrative responsibilities and in most cases inevitably become semi-public figures. Much of the ruling and administrative work of the church is delegated to, and shared with, lay members.

30. With this sketch of the priestly office in mind, the demand for women to be included in the ordained priesthood raises the following questions. Is there a sexually neutral human nature common to men and women underneath their sex differences? If there is, then we have only tradition standing in the way of the ordination of women, and this contention has been until lately the basis of the movement for including women in Holy Orders. On this view sex is irrelevant and no woman should be debarred on the ground of her female sex only. The case for a common human nature behind and detachable from each man or woman cannot, however, be maintained. There is masculine and feminine human nature, with some complication from the shadow of the opposite sex in each and from the extraversion of the hidden opposite in womanly men and masculine women. There is an inevitable conclusion from scientific sexology. Even if there were a neutral substratum independent of sex, there would still be an essential difference between the sexes if the relation between the sexual nature of each and the neutral substratum differed in man and woman.

31. Recently, however, and suddenly, propaganda for the ordination of women has abandoned the concept of a neutral substratum and has appealed to the complementariness of the sexes, deducing therefrom that an exclusively male priesthood cannot be fully representative. This deduction seems to lie behind the slipshod sentence in the document (which did not advocate the ordination of women) *Gender and Ministry*, 'The Church needs without delay a representative ministry of women just as it needs a representative priesthood of men'.¹ That sentence can only mean either that a priesthood of one sex cannot be representative of both, in which case the church's ministry up till now has been maimed through being male only, or that both sexes need a representative priesthood

and a representative ministry, the one exercised by males and the other by females. The sentence also contains a confusion between representation as meaning likeness of the specimen to the thing represented as a deputed delegative function.

32. It is the second of these two meanings with which we have to do in considering the representative character of the Christian priesthood, or rather that aspect of the priesthood expressed as representing the members of the church before God. It has been said earlier in this chapter that the maleness of the ministry in the Christian Church is part of its essential nature. It can now be added that it is an essential feature of the representative character of that ministry. A male priest represents both sexes in a way in which a woman does not, in organised society and church. Woman represents both sexes in a way man cannot, in the life stream. Woman can be regarded as nature's priest, while man is priest of the church. The logic of it is this. Man more easily detaches his relation to his fellows of both sexes from personalities; there is an impersonal and universal element in his outlook which makes possible this detachment. Another aspect of this difference is that men are searching for *Woman* in each female specimen they encounter with interest; women discover *Man* through their concern for this or that specimen to whom each woman commits herself. That is why men write and talk about woman; women only write and talk about men. Again, men are more conscious of sex than women because they are less bound up with their own sexuality. Women are less conscious of their sexuality and thereby more identified with it. Woman develops her sexuality through love of a man; man finds love through the persons he sexually selects. Further, representation is a role men exercise more naturally than women, for it requires a degree of abstraction and generalisation foreign to her feminine wisdom. Representation is a masculine idea; so is equality; so is democracy. Woman represents nobody; she is herself and her relationships are personal, concrete, direct. Humanity needs this feminine life style, for men tend to become subject to illusion. Lastly, men and women on the whole will not value women as representatives; they estimate women in their own personal right.

33. There are practical objections which support the premise that in divine providence the Church's official ministry is male. The late Dr K. E. Kirk, Bishop of Oxford, stressed one of them by arguing

¹ Church Assembly publication, 1962.

that when the sex relation has found its normal realisation in parenthood, there is a natural dependence of the woman on the man. She must devote much of her time to caring for and nurturing her children, and she looks to her husband for protection and sustenance. This involves subordination which is one of function, not of essential nature, and is not incompatible with the essential equality of both sexes in God's sight. The Bible regards this truth of such importance that it compares the dependence of the church upon Christ with the dependence of the wife upon her husband. Women who were priests would be in a position to exercise spiritual jurisdiction over men and this would create a relationship contrary to that which is natural to the life of the household.¹

34. There are even more cogent practical objections. You could not say of a female ministry so convincingly 'the unworthiness of the minister does not hinder the validity of the sacrament'. The Church has survived a good many bad and poor popes, bishops and clerics because their institutional role was respected. Members of a female priesthood would always have to be at their best; they would be judged for their personal value entirely and that would be an awful strain. Woman puts up with man at his worst or lesser good. Men and women in general will be merciless towards personal failures and lapses in women holding public positions though male critics may rally to their defence in a patronising and gallant way. There is also a special kind of loneliness which members of the priesthood have to endure by the very nature of the impersonal background of their personal relations, and this kind of loneliness women are not fitted to stand.

