

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

Christ and his bride

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CHRIST and his BRIDE

Women's Ordination in the Light of Christology

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Preface In June 1975 I took part in a conference in Oxford on the ordination of women. The paper I presented there outlined the theological *Case Against the Ordination of Women* and was subsequently published by the Church Literature Association as a pamphlet. While the theological content remains, I hope, as relevant as ever, the pamphlet's documentation of historical events is now out of date. The first edition of the *Case* immediately preceded the General Synod's debate in July 1975; the second edition was able to record only that the vote had taken place.

In the last two years two provinces of the Anglican Communion have ordained women – the Episcopal Church of the USA and the Anglican Church in Canada. The response of Catholic Christendom has been immediate and uncompromising. Two letters from Pope Paul to Dr Coggan have reaffirmed the Church's reasons for not ordaining women and described the Anglican ordinations as 'an element of grave difficulty' in Anglican–Roman Catholic dialogue, a grave 'new obstacle and threat' on the path to Christian reconciliation.¹ Similar sentiments were expressed by the Orthodox members of the Anglican–Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussion in Moscow in July 1976.² The firmest and clearest theological statement came in October 1976 from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which, in a Declaration³ and Official Commentary,⁴ rehearsed the fundamental theological objections to

women's ordination. Apart from its relevance to the present debate, the document *Inter insigniores* is a major instance of the Catholic consensus, the *sobornost*, of West and East, for it explicitly refers to the 'remarkable unanimity' of the Churches of the East on this question of women's ordination;⁵ while the Ecumenical Patriarch, in his declaration to Dr Coggan at Constantinople in April 1977, expressed his 'joy' at the firm witness of the Roman Catholic Church against the possibility of women's ordination, which he described as 'anti-apostolic'.⁶

In the absence of a decision by an Ecumenical Council, this response of the Patriarchs of West and East constitutes a statement of magisterial authority, with which the Church of England must concur, if she is to continue to claim, as she does, that, with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, she shares in, 'reveres and esteems', the Apostolic Ministry given by Christ to his Church, that holy Catholic and Apostolic order which is essential to the Church.

In the light of the statements of the Pope and Patriarch, in one sense, for a Catholic, there can be no more argument; the Church has spoken. There is, however, the urgent practical need for Anglican Catholics to continue to confront their Communion with the theological objections to women's ordination, so that the gravity of such a development can be appreciated fully and in the hope that it can be averted.

My intention, therefore, in what follows is not to repeat in detail all the arguments of *Inter insigniores* or my own earlier *Case*, but rather to expand what the former document isolates as the major issue: 'The Ministerial Priesthood in the Light of the Mystery of Christ'.⁷ I intend to corroborate the view that the objections to women's ordination are fundamentally Christological, depend on orthodox belief about the person of Jesus Christ, and that therefore the ordination of women is not simply an act of schism but one of heresy and apostasy.

The questions to which I address myself are as follows:

- 1 What is the significance of Christ's maleness for his Eternal High Priesthood?
- 2 What is the significance of a Christian priest's maleness for his participation in Christ's Priesthood?

CHRIST and his BRIDE

1 *The Maleness of Christ*

The objections to women's ordination are Christological, because the sacrament of holy order is, like the other sacraments, a Christological mystery, and because there is only one priest — Jesus Christ. All priesthood is summed up and takes its meaning from him; both the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of the Church (which are ontologically distinct)⁸ are two participations in the one priesthood of Christ. As the letter to the Hebrews teaches us, Jesus is high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (6:20); his redemptive work on the cross has superseded that of the former priesthood. Descended as he was from the race of Judah, Jesus was not of the priestly line; indeed, the epistle tells us that if he were on earth he would not be a priest at all (8:4). And yet the sacrifice he offers, the covenant he mediates, is infinitely superior to the old, for, through the offering of his own blood, he has secured eternal redemption (9:12). Jesus is a priest by right and nature, *the* priest and source of all priesthood.

