

Ordination to the Priesthood: 'That the one who acts in the person of Christ the Head must needs be male but need not be a Jew'

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If a priest must be male in order to represent Christ who was and is male, must he then be Jewish in order to represent Christ who was and is Jewish? My first aim is to clarify what I call the various elements or levels that go into or have gone into an explanation of the Church's practice of not ordaining women. I am concerned here only with the reservation to men of the priestly or sacerdotal grades of the sacrament of order, namely the episcopate and the presbyterate (bishops and priests). I say this before going any further, because at one time 'ordination' had a very wide application, including to deaconesses, abbesses, empresses and so on. My discussion, however, will not even comment on the question of ordaining women to the diaconate, but is restricted to the priestly grades of order. My second aim is to ask how the relationships of Christ's maleness and his Jewishness to the economy of salvation differ in such a way that though his priestly representative must needs be male he need not be a Jew. Thus I shall include here discussion of arguments for the restriction of the priestly grades to men only, particularly insofar as they might seem to imply that a priest must needs be not only male but also Jewish. I shall pursue my second aim against the background of the first, thus placing the question of maleness, Jewishness, Christ and the priesthood, in its wider theological-explanatory context. I shall begin my clarification of the various levels of explanation of the Church's practice with Pope John Paul II's *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, which was issued in 1994.

In this apostolic letter addressed to his brother bishops, Pope John Paul opened a new phase in the history of the explanation of why the Catholic Church so restricts admission to the priesthood. *Inter Insigniores*, a document issued in 1976 by what was then called the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, had stated in its introduction that the Church 'does not consider herself authorised to admit women to priestly ordination'. However, in concluding *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, Pope John Paul stated more strongly:

... I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgement is to be held definitively by all the faithful.

His explicit intention was to reject an explanation of the Church's practice as merely disciplinary, presumably one for which the Church had had reasons but which she could now change. The Pope instead holds that the Church's practice goes together with a lack of authority to ordain women to the priesthood, yielding the explicit conclusion that the question of ordaining women was not open for debate.

He was making his concluding declaration, the Pope said, in virtue of his (Petrine) ministry of strengthening his brothers, so that there might be no doubt on this matter of great importance, which pertained to the divine constitution of the Church. The declaration itself was not an exercise of the Pope's infallible extraordinary magisterium, since it clearly did not fulfil the conditions required for such a definition. However, its language was nevertheless reminiscent of infallibility, particularly in the choice of the word 'definitively', by which it went significantly beyond *Inter Insigniores*. Since a teaching of the Church is—on what I shall assume are sound theological principles—either infallible and definitive or non-infallible and non-definitive, something to be 'held definitively by all the faithful' must therefore be infallibly taught. At first, some supposed something novel had been proposed: a definitive teaching that was not infallible.¹ However, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, in a subsequent reply to a query on this very matter, said that infallibility was indeed linked to this definitive teaching, an infallibility derived however not from the Pope's confirmatory act of declaration in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, but from what theologians call the Church's 'ordinary and universal magisterium'. It was therefore the latter authority which definitively and infallibly judged that the Church had no authority to confer priestly ordination on women: the Pope had simply confirmed that authority's judgement, and had done so non-infallibly.²

What is to be understood though by the 'ordinary and universal magisterium'? An answer may be found in paragraph 25 of the Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium*. There it speaks of the bishops exercising infallibility on the following conditions: (i) they preserve communion among themselves and with the successor of Peter, even when dispersed throughout the world; and (ii) in their authoritative teaching concerning faith and morals, they agree that a particular teaching is to be held 'definitively and absolutely'. When those conditions are met, we have what theologians call the 'ordinary and universal magisterium'. It is evident that the latter is to be distinguished from the non-infallible exercise by individual bishops of the ordinary magisterium, as well as from those infallible definitions made by popes or ecumenical councils of bishops according to their 'extraordinary magisterium'. Once the

Congregation had stated that the definitive character of the judgement in question corresponded in *this* way to the Church's infallible magisterium, and spoke of it as pertaining to the deposit of faith, some supposed that it had been intended to set forth the teaching as a matter divinely revealed, something to be believed by way of the theological virtue of faith.³ This supposition, however, ignored the twofold character of the object of infallibility, the two related ways in which teachings can pertain to faith's revealed deposit.

Lumen Gentium goes on to say that infallibility is 'co-extensive with the deposit of revelation, which must be religiously guarded and loyally and courageously expounded'. An official explanation of the latter part of this quotation was given to the Fathers of the Council by its Theological Commission:

The object of the infallibility of the Church, thus explained, has the same extension as the revealed deposit; hence it extends to all those things, and only to those, which either directly pertain to the revealed deposit itself, or are required in order that the same deposit may be religiously guarded and faithfully expounded ...⁴

This explanation invokes the theological distinction between a primary and a secondary object of infallibility, two ways in which something may pertain to the deposit of revelation, the secondary object being matters closely related to the primary object, and the primary object being what has been *directly* revealed. Another formulation of the secondary object of infallibility is to be found in the second paragraph of the 'Profession of Faith' required of clerics and others since 1990.

I give here the first and second paragraphs: '[i] With firm faith, I also believe everything contained in the word of God, whether written or handed down in Tradition, which the Church, either by a solemn judgement or by the ordinary and universal magisterium, sets forth to be believed as divinely revealed. [ii] I also firmly accept and hold each and every thing definitively proposed by the Church, regarding teaching on faith and morals.'

