

Theology

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Theological Detachment

My run of back numbers of *Theology* goes back to 1955 and I believe I first contributed to its pages in 1966. In the nature of things, not everyone with such a record can become an editor (even when there are three at a time), and apotheosis in this little cosmos makes an occasion for reflection. *Theology* is the one journal whose arrival I have always greeted with excitement—sometimes rapidly calmed, but usually sustained by at least something found within. The chance of valid excitement is only proper in a journal calling itself simply *Theology*. Even compared with the wide-ranging *Journal of Theological Studies*, it is a bare-faced, assertive name: what kind of theology, what branch? Oh, just theology. These days, such a project is audaciously ambitious.

In the General Synod in July 1983, the Archbishop of York (then at Durham), speaking on the *Final Report* of ARCIC, told how on an official visit to the Vatican he had noted there that theology came in two kinds, each with its own methods and aims: systematic and apologetic, the one more self-contained and inward-looking, the other stretching out to the world at large. Even though he saw the second as bringing the tradition into relation with general experience, that was still a very churchly way of summing up theology in our day. It left out the greater part of what goes by that name in universities, seminaries, schools, publishers' lists, and libraries, and at the desks and bedsides of those who read. Whether staying within or looking without, it was theology which has its feet chiefly inside the known circle of faith. Yet the mass of public theological effort among us has at least one foot firmly outside that circle. It may be a methodological foot: it sets out to analyse and uncover the Christian documents and the Christian past by whatever tools are currently available in the academic kit. Or a practical foot: life in 'the real world', with its good sense and its nonsense, is the setting for much theological thought and speech. Or else there is a feeling of satisfactory honesty in adopting a position of detachment

Servant Books, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1980.

I assume Dr Leonard means Joseph Adelson.

The correct title is in fact *Sex and Fantasy*, Norton, New York 1980.

OUP, New York and Oxford 1979.

7 Eleanor E. Maccoby and Carol N. Jacklin, Stanford University 1974.

8 Clark, op. cit., p. 411.

9 Clark, op. cit., p. 441.

0 See Graham Leonard, *God Alive: Priorities in Pastoral Theology*, Darton, Longman and Todd 1981.

Male and Female in Christ's Priestly Dance

ROSS THOMPSON

Part of the pain and confusion in the debate about women priests arises from the fact that for one side the argument is seen as being about women while for the other it is seen as being about priests. For the advocates of women's ordination the issue at stake is the equality of women; for the opponents the issue is, on the contrary, the nature of the priesthood and the authority of the tradition it represents. That is surely why it has become so hard for each side of the debate to hear what the other is saying—we have a two-dimensional area of issue, which each side understands only in terms of its own single dimension. So one side can only hear the opposition as a band of male chauvinists defending the one last bastion of male privilege. Meanwhile, the other can only see the 'enemy' as a band of trendies who really reject priesthood itself as a gift from God, treating it as just another human profession to be adjusted as we see fit ('We have women doctors, so why not women priests ...?').

Certainly among the louder voices in the debate there are enough explicit chauvinists and obvious trendies to make such monoaural hearing feasible. It can seem as if the decision about women priests were a matter of weighing up which is 'more important', justice, or obedience to revelation. As both are, for a Christian, of absolute importance, the decision looks then like being impossible. But surely it is ill-conceived to set justice and revelation at the opposite ends of a single continuum. For example, there is no obvious contradiction involved in believing in justice and equality for women, and yet holding that only men can be ordained. After all—it might be argued—the fact that only wine can be consecrated, and not whisky, implies no 'superiority' on the part of wine, only the fact that, for this particular sacramental purpose, Jesus chose wine and not whisky. And conversely there is no obvious

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contradiction in holding a traditional view of priesthood and of the role of women, yet arguing that precisely because of their distinctive role we need women priests to bring the feminine aspect of our humanity to the altar. Once these possibilities are grasped, the whole debate becomes more complex and bewildering, even wilderness-like, yet also, I believe, more revelatory.