But does the source of priesthood need to be a man? A full estimate of the maleness of Jesus Christ will depend on a proper view of the male predicates we ascribe to God, preeminently 'Father' and 'Son', which the Church has always believed to be not metaphorical but analogical, to be affirmed univocally of God. S. Thomas Aquinas states that the predicates 'Father' and 'Son' are properly, not metaphorically, ascribed to God: *proprie et non metaphorice dicitur Filius et ejus principium Pater*.⁹ The reason for this proper ascription, says S. Thomas, is that paternity belongs primarily to God and is only secondarily a human attribute.¹⁰ Chronologically, in terms of the history of man's understanding of God, it may be true that biological paternity precedes belief in the Fatherhood

of God. But in the logic of creation and redemption, the Fatherhood of God comes first: God is the one from whom all paternity (*patria*) in heaven and on earth is named (Eph. 3:14). Jesus says that in one sense no one, not even fathers, should be called 'father', because we have one Father in Heaven (Mt 23:9). Biblical scholars have stressed the uniqueness, in the ancient near East, of the Hebrew ascription of male predicates to God, and Jesus' description of God as *abba* is now seen as perhaps the most original feature of his teaching. For Jewish-Christian tradition, God is more fatherly than fathers — not because he has sexual characteristics and engages in the *hieros gamos*, but because man's paternity was created by, and depends upon, the divine Fatherhood, of which it is an image.

Many of the arguments in favour of women's ordination attempt to relativize the male predicates of God and Christ. This has been partly because of a failure to perceive that language about God is hierarchically ordered; it has been falsely assumed that all God-talk is univocal, that it all 'does the same kind of job'. Catholic tradition, on the other hand, has seen that certain propositions of the faith are irreducible, 'lower-order' elements in the hierarchy of discourse, while others are metaphorical, useful but dispensable, 'higher-order'. The description of God as Father and Son is lower-order; the female metaphors sometimes applied to Christ (by, for example, Julian of Norwich and S. Anselm) are secondary propositions, depending for any orthodox sense that they may have on the more fundamental male predicates.¹²

The Son of God *asarkos* may only be spoken of in male terms, and if there is to be true Incarnation, rather than what one might call a 'docetic transvestism', then the Son of God *ensarkos* also may only be spoken of in male terms, or rather can only be and is *a man*. The particularity of Christ's maleness is essential to his nature and person. He is Son of God, Son of Man, the new Adam. His maleness is not just a contingent, trivially true aspect of his human nature.

But is Christ's maleness essential to his *priesthood*? Because of what we have said already about the Christological nature of priesthood, the answer to this is an equivocal Yes. The NT does not see Christ's priesthood in isolation from his divine nature as Son of God. He is high priest and *sent Son* (apostle and high priest,

Heb. 3:1; the Son as 'he whom God sent', Jn 3:34 and *passim*). The letter to the Hebrews juxtaposes an OT testimony about the eternal begetting of the Son (Ps 2:7) with a verse about priesthood 'for ever after the order of Melchizedek' (Ps 110:4). Hebrews insists too that it is the Son's doing of the Father's will that constitutes his priestly act; he offers not temple sacrifices but his body and his will: 'Then I said, "Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God"' (10:5ff). The self-oblation at the heart of Christ's priesthood is made to the Father.

Nevertheless, divine Sonship does not in itself give us a proof of the necessary maleness of the priesthood of the incarnate Word. That can only be done by considering the major sexual image in the NT of Christ's redemptive work — the image of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church. I shall now argue that the sexual-nuptial and sacrificial-priestly images are inter-dependent and inseparable, that Christ's sacrificial death could be such only if it was the death of a *God-man*, one of the male gender who could be said to be Bridegroom.

Vincent Taylor has shown that sacrifice is a bedrock concept in the NT;¹³ it is also possible to show that nuptial imagery has similar influence and, at certain points, is indeed co-extensive with the imagery of sacrifice. In the OT the relation between Yahweh and Israel was compared to that of a Bridegroom and Bride. In Hosea (chs 1 and 2) and Jeremiah (ch 2) the stress is on God's fidelity to his adulterous wife. Later, in both Judaism and Christianity, the Song of Songs was interpreted as an allegory of the divine-human relation; within Jewish tradition it is at least as early as the first century AD, although, as Jeremias has demonstrated, there is no extant Jewish example of the Bridegroom image being applied to the Messiah.¹⁴ Yet this is what we find in the NT — in Jesus' reply to the Pharisees about fasting (Mk 2:19f) and in the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1ff). The Messianic application emerges clearly too in the Johannine corpus. When his disciples ask the Baptist about Jesus, he replies:

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 (Jn 3:29).