Again, the language of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* and the language of infallibility cohere, and they do so with regard to infallibility's secondary object. So the judgement that the Church has no authority to ordain women to the priesthood is attributed to the definitive teaching of the bishops of the Catholic Church concerning a matter not directly revealed but nevertheless regarding faith and morals, a matter not to be believed by faith but rather definitively held on the basis of that same faith: it is a matter not among the *credenda de fide* but among the *tenenda (definitive) de fide*.⁵

I conclude then that presupposed to the Pope's declaration in

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis was his prior judgement that the restriction of the priesthood to men was already definitively taught by his brother bishops in communion with him: his aim as Peter's successor was just to strengthen them in what they were already doing. In this way he sought to remove any doubt from those who thought the Church's practice merely one of ecclesiastical discipline: given that the Church's lack of authority was definitively taught by the episcopate, it was to be definitively held by the faithful. Some may of course question his (non-infallible) judgement that the bishops were in fact already teaching in this manner. If the Pope was wrong about what the bishops were doing, his confirmation would be meaningless, based as it would be on an error from which the papal office would not necessarily protect him. In that case, it would become impossible to hold that the matter was definitively and infallibly taught. However, as Benedict M. Ashley OP suggests,⁶ the burden of proof is with those who maintain that this criterion for infallibility, that is, of the matter's having been taught by the ordinary and universal magisterium, has not been met. Moreover, the co-operation of episcopal conferences in publishing the letter might be taken to suggest that the Pope's judgement concerning the episcopate is not incorrect. The burden of proof, as Ashley says, lies with those who think the judgement of the bishops otherwise. If they are waiting for a future pontificate for it to emerge that the bishops in fact teach as they suppose rather than as the Pope supposes, they must also reckon on the possibility that a new pontificate may only serve to confirm the position of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*.

It is claimed then that it is an object of the Church's infallible teaching authority that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women. This is moreover the only explanation of the Church's practice of not ordaining women that *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* says is definitive and therefore implies is infallible. It is not however the only level of explanation that is offered in the apostolic letter as a whole. The fact that the Church has no authority to ordain women priests itself calls out for an explanation: whence is the lack of authority derived? Since the magisterium is the servant of the Word of God, it is no surprise that the ordination of men only has grounds found for it in Scripture, that is, in Christ's choice for his apostles of twelve men: the Church then followed Christ's example as a perennial norm in its choice of priests. Of course a further question may then be raised: what reasons might there be to make sense of Christ's choice of men only, that is, why did he choose only men?

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis gives no specific answers to this question, but recognises that there are 'other theological reasons which illustrate the appropriateness of the divine provision', noting that reasons of this kind had been presented by *Inter Insigniores*. So we are here uncovering various

layers of explanation, which may be pursued in a manner consonant with St Anselm's 'faith seeking understanding': the Church seeks out explanations for what is taken as given in its faith and practice. In this case, the practice of the Church is explained by (1) the Church's judgement that she has no authority to ordain women, a judgement that is now said by Pope John Paul to be definitive. (1) is in turn explained by (2), the example of Christ in choosing only men, to which the Church has subsequently been faithful. Christ's will and action may then be given further explanations to show why they were appropriate and fitting, arguments *ex convenientia* by which theology explores the reasonableness of Christ's will and action. While *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* explicitly names no particular instances of such further explanation, I shall be largely concerned with the following elements of explanation, of which (5) is now regarded by Catholic theologians as of no more than historical interest: (3) the sacramental principle of signification; (4) the theological importance of the maleness of Christ; and (5) the supposed natural subordination of women to men, further compounded by sin. While not necessarily the only elements of explanation that have ever been or may ever be offered, some or all of these have figured in those theories which have been of the greatest importance to the question and of which I shall make mention here. I shall now say something about element (2), before going on to the others.

I suggest that it was always generally assumed that the Church was following Christ's example by ordaining only men just as he had appointed only men as his apostles. However, the fact that St Paul (I prescind from the question of the authorship of 1 Tim. 2:11-14 and 1 Cor. 14:34-35) had recorded in writing a prohibition on public preaching by women meant that Church authorities had something more readily quotable than a more complicated appeal to Christ's will and action. Moreover, given the strength of ecclesial practice, there are in fact few historical references to the question of the sacerdotal ordination of women, and so very few references to the example of Christ in connection with it. Women's ordination did not become a topic of theological investigation until the high scholastic age of the thirteenth century. Before then the topic was more one treated legally in the canons and canonical commentary.⁷ Ecclesiastical legislation can be traced back in written form first to the Pauline prohibition but then also to post-biblical documents such as the Syrian third-century *Didascalia Apostolorum*, which refers to Christ's own action. For example, women are said to be banned from teaching on account of the fact that Christ did not include his female disciples, namely, Mary Magdalene and the other two Marys, among the Twelve, which he would have done, we are told, if women were to teach.⁸ The Fathers of the Church do remark unfavourably on heretical sects

which accorded women functions they considered priestly, but they often concentrate more on objectionable features that accompany individual cases rather than on the ordination of women as such, and so rarely have cause to make an explicit appeal to the example of Christ. However, against the Collyridian ordination of women, St Epiphanius does explicitly invoke Christ's not including his mother among his apostles. If women were to be charged with becoming priests, it would have been given to no one before Mary, but Christ did not will it.⁹ The example of Mary entered into the legal tradition of the Church early in the thirteenth century, when in 1210 Pope Innocent III wrote to the bishop of Burgos and abbot of Morimundo, banning the hearing of confessions by abbesses: even though Mary was more worthy and illustrious than all the apostles, it was to them and not to her that Christ had entrusted the keys to the kingdom of heaven.¹⁰ Reference to Mary being called neither to the mission of the apostles nor to priestly functions then continues right up to John Paul II in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*.

