

VIIIORDINATION OF WOMEN TO THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD-
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The purpose of this essay is to explain how the Episcopal Church in the United States can view the ordination of women to priesthood not as the denial, but as the fulfilment, of the catholic tradition which we have received. It is written primarily for a meeting of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation (US), but is addressed to any who are interested to understand better this action of the Episcopal Church by means of a close examination of some of the factors at work in the momentous decision.

In this paper, I propose to treat (1) the English and American canonical tradition; (2) the theological tradition; (3) the chief objections to the ordination of women as priests; and (4) the understanding of history as the arena of response to the claim of God made upon his people in the Gospel, an understanding which constitutes the best reason for the ordination of women.

I.

The Canonical Tradition

On September 16, 1976, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America officially paved the way for the ordination of women to the priesthood.¹ It did so, acting in accordance with its usual procedures, by passing an amendment to Canon III.9, the addition of a new initial paragraph. It reads,

"The provisions of these canons for the admission of Candidates and for the Ordination to the three Orders, Bishops, Priests and Deacons, shall be equally applicable to men and women."²

The House of Bishops had passed that resolution on the previous day by a vote of 95 to 61, with 2 abstentions.³ The concurrence of the House of Deputies on September 16 completed the canonical process. When the vote was taken in the lower house, 60 delegations were found in favor of the amendment in the clerical order, 39 opposed, 15 divided; in the lay

order 64 delegations voted in favor, 36 against, 13 divided. Five minutes of silent prayer followed the historic decision.⁴

It was a deceptively simple action to accomplish such an important and controversial result. One reason why such a simple statement was adequate for this purpose is that nowhere in the canon law of either the Church of England or the Episcopal Church in the United States have candidates for ordination, deacons, priests, or bishops, been explicitly identified as male. For reasons not clear to the author of this paper, canonical language pertaining to ordination in the Anglican tradition has always been patient of a generic interpretation. Thus, in the Canons of 1973, the edition in force at the time the vote was taken, we read, for example,

"No one shall be ordered Deacon until he shall be twenty-one years of age." (III.10.1)⁵

"No one shall be ordered Priest until he be twenty-four years of age." (III.11.1)⁶

"The election of a person to be a Bishop in a Missionary Diocese...." (III.15.(a)).⁷

This identical language appears in earlier editions of the Canons. A new edition of the Canons is published every three years, after each General Convention. I have not checked them all, but chose somewhat arbitrarily the Canons of 1952 and the Canons of 1922. In 1952, the language in question is used in Canon 34.1 and Canon 35.1.⁸ In 1922, it is used in Canon 7.II and Canon 8.II.⁹ To go back then, to the first set of canons published by the Episcopal Church in the United States, in 1789, we find that the fourth Canon reads, "Deacon's Orders shall not be conferred on any person until he shall be twenty-one years old nor Priest's Orders on anyone until he shall be twenty-four years old."¹⁰

These examples, of course, do not exhaust the references to candidates, deacons, priests, and bishops; but they are typical. An occasional reference to man crops up, as in the canon requiring a medical examination: "This examination shall cover the man's mental and nervous as well as his physical condition."¹¹ But even this phrase had been dropped by 1973, in favor of the more general, "Before the admission of the Candidate, the Bishop shall wherever possible confer in person with the applicant,

and shall require the applicant to submit to a thorough examination..."¹²

The point of this discussion is to establish that the canonical situation encountered in Anglican churches with respect to ordination is drastically different from that in the Roman Catholic Church, where the applicable canon reads,

"Valide ordinari non potest nisi vir baptizatus."¹³

Here the male sex of the candidate is established unequivocally. This provision has apparently appeared in Roman Catholic Canon law from a very early date.¹⁴

But in this respect, the American Episcopal canons are not really different from those pertaining to ordination in the Church of England from the beginning. The language in the Canons of 1603 which corresponds to what has been cited from American canons runs,

"And none shall be admitted a Deacon, except he be twenty-three years of age, unless he have a Faculty. And every man which is to be admitted a Priest shall be full Four-and-twenty years old."¹⁵

Or,

"No Bishop shall henceforth admit any person into Sacred Orders, which is not of his own diocese..."¹⁶

The revisions of the English Code, prepared by the Archbishop's Commission on Canon Law, use language in much the same way.¹⁷

It would be a serious error to infer from this evidence that because the language of Anglican Canon Law has from the beginning been patient of a generic interpretation, such a development was intended or even foreseen. Anglican reformers, like their Lutheran and Calvinist counterparts, could not remotely have conceived that women would be ordained. But it is important for understanding the current Anglican approach to the ordination of women to the priesthood to bear in mind that, for whatever reason, maleness was assumed for ordination rather than specified. Hence the canonical procedure to provide for women priests turned out to be simple in a way which stands in sharp contrast to the complexity of the underlying theological, historical, sociological, and psychological considerations.

It should be said that the Episcopal Church in the United States was not the first part of the Anglican Communion to ordain women priests. The step had already been taken in the Diocese of Hong Kong.¹⁸ It had

been approved in principle, or at least no theological objections were found to it, in the provinces of Canada, England, Scotland, Wales, New Zealand, Ireland, and the Indian Ocean Dioceses.¹⁹ In only four provinces had no action, or negative action been taken.²⁰ Although the Episcopal Church in the United States was the first province of the Anglican Communion formally to approve of the ordination of women to the priesthood, it was in no sense an isolated action. The matter was under intense discussion and scrutiny in most of the other parts of the Communion.

II.

The Theological Tradition

The situation in Anglican theology is in a way comparable to the situation in its Canon Law. Although the ordination of women is not discussed as a real possibility until the second half of the twentieth century, there is, so far as the author of this paper can discover, no direct, explicit recognition that being a woman constitutes a bar to ordination.