Similarly, Paul says that the apostle is best man in the nuptials of

Christ and the Church (II Cor 11:2). The pattern is clear: the Church is Bride, Christ is Bridegroom, the Apostle/Baptist is Best Man. In the Apocalypse, the Church triumphant, the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, is called 'the Bride, the wife of the Lamb' (Rev 21:9), 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (v. 2).

These texts show the pervasiveness of the nuptial image in Synoptic, Johannine and Pauline traditions, but do they prove a link with sacrifice and thus with the priesthood of Christ? It is the letter of S. Paul to the Ephesians that establishes this connection most clearly. The cleaving of a man to his wife is 'a great mystery', a sacramental sign of the relation between Christ and the Church. But it is only this, because of the even deeper connection between Christ's death on the cross and the union of a man and woman. Both involve self-oblation and sacrifice, the latter being but an image of the former. Paul uses the same word (*paredoken*) to speak of both Christ's self-giving in love as Bridegroom of the Church and his self-giving in love as sacrifice, as Priest-Victim.

Christ loved and gave himself (*paredoken beaution*) for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (v. 2). . . . as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up (*beaution paredoken*) for her (v. 25).

Moreover, it is most significant that in the Apocalypse the Church is precisely the wife of the Lamb; nuptial and sacrificial images coincide. This association is made even more significant by the possibility that in the Apocalypse John is describing a vision he experienced while celebrating the Eucharist.

Nuptial imagery was much developed by the Fathers, and, in the spirit of Ephesians, it was seen in relation to Christ's self-giving on the cross for the Church. Origen, in his Commentary on the Canticle, sees Christ as Bridegroom of both the Church and the individual soul, but in both cases his self-giving in love is dominant.¹⁵ S. Cyril of Alexandria sees the Incarnation itself in terms of a wooing of humanity by the incarnate Word—bridegroom.

The Word of God came down from heaven, as he himself says, so that, having as a Bridegroom made human nature his own, he might persuade it to bring forth the spiritual offering of Wisdom.¹⁶

The Gallican liturgical tradition introduces nuptial imagery at several points to speak of Christ's sacrifice. In a prayer for Good Friday

None in the *Missale Gallicanum Vetus* (the name given to an eighth-century MS of two Gallican sacramentaries), the Church asks the Priest-King on the cross to kiss her.

Kiss us now, our beloved spouse, from the cross, as once you did from the cross, your trophy. Kiss us, we pray you, make us sharers in your salvation, wonderful victor, supreme chariot-eer, holy God, most glorious champion.¹⁷

An objector might protest at this point and argue that, while we may prove the pervasiveness of a sexual *image* applied to Christ's sacrifice and priesthood, we have not established, in the image, a connection between the biological *fact* of our Lord's gender and his priesthood. Have we proved that our Lord had to be a man to be Bridegroom-Priest?

On the cross Jesus reveals the true destiny of human sexuality. On the cross the Church is loved like a bride; Christ gives himself up in love to her. On the other hand, as the Fathers teach, on the cross the Church is also *conceived*, when Christ pours out, not mortal seed, but the immortal seed of his Spirit (which he gives up, *paredoken*, Jn 19:30), his water and his blood (Jn 19:34). Like Eve, the Church is both bride and part of the new Adam's body, taken from his side. In an extremely dense passage of his exposition of S. Luke's gospel, S. Ambrose brings all these sexual images together to speak Christ's sacrifice and his creation of the Church. He begins by quoting the Eph 5:30–32 text. Rather oddly, he explains that it is the *woman* who leaves *her* parents to be married to her man. Throughout Ambrose uses the gender word *vir* to speak of Christ.

Who is the man (*quis est iste vir*) for whom woman will leave her parents? The Church leaves her parents . . . On account of which man if not him of whom John says: 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me' (Jn 1:30), from whose side, as he slept, God took a rib; for he is the one who slept and rested and rose again, for the Lord protected him (Ps 3:6). What is his rib if not his power (*virtus*)? For just at the moment when the soldier opened his side, there flowed out water and

blood, which was poured out for the life of the world (Jn 19:34). This life of the world is the rib of Christ, it is the rib of the second Adam, for 'the first Adam became a living being, and the last Adam became a life-giving spirit' (I Cor 15:45), the last, that is Christ, the rib of Christ, that is the life of the Church . . . This is Eve, mother of all the living . . . The mother of all the living, that is the Church which God has built, 'Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord' (Eph 2:20f). Let God come then, let him build woman (*aedificet mulierem*), the first as the help-mate of Adam, the last as that of Christ.¹⁸