Treatment of the question moved from canon law to theology in the thirteenth century, when theologians began to comment on the twelfth-century *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, though Peter had not himself raised the question of women's ordination. Now the action of Christ was part of the theological discussion from its very beginning, in the lectures given by Richard Fishacre, a Dominican of Blackfriars, Oxford, who died in 1248. Fishacre endorsed the standard canonical view that an ordination of a woman would be not just illicit but also invalid 'by the impediment of her sex and the Church's constitution',¹¹ and after his quotations from the canons added that Christ had given the keys not to Mary but to Peter, despite the fact that she was more excellent than any of the apostles (though the authority of Pope Innocent for this point is not cited).¹² Later in the thirteenth century, the Franciscan friar Richard of Middleton more explicitly stated that Christ had instituted the sacrament of order for conferral on men only, not women.¹³ However, the appeal to the example of Christ was given more thorough theological expression early in the the fourteenth century in connection with the question of the *justice* of not ordaining women.

John Hilary Martin OP finds here the tendency to treat orders as a gift effective for the personal salvation of the one who receives it, such that one can ask how something conducive to personal salvation can be justly denied someone.¹⁴ The Franciscan friar, Bl. Duns Scotus, agreed that women were simply unable to be ordained and not just forbidden by law from ordination. This fact he traces back not to a decision of the Church, but to Christ. Scotus is the first to state that:

the Church would not have presumed to have deprived, without guilt on her part, the entire female sex from an act which could have befitted her licitly, which was ordained for the salvation of woman and of others in the Church through her, because that would appear to be of the greatest injustice, not only if done to the whole sex, but also if done only to a few persons. But if it were now licit by divine law that it befit women to hold ecclesiastical order, it would be able to be effective for the salvation both of them and of others through them. And when the apostle said, 'I do not permit a woman to teach' (1 Tim. 2:12), having in mind public teaching in church, he was speaking not as one establishing a statute, but he said 'I do not permit ...' because Christ did not permit it.¹⁵

The mother of Christ was the holiest of women without equal in sanctity among the members of the Church—remember that Scotus is the most celebrated proponent of her immaculate conception—and yet she was not given any grade of order.

Another Franciscan of the time, Antonio Andreas, also argues that the non-ordination of women derives not from the Church but from Christ, who did not bestow orders even on his mother, who exceeded every other pure creature in sanctity: if the Church had on her own authority excluded the whole female sex from such a dignity, the Church would have sinned, especially since order is given not only for others but also for the recipient's own perfection.¹⁶ The eminent Dominican bishop, Durandus of St-Pourçain, taught that the non-ordination of women did not derive from the apostles, who could only thereby have incurred the guilt of prejudice in denying the female sex a dignity useful for salvation—something even worse than a comparable prejudice in temporal matters. It derived instead from the institution of Christ, who gave the power of consecrating the eucharist and forgiving sins only to men, not even to his mother, the holiest of women. Paul's injunctions are said to be what he had himself received from Christ.¹⁷ Another Dominican, Peter de la Palude, follows Durandus, adding that the pope has no authority to grant a dispensation for a woman to be ordained, in effect deriving a form of explanatory element (1) from (2).¹⁸ All these friars flourished in the first half of the fourteenth century, and their denial that the Church rather than her founder was the source of the restriction of priestly ordination to men seems to have been based in a certain concern for justice. Another reason may have been that the stronger voluntarism, which had arisen in theology in reaction to the Aristotle-inspired necessitarianism of the previous century, was conducive to an appeal to the free decision of Christ's will.¹⁹ However, the growth of voluntarism in theology in general in the second half of the fourteenth century and its manifestation in William of Ockham's influential style of theology can be linked to a lessening of interest in sacramental theology in general and so also to a lack of interest

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in the question treated here.²⁰

The approach of the early fourteenth century may be contrasted with the more symbolic thirteenth-century approach of the Franciscan St Bonaventure and the Dominican St Thomas Aquinas. Now both, like Scotus and his successors, inherited the standard view of canonists that the ordination of a woman would be not merely illicit but invalid. However, neither raises the question of women's ordination from the point of view of justice, thereby going on to make an explicit appeal to Christ's will and action. Instead of the predominance of element (2) in their explanations of the Church's practice, they appeal to element (3): signification. Bonaventure lectured on the *Sentences* from 1250 to 1252. In his own solution to the question of why a woman simply cannot be ordained, Bonaventure says that 'the person who is ordained signifies Christ the mediator', he represents him. This fits with what he says elsewhere about the priesthood: the priest is ordained principally to celebrate the sacraments, especially the eucharist, and when he does so and says the words of consecration, he speaks 'in the person of Christ'. Moreover, he is ordained to act as a mediator in the sacrament of penance, a human being who has the place of God. Thomas, who lectured on the *Sentences* shortly after Bonaventure, also wants to explain how the ordination of women is not simply illicit but invalid. In so doing he also appeals to signification. Since a sacrament is a sign, he says, it requires not only the reality (*res*) of the sacrament but also the signification of that reality. The example he gives is the anointing of the sick, where it is required that the recipient of the sacrament be sick, otherwise there would be no signification of the need of healing. Thomas also speaks of the priest as celebrating the eucharist 'in the person of Christ', and also bearing Christ's image, just as the celebration of the eucharist is an image representing Christ's passion and the altar is representative of the cross.²¹

Despite the fact that both Bonaventure and Thomas include (3) in their explanations, they do not use it in precisely the same way. Bonaventure, for example, links (3) directly to (4) and Thomas links (3) to (5). For Bonaventure, the priest must be male because he represents Christ who is male:

Since the mediator was only of the male sex and can only be signified through the male sex, the possibility of receiving orders befits only men, who are alone naturally able to represent him and, according to the reception of the character, actually bear a sign of him. This position is more probable, and can be proved by many authorities from the saints.²²

This argument is presented by Bonaventure to make sense of his claim that the restriction of orders to men is derived not so much from some institution of the Church as from the fact that this sacrament does

not befit women. Bonaventure does not appeal explicitly to an institution by Christ, but it seems to be implied that Christ made his choice of apostles according to this same symbolic fittingness and the Church has followed him in this same way. There is no sense of Christ making a choice of men only when he might just as easily have chosen otherwise, but rather a sense of how Christ and the Church act in harmony with the divinely-established symbolic character of reality. Martin says that Bonaventure's argument depends ultimately on his pervasive understanding of the relationship between God and humanity as paralleled by the ideal relationship of man and woman in their complementary roles: as woman gives rest and a sense of fulfilment to man and man provides for and supports the life of woman, so the Church is the place where God finds rest and through Christ the mediator he guides and directs her. This symbolism features again in one of the arguments Bonaventure had recorded before going on to his own solution: a bishop is the spouse of his church, such that only a man can be a bishop, and since the episcopate is prepared for by all the other orders, that goes for the other orders too.