The theological tradition, too, is quite different in the Roman Catholic Church. Aquinas, for example, does argue that female sex is an impediment to ordination.²¹ His position is significant in the light of subsequent developments. The nub of his argument is that "it is not possible in the female sex to signify eminence of degree, for a woman is in the state of subjection; it follows that she cannot receive the sacrament of order."²² Thus, women can be prophets, for prophecy is a gift of God rather than a sacrament. The prophetess is not required to signify a degree of eminence by her person. Women can even have authority and eminence in temporal affairs. But since they are subject to males, they cannot signify eminence in a sacramental way. "Woman may have temporal power but not in priestly matters."²³ Aquinas does not specify his authority for this claim. It might be biblical, referring to the subjection of Eve to Adam as a result of the Fall,²⁴ or referring to her subordination by virtue of being formed from his rib;²⁵ or it might be an allusion to Aristotle's understanding of the place of women in society.^{25a} The latter reference seems most likely. The word subject appears in both. In another passage, Aquinas observes that slavery also

constitutes an impediment to ordination, for similar reasons.²⁶ Slavery is also discussed by Aristotle in a similar way in a context close to his discussion of the place of women. Slavery, however, can be lifted, and then the impediment to ordination is no longer effective.²⁷ No comparable thought about the removing of the subjection of women to men occurs in either Aquinas or Aristotle. Natural law is irrevocable.

What this Quaestio does not say is also noteworthy. There is no reference to Jesus' action in calling only males to be apostles, and no mention of the priest as an icon of Christ. These arguments must be of a later vintage.

Against this background, we turn to the Anglican theological tradition. The only reference which the author of this paper has been able to discover in early Anglican literature where female sex is mentioned as a barrier to ordination occurs in Richard Hooker's discussion of "degrees and offices of ecclesiastical calling" in the New Testament church. In the passage in question, Hooker attempts to define the relationship between Apostles, Presbyters, and Deacons on the one hand, to other New Testament personages on the other--prophets, teachers, pastors. He dismisses widows and virgins as unable to have any office comparable to Holy Orders by saying "seeing neither of them (widows and virgins) did or could receive ordination, to make them ecclesiastical persons was absurd."²⁸

It is always hazardous to entertain a negative conclusion; but on the basis of the survey of Anglican writing which I have been able to make for this essay, I believe it to be true that until the second half of the twentieth century, no Anglican theologian raised substantively the issue of the ordination of women. In coming to this conclusion, I surveyed (1) More and Cross's Anglicanism,²⁹ a widely used collection of typical seventeenth century theological writing, topically arranged; and (2) a series of commentaries on the Articles of Religion--Gilbert Burnet's (1699),³⁰ Harold Browne's (1887),³¹ E. A. Litton's (entitled Introduction to Dogmatic Theology, 1912),³² E. J. Bicknell's (1919),³³ W. H. Griffith Thomas's (The Principles of Theology, 1956),³⁴ and C. B. Moss' (The Christian Faith, 1957).³⁵ Only in the last of these is the ordination of women even mentioned, and it is mentioned in this last work only to be strenuously opposed. O. C. Quick's standard work,

The Christian Sacraments,³⁶ is silent on the subject.

In the document entitled Theological Reflections on the Ordination of Women, coming from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1972, the seventh of the reasons given why women are not eligible for ordination runs, in part,

"Theologians and canonists have been unanimous until modern times in considering this exclusion as absolute and of divine origin."³⁷

It is further stated that this reason is "of ponderous theological import." It is put in last place in the position of greatest importance, as the document itself says. It would have to be said by way of contrast that the weight of Anglican tradition could not be expressed in such language. It would be much closer to the truth to say that theologians and canonists have regularly assumed that women were ineligible for ordination, but have been extraordinarily silent about the reasons for this exclusion. In the Anglican theological and canonical tradition, the denial of ordination as priests to women would have to be called absolute only until the middle of the twentieth century, and certainly could not be described as being of divine origin, without stretching an argumentum e silentio to the breaking point.

One is tempted to suppose that Hooker, who was in other matters influenced by Aquinas, accepted Aquinas' reason as satisfactory to him, and that subsequent theologians found no reason to open the subject.

III. Twentieth Century Discussion

What about the position taken by C. B. Moss in his treatment of the Thirty-Nine Articles, The Christian Faith? In his discussion of The Outward Sign of Ordination, the first paragraph is entitled, Subject of Ordination: Why Men Only? The first sentence reads, "The 'subject' of ordination is a male baptized person."³⁸ One suspects that the ~~Roman~~ ^{Catholic} tradition has been more influential on Moss' thought than the Anglican, a view which more extensive reading of the text would confirm.

The reasons offered for the exclusion of women are different from those found in Aquinas,

"Women cannot be admitted to Holy Orders. No part of the Church in any age has ever opened Holy Orders to Women. Our Lord

appointed only men to be apostles; though there were then in the world many queens (Acts viii.27), priestesses, and prophetesses (Acts xxi.9; Rev. ii.20). It is certain that any church, or group of churches, which should claim to admit women to Holy Orders would fail to get them recognized by the rest of the Church, and might even cause other churches to doubt the validity of its ordination of men. Whether it is within the power of the universal church to agree to the ordination of women is an academic question of no practical importance, for the assent of the Eastern and Roman Communion to any such proposal is so improbable as to be not worth discussing."³⁹

It may be, he goes on to claim, "that priesthood belongs exclusively to the male sex as motherhood belongs exclusively to the female sex."⁴⁰ He offers no evidence or argument to support this latter view.

Although if our survey of Anglican thought is at all representative, Moss does not in any way represent the prior Anglican theological tradition at this point, he represents the view of a number of Anglicans today and he presents three objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood which deserve answer, in view of the fact that some Anglican churches have not authorized the ordination of women. We shall look at Moss' objections in turn, noticing as we begin that none of these objections ^{in fact} were mentioned by Aquinas or in earlier Anglican writing.

