

THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

The Ordination of Women: a Philosopher's view-point

WHEN Archbishop Rembert Weakland O.S.B., welcomed the 1978 meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) to the archdiocese of Milwaukee, he remarked that if he were to return to the seminary today, with his interest in contemporary questions of human rights, sexuality, and the position of women, he would study philosophy. The reason he gave was that recent theology has profited enormously from advances in the human sciences and from the biblical renewal, but that many of these results have been adopted uncritically. The philosophical task, of clarifying and testing presuppositions, is yet to be done. Whether by coincidence or not, the American Catholic Philosophical Association (ACPA) had already set, as its main research task for that same year, a recovery from the catholic intellectual tradition of some elementary notions which speak more validly to contemporary moral questions than do modern secular notions. The ACPA had already set up a research team to look at women's liberation in terms of pre-modern notions of the human person as essentially related to other persons.

The conjunction of these two events turned out to be a happy one; for in the course of its 1978 meeting, the CTSA presented a study, 'Women in Church and Society',¹ which illustrates at once the need for the kind of philosophical work called for by Archbishop Weakland, and the relevance of several traditional philosophical notions to the current controversy over the ordination of women to the roman catholic priesthood. The CTSA report, despite its wide-ranging title, speaks exclusively to the ordination issue, noting that it raises many questions basic to the wider discussion about the place of women in society. Its authors further narrowed their focus by using as sources only a few consensus statements and official pronouncements which offer some theological rationale. But these are key documents in the debate: recent statements from the Vatican and the American Hierarchy, from learned societies (such as the Canon Law Society of America), from such national assemblies as the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and from ecumenical bodies such as the Orthodox-Anglican and the Orthodox-Roman Catholic consultations (pp 1-16).

The Report achieves an admirable imposition of order on a debate which grows more amorphous by the day; its authors not only summarize and classify current arguments for and against women's ordination, but also

identify some important underlying issues on both sides — such as sexual differentiation, human rights, the value for theology of the modern sciences of human behaviour, and the unity of human nature: all philosophical issues which underlie many other current controversies. But the document is much more than a report on the state of the question. Its authors evaluate the various arguments, and come down on the side of those who favour the ordination of women. They preface their critique with several 'Prolegomena', chief of which is a contrast between two 'mindsets', the closed and the open. The first — attributed to no one by name except the opponents of women's ordination — is said to view God's plan as wholly determined in the past, to see the preaching of Christ as determinative in detail for the whole future of the Church, and to see the Holy Spirit as primarily preserving accurate memories of the past. The open mindset, on the other hand, is that of these authors. For them, revelation is ongoing rather than finished; God is still free to create new things; Jesus's preaching was general enough to allow us to determine some details of life in the Church; and the function of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into an ever new future. With this contrast, the role in theology of modern science, especially the human sciences, is also decided. The closed-minded are said to have no use for history, social science, or psychology; the open-minded, on the other hand, find these indispensable for interpreting divine revelation (pp 19-21).

The first set of pros and cons considers the example of Jesus in selecting all male Apostles, and the practice since then of those Apostles and of the Church in not ordaining women. This long tradition, however, is not to be taken as finally determinative. Denial of ordination to women is no longer appropriate because both the practice and the theory behind it have been outmoded by cultural change. Most importantly, the exclusion of women on the ground that they are naturally subject to men is said to be not a matter of divine law but one of social and cultural expediency. The praxis is said to have a strong theological counter in that of other christian churches which do ordain women, especially the anglican, which shares with us an explicitly affirmed theology of pastoral office. Moreover, the practice of the roman catholic Church in certain mission areas, allowing nuns to administer parishes and to perform all pastoral tasks except the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, Confirmation, Orders and the Anointing of the Sick, is said to argue for the possibility of women being admitted to fully ordained pastoral office (pp 21-25).

Pros and cons which focus on the nature of pastoral office are discussed next. The cons are traced to the basic principle that a priest is a representative of Christ, and that maleness is a necessary character of such representatives. The natural distinction of the sexes puts men in a natural leadership role. These arguments are countered by a theory of the Eucharist in which the priest represents Christ only indirectly. He first represents the faith-community, which is, of course, both male and female.