Aquinas gave the greater prominence in his argument to (5)—women's 'subjection' to men—which like (2) had a history behind it. He argues that just as someone sick is required for the reception of the sacrament of the sick, in order to signify the need of healing, so someone male is needed for the reception of the sacrament of order, in order to signify eminence of degree or grade. Someone of the female sex cannot signify this eminence, Thomas says, because woman 'is in a state of subjection'.²³ The person who signifies must be able to signify what they are meant to signify, and in this case only the male sex will do, since not being subject as is the female sex, only the male sex is able to represent authority (which is of course the authority of Christ himself). These views manifest themselves in how Thomas answers the objections he puts to his position. One is that a woman can be a prophet, an office that itself mediates between God and priests. Being a prophet, he replies, is a gift of God but not a sacrament, so there is no need for the signification of the reality, but only the reality itself. Moreover, in the soul there is no difference between man and woman with regard to the reality, as is clear from the fact that women can be better than men in things of the soul, but while that is enough to make a woman suitable to be a prophet, that is not the case for priesthood where one is concerned with signification by the priest's bodily sex. Again there is no explicit reference to the example of Christ: Thomas no doubt presumes that both Christ and then the Church after him acted in a way that accorded with the nature of sacramental signification and women's subordinate status.

Another witness to the symbolic approach is Peter of Tarantaise, who

later became Pope Innocent V. His commentary on the *Sentences* was written between 1259 and 1264, and in it he relied heavily on Thomas and Bonaventure. Peter's reasons why women cannot be ordained are that preaching is not permitted them and that men are somehow 'more immediate to God' than women.²⁴ This he bases on 1 Cor. 11:3–9: where Paul says that man is the image and glory of God, while woman is the glory of man. Here (3) and (5) are again found in combination: imaging God in a way that woman does not, man is in a position to lead rather than be led by her. But while (3) and (5) is Thomas' combination, Peter seems also to be influenced in this point by Bonaventure. While Thomas makes no mention of element (4), (5) does in fact appear in Bonaventure's account along with (4). Among the arguments given prior to his own response to the question, there is an argument that only someone who bears the image of God, namely, someone of the male sex, can receive the sacrament, because its recipient is somehow 'divine' as participating in divine power.

Bonaventure does put the argument in favour of ordaining that order pertains to the soul which is sexless and according to which *both* women and men are in the image of God. His reply is that order pertains to the sexless soul not considered in isolation but in union with the body, and here once again we meet the principle of signification necessary to the sacrament. Philip Lyndon Reynolds adds that, for Bonaventure, in terms of sexual differentiation, a man is a better image of God than woman, because he is the source of woman and has authority over her as her head.²⁵ Another argument Bonaventure considers for ordaining women is Deborah's position as having judiciary power over Israel. His reply is that it is licit for women to have temporal though not spiritual power, the reason being that the one who has spiritual power bears a 'type of Christ the Head'. Since, however woman cannot be the head of man, his superior, she cannot be ordained. Reynolds submits that when Bonaventure argues that the priest must be male to represent the male Christ the mediator, this presupposes that a mediator must be superior, such that (4) is not independent of depends on (5).²⁶ If Reynolds is right, then at least in Bonaventure (4) is very much bound up with (5). This is important to realise because just as Thomas combines (3) and (5) without (4), so *Inter Insigniores* and theologians of the latter part of the twentieth century have combined (3) with (4) while rejecting (5), making (4) to stand on its own two feet as it were. Their use of (4) can then be only critical retrieval of Bonaventure, and no mere repetition of his doctrine.

Martin writes how, as the thirteenth century drew to a close theologians 'lost interest, and perhaps confidence, in the force of [the previous generation's] symbolic explanations'.²⁷ He tells how the view of

the world as a kind of image of the divine, together with a strong sacramental theology, lost its prominence. Richard of Middleton still links element (3) with (5), though with the explicit addition of standard assumptions concerning the weakness of women in intellect and affections. Again a student's *reportatio* of Scotus's lectures on the *Sentences* at Paris still has a fleeting reference to (3) in combination with (5),²⁸ but the version of his Oxford lectures, which Scotus himself edited, carries no reference to (3) at all, simply combining (5) with (2). Thereafter symbolism loses altogether the centrality it had had for Bonaventure and Thomas and Scotus's successors (whom I have already mentioned) combine (2) with (5) or perhaps, like another fourteenth-century Franciscan, Francis of Mayro,²⁹ simply make use of (5), though that was something that had always been an option for shorter treatments.³⁰ However, in the twentieth century, there were theologians who not only noted the decline of symbolism in theology generally in the middle ages, but also attempted to revive such a symbolic approach for the Church and theology of their own day.