1. The church has never ordained women before.

The fact that something has never been done before constitutes no argument at all that it never should or never can be done. The God of the biblical tradition makes himself known in new departures. Jesus himself was a new revelation of God which could not be encompassed in or comprehended by the old tradition. "Behold, I am doing a new thing." (Isa. 43.19).

Burnet, in his discussion of Article 23, of Ministering in the Congregation, recognizes that extraordinary situations may require breaks with tradition in order to secure a proper ministry. He, of course, does not refer to the ordination of women, but to the ordination of persons by the Reformed and Lutheran churches. But he says,

"though we are very sure this is quite out of all rule, and could not be done without a very great sin, unless the necessity were great and apparent; yet if the necessity is real and not feigned, this is not condemned nor annulled by the Article; ... yet we are very sure, that not only those who penned the Articles, but the body of this church, far above half an age after, did, notwithstanding those irregularities, acknowledge the foreign churches so constituted to be true churches..."⁴¹

To be sure, one must be respectful of ancient traditions, and should not set aside thoughtlessly practices as widespread as that of excluding women from the priesthood. One needs to ask searching questions. Why were women excluded from the apostolate, and from the eldership in Israel and in the church? Have circumstances so altered as to make that "ancient good uncouth?" Does one see the hand of God in such change, or is it the work of rebellious and willful human beings? We shall deal with these questions in Part IV of this essay.

In deciding on the ordination of women, Anglicans found themselves in a heavy crossfire between a universal practice of the catholic church opposing it and the desire to be obedient to the God who calls his servants to do new things for the sake of the Gospel, favoring it. Is it indeed true that God cannot call women to priesthood? May it not be true that he is calling women to priesthood in our day?

If the sheer existence of a universal custom were taken to imply automatically that to change it would be contrary to the will of God, no development either in church doctrines or in church institutions would be possible. It is simply no argument to say that we cannot do it because it has never been done.

2. Jesus appointed only males to be apostles.

The full form of this argument would run as follows: Jesus appointed only males as apostles; since they in turn appointed bishops, and bishops and presbyters in time--long after the writing of New Testament documents--came to be called priests, and since Jesus, the divine Son, must have known the future clearly, he must have intended the all-male character of the apostolate to apply to the bishops and presbyters of the church for all time.

The short form of the argument is an unexceptionable truism. It doesn't prove anything. The longer form of the argument includes several questionable jumps.

It is quite true that Jesus appointed only males to be apostles. It is also true that Jesus appointed only Jews to be apostles. But it certainly can not be true that Jesus intended the all-Jewish character of the apostolate to apply to the ordained ministry for all time. Once this point is clearly grasped, it serves to settle a long-standing disagreement in the Anglican theological tradition between those like Burnet⁴² and Moss,⁴³ who held that Jesus transmitted to the apostles the shape of the ordained ministry for all time to come, and those like Liddon⁴⁴ and Thomas⁴⁵ who held that Jesus entrusted the apostles with power to make decisions for the welfare of the church under the guidance of the Spirit. It is the latter position which accounts for the fact that apostles could delegate authority to bishops, although there is no explicit dominical precept directing them to do so.⁴⁶ It is the latter position which would allow Jewish apostles to appoint Gentile bishops although Jesus had himself appointed no Gentile apostles. And by the same token, the latter position which would allow twentieth century bishops to ordain women, under the proper circumstances, although Jesus appointed no women to be apostles.

The fact is, of course, that the apostles had no successors. The Eleven chose Matthias by lot to take Judas' place, bringing the number back to twelve, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. There is no record that these twelve ever appointed successors. In fact, as A. M. Farrer's study showed a generation ago, a true apostle (Heb. shaliach) as the personal representative of the one who appointed him did not have the power to appoint successors in turn.⁴⁷ Of the selection or ordination of the other apostles in the New Testament, we know only about Paul's, which he describes as "out of due time," a commissioning from the risen Lord. The lists in First Corinthians 12.28-30 and Ephesians 4.11-12 contain no information about how other apostles were called, but group them with prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, speakers in tongues, evangelists, and pastors, none of which offices turned out to be in Holy Orders.

The conclusion of these observations is that in the absence of any specific New Testament word, it is presumptuous to conclude that Jesus gave any directions at all about how apostles were to provide for the continuity of the church, and a fortiori it is presumptuous to conclude that bishops have authority to ordain only such persons as are modeled in Jesus' call of the apostles. For the model has already been broken.

There is a further lacuna in the argument from the example of the apostles. For we are asked to apply Jesus' action in this case to the ordination of priests. The plain fact is that Jesus ordained no priests. He did not even speak of priests for the Christian church. The only person in the Christian movement designated in the whole of the New Testament as a priest is Jesus himself.⁴⁸

As I pointed out in my paper, Christology and Sexuality, prepared for the last meeting of ARC, first bishops and subsequently presbyters came to be called priests because they celebrated Eucharist, which had come to be understood as the memorial of the one, true sacrifice of Christ himself. In Hooker's words, "the Fathers of the Church of Christ... call usually the ministry of the Gospel Priesthood in regard of that which the Gospel hath proportionable to ancient sacrifices, namely the Communion of the blessed Body and Blood of Christ, although it have properly now no sacrifice."⁴⁹ For reasons which we have yet to examine, bishops and presbyters have in fact been male until recently. But if there should be found a commanding reason to suggest that priests might also be female, (and we hold that such a reason exists), it would be misleading to argue that because Jesus appointed only male apostles, the church today can have only male priests. The argument contains fatal non sequiturs.