The images of Head and Body, and of Bridegroom and Bride, of Adam and Eve, here coincide. Indeed, for Ambrose, we might set up the formula: Christ + Church = Bridegroom + Bride = Adam + Eve. We have, in fact, an immensely rich, interwoven fabric of symbol and image in the Scriptures and Tradition, in which sacrificial and sexual motifs elucidate ecclesiology and soteriology and mutually one another. The commentary on the Vatican Declaration concludes:

Christ is the bridegroom of the church, whom he won for himself with his blood, and the salvation brought by him is the new covenant: by using this language, revelation shows why the incarnation took place according to the male gender, and makes it impossible to ignore this historical reality.¹⁹

There can be no fully orthodox theology either of the Incarnation or of salvation without reference to the male gender of Christ. His self-giving on the cross is the archetype of every man's attempt to give himself in love to a woman. His crucified body is creative and generative: in his *flesh* he has created a new humanity (Eph 2.15ff); by the offering of *his body* we have been sanctified (Heb 10.10), not some characterless, generalized, docetic body, but his very body, his male body. Christ's husbanding of the Church is not a pale reflection of 'real sexuality' but its archetype. Nor should it in any way be confused with the perverted, pagan notion of the *hierogamos*. No, it is precisely as a priestly and sacrificial act that it becomes the *telos* to which all human *eros* tends. Christ as Priest—Victim is more Bridegroom than bridegrooms. There is no greater love than the death of the crucified God for his Church; there can be no greater procreation than the creation of a new humanity; there

can be no greater generation of life than the conquest of death and the securing of eternal life.

Even if all this be allowed, it might still be asked whether such imagery has a lasting truth-value. It does indeed. The symbolic structure of Christian theology is such that to remove, or even change the relative position of, a primordial symbol, will destroy the coherence of the whole. God has set his seal on some images, and not on others, for his revelation, and we must gratefully and humbly accept *his* choice. If we do not, if we reject revelation and choose our own, then we have committed ourselves to heresy (*haeresis* = choosing) and self-constructed Gnosticism.

2 *The Maleness of the Christian Priest*

For two thousand years the Catholic Church, West and East, has believed that only men may be ordained bishop and priest. Moreover, the stress on gender has been conscious and deliberate. In the early Syrian tradition, for example, all the male titles of Christ are explicitly applied to the apostles and their successors, the bishops of the Catholic Church, most notably that of Bridegroom. The bishop is married to his church. S. Ephrem addresses Bishop Abraham of Nisibis, who came to his see about 361, as follows:

Thou hast no wife, as Abraham had Sarah;
Behold, thy flock is thy wife.
Bring up her children in thy faithfulness.²⁰

This accounts for the widespread early prejudice against translation from see (compared often to divorce and remarriage) and the present-day western and eastern consensus on the necessity of a celibate episcopate.

The bishop or priest must be male because, in celebrating the sacraments (above all, the Eucharist), the priest does not act in his own name (*in persona propria*) but in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*), a formula which the Vatican Commentary says must be explicated by the Greek notion of *mimema Christou*.²¹ *Persona* here denotes the part played by an actor in the classical theatre, a part identified by the mask he wears. So too 'the priest takes the part of Christ, lending him his voice and gestures'. For the 'actor' who plays Christ in the sacred drama of the liturgy, more fundamental even than his spiritual and intellectual qualities, is his gender:

he has to have a man's body to play the part of Christ the God-man.

The specificity of the male gender is not totally elucidated by this reference to classical theatre, although it is a useful element in the total argument. More substantial is the explication of the priest's maleness from the perspective of the theology of icons and sacraments. For the Fathers speak of the priest as the 'image' (*eikon*) of Christ the High Priest. S. Gregory Nazianzen compares the priest to a ring bearing the seal of Christ,²² and S. John Chrysostom says that the bishop or priest is the *symbolon* of Christ.²³ The priest who blesses or consecrates does not do so in his own name, nor even as the representative of the whole community; he reproduces the Christ of the Last Supper; he is the image of Christ, Christ's visible and living sign. Or, in Austin Farrer's memorable phrase, he is the 'walking sacrament' of Christ the Priest, the efficacious sign of his definitive priesthood.

