

THE CONTEMPORARY PRIEST: EXPERIENCE AND IDENTITY

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A DESIRE on the part of many priests and religious to find an adequately structured way of developing a spirituality which is integrated into daily life and work has led in recent years to a widespread interest in the Ministry to Priests and Ministry to Religious programmes.¹ The continuing elements of these programmes are directed at two levels: the personal and the diocesan/provincial. On the personal level, opportunities are provided for the individual to work both with a trusted partner and with a small group, while on the diocesan/provincial level a system and process are suggested for the provision of resources which respond to current articulated needs in the areas of the spiritual, the intellectual, the physical and the emotional-relational. In the early stage of the programmes, the opportunity is offered to individuals to make use of some 'instruments' which are designed to enhance self-knowledge.² While the 'profile' which results from these instruments is entirely confidential to each person, the results of all such profiles are also used by us to produce a 'group profile' and to give a fairly comprehensive picture of how the 'average' priest or religious sees him/herself. The group profile cannot be said to be representative because the people who contribute information to it are self-selecting. Statistically, however, the figures and results are not without value: they represent a sixty-three per cent sample.³ A group profile is prepared in the form of a report for each diocese (or province), and each report reflects certain features peculiar to the local situation. For the most part, however, all reports bear a marked similarity—hardly surprising given the similarities in family and social background, formation and 'church-style' of priests in the english-speaking world. As far as age-spread is concerned, the sample almost exactly replicates the age-spread of clergy in each diocese. The reliability of the information is tested in certain ways. In addition to the internal test-retest reliability of the instruments used, each individual receives his personal profile in an interview during the course of which he is invited to comment on the accuracy of his results;

the vast majority confirm the findings of the profile. Subsequently, the group profile is studied for a day and a half by the bishop with a group of priests (the 'team') and a staff member; here again, acceptance of the findings is generally high.

To present a comprehensive analysis of all the items covered in our instruments would be beyond both the scope of this article and the capability of the writer. Certain factors, however, have been chosen because they relate directly to issues of initial and continuing formation for presbyteral ministry and, indeed, to contemporary perceptions of Church and of the nature of ministry within it. For the sake of order, I have chosen three headings which refer to tasks of the ordained minister about which our data has significant relevance: elder in the community, man of prayer, and preacher.

1 *The elder in the community*

At a time when one hears so much about a 'shortage of priests' (when in fact we have no scriptural or ecclesiological basis for saying this; who knows what is the *optimum* number?) the evidence shows that among the clergy themselves there exist wide divergences over what exactly a priest *is*. This is perhaps best shown by priests' actual behaviour insofar as it provides a reliable indicator of their real understanding (as distinct from the notional) of the task that they have by virtue of ordination. Much of a priest's time is taken up with diaconal work: broadly-focussed service which may range from administration to taking communion to the housebound, but which for all its value does not require presbyteral ordination for its performance. This is not to say that such work is below him (Cardinal Hume once publicly prayed to be delivered from 'angelism' in the clergy—an unwillingness to turn a hand to any task for the good of the parish). Nevertheless, many priests gain considerable satisfaction from such tasks, while others experience great pressure from the need they feel to live up to others' expectations which customarily have seen the priest as servant-deacon. If, however, the presbyteral ministry is to be seen in terms of servant-leadership—a more narrowly focussed form of service in which among other things working *with* people takes precedence over working *for* people—then certain issues need to be addressed.

a) *An understanding of ministry*. So long as priests (and aspirants to priesthood) see ordination as the commissioning for all ministry, then it is hard to imagine how the Church is ever to realize that 'there is a variety of gifts . . . and all sorts of service to be done' (1 Cor 12,4). Until recently, it is probably fair to say that the clergy had taken over all ministries in the Church; the current

movement towards recognizing a variety of ministries is causing many priests discomfort and confusion. A true understanding of ministries, and of the relative place of the presbyteral ministry, can only come about if it is firmly rooted in an understanding of Church. A solid foundation in ecclesiology (including church history) would seem therefore to be absolutely central both to pre-ordination formation and to in-service training. Furthermore, ecclesiology must be seen as a vital *formational* component: not being limited as it still is in so many seminaries⁴ to the status of a 'subject' to be learned, but rather as an element suffusing the whole formation process so that its influence is not just on thought but on attitudes and behaviour.

b) *The willingness and ability to collaborate.* The data which priests have provided raise some significant points regarding selection of candidates for ordination and of the importance given to skills-training.