It might be rejoined that Jesus, the divine Son, knew the future perfectly. He foresaw the course of the development of the church and its relationship to society. Therefore his institution of the apostolate should be taken as a model to the church for its ordained ministry to the end of time.

Yet to hold that the Incarnate One had such omniscience as to warrant that conclusion is to deny the character of Jesus as vere homo, and hence strikes at the very nerve of Christian faith. The Jesus of the Gospels

is shown as "increasing in wisdom and stature" at the beginning of his life,⁵⁰ and at the end as not knowing the exact time of the consummation of all things. "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."⁵¹

The conclusion of all this is that on the ground of positions taken by Anglican theologians regarding the humanity of the Lord, regarding priesthood, regarding the apostolate, on the ground of appeal to reason, tradition, and scripture, as these authorities are understood by Anglicans, the undoubted fact that Jesus appointed only male apostles is not a sufficient basis to deny ordination of women to the priesthood in the twentieth century.

3. The decision to admit women as priests should be made only by an ecumenical council.

Ecumenical councils in the past have usually been called to resolve problems disturbing the church rather than to plan bold new steps for the future. The case of ordination of women to the priesthood is more likely to find its place on the agenda of a future ecumenical council because a member church began to ordain women priests than as a theoretical possibility proposed in the absence of such action.

In any case, if one considers the untold difficulty involved in summoning a truly ecumenical council, granted the present divided state of the church, it could not take place in a decade, or in a century, or in an even longer time. Meanwhile our church might be found disobedient to the heavenly vision of a new style of ministry for a new age. If the case can be made for ordaining women priests at all, one should not dare to postpone action until the uncertain and very distant time when an ecumenical council acknowledged as able to act in the name of all the Christian churches can be called.

4. The priest is the icon of Christ, and therefore must be male.

Not all the objections to the ordination of women as priests are to be found in Moss' discussion of the subject. One of the most serious and frequently voiced of these has to do with the representative character of the Christian priesthood, and the inability of women to fill this representative role.

Priests are mediators. They represent their people before God. One of the most solemn responsibilities of the Jewish high priest was to confess the sins of Israel in the Holy Place year after year on the Day of Atonement,⁵² and in fact Jesus is called priest in the Epistle to the Hebrews because "he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves, but his own blood."⁵³

This representative function--the role of standing for and representing the whole people was attributed to bishops as early as Ignatius.⁵⁴ If it is true, as seems increasingly likely, that Christian elders functioned in their community in a way parallel to that of Jewish elders in theirs, presbyters too had the function to represent the whole community in their persons. They were the community.⁵⁵

Can women exercise this function? It is the basic contention of this essay, to be elaborated in Part IV, that simply as a sociological fact, women have not been able to exercise this representative role in most human societies until recently. Until they could do so, they could not be priests. But under Christian auspices, this impediment in the role of women in society has been removed--in power and beginning. Therefore a major barrier to the ordination of women as priests no longer exists. It is a new fact of the twentieth century. More of this later.

For it is only half the representative function of the priest to embody the community. The other side of the priest's mediatorial role is to represent God. The decisive function of the priest in Israel was to teach Torah, to instruct in the will of God. The Christian version of this function of priesthood is to say that the priest at the altar is an icon of Christ. He represents Christ to the people.

This fact is often presented as an obstacle to the ordination of women because Christ was male; therefore the priest must be ~~male~~^{male}. But like the argument from the male character of the apostolate, this argument is elliptical and conceals serious flaws.

The full form of the argument must run like this: Jesus is our priest; on the one hand, as second Adam, he is mankind. He was "made human," the Nicene Creed says, not, made male. On the other hand, as the Incarnation of the Second Persona of the Trinity, he is God's icon to us. As we have seen, the celebrant at the Eucharist is a priest by virtue of Christ's priesthood, and in this sense is the icon of God to us.

Can a woman exercise this function? Catholic theology has greater difficulty with this point than with the other side of the representative character of priesthood. The Anglican address to this problem is rather complex.

A number of Anglicans simply do not regard the Christian priesthood as having this second side of the representative function. A continuous line of Anglican theology, beginning in the sixteenth century, is based on an obvious reading of Article XXXI, "Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."⁵⁶ Mass was no sacrifice. The celebrant was not a sacerdos. Priests were, in this tradition of Anglican theology, understood to be presbyters. Thomas, writing in 1956, concludes his consideration of priesthood in the light of the Thirty-Nine Articles by saying,

"In view of these considerations, together with the fact that there is nothing sacerdotal provided in the ministry of our Church, it seems clear that the word 'priest' can only be the equivalent to 'presbyter,' and, as such, expresses the evangelistic and pastoral ministry associated with the Presbyterate in the New Testament."⁵⁸

This is not, of course, the only Anglican view, and it may not at present be the dominant view. Others regard the Christian priest as representing both the congregation and--in some sense--Christ. This tradition is also old in Anglican theology. Those who hold this view might say (I do), first, that since every Christian person represents Christ by virtue of baptism, how much the more the ordained person at the altar.⁵⁹

Sex is not a consideration. Even a Roman Catholic writer declares that,

"In the Church there is on the one hand only one 'priestly man,' namely Christ; and since all Christians are members of Christ by their Baptism, they are that 'priestly man.'"⁶⁰ *l'homme ordonné*

The author recognizes that Roman Catholic theology makes a distinction between these two appearances of the image--in baptism and in ordination. But on the basis of the Anglican theological tradition, it seems artificial to do so. There is no discernible reason why a woman, who can be a bearer

of Christ by virtue of her baptism, might not be an icon of Christ by virtue of her ordination.