In evaluating this idea, let us consider it first from the perspective of sacramental theology. In the sacrament of ordination the efficacious sign is not a thing (bread, wine, water, oil) but a person — an embodied person, a person with a gender, a face, a physical identity. Now it is precisely as a person with a particular gender that a priest, with the grace of the sacrament, images Christ, is his efficacious sign. S. Thomas tells us that 'sacramental signs represent what they signify by a natural resemblance',²⁴ in other words, to be a sacramental sign of Christ the High Priest a Christian priest must at least *look like* Christ in his human appearance, obviously not with regard to secondary characteristics (hair colour and length, height, age, about none of which we can be absolutely certain) but to that which we do know — Christ's humanity in its particular gender, his maleness.

It is becoming clearer, I hope, that the maleness of the priesthood is closely tied to Catholic affirmations about the sacraments, the dignity of the material order, and so the Incarnation itself. It raises, I believe, precisely the same questions that emerged during the iconoclastic controversy in the eighth and ninth centuries. What is more, I believe that the theology of the Fathers who defended the icons can help us in our defence of tradition's restriction of the priesthood to men.

The iconoclastic controversy was essentially about the Incarn-

ation.²⁵ The iconoclasts would not venerate images because they did not really believe in the reality of God made man; they would not assent to S. John's statement about the Word made flesh, 'whom we have heard, whom we have seen with our eyes, whom we have looked upon and touched with our hands' (I Jn 1:1). Before Christ it is true that it was not legitimate to have religious art; that is why the commandments prohibit graven images. But with the great and glorious fact of the Incarnation all is changed. The invisible has been made visible. God may now be depicted in art, in physical representation, because he became man and took our human nature upon him. God assumed a material body, so material images (made of *stuff* — wood, stone, paint) may be made of him. We cannot know *exactly* what Jesus is like, but this we do know — he is a man, and we do know what men are like. The iconoclasts believed that Jesus was 'indescribable', because their view of the Lord was docetic; they would not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh (II Jn 7). S. Theodore the Studite (759–826), champion of the holy images, justified the painting of the image of Christ by insisting upon his individual, human characteristics.

An indescribable Christ would be an incorporeal Christ; but Isaiah (8:3) describes him as a male being, and only the forms of the body can make man and woman distinct from one another.²⁶

To insist on the importance of Christ's gender, and of the legitimacy of its iconic representation, is simply to affirm the truth of the Incarnation. To question these is docetism.

I believe that the arguments of those who propose the ordination of women are docetic in the form attacked by S. Theodore. By claiming that Christ may be imaged 'just as well' by a woman at the Eucharist, or by rejecting the relevance of imaging him at all, they reveal a truly distorted and disordered Christology. A woman at the altar is like a painting of Christ dressed as a woman. The latter would have been regarded by the iconodule Fathers as a monstrous perversion, not only for moral reasons, but also because it would involve a formal denial of the reality of the Incarnation. *Now a priest is literally an icon of Christ*, created not out of paint, wood or stone by an artist, but by the Holy Spirit out of male flesh, an icon given colouring and form by the contours and dimensions of a male body.

For a woman to be an icon of Christ is simply impossible and indeed the attempt to make her such would reduce the whole incarnational basis of the sacraments to what we have called docetic transvestism. A woman can no more be made a bishop or priest than water can be transubstantiated into the Blood of Christ, or wine used for baptism. There is a defect of matter. A woman is the wrong stuff; ordination will not 'take'.

Staretz Silouan, the great spiritual father of Mount Athos of this century, has given us a lovely description of what the priest as icon of Christ means:

. . . the Lord let me see a priest — he was standing hearing confessions — in the image of Christ. Though his hair was white with age his face looked young and beautiful like the face of a boy, so inexpressibly radiant was he. In the same way I once saw a bishop during the liturgy.²⁷

While, because of our sin, such transfiguration into the exact likeness of Christ is not general among priests, it is thoroughly normal; it is but the expression of the ontological reality of priesthood and its indelible character, its sacramental imaging of Christ the High Priest.