While it is a matter of simple observation that some priests are autocratic, domineering and self-sufficient, random conversations with committed lay people will more frequently contain complaints about priests' behaviour which seems to be determined less by a desire for power than by ineptitude. The ability to engage in a mature collaborative ministry (such as is certainly required by the mood and prescriptions of today's Church) depends not only on adequate and professional skills-training but also, and primarily, on a willingness which is based on a personal conviction about the good in people, about the presbyteral task of facilitating personal and community growth in the parish, and about the inherent value of the decision-making process. Our sample indicates that over forty per cent of priests view human nature as being basically negative, only eighteen per cent gave an indication that they might be successful mediators, while twenty-seven per cent give at least notional assent to such values as openness to experience, self-determination, trust in others, assertiveness and affirmation of others. In the application of values, fifteen per cent indicate a flexibility which enables them to transcend one value in favour of a higher one; while forty per cent show a marked tendency towards rigidity, which probably makes them appear so dogmatic that they find it difficult to relate to others except in a most formal way.

One of the risks of requiring celibacy as a condition for ordination is that ministerial priesthood still contains, and attracts, men whose psychosexual development is so retarded or distorted that they find it extremely hard to get on with people, resulting in a coping mechanism which shows as a detached aloofness, for which ministerial priesthood (and especially its cultic elements)

provide a 'safe' haven. (It must also be pointed out that there is significant lay collusion in this rôle-conformity, and that for some priests such collusion produces considerable anxiety).⁵ This is certainly not presented as an argument against celibacy. Research in the United States seems to indicate that married men enjoy no greater experience of intimacy than do celibate clergy. Our data suggests, however, that better screening of candidates is needed either to filter out the men who apply for ordination as an escape from human relationships, or to provide substantial therapeutic help so that they can indeed become 'wounded healers', at home with their weaknesses, and committed to a belief in themselves and in the goodness of others. Only when this has happened will training in the skills of communication, leadership and community work be internalized and become effective and fruitful.

c) *Inner directedness*. In our work with priests, we have found particular value in Maslow's concept of the 'self-actualizing person', particularly because Maslow and others have found ways of isolating and measuring some of the attitudes and skills that such a person seems to possess. One such is the ability to live principally out of one's personal free centre—inner-directedness.

The elder in the community will inevitably find from time to time that he is the focus of conflicting viewpoints, or possibly of no viewpoints at all when one is required. Either way, he is required to make decisions.

If he is inner-directed, he will largely have liberated himself from social pressures, expectations and goals. Typically, he will enjoy a more autonomous and self-supportive orientation than non-self-actualized people who tend to conform primarily to conventional mores. He will, in other words, be well placed to make mature and appropriate decisions which attend more to values and principles than to external pressure. It should be noted that such a person will not be completely inner-directed, since that would represent an extremely rebellious stance towards the world. He will also be other-directed (outer-directed) in that he is sensitive to people's approval, affection and goodwill while maintaining his independence. He will have developed a way of living in which he has both confidence in himself and respect for others. A self-actualizing person may be expected to be about twenty-five per cent dependent on others and seventy-five per cent dependent on himself; other-directed people are specified as being fifty per cent or more dependent on others: they are more comfortable when directed by others, prefer to do what they are told rather than take initiatives, and are strongly motivated by others' approval. Half of the priests in our sample fall into this category. We

have also made use of a separate instrument to measure ego-development, which indicates how well a person is managing to develop an increasingly adequate and internalized response to the complexities of reality; it gives an indication of how deeply principles are being internalized. Fourteen per cent of our sample scored at the autonomous or integrated levels (stages 5 and 6); fifty-five per cent at the conformist level (stage 3), and thirty-one per cent in between (conscientious level). While these scores have implications which will be explored later, they confirm in this instance the measures of inner/other-directedness.