There is then less room for defensive dogmatism on either side; for the attack comes no longer head-on, so to speak, but cuts across and undermines false assumptions. Tradition, for example, can no longer be used as if it were an answer to the feminist attack; for it emerges that tradition, and our traditional understanding of God's revelation in Christ, may themselves have something sexist at their root. And conversely feminism cannot be used to fight off the challenge of the particularity of Christ's revelation; since it becomes clear that feminism may rest on assumptions about leadership and equality which Christ the servant overturns. Indeed it seems to me that both extremes may be working on an image of Christ and of his representative that is fundamentally faulty: the image of a leader in an all too worldly and all too male-dominated sense. In fact it may be—and this is what I shall argue—that we need women priests, not so much to liberate women, as to liberate priesthood.

I shall try then to let the two dimensions of the debate interrogate each other. In the next section I shall consider the challenge to our concepts of liberation and sexuality posed by the revelation of God in the man Jesus; after that I shall turn to consider the need for the challenge to our understanding of revelation and priesthood posed by the existence of women priests.

Sexuality and liberation in Christ Jesus

'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3.28).

One often finds this text cited in support of women priests, and of course it is fundamental to the debate. Unfortunately it can be used in a way that seems to me misleading, as if it meant that in Jesus personally there was, or is now, neither male nor female. That is surely inadequate Christology. For either it docetically denies true sexuality—hence true humanity—to Jesus of Nazareth, or it views the resurrection (or ascension?) as a kind of disincarnation, in which the Christ is somehow spirited away again from his sex and race and all the other particular aspects of the earthly life of Jesus. I do not deny that this sort of thing is often there in the background of people's thinking about Christ; but for that very reason we must do nothing to encourage it. If women priests were to carry the implication that the risen Christ who presides at our Eucharist were something other than the male Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, all orthodox Christians would be obliged to resist having them.

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Why? Because it is essential for our understanding of our own liberation in Christ, that liberation does not spirit us away from our sexuality or any other aspect of our being the particular human beings we are. The gnostic view of women's liberation—that women could be saved by being unsexed, by becoming men—really spells no liberation for women at all.¹ Yet I sense that one of the deepest felt—though seldom voiced—objections to female priesthood is precisely an obscure notion that there is some kind of unsexing involved. Lady Macbeth, the Priestess, the Witch, loom large among the archetypes people fear, the figure that combines female seduction and determination with the more overt machinery of male authority and power.

In fact, of course, it is in the male Jew, Jesus, that there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek. In the particular man, sexism and racism are overcome, not in his particular person, but in his all-embracing, all-loving humanity, which reaches out to all sorts and conditions of people. That is crucial. Behind much of the argument about women's liberation and priesthood there lurks an individualism, I suspect, which takes priesthood to be an individual's possession, a personal privilege, which it is wrong to deny to any class of people. But the individual priest is nothing in himself—less, surely, than anyone who has any kind of definable job, role or status. His vocation is precisely to have no particular vocation,² so that in some frail way he can mirror the Son of Man, who had nowhere to lay his head, and so focus the priestly glory that belongs, not to him personally, but to humankind in its sheer humanity. Centuries of clericalism have tried to attach the priesthood to things the priest, by virtue of his training, is uniquely able to do, or to something the priest mysteriously is, as an individual, to the exclusion of the 'laity'. But true priesthood is only there in the giving and receiving (which is why, in traditional terms, it is linked with sacrifice). All the priesthood a priest has flows to him from the priesthood of Christ and the royal priesthood of all.

Now with material gifts it is surely true that the only way we can share them is to distribute them equitably, ideally to have them in common. But the gifts of mind and spirit should never be thought of in this way. A person's idea or creation is only hers or his in the communication of it to others. So in the Church: the gifts and the weaknesses of each belong to all already; liberation consists not in each trying to have the gifts of all in defiance of his or her particular nature, but in together building a society in which it is more possible to give and receive, and hence to realize the gifts we have. That is why I cannot in the end accept arguments for women priests based on the desire or felt calling of individual women to have and exercise the gift of priesthood, as if they did not have those gifts already, through Christ and through those priests there already are.

So it is not primarily in order to be fair to women that we need women priests. Nevertheless the way priesthood is exercised and

institutionalized in our Churches clearly makes it very hard for a lot of women to feel it belongs to them. Priesthood has got imprisoned, in our Churches. And I become more and more convinced that a major factor in this imprisonment is the fact that our priesthood is all male.