Since it is in and through his standing in the place of the community that the priest represents Christ, a female minister would be entirely appropriate (pp 25-32).

The third cluster of arguments is said to rest on diverse views of the nature of women and, prior to those, on views of human nature and of sexual differentiation. Here, two anthropologies are described, single and dual. The one called 'dual' sees men and women as having two different natures, two different sets of attributes, and assigns them naturally distinct ecclesial roles. These two different natures are said to be equal but complementary: and this by a biological determinism which is integral to the immutable divine plan. Since there is an eternal feminine and an eternal masculine, what modern sciences tell us of changing sexual roles and of the indefinability of sexual differences is irrelevant for the life of the Church. The closed mind, which adopts this dual anthropology, is thus allegedly clinging to the past because it is the divinely willed natural order. The 'single' anthropology, on the other hand, emphasizes the equality of men and women in the same nature. Sexual differences are purely biological, having only a functional meaning, that is, in reproduction. As far as personal life is concerned, sexual distinctions are accidental rather than essential, due to history and culture rather than to nature. The human sciences, in their failure to discern any clear and invariable sexual differences and the needs of changing social and cultural structures, call for roles based not on biological characteristics, but on spiritual, and therefore sexually neutral, qualities. This 'open mindset' thus looks creatively to the future (pp 32-40).

A final section of the report evaluates arguments on both sides concerning the question of justice. Three such principles underlie arguments in favour of ordaining women: equality, which requires that all who have the same natural and baptismal dignity have equal access to ecclesial office; the implication of right by duty, by which women who feel a duty to priesthood have a right to authenticate that perception; and the common good, by which it becomes unfair to the Church to deprive her of female talents which could meet some of her genuine needs. But justice is said to be an issue for the opponents of women's ordination only indirectly. Thus, to ordain women would be an injustice inasmuch as the divine plan would be violated. Further, respect for equal dignity can be honoured even while denying certain roles to one sex, because the sexes are different (complementarity, it is argued, does not mean inequality). In evaluating these arguments, the authors question whether a sexual differentiation of roles is automatically discriminatory. The answer is that, while it need not be so in theory, the practice of the Church has been discriminatory. The qualities which have been seen as natural to women (sensitivity, intuitiveness, a knack for fostering personal growth and intimacy, a sacrificing nature) and thus as excluding them from the priesthood, have not excluded men who have the same qualities. The conclusion is that

women have been denied ordination, purely and simply because they are women. Since the sexes cannot be differentiated in any scientific way except biologically — a difference which makes no difference as far as personal life is concerned — it is unjust to exclude women from the ordained ministry (pp 40-45).

The conclusion of the report is predictable. Arguments against the ordination of women are found inconclusive, while those favouring it are decisive, unless they can be controverted by developments in anthropology and the theology of pastoral office. Since the dual anthropology is incredible in the light of contemporary science and experience, the single one is preferred. It is said to lead inevitably to the ordination of women, unless the nature of pastoral office can be shown to be decisively against it. But if the priest can be seen as representing, first the faith of the worshipping community, and through this faith the headship of Christ, there is no reason why that community, which includes both men and women, could not be symbolized by a woman. Given, then, that the ordination of women is thus accepted as theologically possible, it would, by the arguments from justice, become morally necessary. The argument of the report, therefore, finally rests on Fr Kilmartin's views of the theology of pastoral office;² and it recommends that further research be conducted in the two areas of theological anthropology and the representative role of the priest (pp 46-47).

Philosophical presuppositions are clearly at work here. A first observation comes from simple logic: in opting for a single anthropology these authors weaken their own position. For if there really is only one human nature, essentially identical in men and women, so that sexual differences are purely biological and wholly incidental to any properly personal questions, then there is no need for two kinds of ministers to represent the faith-community. One will do. This anthropology is, then, tactically weak; it eliminates a reason for excluding women from the priesthood, but it offers no compelling reason to admit us.