At the same time, ideas of the subordination of women lost the place they had previously held among popes, bishops and theologians. Sara Butler tells how, during his pontificate, Pius XII ceased to locate woman's dignity primarily in her motherhood, locating it instead in her personhood. This was linked to an emphasis on the complementary roles of man and woman in equal dignity, which passed then into the teaching of Paul VI and that of John Paul II, who has spoken not only of the equality of man and woman but of their complementarity and their *mutual* subjection one to another (cf. Eph.5:21), where the husband, though the 'head' of the wife, is also subject to her.³¹ Of course, just as there are those who wish to argue that *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* is not infallible and then reject its claims, so some might want to argue that these developments themselves are not infallible. If they wanted to do so, they would find it easy, since it is either a case of the non-definitive ordinary magisterium of the pope or an individual bishop, or of the corporate magisterium of the bishops (for example, Vatican II's call in paragraph 29 of *Gaudium et Spes* for the eradication of social and cultural discrimination on the grounds of sex) where it may easily urged that, though acting in communion, they were nevertheless not teaching definitively, fulfilling only the first of the two criteria for the ordinary and universal magisterium.

However, no serious theologian has done this, and all those who argue for the Church's teaching on the exclusion of women from ordination also hold to the Church's teaching on the equality of men and women as certainly true if not infallibly taught. Since their wider theology must encompass both these aspects, (5) is rejected altogether, and in

regard to the ordination of women they link (4) with (3), adding (2) also. I should say that, if it is true that the theologians of the thirteenth century did not feel the need to make an explicit appeal to (2) on account of their confidence in (3), it does not necessarily follow that more recent theologians will not experience that need. First, (2) has simply entered theology in a powerful way since the thirteenth century such that it is perhaps just there to stay. Where the question was treated in modern times other than by repeating the words of one of the medievals, Christ's choice of only men as apostles, the apostles' choice of only men as the seven deacons, and so on, is a yet more prominent factor.³² Secondly, once the assumptions of (5) have been rejected, (4) may seem weaker when standing alone and so the need for (2) is more keenly felt. Finally, for all the efforts of theologians, a symbolic view of the world is perhaps no stronger today than it was in late medieval times. The very fact that theologians feel the need to promote the mentality of (3), rather than appeal to a common assumption of the importance of symbolism, renders an appeal to (2) more pressing. So (3) was very much invoked in the latter part of the twentieth century in conjunction with (2).

(2) is of course itself not as easily asserted in more recent times as it was late medieval times. Greater awareness of historical conditioning in general has prompted the suspicion that Christ was historically conditioned by something like (5) in his choice of men only, such that the Church, having herself been freed of the conditioning of (5), is now free to ordain women. *Inter Insigniores* and its defenders respond that Christ was not so conditioned but free in his choice, referring to other indications that in his dealings with women Christ was free from the assumptions of his time, and this view also appears in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. I should add in passing that making Christ the source of an exclusion considered sinful in itself might also raise problems for the reality of redemption. It could be objected that Christ's choice was determinative only temporarily, but against that it may be urged that (3) and (4) are such as to have permanent validity. Then there are other objections which are quite clearly incompatible with Catholic teaching, since they presuppose that Christ instituted neither the sacrament itself nor perhaps even the Church. Then there have been objections raised against the notion of the priest representing Christ. Edward J. Kilmartin SJ has argued that the priest first of all represents the Church, thus representing Christ only indirectly.³³ However, *Inter Insigniores* and its defenders take the view that the priest represents the Church because he is in the first place acting in the person of Christ.³⁴ Dennis Michael Ferrara, who rejects Kilmartin's position, holds that the priest acting in the person of Christ does not in any way make him a 'representation' of Christ, and attempts to ground his position in the

teaching of St Thomas.³⁵ Ferrara has then had to face the replies of his critics.³⁶ However, in the remainder of this article, I wish to concentrate on none of these, but on another objection that I have often heard popularly put to the arguments of *Inter Insigniores* and its allies, namely, that a combination of (3) and (4) would imply that it is not only necessary that the priest be male because Christ was and is male, but also that he be Jewish because Christ was and is Jewish. This can then be linked to (2) — Christ chose only Jews to be apostles — and then to (1) — the Church would have no authority to ordain non-Jews. Since, however, it is generally taken to be absurd that the priest must necessarily be Jewish, not only is the application of these arguments to Christ's Jewishness rejected, but doubt is also cast on their application to his maleness.

Inter Insigniores responds to the objection that since Christ is now in heavenly glory, where there is no marrying, it matters not whether a man or woman represent him. The document replies that the distinction between man and woman, insofar as it relates to the identity proper to the person, is not suppressed in heaven. Then comes the following assertion:

It is indeed evident that in human beings the difference of sex exercises an important influence, much deeper than, for example, ethnic differences: the latter do not affect the human person as intimately as the difference of sex, which is directly ordained both for the communion of persons and for the generation of human beings. In Biblical Revelation this difference is the effect of God's will from the beginning . . .³⁷

One might discern here just the merest trace of a suggestion that it is on account of the fact that sex is somehow 'deeper' in a person than ethnicity that Christ's maleness but not his Jewishness has a certain significance which must be continued in his priestly representative. However, the document makes no such suggestion, at least explicitly, and in any case such an argument would appear rather weak. Now Ashley³⁸ records that Sandra M. Schneiders, in her critique of *Inter Insigniores* (which I have not been able to consult), asserts that to the contrary ethnic differences are more significant than gender. She holds — not unreasonably — that Christ chose only Jews for the Twelve because of the latter's unique function of representing redeemed Israel, but she asserts this function to the exclusion of their priesthood. Schneiders says that this calling of only Jews indicated nothing therefore for the future Church. Since ethnic differences, which are more significant, have been set aside, then so may gender. Her conclusion is that the Church may now ordain women as priests. But whether or not sexual and gender difference is more significant in general, theologians must presumably be able to produce some further reason why Jesus' ethnicity need not be continued in

his priestly representative while his sex must needs be, a reason why Christ's choice of only men is determinative for the Church but not his choice of only Jews. There must presumably be some reason why ethnicity can be set aside but gender not, whichever may happen to be deeper within the human person. Though a supporter of *Inter Insigniores* can agree that the apostles had to be Jewish for a reason such as Schneiders gives, they have to be able to distinguish a different reason why they had to be male, a particular reason which extends the requirement of maleness to the priest while the particular reason for the apostles' Jewishness requires no such extension.