A further answer is possible. For we are dealing, as we said, with an icon of an icon. Jesus is the representative of God. He is unquestionably male. But the Second Persona of the Trinity, whose Incarnation Jesus is, is beyond sexual differentiation. The Second Persona is identified in the Fourth Gospel as the Word,⁶¹ but in I Corinthians and in some Patristic literature as Wisdom.⁶² The Word is presumably masculine. Wisdom is personified as feminine.⁶³ And the New Testament is equally happy to attribute certain sayings to Jesus in one Gospel and to Wisdom in another.⁶⁵ The earliest community, in other words, could contemplate Jesus as being the spokesman, or representative, of Wisdom, usually represented as female. If the icon of feminine Wisdom could be male, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that the icon of the icon might be female. I wonder if the feminine representations of Jesus in medieval art and piety, to which we have been introduced at earlier sessions of ARC, may not spring from this Wisdom tradition, and finally from a realization that God is not to be identified with either sex.

The fact that a priest is an icon of Christ does not preclude the ordination of women to priesthood, when one appeals to authorities--scripture, tradition of the first five centuries, and reason--in an Anglican way.

There are still other Anglicans, whose position on the ordination of women priests is very close to that of the Roman Catholic Church, who simply do not acknowledge the force of any of the above arguments, who would insist that only a male can represent Christ, and only a male perform the priestly act which unites the Bride of Christ to her Lord.

5. See Appendix A.

6. Inherent differences between men and women.

Are there, then, inherent differences between men and women, such as to preclude the ordination of women to priesthood?

a. There are obvious and easily specifiable physical differences between men and women. To the best of my knowledge, these have never been seriously advanced as objections to the ordination of women. If one proceeds to what might be called ancillary sexual characteristics, such as, for example, strength, the situation is not as clear-cut, but the result is the same. It may be true that most men are stronger than

most women of comparable size; but some women are stronger than some men, and weakness as such has never been taken as an impediment to the ordination of men. It is hard to think of a single physical characteristic of this ancillary kind of which a similar analysis could not be made. Is there a single such trait which women possess and males do not, or vice versa? I cannot think of one. If one were to be discovered, would it bear on the question of ordination? The physical conditions which presently constitute barriers to ordination, although they originally referred to males, in fact pertain to both sexes. If there is one which pertains to women only, it is remarkable that we are not able to specify it.

b. The matter of psychological differences is more obscure. On the one hand, it seems certain on the basis of the psychosomatic unity of the human person that physical difference will create some psychic difference, perhaps even of a fundamental kind. Yet the investigations of our consultation into this area have been peculiarly frustrating. There is no way to gain access to a human psyche not already culturally conditioned; and even if one compares several different cultures, one is not sure of having removed the effects of male dominance from the analysis. They doubtless appear in most cultures. But even if such an analysis were possible, would its results be useful? Human beings always live in cultures; priests function in cultures. Both men and women are inevitably and necessarily shaped by the culture in which they live. It may be that most men in a certain culture will have certain characteristics (aggressiveness?) and most women others. (Or it may not!) The question is, what do such traits have to do with ordination? No one has ever suggested that aggressiveness or the lack of it, is a bar to the ordination of males. Are there any characteristics which belong solely to women which we can reasonably present as barriers to ordination, or which appear in any tradition as barriers to ordination?

The fact is that after several meetings, (three if I'm not mistaken), at which this subject has been raised, and after a lengthy discussion with Fr. Brungs, we have yet to discern any. The inconclusiveness of the result is important. It is not to deny that some differences between men and women will at last be discovered. The goodness and variety of

creation rather suggest that they will be. It is to say that whatever they may be, they do not seem to be of such a nature as to prevent the ordination of women. Instead, the differences between men and women, culturally conditioned as they are, enrich the talents and gifts which the human race possesses. Priesthood should be able to claim all human gifts in its service, then, unless it can be conclusively shown that "priesthood belongs exclusively to the male sex, as motherhood belongs exclusively to the female sex."⁶⁶ This claim, as far as I can discover, is merely speculative wherever it occurs. To deny ordination to women on the grounds of it, in the face of the call of God to priesthood which many women present themselves convincingly as having received, is to be disobedient to God in obedience to one's tradition.

c. Are there theological considerations having to do with a woman's offering of sacrifice, considerations which cloud the Gospel and corrupt the good creation? Fr. Keefe has claimed so in his various papers. I made an extended reply to him in the essay I wrote for our last session, Christology and Sexuality. I tried to show in that paper that the notion of ministry on which that opinion rests is seriously at variance both with the Anglican understanding of Catholic tradition and with the Canterbury Statement, our agreed position on ministry. To the best of my knowledge no Anglican seriously and in public offered such an objection to the ordination of woman priests. It makes no contact with what most Anglicans at any time in our history have believed about priesthood. My paper has received no comments from its readers which make me change my mind.

IV. Historical-sociological Development under the Spirit of God

What circumstance then, we ask, has for nineteen hundred years precluded the ordination of women but now has so altered as to permit and indeed demand it? The answer lies in none of the matters we have examined but in the place of women in society. From the beginning of the Christian movement until the present century, women have occupied a subordinate place in the world at large. The literature to illustrate and establish this point is abundant,⁶⁷ but we need to do no more than to cite again Aquinas' reason why female sex is an impediment to receiving orders:

But the Kingdom did not come. The meantime stretched on for centuries. For centuries the church was content to wait for it, leaving the conditions of subjection in the world untouched. What in Scripture was understood as the effect of sin, as far as the place of women was concerned, came to be understood as a state of nature under the influence of Aristotle. It could not be alleviated. Slavery remained as an institution, although individual slaves were occasionally freed. Even the Reformation did not deal with these issues. It was the Enlightenment which began to make a concerted effort to shape the world--society beyond the church--according to the model of toleration (neither Jew nor Greek), freedom (neither slave nor free), and equality between the sexes (neither male nor female).

