

# Objections to My Essays on Women's Ordination



I am pleased to discover that someone actually takes the time to read my blog. An Anglican deacon named [Christopher Little](#) has taken the time to address my series of essays on women's ordination. I am happy to have my views challenged. I believe that what I have written is defensible, but, if not, the sooner I am corrected, the better. Little begins by addressing my first essay, "[Concerning the Ordination of Women: Preliminaries.](#)"

I began that essay by noting the names of a number of contemporary orthodox theologians and biblical scholars who embrace women's ordination: T. F. Torrance, Ben Witherington, N.T. Wright, Richard Hays, Michael Gorman, Robert Gagnon, and Alan Padgett.

Deacon Little comments:

*Now, it's of course fallacious to argue or even imply that because a number of noted "orthodox Christians" defend women's ordination ("WO" going forward) that Witt therefore stands in good company. It may be the fact that each and every one of these ostensibly orthodox Christians happens to be heretical on this particular issue, and defenders of the traditional view believe that they are in fact so, their commendable orthodoxy on all the other issues notwithstanding. Also fallacious is the argument that "the number of orthodox Christians endorsing WO is not a small or insignificant group." Size doesn't matter in this discussion.*

*What matters is whether or not WO is an unbiblical and uncatholic innovation.*

It is of course correct that the number of adherents to a position does not determine its truth. At the same time, the number of those who disagree with a position does not determine its falsity. The point here was not to "count noses." When there is disagreement about an issue, it does mean something that there is *sizable* disagreement. It is possible that one side is simply stupid or deliberately deceptive, but charity would not assume that without giving a fair hearing to the opposition.

I deliberately listed the above names because they are some of the most significant and respected scholars in late twentieth century and early twentieth-first century *orthodox* theological and biblical scholarship. T.F. Torrance was one of the most significant systematic and historical theologians of the late twentieth century. If one wants to know something about trinitarian theology, then one had better know Torrance. Christology, incarnational theology and atonement? Ecumenical theology? Sacramental and liturgical theology? The relationship between theology and modern science? Torrance.

The other scholars I mentioned are all experts on NT scholarship. Hays, Wright and Gorman are recognized authorities on Paul. Witherington has written critical commentaries on every single book in the NT, and his doctoral dissertation (later published by Cambridge University Press) was likely the first ever study of every single passage referring to women in the NT. It is still considered an indispensable work in the field. Gagnon's book on homosexuality and the Bible is considered the definitive work in the field. Given that so much of the discussion about women's ordination rests on the interpretation of passages in Paul, it might have some significance that perhaps the majority of contemporary NT Paul scholars say that there is

nothing in Paul's theology that would forbid the ordination of women. It might be significant if the foremost expert on what Paul says about homosexuality also says that nothing in Paul forbids women's ordination. If we have Wayne Grudem (pretty much alone) on the one side, and a significant number of the most respected Pauline scholars on the other, that alone is worth noticing.

Deacon Little writes:

*What matters is whether or not WO is an unbiblical and uncatholic innovation.*

And, of course, that is correct. However, it is also the case that the people I mentioned are in fact experts in the area of both biblical studies and (in Torrance's case) evangelical, ecumenical, and catholic theology. It is, of course, possible that these intelligent *orthodox* theologians and biblical scholars suddenly become either "dunces," dishonest, or "heretics" when they discuss the issue of women's ordination, but it would be presumptuous to make such an assumption without first hearing what they have to say.

I wrote:

*I have also known a number of orthodox ordained women clergy who are my friends, and whom I greatly admire, and, at the seminary where I teach I have been privileged to have as students women who were among the best students, finest preachers, and some of the most promising theologians of any of my students. I think it would be a great tragedy for the church to deny these women the opportunity to use their gifts and pursue their callings, but, even more, to be served by them. I am writing this series of posts primarily for these women.*

Deacon Little comments:

*So we see here something of the emotional motivation for Witt's series of articles. He has close female friends who have been ordained to the priesthood and valued female students who are headed there. I again want to commend Dr. Witt for his honesty, because there's a lot of emotional fuel here at work in his thinking and writing. Enough emotional fuel, in fact, to create a very bad argument.*

I'm not quite sure why Little presumes that because I have had women friends who are ordained clergy that my primary commitments on this issue are emotional. I also have friends (including male clergy) who do not believe in women's ordination. If my emotional commitment to my friends who do not believe in women's ordination is not decisive for my *disagreement* with them on this issue, then neither should my friendship with ordained women be considered emotionally decisive for my endorsement. I am quite capable of being friends with people without allowing my friendships to be decisive about whether or not I agree with them. I would hope that is true of most people.