It is above all in the Eucharist in which the bishop or presbyter as male image of Christ the male priest comes out so clearly. We have seen Christ's sacrifice thought of in nuptial terms; it is that very same sacrifice which is made really present and offered in the Mass. It is therefore the Mass which is Christ's self-appointed means of communicating his fruitfulness. Von Balthasar has written thus:

In its origin (Christianity) presents to man and woman a glorious picture of sexual integrity: the Son of God who has become man and flesh, knowing from inside his Father's work and perfecting it in the total self-giving of himself, not only of his spiritual but precisely also of his physical powers, giving not only to one individual but to all. What else is the Eucharist but, at a higher level, an endless act of fruitful outpouring of his whole flesh, such as a man can only achieve for a moment with a limited organ of his body?²⁸

The Body given in the Eucharist is the Body given on the cross, the Body of the Bridegroom pouring out his love and life for the Bride. That supreme mystery can only be imaged by a man.

Conclusion

There is much that has been left out. Most of what else I would like to say I have already said in *The Case Against the Ordination of Women*, and everything is authoritatively expounded in the Vatican documents and in recent articles by leading Roman Catholic theologians, including Hans Urs von Balthasar.²⁹ Above all, I regret that the urgency of stating the theological objections to women's ordination has not left me the time or space to say anything about the positive ministry to be exercised by women in the Church, given that they cannot be ordained bishop or priest. The restriction of the priesthood to men is emphatically not a sign of male superiority; the priest's imaging of Christ is a service, a ministry; the Church's hierarchy reverses that of the world — the apostolic minister is 'last of all' (I Cor 4:9) and servant of all (Mk 10:44). The maleness of priesthood is to be seen in the context of the sexual order of the new creation, which is not a great grey collective where all are uniformly the same, but rather a 'unity-in-diversity', where sexual alienation is overcome precisely so that a new sense of sexual differentiation may emerge. The difference between man and woman is charismatic, a sign of the distinctive gifts of each. Love and equality are realized in the exchange and mutual respect of those gifts. In Christ man and woman are one and yet more truly themselves.

But what are the distinctive female charismata? In the *Case* I hinted that Catholic tradition offered us insights into the mystery of sexual differentiation that in some ways challenge the stereotypes of our culture. The apostles are presented in the NT as weak and foolish, exhibiting cowardice, lack of self-control and downright stupidity, deserting and denying Jesus on Holy Thursday night; while the women who follow Jesus show fidelity and stability. It might be argued, then, that the ordination of women is impossible not because of their weakness but because of their strength, their silent and supportive ministry as 'bearers of myrrh'.³⁰ Since I argued in this way in the *Case*, similar statements have been made by Louis Bouyer and von Balthasar, who have claimed that there is a kind of 'deficiency' in men that requires sacramental grace for a ministry to be possible at all, while women exercise a ministry in their own right, as they are. As von Balthasar reminds us, in Mary the Church is a reality even before there is an apostolate; she is 'the privileged "place" where God can and wants to be received into the world.'³¹

Here, surely, is a true vocation for every Christian woman: a vocation to image in her own life the intrinsic ministry of Mary, *the* Woman of the new creation. As the Ecumenical Patriarch recently said, the energy being spent on the anti-apostolic project of women's ordination would be better re-directed to more fervent devotion to the Mother of God.³²

The objections to the ordination of women are not those of blind prejudice, male chauvinism, or even of expediency and psychology, but of fundamental theology. Women's ordination is, then, not only undesirable, it is *impossible*; there is a defect of matter. Women 'ordained' bishop or priest are not bishops or priests, their orders are not orders; their sacraments are not sacraments; the 'ordained' women are simply muddled, apostate laywomen, who have turned their backs on their true Christian vocation. A Church that ordains women begins to lose its ecclesiastical identity, its participation in the mystery of Christ in his Church. Women's ordination literally destroys Catholicity and Apostolicity, and within a short time of the ordination of the first woman as bishop, the validity of all subsequent ordinations is threatened.

In the face of such grave departure from apostolic faith and order, what can or should Anglican Catholics do? It would be improper here to legislate or make prescriptions. Whatever response we make, we must balance the demands of conscience and the necessity to hold back from individualism. Above all, what is necessary is *prayer*, not only intercessory and petitionary prayer that God will act to save our Church from self-destruction, but also unceasing adoring and contemplative prayer, which must always be the heart of our Christian life. Only that will free us from the subtle and devious forms of pride and self-aggrandizement that can distort even the sincerest statement of the truth. Only the 'little way' of adoration of God, ascesis and self-denial can win the day for us. Let us have the God-centred perspective of our Fathers in the Faith, of, for example, S. Augustine, who concluded a critique of heresy with these noble words.