To trace in detail the transformations in Anglican theology by which Hooker's position, according to which it is assumed that women will not be ordained, becomes one in which the ordination of women can be contemplated, at least by a large and controlling number of Anglicans in most of the provinces of the church, would require a detailed analysis of the interaction during a period of four hundred years of the three strands which are usually said to comprise Anglican thought: catholic, evangelical, liberal.⁷¹ The stages of development might be outlined as follows:

1. As far as the contribution of the catholic strand is concerned, one notices the substitution of Plato for Aristotle as the philosopher of authority. As early as 1549, a Cambridge University statute permitted the study of Plato to be substituted for the study of Aristotle. Seventeenth-century Anglican theologians acknowledged the authority of the first four councils.⁷² The theology of this early period, of course, is stated predominantly in terms of a middle Platonism. The influence of Plato on subsequent Anglican theology is well known, and epitomized by the story of William Temple's reply to a questioner who asked him who Anglicans had in the place of Luther for Lutherans or Calvin for Presbyterians. With one of his great and characteristic guffaws, he replied, 'Why, Plato, of course!'

2. Plato had his role to play in the development of the liberal or enlightenment tradition also, through the influence of Ficino and his style of neo-Platonism, which had been newly discovered through Greek

refugees who fled to Western Europe after the fall of Constantinople. This style of platonic thought influenced Whichcote, Cudworth, Henry More, and the Cambridge Platonists, and through them John Locke. John Locke, a devout Anglican layman who seriously considered taking Orders, is perhaps the most decisive philosophical influence on English and American political institutions to this day.

In his views, religious toleration was a desideratum. It is built into the American constitution. Slavery was justified, however,⁷³ and it was still assumed that women would not vote.⁷⁴ These views also are reflected in the U. S. Constitution. We might observe that in Locke, the first of the three Pauline expectations (neither Jew nor Greek) was achieved in society, through religious toleration, but neither of the latter two. But much more importantly, a political process is established by which its institutions can be changed in an orderly and continuous way.

We notice also that Locke's influence was transmitted to France, through Voltaire,⁷⁵ where it was developed into a much more radical assertion of liberty, equality, and fraternity. (Even there, the full status of women is not yet acknowledged!) The influence of the ideals of the French Revolution were reflected back in turn in the political aspirations of the English discontented poor, dislocated by the rising Industrial Revolution. The Chartist movement in England threatened something like a counterpart of the French Revolution.

3. The factor which is often given credit for saving England from such a development is the Evangelical revival, sparked by the preaching of the Wesleys and Whitfield.⁷⁶ The emergence of this evangelical movement, both within the church of England and outside it, marks the predominance for a while of the evangelical strand of Anglican theology.

Now the political ideas of Wesley were quite conservative, but he preached the gospel to the poor as had not been done for centuries. And the social implications of the gospel were no longer filtered through Aristotle's account of natural law. They were seen to be the effects of sin, and as such to require changes in society. The pressures to change did, to be sure, come from beyond the church. God, it might be said, had raised up from the Chartists "children unto Abraham," and, once more used "Assyria as the rod of his anger."

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That is to say, social pressures from beyond the church moved some in the church to act in a way which was perceived to be conformable to Gospel requirements. As to the matters in hand, slavery was brought to an end by an Act of Parliament in 1807, chiefly by the labors of William Wilberforce, a devout layman, deeply influenced by the evangelical revival. He is one of two post-Reformation lay persons commemorated in the calendar of the new American Prayer Book.⁷⁷ Slavery was ended in the United States by the Civil War. Protestant churches played a significant role in abolition, the Episcopal church not such a prominent part.

The point is that once the influence of Aristotle had been removed as a theological authority, the status of slaves, and therefore, presumably, also of women, could be seen as a result not of nature but of sin; and the mission of the church to correct the results of sin in the social order was accepted, albeit reluctantly. This result in much Anglican theology came about through the interaction of its three strands. Anglican theology cannot really be understood apart from this continuing, complex, interaction.

The position of women has come into focus last of all. (Was it prophetic that in Paul's trio--Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female-- it was mentioned last?) It is the deepest division of human nature. The subordinate status of women was questioned first by secular sources. The vote was claimed and women entered most of the professions during the course of this century. The church, it must be confessed, did not have a major, visible role to play. But as a result of this process, women began to be able to exercise leadership in the social order; and when that development occurred, the impediment to their ordination recognized in Aquinas, and assumed in the Anglican theological tradition from Hooker to Locke and beyond, was no longer operative. Women could exercise leadership both in church and in society. Their position could signify preeminence.

As early as 1916, William Temple, later Archbishop of Canterbury, anticipated the ordination of women. His biographer, Joseph Fletcher, writes,

"When he (Temple) thought of laity he meant both men and women, and he constantly struggled against the subordinate and falsely humble place given to women in both Church and society. In 1916, he led the fight, a successful one, for the right of women to sit in the Assembly. Seconded by Mrs. Temple's devoted service, he backed

'women's work' in the Church as well as 'men's work,' and strengthened the orders for deaconesses. He was convinced that deaconesses were ordained ministers.⁷⁸ He never changed his mind about either the principle itself or the strategy of postponement, which is explained in a letter to a parson's wife in 1916. 'Personally I want (as at present advised) to see women ordained to the priesthood. But still more do I want to see both real advance towards the reunion of Christendom, and the general emancipation of women. To win admission to the priesthood now would put back the former and to most it would put back the latter.'"⁷⁹

Sixty-five years have elapsed since these words were written. The cause of reunion steadily advanced, as did the general emancipation of women. The arguments usually advanced against the ordination of women proved to be weak. The momentum for the ordination of women to the priesthood mounted.