What inferences can be drawn from these findings? One immediate conclusion is to do with the model of Church in which the majority of priests were (are?) trained: the institution, the 'perfect society', the hierarchical chain-of-command model. Within such a model, inner-directedness and autonomy were not actually encouraged, since docility and unquestioning obedience were higher virtues. Many priests exercised heroic self-denial in conforming to these requirements; they display great personal discipline and rigour.⁶ In today's Church, however, additional models are suggested. For example, inner-directedness would seem to be a *sine qua non* for the prophet, for the herald, for the reconciler. It would surely not be out of place for some urgent work to be done in the area of spiritual leadership (or leadership of any sort, for that matter) in which dialogue, reconciliation and consensus take over from confrontation, manipulation and the struggle for power. Assuming that spiritual leadership is part of the *episcopate* of an elder, then the nurturing of inner-directedness would seem a matter for attention. In some respects, a vicious circle can prevent this: if existing leaders are not committed to encouraging greater responsibility in their followers, the 'followership-style' of today is likely to determine the 'leadership-style' of tomorrow, and the cycle thus continues. Where priests are concerned, this has something to say both to bishops and to lay people; where seminarians are concerned, it has implications for rectors and staff. There is no doubt from our data that the seminary formation which priests received has a lasting and significant effect on many of them, and not least in their attitudes to responsibility and self-determination. Conformity to expectations was the surest way of being 'passed' for ordination: to be seen by the right people in the right place at the right time doing the right thing. Happily, times are changing,⁷ but major issues still remain to be resolved. For example, how can pre-ordination formation be so structured as to *encourage* both the development of autonomy and inner-directedness on the one hand, while requiring conformity to certain prerequisites on the other?

Changes in the processes of supervision and discernment would help; in how many seminaries, for instance, would staff never discuss a student except in his presence? Or invite people to say why a man should be ordained rather than asking if anyone has anything against him? It is a sad fact that there are still seminaries where the surest way to achieve ordination is for the student to keep his head down, his nose clean and his powder dry. This *must* have an effect on his perceptions of authority, leadership and responsibility in the Church, and will carry through into his presbyteral life. 'If men use the green wood like this, what will happen when it is dry?' (Lk 23,31).

The question of inner-directedness and proper autonomy has even further implications in the whole area of self-concept, which we understand to include an accurate self-perception and a loving self-acceptance, without which surrender of the self to radical conversion is probably impossible. We are dealing here not with some arcane psychological notion but with the fundamental christian virtue of humility—true self-knowledge. Such a knowledge of self will embrace weaknesses, certainly, but must equally acknowledge gifts and talents: 'We have received the Spirit that comes from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that he has given us' (1 Cor 2,12). An individual's self-concept can be enhanced or diminished by a multiplicity of factors, but one which certainly damages self-esteem is a regime in which a person is prevented from making significant decisions or from taking responsibility for himself and others—people learn to act responsibly only by being given responsibility. Formational practice must, therefore, attend to the fostering of responsibility as an ingredient of inner-directedness not only as a model for the seminarian's future style, but also for his spiritual well-being, enhancing an environment in which the conversion process can more easily be embraced.

In reflecting on the elder in the community it is well to advert to the fact that he, too, is 'under authority': he is accountable to the Church, in the persons of the people he is sent to serve, to his brethren in the presbyterate and to his bishop. Priests have been heard to say, 'I am accountable to God', as though that were the end of it, and they tend not to take kindly to the challenge, 'How can you say you are accountable to the God you cannot see when you refuse to be accountable to the brother you can?' When one considers the extent of a priest's responsibilities, and the extraordinary effect for good or ill which he can exercise on so many people, it seems strange that he is so rarely called to give an account of his stewardship. Sometimes a bishop on visitation may ask some searching questions, though this is not common.

The general pattern seems to be that, once ordained, a priest is rarely, if ever, faced with any sort of interview or questioning about his personal and ministerial life or about his professional development. It is precisely to address this issue that the Ministry to Priests programme encourages a voluntary one-to-one relationship between priests, so that at least occasionally they have the opportunity to speak about their lives, and to receive not only support but also loving challenge from a brother. Even this, however, is difficult—even repugnant—for some priests, and the reason will often be that the other-directed person has a real problem in simply 'being himself' and trusting his own experience and inner promptings. He will be over-sensitive to others' opinions, have approval by others as a high priority, and be more concerned with external appearances and adherence to rules than with the search for underlying principles. He will thus experience difficulty in any self-disclosure other than the most highly regulated; in short, he will resist accountability where it threatens his 'respectability'. His attitude to 'authority' will also be distorted. Autonomous and inner-directed people consider the exercise of genuine authority (that is motivated by justice and exercised in love) an indispensable part of human spiritual growth. They are able to exercise authority as a dialogic process—a mutual search for discerning the will of God—and they are able to maintain a delicate balance between authority exercised in the Spirit from without and the promptings of the Holy Spirit within. Our research indicates that for many priests this delicate balance has yet to be achieved. Until it is, relationships with the external manifestations of authority are bound to be unsatisfactory, leading in extreme cases either to meek submission or to mindless rebellion.