Now no one argues that the priest must be like Christ in every respect. For example, there is no support for the idea that the priest must have the same coloured eyes as Christ to represent him, and no one supposes he set out to choose twelve men of his own eye-colour. The most obvious way to distinguish eye-colour from sex here might be to say that while Christ's particular eye-colour is of no theological significance, his maleness is. While that may be true, that would be no way to exclude the importance here of Christ's Jewishness, since his Jewishness is undoubtedly of theological import. God gave the Jewish people a special calling in the economy of salvation, one with implications for the whole human race and so it is of immense theological significance that Jesus be Jewish. The formal reason that makes something significant rather than insignificant in this regard must be one more specific than mere theological significance in general. Again, no one supposes that only ordained priests can be representatives of Christ. All Christians can no doubt represent Christ in a wider sense in their everyday lives, and this can be linked to their own sharing in Christ's priesthood distinct from that particular to the ordained priest. No one supposes that they need have Christ's eye-colour, race, or even gender to do this. If it be objected that the same lack of requirements must apply to Christ's ordained representative, the obvious response is that ordained priestly representation is of a different kind.

Theologians normally link this 'different kind' to Christ's headship of the Church. Vatican II said in *Presbyterorum Ordinis* both that the priest represents Christ in special way' and that he acts 'in the person of Christ the Head.'³⁹ This implies that the priest represents Christ precisely as the latter is related to the Church as her Head. If it is thought to connect Christ's maleness with this headship on the basis of some alleged superiority of men over women implied by headship, then the rejection of (5) means that such a move would be unacceptable such that the connection between his maleness and headship be sought instead in (3) and (4). But one must also reject any easy dismissal of a connection between Christ's headship and his ethnicity. It is significant for the economy of

salvation not only that Jesus be a Jew, but also that he be the King of the Jews, the Messiah, Christ. It is precisely as the anointed Head of the Jewish people that Jesus can somehow 'refund' his people in his own person and work, so that he is then Head of the new Israel of the Church, which comprises Jew and Gentile alike. So if the special representing of Christ the Head must necessarily involve maleness, then why must it not also involve Jewishness, since Christ's headship is first of all the headship of Israel, that nation with unique meaning for the whole world?

Before I go any further, I should distinguish a representation from a representative.⁴⁰ On the wall of my room, I have an artistic representation of Jesus and Mary as Japanese. Though they were not Japanese, I have no problem in identifying these figures as Jesus and Mary, and the same is the case for me with representations of them as black Africans or white Europeans, neither of which they in fact were. I think that any other reasonable person would share my view, whatever initial difficulties they might encounter. But while I have no problem with 'There's a Japanese Jesus and Mary', I would have trouble with 'There's a male Mary and a female Jesus'. I simply could not recognise Mary pictured as a man and Jesus pictured as a girl as representations of Jesus and Mary in any proper sense, and I think that that is the case for almost everyone. Now all this is to move within the world of art, of artistic representation. The latter may then be contrasted with a live representative, and I have already said that in a wider sense any Christian—man or woman—can be a representative of Christ. Drawing on the analogy of Christian art, I suggest that, if it is the case that only a man can be a priestly representative of Christ (though he can be of any race), that might be in part because the priesthood shares something in common with representation as found in Christian art. The priest's particular way of being a representative of Christ would involve him being also a representation of Christ. That is not to say that the functioning of the priesthood is to be confused with artistic representation, but just that the priest's special way of being a representative of Christ would share something in common with such representation. The reason for this might simply be thought to be that our response is elicited by the fact that sex is more intimate to the human person than race, but again that may be to move only at the level of psychological speculation. And so we are forced back to the theological question: what is it about Christ the Head's maleness that requires maleness of his representation, and why does that not apply to his ethnicity?

Inter Insigniores's official commentary takes up the document's comment on race and sex in a slightly different context. Here the objection is that only what is essential to Christ's human nature can have a special place assigned to it, while his sex and race are only incidental

characteristics. The objection continues that if men of all races can validly represent Christ, then why should this ability be denied women? We are here on the territory of it being questioned why it should be important for the priest to be the same gender as Christ but not of the same ethnic group. What is of particular interest is that the objection runs sex and ethnicity together: what counts in argument for one counts also for the other. The commentary begins to answer the objection by appealing to the original document's assertion that ethnic differences affect the person less intimately than sexual difference, adding a further assertion that biblical teaching agrees here with modern psychology. Again the commentary adds that sexual difference is divinely willed for the humanity from its beginning, implying that ethnic difference is not. These are not presented, however, as the crucial points. Instead it is stated that 'it must be affirmed first and foremost that the fact that Christ is a man and not a woman is neither incidental nor unimportant in relation to the economy of salvation'.⁴¹

This last statement might seem to have the unfortunate implication that Christ's Jewishness is in contrast incidental and unimportant in relation to the economy of salvation. Such an implication is surely unintended, and one can begin to see an explanation of how its relation to the economy of salvation might differ from that of maleness when one reads what the commentary says next. Following *Inter Insigniores*, the commentary explains the positive relation of Christ's maleness to the economy of salvation in terms of (3) and (4). The implication we might draw out is that Christ's Jewishness, though genuinely theologically significant, does not have the same symbolic representational role that his maleness does—his Jewishness is a significant matter but not a matter of signification in the way that his maleness is. Jesus' Jewishness is indeed related to the economy of salvation, but not in the symbolic-representational way that his sex is so related. I shall now try to sketch out a little more what the difference between these two theological significances might be, with an eye to why one would have implications for the particularity of the priest but the other not.