But there is a more basic error. Though called *single* (because it makes humanity identical in both men and women), this anthropology is really a dualism of mind and body. In order to separate sexuality from personhood, we must separate matter from spirit, anatomy from psychology, in a way that would do Descartes proud. But such a view is simply untrue to our ordinary, day-by-day experience. Our sexuality, evident chromosomally in every cell of our bodies, is a life-long horizon of our self-image from the moment when we first realize that we are little boys or little girls and not the opposite. Sexual differences affect everything we do. The nervous systems of men and of women are structured somewhat differently, so that our very ways of perceiving reality — the sense perceptions basic to every judgment and every choice — are somewhat different. Of course male and female psychologies are not totally disparate: as Belloc once remarked, if they were, we couldn't talk to each other at all. But sexual differences are an

element of everything we do. They are not just important to those who reproduce, and at the time when they are doing so.

To take an example, the capacity to bear children is central to every woman's understanding of herself in properly human terms. To see herself as human, as differing essentially from animals of other species, a woman must see herself as female, as capable of bearing children but not begetting them. In philosophical terms, our sexuality is not just one accidental feature among others, like hair colour, musical ability, height, weight or skin-temperature. These can vary without affecting personal identity in any central way. We can imagine ourselves as having been born with variations of these. But to fantasize having been born of the other sex is to fantasize oneself as being, quite simply, someone else. Sexuality is not accidental but essential to our personal identity.

In fact, a single anthropology is contrary to the modern science that is so admired by those of the open mindset. Think, for example, of the research of Masters and Johnson, which could hardly be more biological.³ As leading sex therapists, they are convinced that the best guarantee of physiologically successful sexual activity is a personal intimacy based on the exchange of vulnerabilities. What is one to say, then, about an open mindset which looks to the future rather than the past, and yet sees sexuality as having a purely reproductive meaning? Such contempt for matter as a constituent of human personality is as old as gnosticism.

The dual anthropology, though, which would practically assign men and women to different species, is equally false. Here, mind and matter, spirit and body, are so unified as to be identified with each other. Biological differences are taken to have full determining power over roles: that is, over the areas in which persons are allowed to exercise their freedom. Thus men, because they are begetters rather than bearers of children, are naturally leaders, heads of organizations, with talents for action and management and logic. The complementary body structure of women makes them subordinate to men, naturally suited to private spheres of activity, apt for intimacy and submission. These differences in personal natures are determinate, unchangeable physical structures. This view is a materialism which would effectively deny any spiritual aspect to persons, any surplus of mind over matter which would allow free choice to overcome stereotyped patterns of behaviour, or to originate personal aptitudes for various roles. All is fixed by nature. Sexuality is a permanent physical fact which makes women incapable in advance of functioning as priests. These biological determinists are indeed, on this point, the closed-minded. In thus identifying personhood with bodily structure, they are also led to deny any place to history and the human sciences in interpreting revelation as a guide to conduct. Norms are physically fixed at one's birth.

A philosopher would like to pronounce a 'Pax' [*sic!*] on both these houses. Both miss the mark, not only on the relation of body to spirit, but also on the relations between freedom and determinism, between culture

and nature, and between science and divine revelation. But single and dual anthropologies are not our only options. There is a third: a holistic view of the unity of human nature in which matter and spirit are so joined that each is proportionate to, and pervasive of, the other, with the unity of a single substance, a single being, a single material/spiritual nature. In this view, the biological permeates the spiritual and vice versa. Our sexuality is not identical with that of the beasts; it is personal. And our personhood is not that of a sexless spirit; it is sexual. Mind and matter influence and depend on, but do not wholly determine or obliterate, each other. Difficult though it may be, both in theory and in practice, this view would have us integrate the biological and the psychological, culture and nature, matter and spirit. In this view, we would see ourselves as different — not in incidental ways, but in the very core of our persons — from those of the opposite sex. We are not sexless spirits inhabiting or using sexed bodies with varying degrees of comfort. Rather, in Marcel's language, we *are* our bodies. And yet these bodies, material as they are, have spirit as one of their components. Understanding this paradoxical combination of matter and spirit is an arduous, life-long task. And living that integration is even more arduous and life-long.