The one area where my friendship with ordained women was decisive was that it provided the reason for me to write this series of essays. I have other projects I would prefer to work on, and I would have preferred someone else write these essays. However, no one else was doing it, and so, as I stated, I decided to do the job because I care about these women.

Deacon Little adds:

*But Witt also begs an essential question when he refers to these women's "calling" to the priesthood, for the very question to the apostolic and catholic Christian is whether such a "calling" can even exist.*

I would only be "begging the question" if I somehow assumed

that my assertion here was *itself* an argument, and that I had no actual warrants for my position beyond the assertion. But setting out those warrants is the entire purpose for this series of essays. Of course, I did not provide the warrants in *this* essay. It is, as I state, *preliminary* to the discussion. After the essays have been read and my arguments have been addressed would be the time to decide whether I was “begging the question.”

I wrote: “My path to Anglicanism and my path to the approval of women’s ordination was the same path, and the theological arguments that led me to the one were of the same kind of arguments that led me to the other.”

Deacon Little comments:

*Here we get a glimpse into the long-standing nature of Witt’s emotional attachment to the proposition that women may be ordained to the Anglican priesthood. He confesses that he rejected the traditional view of ordination he encountered of his free church past, and that this was one of the reasons he was attracted to Anglicanism – at that time represented in North America by The Episcopal Church.*

Here I fear that Little has simply misread what I wrote. I did not say that my commitment to women’s ordination was one of the reasons that I was attracted to the Episcopal Church. I wrote: “My path to Anglicanism and my path to the approval of women’s ordination was the same path, and the theological arguments that led me to the one were of the same kind of arguments that led me to the other.”

My path to Anglicanism was somewhat peculiar. The only Southern Baptist studying theology at a Roman Catholic seminary, I decided at the end of the period working on my Master’s degree to become an Anglican because, during my time at seminary, I immersed myself in the specific theological issues that were the focus of disagreement at the time of the

Reformation, and came to theological conclusions that led me to Anglicanism. That decision had nothing to do with women's ordination. I wrote something about that process [here](#).

In the same way and at about the same time, I came to endorse women's ordination for *theological* reasons, after having done a great deal of reading on the issue, both in favor and opposed. In both cases – becoming an Anglican, endorsing women's ordination – I followed a similar process: doing the necessary research, weighing the theological arguments, coming to a reasonable conclusion – but there was not a *causal* connection between the two positions.

Little concludes that my summary of the difference between Protestant and Catholic objections to women's ordination is largely accurate, but then adds:

*Witt's assessment at this point is more or less correct, although I would argue that there really isn't such a neat and clean distinction between "Protestant" and "Catholic" arguments as he seems to suggest. While it's true that Evangelical opponents of WO tend not to argue along liturgiological, ecclesiological and other theological lines as Catholics do, it isn't true that Catholic defenders of the traditional view tend to shun the biblical argument for male headship in home and church.*

Little is correct that there does exist some overlap among Catholic and Evangelical opponents of women's ordination – especially among Anglicans. What he does not acknowledge is that what he calls "Catholic defenders" who embrace arguments for "male headship in home and church" are at odds with the official position of the Vatican. Modern Roman Catholic theology (including Pope John Paul II himself) is officially egalitarian. As Sara Butler writes: "Because the contemporary magisterium has abandoned the view that women are unilaterally subject to men, it obviously does not supply this as the

reason women cannot be priests.”<sup>1</sup>

Deacon Little expresses dissatisfaction with my distinction between exegesis and hermeneutics:

*Both the “Protestant” opponents of WO whose emphasis is on the exegetical approach and “Catholics” who emphasize the theological approach understand well the role that understanding of 1st-century culture plays in conservative hermeneutics, but they would argue that the pertinent biblical material in this case is not culturally conditioned, say, as Paul’s comments on slavery would be. Surely Witt understands that liberal Episcopalians would argue that the Bible’s proscription of homosexual behavior is just as much “culturally conditioned” as is its proscription of WO, and thus because of such a “hermeneutical” consideration 1st-century religious culture must give way to 21st-century secular culture. So, it would seem Witt’s argument proves too much. If neo-Anglicans can undo 2,000 years of tradition with respect to WO on the basis of “hermeneutics”, liberal Anglicans can do the same with respect to homosexual behavior. He can’t have it both ways.*