35. The working out of a priesthood of both sexes should be envisaged much more concretely than it has been by its advocates. What form will it take? Men in charge of some parishes, women of others? A man in charge here with assistant woman priests; a woman in charge there with men assistants? Two equally-yoked clerics, male and female in joint charge? There is latent jealousy and rivalry in the male clergy which breaks out on occasion. This will be greatly exacerbated if sex differences are mixed up with it. Again, there are erotic factors. Sex differences have erotic effects which differ according to whether men or women are in public positions. There are

many spheres of activity in which men and women meet and co-operate without sexual arousal; they are the relatively impersonal spheres of shop, factory, farms, regiments, schools and laboratories, where the sexes meet *en masse*. But where women perform personal service as secretaries to business men or assistants to professional ones, in a setting where privacy is long and frequent, erotic factors come into play leading, if not frequently to adultery or fornication, at least often to possessiveness and heartbreaks. The pastoral office brings a closeness of spiritual intimacy which easily spills over into incipient love relationships. A two-sex priesthood would multiply this problem between ministers, and between lay folk and ministers. The problem of transference of the love impulse to the paternal or maternal figure is a perpetual risk; it is not obviated by one of the parties being married, and it arises with peculiar strength with the release of psychic energy which personal pastoral care can effect. It is of no use taking a high, lofty line about these things and saying 'how dreadful to suppose that Holy Orders are not a safeguard against them'. They happen now and they will become much more tangled with a bi-sexual official priesthood.¹

36. In conclusion, the practical objections to ordaining women to the Christian priesthood make explicit the assumption that it is of the nature of that priesthood to be composed of male ministers only. The ordination of women will not be in the interests of women themselves. They have their own kind of ministry giving the peculiar gifts of the feminine sex to the furthering of Christ's work on earth. Much of this will be lost if drawn into the organised priesthood. The Bible and the history of the Church testify to as full an apprehension of the significance of womanhood in the Church's life

1 For other criticisms of women in the ordained ministry see: H. Hensley Henson, in *Bishoprick Papers*; E. L. Mascall, *Women and the Priesthood of the Church* (Church Union pamphlet); F. C. Blomfield, *Wonderful Order* (SPCK); F. Noel Davey, *Some notes on the Theological Approach to the Question of Ordaining Women to the Priesthood*; N. P. Williams, paper on 'Deaconesses and Holy Orders' in E. W. Kemp's memoir, *N. P. Williams* (SPCK); Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Women in the Church*, Lutheran (S. Louis, 1955); J. J. von Allmen, *Commission on the Pastoral Ministry of the Reformed Church of France*, published in *Verbum Caro*, 1963; Professor Nicolae Chitescu (Bucharest), in *Concerning the Ordaining of Women* (World Council of Churches publication, 1964); also Archimandrite Georges Khodre (Antioch), same publication; Bertil Gartner, *Das Amt, der Mann und die Frau im neuen Testament*, in *In Signo Crucis*, Lutheran (Uppsala).

1 Essay on 'The Ordination of Women' in K. E. Kirk, *Beauty and Bands*.

as of manhood. To think that this is denied by women's exclusion from the regular priesthood in its specific sense is tantamount to regarding the priesthood as a mark of promotion instead of a commission, and it indicates a monstrously clerical notion of the Church. In addition to women's ministry as women in the Body of Christ, women with special gifts have not found their expression denied. Some have been public figures of great influence like Catherine of Siena; others have shown great organisational powers like Theresa of Avila who combined them with spiritual leadership of unique quality. Others have become trained theologians or expositors of the word of God. Women have given spiritual direction and advice. Many a parish priest has learnt much from the women to whom he has ministered in sickness, health or trouble, about the faith and life of a member of Christ. But women's ministry at these levels is best done, and perhaps only done, loosely, spontaneously and in freedom from organised commitment. Two women of our own time have served the Church of England and others with their minds and religious insights. Neither believed in the ordination of women. Dorothy L. Sayers wrote in a private letter:

'I carefully avoid those tiresome people who want to have female priests — it would be dramatically unsuitable since God, very sensibly chose to be born as a man, so that a female priest is rather like Sarah Bernhardt playing Hamlet. . . But I do wish people would remember that a woman is simply a female man (as a tom cat is a male cat) — not a different species.'

And Evelyn Underhill the writer on Mystical Theology, who conducted retreats for lay people and priests, wrote:

'I am opposed to the giving of the priesthood to women, for many reasons . . . On the other hand, I greatly desire and also expect an immense extension and recognition of women's ministry in other directions than this . . . I have known a few women in my life who have genuinely ministered to souls in a creative way. The question of status, scope and so forth has never, I should think, entered their minds at all. We notice in them a sort of beautiful informality and freedom in their proceedings; and something which we might call a maternal and domestic quality in their methods, which seems on the whole to look more towards the prophetic than the priestly way of serving God and tending souls. As individuals surrendered to the Spirit, moving and working under his pressure, and yet with great freedom and originality, within the institutional frame . . . Most

of us, I think, are definitely at our best in a limited environment.¹

37. The Church of Christ in our land is sorely maimed by the scarcity in the personnel of its ministry, and by some feebleness in the presentation of its message. It is at the same time confronted by a rapid secularisation of English society. What counts more than numbers is a body of dedicated pastors and prophetic teachers, spiritual guides and leaders of liturgical action. This task calls heavily on men and women committed to Christian discipleship and on the faithful priesthood that remains. That task will be the better carried out with the misguided, irrelevant and distracting question of the ordination of women out of the way.

¹ Essay, 'The Ideals of the Ministry of Women', in *Mixed Pasture* (Methuen, 1933).

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