Thomas Aquinas proposed this anthropology of the incarnate spirit in the thirteenth century. It was first condemned by the Archbishop of Paris, and then made defined dogma at the Council of Vienne in 1314. But it has never really caught on, in philosophy (which vacillates, as in classical greek times, between materialism and spiritualism) or in theology, where *contemptus mundi* and secularism continue to alternate as king of the anthropological castle. Simple minds do not cope well with complex concepts. It is easier to think of ourselves as wholly material: not qualitatively different from the beasts, whose sexual behaviour is wholly and uniformly determined by bodily structures; or as pure spirits, functionally but not essentially different from the angels, our life as spirits wholly divorced from any important sexual meaning.

It is not just simple-minded philosophers and theologians who find a holistic anthropology troublesome. The problem haunts us all, as Robert O'Connell points out in a fine essay on the subject. The difficulty, dramatized in several of Tennessee Williams's plays, is due not only to events of intellectual history, such as the influence of Manichaeism on St Augustine. Rather, it is rooted in a tension that we all experience within ourselves: equally strong aspirations toward a gross sensuality and an ethereal communion with the divine. The relative ease with which we can, and commonly do, resolve this tension by suppressing one of its members leads to dual and single anthropologies: to self-images which falsify us either as pure spirits or as wholly material. As O'Connell points out, it is not enough of an integration to make the body the soul's instrument rather than its prison. An instrument is separate from its user. We need to think away — and live away — all separation of soul from body, and yet not

identify the two. We need to make a 'healthy acknowledgment of polarity in the human constitution, along with an equally healthy rejection of dualism'.⁴ O'Connell recommends such holism on biblical grounds. Aquinas offered several philosophical arguments for it, the most straightforward being a simple appeal to introspection: each of us experiences himself as a single subject of both bodily and spiritual activities. I think, and I see and touch, and I am the same 'I' in both cases. Thus I am neither body alone nor mind alone, but a substantial unity of both.

In a holistic anthropology, each person is a single whole, at once human, sexed, and individual. Our sexuality is not really separable from our humanity, nor from our individuality. We can think, and speak, of these three separately. But they are separate only as abstractions in our minds. A woman has no sexless humanity through which she can act to fulfil certain roles in the same way in which a man could. She is her feminine self through and through, a single, holistic self that is at once female, human, and individual. The same is true of a man: his very self, human and individual, is masculine through and through. It is a false abstraction to speak of a sexually neuter humanity, common to men and women. No one's sexuality is irrelevant to his life as a person: everyone's person is his or her sexuality, through and through. Sexuality has meaning for every aspect of each person's life. It pervades each one's very existence. It is each one's very self.

Human sexuality is, then, both biological — a set of physical facts within whose parameters we are enclosed at birth — and personal, waiting to be enacted and given meaning by free choice within those parameters. One famous gentleman, when asked by a woman what he thought was the main difference between the sexes, replied, 'Madam, I cannot conceive'. Well, no. He could only beget. That was his biological given, his place in nature. But he could choose what kind of a begetter to be: casual or responsible, tough or tender, christian or pagan, or none at all. That was his freedom: his freedom to choose his place in history. In other words, neither a pure determinism, which fixes all roles on the basis of bodily structures, nor a pure freedom, which disallows sexual considerations in assigning roles, is a true picture of human sexuality. Anatomy is not our destiny. But neither is it wholly irrelevant to our lives as persons; it is a conditioner of our freedom. In the life of the Church, the erotic and the spiritual are not to be divorced from each other, but integrated.⁵

Thomas Aquinas argues flatly that there can be no virtue without passion: and therefore no charity, which is the heart and soul of all christian moral perfection. And thanks to the holistic way in which our sexuality pervades ourselves, our entire emotional make-up is erotic, rooted in the attraction of sexual opposites for each other. This attraction must be either suppressed, unrestrained, or integrated into our spiritual life. But our emotions are all of a piece. Thus one whose erotic feelings are repressed, in an effort at the pure angelism sought by single anthropologists, will be

deficient in other feelings as well: anger, sympathy, humour. One who allows free rein to an *eros* wholly divorced from the human spirit soon finds his emotions brutalized. But *human* sexuality is something else again: an integration of mind and body in which passion, channelled by free choice, is the mark of all that one does, because it is the mark of what one is.