But surely Little is aware that there were defenders of chattel slavery in the nineteenth century who would have argued that what Paul said about slavery was *not* “culturally conditioned.” Of course, I am aware that theological liberals argue that the Bible’s prohibitions of homosexuality are culturally conditioned, and that opponents of women’s ordination (whether Protestant complementarians or Catholic sacramentalists) argue that male-only ordination is *not* culturally conditioned. It is precisely because disagreements like this are possible that simple appeals to either Scripture or tradition will not resolve the issue – why the questions of (1) slavery; (2) same-sex sexual activity; and (3) women’s ordination, are a matter of hermeneutics – how to apply what the authors of the Bible said addressing issues of first-

century culture to our different current cultural situation. Nineteenth-century advocates of chattel slavery argued that *none* of (1), (2), and (3) were culturally conditioned. Conversely, modern advocates of same-sex unions argue that (1), (2), and (3) are *all* culturally conditioned. Contemporary opponents of women's ordination argue that (1) is culturally conditioned, but not (2) and (3), while orthodox proponents of women's ordination argue that (1) and (2) are culturally conditioned, but not (3). That's not *quite* my argument – I don't argue when addressing exegetical questions that the biblical writers held views about women that can be ignored because they were culturally conditioned, but rather that the complementarian arguments are misreadings – but the point is clear. Simple appeals to Scripture and tradition will not resolve the issue; nor will simple assertions that biblical references to slavery are culturally conditioned, but traditional opposition to women's ordination is not. If *I* can't "have it both ways," *neither* can opponents of women's ordination.

[1](#) Sara Butler, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2006), 47.

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# Concerning Women's Ordination: Women's Ordination and the Priesthood



# of Christ (Biblical and Patristic Background)



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This is the second in a multiple-part series of essays in which I intend to address Catholic objections to the ordination of women. This essay will be the first in the series to examine the definitive *new* Catholic objection to the ordination of women that first appeared in Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Inter Insigniores*. In summary, the objection runs as follows: Women cannot be ordained because, during the celebration of the Eucharist, the presiding priest represents Jesus Christ. During the eucharistic prayer, the priest recites Christ's words (the "words of institution") – "This is my body," "This is my blood" – and thus makes Christ present by acting as a representative of, or "in the person of" Christ (*in persona christi*). Because Jesus Christ is a male, only a male priest can exercise this representative function. In this essay, I will summarize the rise of the objection and examine the relevant biblical and patristic background.

In previous essays concerning Protestant objections to ordination, I have focused on arguments based on hierarchical authority: Women cannot be ordained because of a permanent hierarchical oversight or "headship" of men over women. Although ontologically equal, men and women have different

roles: men always lead and women always follow; men always command, and women always obey.

Catholic objections are distinct from this Protestant hierarchical understanding based on authority in that Catholic objections focus not on authority *per se*, but on issues of sacramental and, in particular, eucharistic theology. Catholic objections rest on the following assumptions not usually shared by those whom I have referred to as "Protestants." First, while the priesthood of Christ is unique, ordained clergy in some manner participate in Christ's priesthood. The clergy are not simply members of the congregation who have been delegated to perform a function, but have a distinct ontological status bestowed on them through the laying on of hands in ordination. The clergy are not simply "elders" or representative members of the congregation, but are in some sense, "priests."<sup>1</sup> Second, while the primary duty of ordained clergy is to proclaim the Word and to celebrate the sacraments, the Eucharist has the distinct purpose of making the risen Christ sacramentally or "really" *present* in a way that he is not present in creation in general. The Eucharist is not *simply* a memorial or "nothing more" than a symbol (as in Zwinglianism), but in some sense, it really is or enables participation in the risen humanity of Christ. The consecrated elements of the Eucharist "are" or "become" or "enable participation" in the risen Christ's body and blood. Third, the Eucharist is, in a qualified sense, a sacrifice. Protestant objections at the time of the Reformation to the notion of eucharistic sacrifice as a "repetition" of Christ's sacrifice seem largely based on misunderstanding – one hopes not deliberate misrepresentation. No one seems ever to have believed *that!* The patristic and Catholic position is that Christ's sacrifice took place once-and-for-all on the cross of Calvary, and cannot be repeated. Nonetheless, in the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice is made effectively present or "re-presented." Although Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice is a past event,

its effectiveness is not relegated to the past.