Is this process, this strange, tumultuous, dialectical history, the work of God? It is the contention of this paper that in these two developments,--the abolition of slavery and the assertion of racial equality on one hand, and the elimination of the subordination of women and the assertion of equality of the sexes (already stated in Genesis!) on the other,--we have witnessed the achievement in the world, in power and beginning, of the vision of the Kingdom of God which will be completed and perfected only eschatologically. The Spirit of God has been at work to create a society where--at least preliminarily--differences of belief are respected and enjoyed, where slavery has been abolished, where women are no longer in a "state of subjection." A this-worldly version of "neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female" begins to emerge.⁸⁰

In our present situation, at least from an Anglican perspective, there is no longer any sociological-historical barrier to the ordination of women. It is time for the church to move ahead on this front, to allow the Spirit to provide the far richer, more gifted, priesthood which will result when both men and women contribute their various talents to it, so much ampler than a purely male priesthood will ever be. Today God calls women to priesthood, having in characteristic ways provided

a society in which they may serve as priests, in a position of preeminence. The legitimate impediments to ordination have been removed. Valide ordinari nunc possunt et vir baptizatus et femina baptizata.

End notes:

n. 1

1. There had been two earlier ordinations of women to the priesthood in the American Episcopal Church: in Philadelphia on July 29, 1974, and in Washington, D.C. a few months later. A special meeting of the House of Bishops convened in the wake of the first of these ordinations declared that "the necessary conditions for valid ordination to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church were not fulfilled on the occasion in question, since we are convinced that a Bishop's authority to ordain can be effectively exercised only in and for a community which has authorized him to act for them, and as a member of the episcopal college; and since there was a failure to act in fulfillment of constitutional and canonical requirements for ordination." (Journal of the General Convention, 1976; p. B-198.)
One notices that the sex of the ordinands is not mentioned! (It might be implied, to be sure in the failure to meet constitutional and canonical requirements.) It is one of the small ironies of history that the service used at the Philadelphia ordinations in July, 1974 was the Ordinal of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, the old-fashioned liturgy at the epoch-making event, for unlike the new service proposed for trial use, which has subsequently been adopted in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, the old liturgy does not require certification that the requirements of the canons have been satisfied. (Cf. 1979 BCP, p. 526)
2. Journal of the General Convention, 1976; p. D-64.
3. Ibid., p. B-54
4. Ibid., p. D-64
(A delegation contains four presbyters and four lay persons. The orders vote separately when requested to do so by clerical or lay deputies from three or more dioceses. If three or four deputies from one order vote together, the delegation is recorded as voting in that way in that order. If two vote against two, the vote is recorded as divided and counts in the negative.)
5. Constitution and Canons for the Government of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America..., 1973; p. 60. Emphasis mine.
6. Ibid., p. 64. Emphasis mine.
7. Ibid., p. 73. Emphasis mine.

8. Constitution and Canons..., 1952; pp. 78, 84.
9. Constitution and Canons..., 1922, Annotated with an Exposition of the Same... By the Reverend Edwin Augustus White, 1924; pp. 243, 267.
10. Ibid., p. 246. Emphasis mine.
11. Ibid., p. 121.
12. Constitution and Canons, 1973; p. 60.
13. Jone, P. Heriberto, Commentarium in Codicem Juris Canonici, F. Schoningh, Paderborn, 1954; vol. II, p. 182. Canon 968.
14. Ramig, Ida, The Exclusion of Women from the Priesthood, Scarecrow Press, Metuchem, N.J., 1976; p. 5.
15. Walcott, MacKenzie, E.C., The Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical of the Church of England, James Parker, Oxford, 1974; p. 51. Emphasis mine.
16. Ibid., 54. Emphasis mine.
17. The Canon Law of the Church of England, SPCK, London, 1947; pp. 142ff.
18. See the Report on the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood in the Proceedings of the Anglican Consultative Council, Trinidad, 1976. pp. 44-46.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Aquinas, Summa Theologica (tr. by Fathers of the Dominican Province) Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd., London, 1932; vol. 19, pp. 51-53. Part III, quaest. xxxix, art. 1.
22. Ibid., III. quaest. xxxix, art. 3
23. Ibid.
24. Gen. 3.16.
25. Gen. 2.23
- 25 (a) Aristotle, Politics, 1254b.
26. Aquinas, op. cit. III. quaest. xxxix, art. 3
27. Ibid.
28. Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, V. lxxviii.11. Emphasis mine.
29. More, Paul. Elmo, and Cross, Frank L., Anglicanism, Morehouse, Milwaukee, 1955.
30. Burnet, Gilbert, Bishop of Sarum, An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles, ed. by James R. Page, Appleton, New York; 1845.
31. Browne, E. Harold, An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles, Longmans, Green; 1887

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33. Bicknell, E. J., The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (3rd ed.), Longmans, Green; 1955.
34. Thomas, W. H. Griffeth, The Principles of Theology, An Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles, Church Book Room Press, London; 1956.
35. Moss, C. B., The Christian Faith, SPCK, London, 1957.
36. Quick, O.C., The Christian Sacraments, Nisbet, London; 1927.
37. Theological Reflections on the Ordination of Women, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCC; 1972.
38. Moss, op. cit., p. 387. (Notice the emergence, for the first time in our survey of the language of the Roman Catholic canon--a break with Anglican tradition!)
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Burnet, op. cit., pp. 338-339.
42. Ibid., p. 334.
43. Moss, op. cit., pp. 387-8.
44. Liddon, op. cit., pp. 380-1.
45. Thomas, op. cit., p. 323-5.
46. As Thomas remarks, "There is no proof in the New Testament of the Apostles appointing successors, so that what should be the strongest link in the chain is really the weakest, namely, the connection between the Apostles and their first successors." Ibid., p. 324.
47. Farrer, A. M., Ministry in the New Testament, in The Apostolic Ministry, ed. by K. E. Kirk, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1946; p. 125.
48. Heb. 9.11 and passim.
49. Hooker, op. cit., V. lxxviii.3. Emphasis Hooker's.
50. Lk. 2.51.
51. Mk. 13.32.
52. Lev. 16.1-22.
53. Heb. 9. 12.
54. Ign. ad Eph. 1.3; ad Mag. 2.1; ad Trall 1.1; etc.
55. "The elders are identical with the city; they comprise the whole body of citizens helping to support its life." Pedersen, J., Israel, Cumberlege, London, 1926; vol. I-II, p. 36.