d) *Liturgical competence.* The quality of liturgical training is outside the scope of this article, although it is patently of primary importance. Our data suggests, however, that there exist other factors, apart from the study of liturgy, which relate directly to the competence of a priest as liturgical president. The majority of priests (eighty-seven per cent) derive great satisfaction from celebrating the liturgy, but conversations with lay people and with bishops do not confirm that this satisfaction is universally shared. While reading and study will improve a priest's understanding, his 'performance' will depend largely on qualities some of which have been mentioned earlier: a commitment to collaboration and the discernment of gifts, a consistent and rhythmic personal prayer life, an adequate level of self-esteem (not least in the area of physical presence—sixty-one per cent report a poor sense of physical self-worth), an openness to the transcendent (without which the value

of symbol will be ill-appreciated), and a flexibility in the application of values which will allow spirit and meaning to take precedence over 'the letter' (thirty-nine per cent show a marked tendency towards rigidity in applying values). Finally, it needs to be said that even given all the above qualities and training, a priest's efficacy as liturgical president will be most pronounced to the extent that he is accepted, and sees himself, as an elder in the community, knowing his people, being known by them, and working with them.

2 *Man of prayer*

For all the theological and historical speculation about presbyteral ministry, there is something very significant to be learned from *sensus fidelium*; it is, after all, yet another way of listening to the Church, and many priests are profoundly aware that what people say about their expectations of the clergy ring true. 'I want my priest to be a man of prayer who can lead me to God . . . to teach me how to pray . . . to be a spiritual guide . . . to speak to me about God.'

Our data indicates that most priests feel inadequately prepared for this task, and they have quite serious misgivings about the priority which they are giving to it. Several findings serve to confirm this:

a) *Training in prayer*. In our survey (Spiritual Orientation Inventory) of priests' prayer patterns, we ask individuals to indicate the proportionate amount of time they give to a variety of prayer styles. The data shows that most priests have a very narrow 'prayer-repertoire', centred around reflective reading, contemplating God's goodness, and 'simply being quiet'.

On questioning, it becomes apparent that training in prayer has been sketchy and rudimentary; for most, only discursive meditation was taught, and even then not very well. Priests in general are seriously concerned about this, and would certainly welcome and benefit from opportunities for initiation into more intuitive and affective forms of prayer. Furthermore, it seems that the study of ascetical/mystical theology and an introduction to the spiritual masters were almost entirely neglected in pre-ordination formation. There is not a lot of evidence to show that the current situation is any better.

b) *Martha and Mary*. A persistent plea which arises in every diocese with which we have worked is for 'less activity'. Priests are concerned about the extent to which 'being busy' is detrimental to 'being'. This is confirmed dramatically by the data on what is called 'time-competence'. Using the same instrument as measured

inner-directedness, we are able to obtain information about the extent to which a person is distracted from the present moment. Maslow's theory holds that a self-actualized person is better able than average to live almost (eighty-nine per cent) fully in the here and now, and to relate past and future in continuity with the present. Such a person will be less burdened by guilt, regrets and resentment, by nostalgia for the past, and also less distracted by idealized goals, predictions and fears for the future. In simple terms, he is someone who can give mostly undivided attention to the present, while still able both to reflect on and learn from the past and to plan prudently for the future. In terms of our christian tradition, we are speaking about the sacrament of the moment.