Sexuality is then, to be welcomed, and appropriated, as a condition of our faith, our prayer, our very reception of divine life, and — yes — our construction and assignment of ecclesial roles. To abdicate that task is implicitly to falsify our very selves, as either beasts or angels. Single anthropologists would eliminate sexuality as a concern, deriving roles from spiritual rather than biological attributes. Dual anthropologists, on the other hand, offer an embarrassing caricature of our integration. What can we say about apparently serious proposals to exclude women forever from ordained ministry on the grounds that our compassionate, sensitive, loving, intuitive nature disqualifies us from offering sacrifice, forgiving guilt, and comforting the sick and dying? Such viewpoints are enough to make strong men weep.

Human nature, then, sexed as it is, is analogous in men and women: neither univocal (completely the same), nor equivocal (totally different). All of us, men and women, have a single nature in that we all belong to the human species rather than to any other. Men and women are equal in the dignity, the rights, and the responsibilities of that nature, and neither sex is inherently more or less human than the other. But thanks to the way in which sexuality permeates every aspect of our being, that single human nature is dual in its modes; two ways of being human are realized, differently, in men and in women. We are different not just in accidental features, such as bodily organs, but in the very essentials of our humanity. The sensory-intellectual mode of knowing and the physically conditioned freedom of choice which are the marks of the human are realized differently in men and in women. The two sexes, then, enjoy two irreducibly different modes of knowing and loving, two modes of *being* human. The differences are not different degrees of a univocal humanity identical in both. Complementarity need not mean inequality, even if it has often been that in the practical order. Nor do the differences constitute two natures, equivocally constituting two species, so that only males would have a fully human nature. But still, the differences are real, not just biological but psychosomatic, and they are important enough to require us to discern them accurately and to express them appropriately in social and ecclesial structures.

There is a further philosophical question, though: that of methodology. How do we come to know our analogous, bisexual human nature? In one way, this is the easiest task of all. Each of us experiences from within what it is to be human, to be masculine, or feminine. We know our own nature better than all the others that we have to observe from the outside. But, alas!, there is the fact of freedom, which complicates the matter

enormously. Thanks to free choice, we are able to act, and indeed to be, in ways that are contrary to our nature. Moreover, our sexuality is not just a given fact of nature that awaits our discovery. Sexuality that is truly human is an appropriation of nature, a reality which we must first come to possess in consciousness and freedom, and then make pertinent to our individuality. Thus our masculinity and femininity are partly defined by our own free choice. And what free choice has defined, free choice can re-define. The definition as well as the reality of human sexuality is still in process, in each one of us as in the human race as a whole. Thus, in deciding what our sexual differences are, we cannot look to history alone, for some sexual roles have not been legitimate. Nor can we look to abstract definitions that would completely overlook history; for history is the only *locus* in which our bisexual human nature really exists. Thus we can easily agree that sexual roles have been in many cases inappropriate to our true sexual differences, that they are unjust, that they inhibit the full growth of God's life in us all. The remedy, though, is not a mindless dismissal of sexual differences and roles based on them, but something much harder: a new effort to discern those differences more accurately and then to invent new, legitimate roles.

Experience can be our only source of such knowledge: not sheer, uncriticized experience, which is often idiosyncratic and alien to our true humanity; but experience judged in the light of what is and what is not genuinely human, genuinely masculine and feminine. Here the social and other sciences can help, but they cannot give final answers. For in our holistic make-up we are, indeed, partly material, and thus amenable to the empirical methods of the sciences. But we are also spiritual and self-determining, especially in our sexuality. Hence it should be no surprise that the sciences have not been able to define sexual differences. They never will. The specifically human, personal aspect of our sexuality is not amenable to empirical methods. Our response to this failure of the sciences, though, is again not to deny sexual differences, but to seek to discern them through other methods, those of philosophy and, indeed, theology.