Trust in the Lord, and join good works to true faith. Confess that Christ has come in the flesh, both by believing and by a good life, and hold fast both as received from Him, hope for their increase and perfection from Him. For 'cursed is he who puts his hope in man'. But good is it for man, 'that whoever glories,

should glory in the Lord'. Turning to the Lord God the Father Almighty, let us with a pure heart, as far as our littleness is able, render very great and true thanks to Him, beseeching His singular gentleness with our whole soul, that He would in His good pleasure favourably hear our prayers, and by His power expel the enemy from our thoughts and deeds, multiply our faith, rule our minds, grant us spiritual thoughts, and bring us safely to His blessedness: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.³³

NOTES

- 1 *The Replies of the Leaders of certain Churches to Letters from the Archbishop of Canterbury concerning the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood with extracts from the Archbishop's letters* (London, 1976), pp. 2,3
- 2 *ibid.*, p. 6
- 3 *Woman and the Priesthood*. Declaration on the Question of the Admission of women to the Ministerial Priesthood (Vatican City, 1976); henceforth, 'Declaration'.
- 4 *The Ordination of Women*. Official Commentary from the Sacred Congregation of the Faith on its declaration *Inter insigniores* 'Women and the Priesthood' of 15th October 1976 (London, 1977); henceforth, 'Commentary'.
- 5 Declaration, p.6.
- 6 *Pilgrim of Unity*, CTS pamphlet of the Archbishop's Journey to Rome, Constantinople and Geneva (London, 1977), — no page number.
- 7 Declaration, p. 12.
- 8 I have defended this, the traditional Catholic view, in 'Priesthood, Suffering and Sacrifice', *Christian iv*, No. 1 (1977), 29ff.
- 9 *Summa theologiae* 1a, 33, 2, ad 3; Editiones Paulinae (Rome, 1962), p. 168.
- 10 *ibid.*, ad 4.
- 11 See, for example, Joachim Jeremias, *Abba. Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1966), pp. 15ff.
- 12 For a list of medieval examples, see Sister Benedicta Ward's Introduction to her translation of *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm* (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 67. For a further evaluation of this tradition, see also my *Case*, p. 13f.
- 13 *The Atonement in NT Teaching* (London, 1940), *passim*.
- 14 For Rabbi Akiba on the Canticle, see Strack-Billerbeck, I, pp. 516, 898. On the absence of the idea of the Messiah as Bridegroom, see *numphios* in TDNT iv (Grand Rapids, 1967), 1099ff.

- 15 *Com. in. Cant.*, Latin translation of Rufinus; PG 13.61ff.
- 16 *In John* ii, 1; PG 73 2288f; ed. P. E. Pusey (Oxford, 1872), p. 203.
- 17 ed. L. C. Mohlberg (Rome, 1958), p. 31.
- 18 *In Luc.* ii, 86ff; PL 15.1584ff; ed. G. Tissot (Paris, 1956), p. 112f.
- 19 Commentary, p. 20.
- 20 Cited in Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 151.
- 21 p. 17.
- 22 *Or.* 40, 26; PG 36.396C.
- 23 *In II Tim.* 2, 4; PG 62.612.
- 24 Cited in Declaration, p. 13.
- 25 See, for example, H. Leclercq, *DACL* vi (pt 1;1926), 214ff. This is a good, if slightly dated, general survey of the issues.
- 26 *Antirr.* i; PG 99.409C.
- 27 *Wisdom from Mount Athos. The Writings of Staretz Silouan* (1866–1938), ed. Archimandrite Sophrony, transl. Rosemary Edmonds (London, 1974), p. 65.
- 28 'The Christian and Chastity', *Elucidations* ET (London, 1975), p. 150.
- 29 'La tradition ininterrompue', *L'Osservatore Romano*, French Edition, xiii (29 March 1977), 2.
- 30 p. 6f.
- 31 'La tradition ininterrompue', 2.
- 32 *Pilgrim of Unity*.
- 33 *Serm.* 183, 15; PL 38.994.

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