I take it as given that a priest, as a mediator between the divine and the human, represents both the divine to the human and the human to the divine. The Christian priest represents not only the people to God, but also God to the people, doing the latter by way of acting in the person of Christ, the great High Priest, representing his unique incarnational mediatorship. A combination of (3) and (4) takes the priest's maleness to figure in his representation of Christ to the people. The fact that the priest's maleness possesses this value must depend on its being a continuation of some theological significance proper to the maleness of Christ. The reason for Christ being male rather than female cannot be any

form of (5), given the rejection of (5) in any form. St Thomas had explained Christ's maleness in this way (Christ's work of teaching, leading, and battling for the human race pertained to a man,⁴² and he became incarnate in the 'nobler sex'⁴³) as had St Bonaventure (the female sex is excelled by the male sex in dignity in ruling, power in acting, and authority in presiding, and so is not fitting for incarnation⁴⁴). Such explanations are rejected by *Inter Insigniores* in favour of (3) and (4). Christ's maleness is therefore taken to be of symbolic significance, his incarnation according to the particularity of the male sex giving flesh to the masculine symbols of which the Scriptures make especial use for God: just as God is the bridegroom of his people, so Christ is the bridegroom, the Head of the Church (though, unlike the merely human bridegroom and head, he cannot be literally 'subject' to his bride), and he is the Son who makes known the Father.⁴⁵ It would seem that Jesus' unique way of representing the Father as his incarnate Son—Christ the Sacrament of God—involves him being not simply his representative but somehow a representation of him, and this representation then figures precisely in Christ's relationship to the Church as her Head, and is continued in his priest. However, no Catholic can suppose such representation to mean that God has male gender, since Catholic teaching excludes such from the divine nature. That of God which is represented by Christ's maleness cannot be maleness in God, but something of God which maleness fittingly symbolises. The latter cannot of course be the superiority of Creator over creature, because that would presuppose the already-rejected (5). Some theologians have been exploring the possibility that it is instead divine transcendence, female deities in biblical (and other) times being more associated with the earth, such that feminine symbols for God suggest too close an identification of creature and Creator for those symbols to assume the unique place of masculine ones.⁴⁶

I hope that this presentation of the combination of (3) and (4), though all too brief and partial to do justice to it, is not too inadequate for my present purpose, which is to suggest that, whatever merit this argument might possess in its own area, it cannot be applied to Christ's Jewishness, because Jewishness does not figure in the relevant aspect of Christ's priesthood and headship in the economy of salvation. It is indeed of great theological importance that Christ be not only a Jew but the Head of the Jewish people. He is not only representative of Jews in the sense that any member of a class may be said to be representative of its class, but he is also a representative, and more precisely *the* representative of the people in that he is their Head. It is this royal headship, itself with priestly and cultic connotations in the Scriptures,

which makes him the fitting representative of the entire human race, given that the Jewish nation itself somehow represents in God's plan that same whole human race. But all this is to do with that aspect of Christ's mediatorship in which he represents humanity to God rather than God to humanity. In the economy of salvation it is necessary that Jesus be the Jewish Messiah in order that he fittingly be the representative of the entire human race to God. I can think of no good reason to suggest that Jesus needs to be Jewish so that his Jewishness may symbolise something of God to human beings. As far as I can see, his Jewishness does not have this symbolic value of representing the divine to the human, but its theological significance is of another kind and located elsewhere in Christ's mediatorship and the economy of salvation. Perhaps it was also fitting for Christ to be male in his representation of the human to the divine as the New Adam, but whatever be the case there, the suggestion is that while Christ's Jewishness is restricted to his being a representative of the human to the divine, such that it does not figure in his representation of the divine to the human, his maleness must be somehow crucial to the latter representation, or else the combination of (3) and (4) would prove a problematic candidate for making sense of (2), perhaps triggering an altogether new search for theological arguments *ex convenientia*.

In the course of this discussion we have encountered various levels of explanation of the Church's practice of not ordaining women. While it has been proposed by *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* that the first level is to be held definitively, and a second level is explicitly mentioned in the same letter, further levels of explanation proposed elsewhere continue to be criticised, debated, deepened and refined. I have looked briefly at one criticism that might be raised against these further levels of explanation, and more briefly still sketched out a suggested response. Whether or not my proposal has any merit, objections to these explanations will continue to be made just as responses to those criticisms will surely follow. It is essential to the theological task to continue to engage with these arguments, if clearer sense is to be made of the Church's practice and the action of Christ to which the Church appeals. But I suspect that many of the critics of the Church's practice might only be persuaded, if at all, not by any explanation of it that at the same time eschews any alleged subordination of women, that is, an explanation which would be part of a wider theoretical reconciliation of the equality of men and women with the practice of restricting ordination to men, but rather by a tangible and genuine attempt at the practical *living out* of such a reconciliation in the day-to-day life of the Church, in the face of the consequences of sin.