Maleness and the priestly image of Christ

I have argued that it is essential, in the kind of priesthood we have, to safeguard the truth that the real president at our Eucharists is the male Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. But those who rush in to argue that *therefore* the priest must be male, to represent Jesus' maleness, prove curiously reticent on the matter of Jesus' Jewishness—or for that matter any other aspect of who he was. It remains for them to explain why Jesus' sexuality is singled out as needing direct representation.

One argument I have heard from the Orthodox is that the priest represents Christ the bridegroom, come to woo back his bride the Church. This is never pressed so far as to conclude what gender the congregation ought to be to represent the bride! The image is beautiful and powerful in the way it holds together our two dimensions of sexuality and priesthood, and so helps us understand the loving dimension of mystical prayer and the eucharistic dimension of marital love. Nevertheless it only places our question one step further back: why should this aspect of Christ be felt to need imaging at the altar, and not say that in which Christ likens himself to a mother hen gathering her chicks (Matt. 23.37, Luke 13.34)? Here one suspects the workings of a way of thinking much older than Christianity, which associates the male with the divine, with initiative and sovereignty, and the female with the earthly, with humility and patience. This ideology is perhaps the persistent root of sexist attitudes even in our own day. Yet in Christ we see the divine come to us precisely in the earthly and humble, in patience and passion.

The only other argument I have heard on this issue is less poetic, more philosophical. It argues that Christ's maleness needs representing because it is essential to his humanity, while Jewishness and other features are only accidental—the form his humanity happened to take. I am not quite sure whether the argument is that maleness is essential to Jesus' person—to his being who he was—on the shaky grounds that sex changes change our personal identity in a way that race changes (if possible!) do not. Or whether it means that maleness is essential to humanity in general, in which case we are back to the gnostic way of turning women into human beings. Of course, one can argue that sexual differentiation is essential to humanity in a way in which racial differentiation is not, in that one can envisage an interbred, racially monochrome humanity, but not a unisex humanity capable of self-perpetuation. (There might, of course, be some alternative means of reproduction; but there would then be

strong arguments for saying we were dealing with a new post-human species.) However, all we can get from this is the obvious point that Christ, to be human, had to be sexual—one sex or the other!

So neither of these ways seems to prove that one needs to be a man to represent Christ. Which is perhaps just as well; because if by some means that were proven, it would be hard then to see how women could be Christian, or redeemed. For redemption surely involves a growing into the image of Christ; and to be Christian is to be in some sense Christ's representative in the world. Here we see how the exclusion of women from the priesthood locks women away from far more than the ministerial priesthood, and prevents the latter from being a sacrament—an effective sign—of our belonging to Christ, man and woman alike, all sharing in the blessings of his priestly offering.

It is Christ's sexuality, not his actual maleness, that is essential to his being human. Yet curiously our all-male priesthood—along with a lot of other misleading imagery and thought, no doubt—has got this the wrong way about (though whether as the cause, or the consequence, of the confusion, I do not know). We have confusedly seen Jesus as definitely male, yet only hazily sexual. Asking questions about whether he did, or even could, participate in the many-sided beauty of human sexual expression which covers not just the sexual union itself, but the kiss, the cuddle, the wink, the dance, provokes distaste and embarrassment precisely, I suggest, in those quarters most anxious to assert Jesus' maleness through the masculine priesthood. So the masculine priesthood asserts not the real, sexual humanity of the divine Son, but a curious quasi-divinity of masculinity divorced from sex. Jesus is being used to make a point about male authority. In the process he is imprisoned, as is priesthood, and male sexuality. In each case a life and a living power is turned to a dumb idol, frozen into a static travesty of itself. For in real life maleness, is no more a private possession than priesthood or Christhood; it exists only in the interplay with its opposite in the human sexual dance.

As a recently ordained priest myself I have felt the subtle pressures—and attractions—to be a figure of male authority and initiative, rather than a vessel of the humble passion of Christ. And certainly I sense even in my own reactions a real (and justified) horror at the spectacle of women being inserted into this male-dominated role, and thereby unsexed. But that is only a spectacle, a fantasy not borne out by the potential women priests I have met. In reality I can see women liberating the priesthood to its true purpose and dynamism, restoring features of it that were always there, but locked away, or marginalized.