What we need, then, is a careful sorting out of the experienced differences among people to see which are natural rather than cultural, and then, among the natural, which are sexual and which are merely individual. Which parts of me are due to my being born human, which due to my being born female, which have I freely chosen in keeping with my humanity and my femininity, which have I freely chosen in violation of these? Which parts of me would be found in any and every woman, but in no man? Which might also be found in others of either sex? Which are mine and mine alone? Which are due to my culture and the early conditioning I received from my family? Which have I consciously chosen as a reaction against my culture and my family? In a way, the task seems hopelessly complicated. But such is the task of becoming a person. These are some of the distinctions which all of us must make in our own lives, and then share with each other, if we are to discover our genuine sexual

differences. Men — all men — have something about them which women do not share, and vice versa. These somethings are not the stereotypes: intuitive, emotional softness in women, and rational, controlled strength in men. But some differences there are, basic to our lives as the naturally given parameters in which we are free to determine our sexuality. The way to their discovery is introspection, shared on a grand scale, by those who are sensitive to their sexuality as it has conditioned their life in the Church and Society.⁶

A philosopher, finally, must also criticize a simplistic opposition of open and closed mindsets. A focus on the future, exclusive of the past; a love of creativity and of novelty for its own sake; an uncritical acceptance of the conclusions of science into theology, and of recent scholarship just because it is recent: none of these is any more open-minded than the closed mindset which is said to be a prisoner of the past. If the past is an abstraction which is to be dismissed in favour of the concrete reality of the present, a present that is isolated from the past is just as much an abstraction. Some of what is historically and culturally conditioned might, after all, be permanently true. If all of the past is *ipso facto* relative and to be cast aside as soon as social and cultural changes put it out of date, then the theology of the present, which is as culturally determined as any other, has no more truth than what is already outdated. The defect of the single anthropology, with its false spiritualization of the human, has an echo here: instead of seeing us as truly transcending time and space by incorporating into our consciousness and choice what is valid from all times and places, the proponents of the open mindset described in the aforesaid report would so separate us from time and space as to make transcendence impossible. An uncritical acceptance of contemporary science imprisons us in a present which is doomed presently to pass away. If only what is, here and now, is real and significant, then nothing is finally worthwhile, nothing is finally true.

The state of the question of women's ordination, finally, shows us an unexpected instance of secularization, a category mistake. A question which ought to be cast in properly religious terms, in terms of our participation in the life of the Triune God, is instead cast into social, even political terms. It is seen as a question of the organization of the Church, of functions and roles within a human group. Empirical evidence — the fact, for example, that women do function as well as men in teaching and managing — is made determinative of a trans-empirical question. (One of my colleagues recently said, 'The question of whether or not a woman can consecrate will be definitively settled one of these days when one of them simply gets up and does it'.)

Both sides err here. Those who would exclude women from priesthood because of divinely fixed sexual characteristics, as well as those who would ordain women on the basis of proven talents for leadership, interpret the Headship of Christ as functional rather than ontological. Both sides make the same mistake: they confuse the derivative with the primary, taking

acting rather than being as fundamental. Both thus mistakenly locate the Headship of Christ in his functions as Teacher and King rather than in his ontological status as Son. They further mistakenly view the priesthood as a function. Advocates of women's ordination then draw a false analogy, in which the success of women as teachers and managers is seen as a qualification for priesthood. Their opponents, also seeing priesthood as a role, deny it to women on the basis of a sexual nature that lacks certain functional qualifications.

But it is a false spiritualization of the human — the single anthropology again — to say that two events are identical when a man and a woman speak the same words or perform the same actions. Given a holistic unity of mind and body — the identity of humanity, sexuality and individuality in each person — sexual differences are ontological, not just functional. Thus a man and a woman can both nurture children. But the nurturing is different, significantly so, in the two cases. The same is true for driving a truck, running for office, or any other common activity. Any human action is profoundly conditioned by the sexuality of the one who does it. The reason for admitting men and women to roles from which they have been stereotypically excluded is not that these actions are sexually neutral. Rather, politics, truck driving and child care can be done in two different modes, masculine and feminine; and we need them in both modes for our lives to be humanly complete.

But there is no automatic parallel here to priestly functions, because these are symbolic actions. Moreover, they are symbols of a special kind: sacraments, causal symbols and symbolic causes of that divine life in us which is our salvation from sin and death. Sacraments cause what they symbolize, but they are effective causes only by being accurate symbols. Hence their accuracy is all-important; without the correct symbolic content, there is no causality of grace. And without that causality, we are doomed.