- 1 Cf. F. Sullivan SJ, 'New Claims for the Pope', *The Tablet*, 248 (1994), p. 769.
- 2 See the CDF's response dated 28 October 1995 and Card. J. Ratzinger's 'Reflections' on the apostolic letter.
- 3 Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity. Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1996), p. 181f.
- 4 Tr. by Sullivan, *Magisterium. Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1983), p. 132.
- 5 Cf. also the CDF commentary on the Profession, which was issued in connection with *Ad Tuendam Fidem* in 1998.
- 6 *Justice in the Church. Gender and Participation* (Catholic University, Washington DC, 1996), p. 209.
- 7 On the canonical tradition, see John Hilary Martin OP. 'The Ordination of Women and the Theologians in the Middle Ages', *Escritos del Vedat*, 16 (1986), pp. 126-44.
- 8 3.6 (tr. by R. H. Connelly, Clarendon, Oxford, p. 133).
- 9 *Panarion*, 3.2.79 (PG 42:744).
- 10 X 5.38.10.
- 11 The canonical text cited is from Johannes Teutonicus's *Glossa Ordinaria*, in D. C. 27.1.23 v. *Ordinari*.
- 12 For Fishacre's text, see Martin, 'The Ordination of Women', p. 144f., n. 65. Martin adds that Fishacre's treatment was followed by another Oxford Dominican, Simon of Hinton.
- 13 *In IV Sent.*, q. 25, a. 4, n. 1 (Brixiae, 1591, III, p. 388f.). His text seems to have still been influential in the fifteenth century: see Guido Brianson OFM, *In IV Sent.*, q. 12, c. 1 (Baland, 1512, f. 193v).
- 14 See John Hilary Martin OP, 'The Injustice of not Ordaining Women: A Problem for Medieval Theologians', *Theological Studies*, 48 (1987), pp. 303-316; and Thomas A. Shannon, 'A Scotist Aside to the Ordination-of-Women Debate', *Theological Studies*, 56 (1995), p. 353f.
- 15 *Ordinatio*, *In IV Sent.*, q. 25, a. 2 (Wadding IX, p. 570).
- 16 *In IV Sent.*, d. 25, q. 1, a. 3 (Venice, 1578, II, f. 156r).
- 17 *In IV Sent.*, d. 25, q. 2 (Venice, 1595, p. 818)
- 18 *In IV Sent.*, d. 25, q. 3, a. 1 (Paris, 1514, f. 133v).
- 19 Dennis M. Ferrara, 'The Ordination of Women: Tradition and Meaning', *Theological Studies*, 55 (1994), p. 714f.
- 20 However, in the fifteenth century Gabriel Biel does treat the matter in terms similar to those of Peter de la Palude. See the *Supplementum in XXVIII distinctiones ultimas Quarti sententiarum*, d. 25, q. 1 (Paris, 1521, f. 32r)
- 21 *Summa Theologiae*, 3a., q. 83, a. 1 ad 2 & 3 (Blackfriars LIX, p. 136f.)
- 22 *In IV Sent.*, a. 2, q. 1, conc. (Vivès VI, p. 200).
- 23 The text from *In IV Sent.*, q. 2, qa. 1 ad 4 is incorporated in the supplement to the *Summa*, q. 39, a. 1.
- 24 Cited by Martin, 'The Ordination of Women', p. 175, n. 131.
- 35 'Scholastic Theology and the Case against Women's Ordination', *The Heythrop Journal*, 36 (1995), p. 258.

- 26 Ibid., pp. 274ff. See also Martin, 'The Ordination of Women', pp. 156-90.
- 27 'The Injustice of not Ordaining Women: A Problem for Medieval Theologians', p. 309.
- 28 *Reportatio, In IV Sent.*, d. 25, q. 2 (Wadding XI.2, p. 784).
- 29 *In IV Sent.*, d. 25, q. 4 (Venice, 1507, IV 41r)
- 30 In the previous century the English Dominican, William of Chatton (text in Martin, 'The Ordination of Women', p. 149, n. 74). Short treatments might also do no more than record the inability of women to be ordained, e.g., an anonymous Franciscan (text in Martin, *ibid.*, n. 73), or more specifically to receive the character, e.g., Ulrich of Strasbourg OP. *Compendium Theologiae Veritatis*, bk. 6, ch. 6, in Beati Alberti Magni Opera (Lyons, 1651, XII.2, p. 121f.).
- 31 See Butler, 'Women's Ordination and the Development of Doctrine', *The Thomist*, 61 (1997), pp. 506—10.
- 32 E.g. Michael de Palacio, O. Carm., *In IV Sent.*, q. 12, c. 1 (Salamanca, 1627, p. 513).
- 33 'Apostolic Office: Sacrament of Christ', *Theological Studies*, 36 (1975), pp. 243—64.
- 34 Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, pp. 174ff.
- 35 'Representation or Self-Effacement: The Axiom *In Persona Christi* in St. Thomas and the Magisterium', *Theological Studies*, 55 (1994), pp. 195-224; 'The Ordination of Women: Tradition and Meaning', *ibid.*, pp. 706-19; '*In Persona Christi*: Toward a Second Naiveté', *ibid.*, 57 (1996), pp. 65—88.
- 36 Butler, 'A Response to Dennis M. Ferrara', *Theological Studies*, 56 (1995), pp. 61-80; Ferrara, 'A Reply to Sara Butler', *ibid.*, pp. 81-91; Guy Mansini OSB, 'Representation and Agency in the Eucharist', *The Thomist*, 62 (1988), pp. 499-517; Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, pp. 175-9.
- 37 sec. 5 *Women Priests: Obstacle to Unity?*, CTS, London, p. 15).
- 38 *Justice in the Church*, p. 181, n. 27.
- 39 secs. 13 & 2.
- 40 Ferrara, 'Representation or Self-Effacement', p. 215, makes a comparable distinction, but his notion of representation is drawn more from drama, and his aim is to argue that while Christ is a representative he is not a representation.
- 41 *Women Priests: Obstacle to Unity?*, p. 42.
- 42 *In III Sent.*, d. 12, q. 3, a. 1, qa. 2, sol. 2 (Moos III, p. 387).
- 43 *Summa Theologiae*, III a., q. 31, a. 4 ad 1.
- 44 *In III Sent.*, d. 12, a. 3, q. 1 (IV, p. 270).
- 45 Bridegroom, Father and Son are the images presented in *Inter Insigniores*. For a broader 'system or complex of mutually interpretative and reinforcing symbols', see Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, pp. 91-118.
- 46 For an example of such an approach, see *ibid.*, pp. 102-111.