We are accustomed to seeing the priest as pastor, shepherd of his flock, father of his people; but has he not always also represented God as mother, the one who feeds and nurtures Christ in his people? In the icon of Our Lady, *Zoodochos Pēgē*, fount of life,

feeding the Lord of Life from her own breast, the Church has adored this giving; but though Our Lady holds out to the world the image of his body as the priest holds out before us the sacrament of his body, the connection has not been made. Perhaps it is for the woman priest to make it. Again, we have seen the priest as apostle, preacher, prophet, the representative who comes in God's name, to speak the word that changes hearts and consecrates our offering and our lives. Would a woman priest not make it clearer that the priest has always also been the listener, the receptive one who waits till she discerns the word that has been sown deep in our hearts, and enables us so to speak it that it grows to become for us the bread—the whole substance—of life? Finally, we have seen the priest as he who takes our offering and invokes the Spirit on it to make it the offering of Christ; but surely the woman priest would make it clearer that this is midwife's work—bringing the Christ which the Spirit has conceived in us to birth, fruition, and final offering? As St Paul put it, 'My little children, with whom I am again in travail, until Christ be formed in you!' (Gal. 4.19).

It is here, at any rate, that the real issue lies; whether the way women priests would change our image of Christ represents a betrayal or a rediscovery of the God who has revealed himself to us in Christ. My own view is that the Christian tradition has grown through a series of revolutionary breaks, each of which shows us the radical implications of scriptural revelation bursting out of the dead-weight of its former context. The mission to the Gentiles; Nicaea; the Reformation; and now women priests. For we have grown accustomed to seeing God in exclusively 'male' terms of sovereignty and initiative breaking into history from beyond. But Vanstone has recently made it clear that it is equally scriptural to see God in 'feminine' terms of waiting and passion,³ upholding the world with 'the everlasting arms'. And tradition teaches us to see God not only as the sovereign one, but as the triune dance.⁴ For he is Spirit as well as word, response as well as initiative, immanent indweller as well as transcendent origin; not only the truth that compels us but the beauty that allures us and begets our initiative in the first place. He is Father, Son and Spirit, beyond us, beside us and within us. And if the priest exists to guide our human dance—including our sexual dance—in all its richness, and all its pain, into the Triune dance, the priestly offering of God the Child to God the Father in God the Spirit, if this is what the priest is for, it needs those qualities which woman represents; and therefore needs some priests who are in fact women.

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Notes

- 1 cf. the ending of the *Gospel According to Thomas*.
- 2 I owe this thought to Schmemann, in *The World as Sacrament*, DLT 1966.

- 3 *The Stature of Waiting*, DLT 1982. 'Feminine' is my interpretation of the implications of Vanstone for the present argument; I do not know whether he himself would draw this implication, but I think it is there to be drawn.
- 4 'Dance' is one free translation of the term *perichoresis*, often more prosaically translated 'circumincession'. It means going in and through and around each other as in a dance where the three form one figure, yet remain distinct.

'Adam, the Type of the One to Come'

JOHN MUDDIMAN

With these words, St Paul stumbled upon the terms of an equation which was to influence profoundly the later development of Christian theology: Adam as the type for Christ.¹ But their significance for Paul originally was of a quite different order; not systematic but apologetic, not a doctrinal abstraction, but an instance of the argument from Old Testament prophecy.

The early Christians were well aware that they could never win the argument from prophecy, if its terms were fixed in advance by the Jewish expectation of a Davidic Messiah. For the cross of Jesus stood as the inescapable negation of such hopes. Fulfilment, as they experienced it was of the paradoxical variety. It was fulfilment that called prophecy into question, and the argument from messianic prophecy, therefore, becomes for the early Church a distinctly secondary and domestic activity: it was a matter of building up and reinforcing the faith of those from whose eyes the veil of unbelief had already, by God's grace, been lifted. Once remove the veil, of course, and not only those texts which Jewish opponents might concede to be messianic, not even principally those texts, but the Scriptures in their entirety could be reinterpreted as pointing forward to Christ. In Luke's Gospel the risen Jesus says to his disciples on the walk to Emmaus:

'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (24.25-7).

The New Testament itself then already attempts to move the discussion away from particularist arguments concerning the Son of David, and on to the universal question of Christ and man. The developing concept of the Son of Man in the Gospels, and the first and last Adam in Paul are the evidence for such a shift.

Jewish thinkers had, admittedly, themselves tried to bring Adam within the ambit of messianic prophecy. At his advent the Messiah