56. Cf. Jer. 18.18; Mal. 2.7.
57. BCP, p. 878.
58. Thomas, op. cit., p. 320. Cf. Liddon, op. cit., p. 390; Browne, op. cit., pp. 567, 746; Barnet, op. cit., p. 461ff.
59. Cf. e.g. BCP Service of Holy Baptism, "Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?" BCP, p. 305.
60. Henry, A.M., O.P., Christ in his Sacraments, Theology Library, vol. VI, Fides, Chicago, 1958; p. 326.
61. Jn. 1.14.
62. I Cor. 1.24.
63. Prbs. 8.1ff.
64. Mt. 23.34-36.
65. Lk. 11.49-51. Cf. Christ, Felix, Jesus als Weisheit, Zwingli Verlag, Zurich, 1970 for an extended discussion of this identification.
66. Moss, op. cit., p. 387.
67. Cf. e.g., Janeway, Elizabeth, Man's World, Woman's Place, Dell, 1972.
68. Aquinas, op. cit., III. q. 39, art. 1.
69. Aristotle, Politics, 1254b.
70. Gal. 3.28.
71. Cf., e.g. Wolf, W. J. ed., Booty, J.E. and Thomas, Owen C., The Spirit of Anglicanism, Morehouse-Barlow, Wilton, Ct., 1979; pp. 139-151.
72. "One Canon, two testaments, three creeds, four councils, five centuries," in Lancelot Andrewes' epigram, cited in my last paper for ARC, Christology and Sexuality. Sermon on Isaiah lxii.5.
73. Cf., Russell, B., A History of Philosophy, Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1945; p. 626. *Cf. Second Treatise 356*
74. Ibid., p. 631. *Cf. Second Treatise § 82.*
75. Ibid., p. ~~631~~41-42
76. Malden, R. H., The English Church and Nation, SPCK, London, 1952; p. 301.
77. The other is Bernard Miczeki catechist, martyred in Rhodesia in 1896.
78. In the American Episcopal Church, General Convention declared that deaconesses were within the diaconate in 1970.
79. Fletcher, Joseph, William Temple: Twentieth Century Christian, Seabury, New York, 1963; p. 216.

80. In his essay, Ordination of Women?--An Ecumenical Meditation and a Discussion, in Micks and Price, op. cit., pp. 90-99, Frans Josef van Beeck, S.J., comments,

"The ordination of women to the priesthood is but one way in which a larger, more basic, more comprehensive concern is raised, namely, the need, in the Lord, for harmonious relationships between men and women, not only in friendships and marriages and good professional collegiality, but also in social structures. The raising of the issue of discrimination against women in the world at large as well as in the church must, from a theological point of view, be seen as an instance of historical revelation, and as such it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the world as well as in the church.... (p. 99)

APPENDIX A

5. The Witnesses of the Pauline Writings

The point of view advanced already, particularly in section 2 above, could be taken to apply also to the Pauline witness regarding the place of women. We could say that if Jesus did not legislate for the church for all time to come, neither did Paul. Nevertheless, several of Paul's statements on this subject are so unequivocal, and are cited so often to oppose the ordination of women to the priesthood, that they require special attention. One thinks especially of

"the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God," (I Cor. 11.3)

or,

the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not able to speak, but should be subordinate, even as the law says," (I Cor 14.34)

or, in the deutero-Pauline literature,

"let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." (I Tim 2.11-14)

Reginald Fuller weighs this evidence carefully in his essay, Pro and Con: The Ordination of Women in the New Testament.¹ He is able to show that in some passages, Paul does envisage women praying and prophesying, and perhaps even saying the eucharistic prayer, if the eucharistia in I Cor 14.16 be translated as a technical term. He shows that the passage in I Cor 11 is probably an interpolation by the same hand that wrote I Timothy, a product of a later generation.²

He concludes,

"This later writer, though a member of the Pauline school, has dropped one side of his master's teaching (I Cor 11.5; Gal 3.28) and developed only the other (I Cor 11.3, 7-8). As a result, the freedom which Paul had allowed for the ministries of women prophets in Corinth, of Euodia and Syntyche at Philippi, of Prisca and Phoebe and others, had to be surrendered to the needs of a later day.... She was sacrificed to the needs of consolidation, of accommodation to the mores of contemporary society, to the threat of gnosticism.

What does this latest period of the New Testament teach us then? Not that the rules it lays down are valid for all time. As a matter of fact, the ministry continued to adapt itself to later needs... Adaptation and flexibility were the keynotes of ministry in the New Testament period. Its regulations are nowhere prescriptive for all

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time. If in Paul's churches women were allowed to exercise a full ministry of the word (and perhaps even of the sacrament), though under a single restriction of being veiled, and if in the sub-apostolic age women were silenced; if too in Paul's churches there was no ordination, and if by the time there was ordination, there was no ministry of women apart from the widows, the New Testament says to us that the church is free to adapt its ministry to the needs of the age."³

But this is similar to the conclusion of section 2.

Notes:

1. In Micks, Marianne H., and Price, Charles P., eds., Toward a New Theology of Ordination, Greeno, Hadden and Co., Somerville, Mass., 1976; pp. 7-11.
2. Ibid., p. 6.
3. Ibid., p. 9.