The results from our sample indicate that two per cent scored in the self-actualized range, eighteen per cent in the average range, and eighty per cent in the lower range. (The lower range measures a level of distractedness greater than twenty-five per cent, so such a person could be described as 'less than three-quarters present to the moment'). The figures are borne out by what priests themselves say: 'I am always dealing with the urgent . . . most of my time is spent reacting to demands . . . there seems more to do and fewer of us to do it . . . I need to manage my time better'. It is certain that a secular priest's life is very fragmented and full of distraction; one might almost say that it is a vocation to be distracted. Hence, concentration for sustained periods is extremely difficult and the anxiety level quite high. The nature of the work make it thus, and if a priest feels the need to fill his life with activity in order to bolster his self-worth, then he will find it doubly difficult to say 'no' from time to time in order to pause for prayer, reflection and recreation. He will also find that when he does take time for prayer, distractions continue to crowd in because he has been unable to shut out past and future. In one part of our survey we invite priests to give an indication of the frequency of their 'experience of the transcendent', and the results clearly point to a link between time-competence and the ability to pray. One priest, much distracted, described what happens: 'The Lord calls and I'm not in'.

The issue of time-competence raises a host of questions for priests themselves and for people concerned with formation: questions to do with personal discipline, a clear understanding of presbyteral (as distinct from diaconal) ministry, the setting of priorities and personal goals, the need for support in saying 'no' in favour of a higher 'yes' and—yet again—an emphasis on the need for accountability and/or non-managerial supervision. In the Ministry to Priests programme we encourage the formation of support

groups which may go some way towards providing priests with a safe environment, free from judgment or criticism, in which they can explore together (especially in a life-sharing group) some of the influences which are contriving to distract them from the present and impoverish their prayer life. The evidence seems to indicate that a person will find it well-nigh impossible to improve this time-competence without recourse to others he can trust.

c) *Spiritual direction.* Very few secular priests could choose to call themselves 'spiritual directors'—indeed, fewer still have received any training in spiritual direction—yet it would seem that no other presbyteral function so well qualifies us to assume the title of 'Father'. This is by no means to suggest that only priests (secular or religious) should be spiritual directors, but it does seem to raise a question about those to whom is given *cura animarum*. In any case, one may ask 'To whom does the secular priest himself go for spiritual direction?' In our sample, forty-six per cent appear to consult a director with some degree of regularity. Yet, from the same sample, we have thirty-six per cent expressing serious misgivings about their religious orientation and/or their adherence to moral principles. One may wonder whether a priest is actually free to 'paddle his own spiritual canoe'. What was said earlier regarding the need for accountability plainly supplies here also. In the Ministry to Priests programme we are at pains to point out that the duty of a priest to take adequate steps, and account for them, in his personal development, is based primarily on the right of the people of God to expect their priests to exercise in their own lives what they exhort others to do.

In this, as in so many other areas, the style of early formation is critical. If the art and science of spiritual direction is to be given due recognition, it seems important that people who are discerned to have the necessary gifts should receive every encouragement to undertake both the learning and the skills-training to help open up again for the Church the enormously rich treasures of our tradition. It would also be an appropriate response to a contemporary world which is expressing a great thirst for 'the spiritual'; it really is rather bizarre that so many people are looking to the East for spirituality while we Christians are, so to speak, sitting on a goldmine.

3 *The preacher*

A high percentage of our sample (eighty per cent) expressed great-to-moderate satisfaction from preaching. (Whether a survey of congregations would express similar satisfaction is not known.) Some of our other findings, however, shed some light on areas of

the subject which pertain to pre- and post-ordination formation.

a) *Moral development.* To 'break the word' requires that it first be absorbed, and a most effective preacher is one who can represent the good news by modelling for his hearers what have been the Christ-events in his own life, so that they in turn can reflect, internalize and celebrate what the Lord is doing for them. To preach in such a way demands a high level of moral development, whereby the preacher has so absorbed and made his own the values and principles of the gospel that he can proclaim them in a language and setting that is both authentic and credible. Our data indicates that in general priests fare as well as other groups when it comes to such development. Nevertheless, it would be fair to expect in a preacher a level of principled reasoning which is somewhat higher than average; one might reasonably expect an emphasis on the spirit rather than the letter of the law, a concern for unifying fundamental principles which undergird rules and laws. 'On these two commandments hang the whole law, and the prophets also' (Mt 22,40).