What we need, then, in the final analysis, is a clarified theology of the Trinity. For only in correctly understanding Christ's headship ontologically, in terms of His Sonship, can we discern what is required in one who would accurately symbolize that Sonship. The masculinity of Christ, integrated as it is with his individualized humanity, given unique definition by his free choice, is thus much more than an anatomical structure. But it is that. A natural resemblance to Christ which would allow someone to symbolize him is also much more than a mere physical resemblance to other male mammals. But since his sexuality was as integral a part of his person as anyone else's, it cannot be overlooked. It is his mode of being who he is. If his headship, then, is seen in its fundamental ontology rather than in functional terms, masculinity — biological but fully human, fully individualized, fully christian masculinity — is a prerequisite in one who is called to *be* in his stead. Who would dare to claim such awesome sexuality for himself?

An alternative to the conclusion of the CTSA Report may be found in the work of Fr Donald J. Keefe S.J., written as a counter to Kilmartin's theology of pastoral office, which is one of the Report's mainstays.⁷ In this presentation, which owes much to Gerhard von Rad's writings on the OT, and Marcus Barth's commentary on the Letter to the Ephesians, the essential difference between cosmic paganism and biblical faith is a view of the world as either an ambiguous clash of opposites whose resolution is achieved by a victory of one over the other (good over evil), or as unambiguously good. In the first, pagan, view, God and the world, spirit and matter, society and individual, reality and human reason, masculine and feminine are all dichotomized in a chaotic clash. The members of these pairs are all related as good to evil, and salvation comes only by the triumph of the former over the latter. For us to be saved, then, we must depart from time and matter. One effort towards that salvation is the reduction of persons to functions, in which human sexual relations are marked by the repression of women by men, a repression in which men finally emasculate themselves.

In the biblical view of the world, however, creation is unambiguously good. God and the world, spirit and matter, eternity and time, and other pairs of opposites are not linked in dichotomous chaos, but are unified in a bipolar reciprocity that is orderly and good. The bipolarity of masculine and feminine, however, is not just one instance of reciprocity; it is, rather, the basic structure of reality, and as such, it is sacramental. Human sexuality, in other words, is at once cause and symbol: cause by *being* symbol of that presence of God in creation which makes creation good. The bisexuality of the world constitutes its goodness. In the biblical writings, the goodness of creation is personified as a woman: Israel is Yahweh's spouse, fallen into harlotry but restored to bridal purity so that creation becomes salvific in marital union with him. In the New Testament, Jesus's relation to the new creation is also marital; Head is to Body as Bridegroom to Bride. The liturgy in which we enact this marital union is also bisexual, a reciprocity of distinct yet unified masculine and feminine principles. Thus does the Eucharist become the norm for christian morality: all of human life is sexual, as is all of reality. Thus any violation of the right order of things is an infidelity to the marital union between God and creation.

For judaeo-christian believers, then, symbols are not *just* symbols, imaging or mirroring the presence of God in the world. They are causal symbols, effectively enacting what they symbolize. And human sexuality is the primordial sacrament. Sexual roles are holy because they are ontological, not just functional. To be masculine is to worship as a causal symbol of God's steadfast love for his creation, and to be feminine is to worship as an image of creation's acceptance of that love. Any violation of good order in human sexuality violates the salvific good of creation, meant to be enacted in our history so as to make that history salvific as an act of worship.

It follows that the accurate symbolizing, that is to say the correct enactment, of masculine-feminine reciprocity is of prime importance in the liturgy itself. As the epitome of Christ's becoming one flesh with his Church in a marital union, the Eucharist must preserve an alterity between the priest and the worshipping community, between the sacrament, causal-symbol of the Head, and the sacrament, causal-symbol of the Body. Christ's masculinity, inseparable from his person, is thus inseparable from his marital relation to the Church, and thus must enter into the symbolism of the act of worship in which that marital union is enacted. In other words, masculinity in the full personal, ontological sense of that term is a prerequisite for one who would enact the marital presence of Christ to his New Creation. Any denial of the mutuality of the sexes — in the liturgy, but in the rest of our lives as well — is a lapse into cosmic paganism, into a world that does not exist. And mutuality is a prizing of differences — of *la différence* — in reciprocal affirmation. To reduce or destroy the religious significance, that is to say the sacramental efficacy, of sexual differences is thus to deny at least implicitly the sacramentality of marriage, the sacrificial efficacy of the Eucharist, the immanent reality of Yahweh's love for his good creation, and of Christ's love for the Church.

Robert O'Connell reads the Bible as proposing a holistic anthropology, on many of the same grounds as does Donald Keefe. His main point is Christological: in Christ divine love is itself incarnate, in a body which is neither identified with that love in some materialistic way, nor locked in dichotomous conflict with it. Our salvation lies not in a final escape from our bodies and the rest of the physical world, but in a resurrection which embodies us more deeply than ever. Such a salvation sets us a paradoxical task: to incarnate the most spiritual of loves (that charity which is the life of God in us), and to spiritualize our bodies by making their every move an enactment of that same charity.

Our salvation does, finally, overcome a dualism by wholly suppressing one of its members: not the dualism of matter and spirit, symbolized in paganism by the dualism of male and female. Rather, we must overcome the dualism of egoism and charity. When charity wins its victory, egoism will be wholly destroyed: not by the escape of our souls from matter, but by the incarnation of charity into matter. The instrument of that incarnation is sacramental sexuality, by which God works in us to set free from sin and death these bodies which are ourselves.⁸

The question of women's ordination, then, is not trivial, nor is it one of simple justice seen in terms of secular social order. It is a properly theological question of complete profundity, involving the theology of pastoral office as rooted in sacramental theology, especially that of the Eucharist. But the roots and branches of the question extend also to ecclesiology and Christology, and finally to Trinitarian dogma.

A philosopher must leave such theological questions to the theologians. But it is clear which view of women's ordination rests on sounder

philosophical assumptions, especially an anthropology which makes sexuality either central or incidental to our identities as persons. After all is said and done, there are only three basic ways of viewing our nature; and one of these, the materialism which denies us any transcendence over animal life, is presumably ruled out for all Catholics. Our options, then, are between the dualism which underlies the CTSA's advocacy of women's ordination, and the holism presupposed by the sacramental sexuality that makes women's ordination ontologically impossible. A dualism which separates matter and spirit locates sexuality wholly on the side of matter. It thus makes sexual differences irrelevant to our lives as persons; lives in which humanity is humanity, univocally the same wherever we find it. But in a holistic anthropology which is neither single nor dual, matter and spirit must be ontologically unified, sexual differences are ontologically personal, and human nature is analogously realized in a bipolar reciprocity of unified differences and of a differentiated unity.

To adapt a commonplace of American pragmatism, then, sexuality is either a difference which makes no difference (in which case it isn't any difference at all); or else it is *la différence*, the difference which makes, literally, all the difference in the world. Theologians must finally decide the properly theological aspects of the women's ordination question. But in so doing, they need all the help they can get; from biology, sociology, psychology and the other sciences, yes; from the biblical renewal, yes. But also from philosophers. For first of all we need to know who we are, and what our sexuality is, and how we come to know what we know.

Mary F. Rousseau Ph.D.

NOTES

¹ Sara Butler M.S.B.T. (ed.), *Research Report, Women in Church And Society* (Manhattan College, Bronx, N.Y., 1978). The other contributors are Sisters Anne Carr B.V.M. and Margaret Farley R.S.M., and Fathers Frederick Crowe and Edward Kilmartin S.J.

² E. Kilmartin S.J., 'Apostolic office: sacrament of Christ', in *Theological Studies* 36, 2 (1975), pp 243-64.

³ Cf W. H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnston, *The Pleasure Bond* (Boston, 1975).

⁴ Robert J. O'Connell S.J., 'Body and Soul', in *The Way*, 10, 1 (January, 1970), pp 9-20.

⁵ Cf Paul Connor O.P., *Celibate Love* (London, 1980).

⁶ Cf Mary F. Rousseau, 'Abortion and Intimacy', in *America*, 140, 20 (26 May 1979), pp 429-32; Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (New York, 1976); Mary Gules Durkin, *Marital Intimacy* (New York, 1981).

⁷ D. J. Keefe S.J., *Sacramental Sexuality and the Ordination of Women*, in *Communio*, 5, 3 (Fall, 1978), pp 228-51. See also his 'Biblical Symbolism and the morality of *in vitro* fertilization', in *Theology Digest* (1974), pp 308-23.

⁸ O'Connell, *art. cit.*, pp 18-20.