b) *Self-acceptance.* Part of a developing self-concept is the ability to acknowledge, own and be at peace with one's weaknesses. Only when this process is under way can one be an effective healer and, equally, an effective preacher. Self-acceptance is by no means the same as complacency; it is rather the humble acknowledgment of real weaknesses through which the power of God can flow. A good preacher will have empathy with his hearers—he will know what it is to feel as they feel, because he himself is full of weakness. True self-acceptance, however, is difficult to obtain in an environment where affirmation is lacking, in which criticism, judgments, condemnations and gossip thrive. In such an atmosphere, self-esteem is an early casualty, and self-acceptance an impossibility, because self-preservation demands that weakness be first of all hidden and then eventually denied. While there is no reason to suppose that women's communities are immune to such an environment, it is certainly a risk among men—especially among men who may have difficulties in acknowledging the 'feminine' in themselves. Terms like 'ragging' and 'slagging' are sometimes used to identify such behaviour, which is not only destructive, but often painfully so. For a seminary, the lessons are obvious, yet how many people have ever thought that so-called 'conventional' macho behaviour could actually inhibit the preaching of the word?

c) *Prayer life and spiritual reading.* Computer people have a delightful expression to describe the meaningless output which results from meaningless input: 'Garbage in, garbage out'. For the preacher the same applies, and is an awful warning. When time is not given to

prayer, reading and reflection, then it is no surprise if the homily is dull, irrelevant, or even misleading. Our evidence shows that secular priests read very little; it also shows that the reason is not anti-intellectualism—many would dearly love to read more—but pressure of work. The pressure is both from within and without; from a compulsion to be busy and from the un-considered demands of parishioners who expect the priest to be where they want him, when they want him. Where such a situation prevails, the priest will find it very hard to break the circle on his own—he needs support. He also needs enough courage and clarity of vision to work with his people in such a way that they put a high value on the solitary time he needs to prepare for preaching. Here again, the need is to be able to say ‘no’ in order to improve the quality of ‘yes’. Goal-setting, prioritizing and clear communication all involve skills which can be learned, and would seem necessary in both pre- and post-ordination formation.

My own journey of discovery towards the Ministry to Priests programme had its beginning in conversations about in-service training with brother-priests. Much good work had already been done by my predecessors: excellent courses given by outstanding people in a supportive environment. These courses were valued and necessary; what came out in conversation, however, was that other needs—more personal and interpersonal—also existed, and required to be met by something more than courses. The Ministry to Priests programme was developed in an attempt to respond to these needs, and is now in a position to shed some light on the formational requirements for today’s ordained priest.

Undoubtedly, the major issue which has surfaced is the absolute necessity of giving priority (of time, effort, money and skill) in the seminary to personal development towards (christian) maturity. The general pattern at present still gives most importance to academic study, yet secular priests themselves (and the people they serve) experience most difficulty at parish level when the priest is inept at working with people, is not accountable and does not enjoy a support system of sufficient intimacy to challenge him to continue growing. The circumstances of the Church today are so vastly different from those of even only twenty-five years ago that the assumptions and practices of pre- and post-ordination cannot go unquestioned.

NOTES

¹ The programmes are now widely adopted in the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland and Britain. The London office is currently working with thirteen dioceses, a religious congregation and a missionary society.

² The instruments used are: the Personal Orientation Inventory, the Tennessee Self-concept Scale, the Spiritual Orientation Inventory, a test of ego-development and a test of moral judgment.

³ 1,117 priests out of a total 1,762 in ten dioceses. Work with male and female religious is not yet sufficiently advanced to provide reliable figures, although a certain amount of research has been done in America.

⁴ Two examples may serve: in one very large seminary, the 'learning' part of the training is seen as the responsibility of the 'academic' staff who disavow any participation in 'formation', which is the responsibility of the 'deans' and spiritual directors. In another seminary, staff and some students reject the suggestion that they should try to build community; as one said, 'I am not training to be a monk'. Both examples say something of interest both about the nature of formation and about the understanding of Church.

⁵ 23% reported that conforming to others' expectations caused 'more than slight' to 'very much' anxiety.

⁶ It is important to note that there are happy and well-adjusted people at every level of human development: people who have come to terms with their experiences thus far, and who are living in accordance with their insights. It is not our intention to suggest that sanctity is the prerogative of an elite corps of the 'highly-developed'. God is not bound by human concepts about growth, and has been observed to dispense grace on the most 'under-developed' people.

⁷ In some places, at least. There is still one major seminary known to the writer (and hundreds of others!) where the ultimate criterion for ordination is that a seminarian be 'a sound man' and where a major crime is 'singularity'.