Although I am using the adjective “Catholic” to describe this position, I am not assuming that “Catholic” means exclusively *Roman Catholic*. Broadly speaking, Eastern Orthodox Christians, many Anglicans (particularly “Anglo-Catholics”), Lutherans, and some Reformed could embrace the above three points. The third point would be problematic for Lutherans (as well as low-church Anglicans and many Reformed) insofar as Luther rejected the “sacrifice of the mass,” but Lutheran affirmation of the “real presence” still makes the Lutheran position fall into the parameters of what I am calling “Catholic”).<sup>2</sup>

It needs to be emphasized that this is a new argument against women’s ordination. The traditional argument (as noted in this previous essay in this series<sup>3</sup>) was that women cannot be ordained because they are ontologically inferior. Women are less intelligent, more emotional, and more subject to temptation. Precisely because of this ontological defect, women cannot be ordained and they cannot exercise authority over men. (Traditionally, this restriction precluded not simply ordination to church office, but any position of female leadership or authority over men whatsoever – whether ecclesial or secular.) Neither Protestant complementarians nor Catholic sacramentalists any longer hold to this traditional position. Both now affirm the ontological equality of women – which is all to the good. Accordingly, there has necessarily been a need for new arguments. The new argument for Protestant complementarians has to do with distinct gender “roles.” Although ontologically equal, men and women have different roles, and it is the role of women to be subordinate to men and never exercise authority over them. It is the role of men to exercise authority and leadership over women. (I have addressed this position at length in previous essays.)

Catholics no longer endorse any hierarchical opposition to women’s orders. To the contrary, the modern Roman Catholic

church has fully embraced women's equality – including the assumption that women are fully equal to men in exercising leadership and authority. Thus, Pope John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem* adapts what could be called an "egalitarian" interpretation of Paul's exhortation to husbands and wives in Ephesians 6. The "submission" that Paul enjoins to wives is a "mutual submission": "However, whereas in the relationship between Christ and the Church the subjection is only on the part of the Church, in the relationship between husband and wife the 'subjection' is not one-sided but mutual."<sup>4</sup> Sara Butler notes: "Because the contemporary magisterium has abandoned the view that women are unilaterally subject to men, it obviously does not supply this as the reason women cannot be priests."<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, the Roman Catholic Church embraced a new argument against the ordination of women – rooted in sacramental theology. Only a male can be ordained because only a male priest can represent Christ (act *in persona christi*) in the celebration of the Eucharist. That this position is indeed a new position is evident in that it first appears in Pope Paul VI's *Inter Insigniores (Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood)* in 1976. In the Declaration, the Pope states first "that the bishop or the priest in the exercise of his ministry, does not act in his own name, *in persona propria*: he represents Christ, who acts through him: 'the priest truly acts in the place of Christ'. . ." The *Declaration* associates this representative stance particularly with the celebration of the Eucharist and the "words of consecration": "[T]he priest, who alone has the power to perform [the Eucharist], then acts not only through the effective power conferred on him by Christ, but *in persona Christi*, taking the role of Christ, to the point of being his very image, when he pronounces the words of consecration." Finally, the pope draws the evident conclusion. Only a male priest can represent Christ in this way because Christ is a

male:

*The same natural resemblance is required for persons as for things: when Christ's role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be this "natural resemblance" which must exist between Christ and his minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man: in such a case it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ. For Christ himself was and remains a man.*<sup>6</sup>

The same position reappears in Pope John Paul II's *Mulieries Dignitatem* and *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. In *Mulieries Dignitatem*, John Paul II stated:

*It is the Eucharist above all that expresses the redemptive act of Christ the Bridegroom towards the Church the Bride. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts "in persona Christi," is performed by a man. This explanation confirms the teaching of the Declaration Inter Insigniores, published at the behest of Paul VI in response to the question concerning the admission of women to the ministerial priesthood.*<sup>7</sup>

*Pastores Dabo Vobis* refers to the priest as a "sacramental representation of Jesus Christ." Priests "share in the one priesthood of Christ," and they perform their "sacramental actions" *in persona Christi*.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, numerous Roman Catholic theologians challenged this new position. However, in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (1994), Pope John Paul II officially closed the discussion:

*Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the*

*Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.*<sup>9</sup>

On October 28, 1995, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued its "*Responsum Ad Propositum Dubium Concerning the Teaching Contained in Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*," signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI). It states: "This teaching requires definitive assent, since, founded on the written Word of God, and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church, it has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium."<sup>10</sup>

This effectively silenced the issue of theological discussion for Roman Catholics. This does not mean that the argument of *Inter Insigniores* is a sound argument. It does mean that any Roman Catholic theologian who values his or her livelihood knows that publicly questioning the argument is a risky exercise. Since *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, the public Roman Catholic discussion largely seems to have dried up. In the words of Sara Butler, "Catholics may no longer regard this as an open question or publicly advocate for a change in Church practice."<sup>11</sup>

After *Inter Insigniores*, non-Roman Catholics (such as Anglo-Catholics) who opposed the ordination of women embraced the new position. For example, in a 1978 essay, Orthodox Bishop Kallistos Ware wrote against women's ordination based on the argument that a priest must be male because the priest is an "icon" of the male Christ:

*Such, then, is the Orthodox understanding of the ministerial priesthood. The priest is an icon of Christ; and since the*

*incarnate Christ became not only man but a male – since, furthermore, in the order of nature the roles of male and female are not interchangeable – it is necessary that the priest should be male. Those Western Christians who do not in fact regard the priest as an icon of Christ are of course free to ordain women as ministers; they are not, however, creating women priests but dispensing with priesthood altogether.*<sup>[12](#)</sup>

A more recent Anglican document affirms:

*[I]n order to represent the High Priesthood of Christ, . . . sacramental symbolism is required – namely, the ordained minister, who visibly carries in his human person the likeness of the Son. . . . There is a “natural resemblance” which must exist between the matter of the sacrament and the thing signified. It is because the priest has to be the sign and image of Christ that only men can be ordained to the priesthood. . . . While it is true that the priest represents the whole Church in the celebration of the Eucharist (acting in persona ecclesiae), he does so only because first he represents Christ himself, and acts in persona Christi; more specifically, in persona Christis capitis, in the person of Christ who is the head of the Church.*<sup>[13](#)</sup>

In order to address the new Catholic objection to the ordination of women, I will first summarize the biblical and historical background to the notion of priesthood and sacrifice.

### **Old Testament Priesthood**

According to the Pentateuch, God established the worship of Israel at Sinai along with the giving of the law. The goal of the exodus from Egypt was to produce a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). Moses received instructions concerning both the



building of the tabernacle and the institution of the priesthood when he ascended Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24). The role of the priesthood was twofold – both to offer sacrifice and to teach the people concerning God’s requirements. One of the main tasks of the priesthood was to distinguish between the holy and the common, the clean and the unclean (Lev. 10:10-11).<sup>14</sup> The priest’s role can also be thought of as “mediatorial”: the priest represents God to the people (in teaching and oracular functions), and the people to God (in sacrifice and intercession).<sup>15</sup>

One of the problems in assessing the notion of priesthood in the Old Testament has to do with the limited and isolated nature of its discussion in the Old Testament. Instructions concerning the requirements for Israel’s worship are limited primarily to Exodus 24 ff., the book of Leviticus, and Ezekiel 40 to 48.<sup>16</sup> Despite what must have been its importance in Israel’s life, this material is discussed little elsewhere, with the exception of the Psalter. Even within the material that provides instructions for administering Israel’s cult, the biblical text provides no theory or explanation for the reasons behind sacrifice and atonement: “[T]he biblical weight falls on the function of sacrifice rather than on a theory of its meaning.”<sup>17</sup>

While similar in many respects to the religious practices of the surrounding pagan nations, there are aspects of Israel’s temple worship that are unique. Israel’s priesthood is understood as functioning only within God’s covenant with Israel and God’s gracious relation to his people. God provided the sacrifice, and Israel’s worship was a response to God’s action, not as a means to procure God’s favor.<sup>18</sup> Although Israel, like other nations, had festivals that corresponded to the repeated cycles of the agricultural year (Exodus 23; Lev. 23; Deut. 16), the “nature” symbolism of these cyclical festivals was incorporated into the events of Israel’s



redemptive history: the passover (Ex. 12, Lev. 23), the feast of “booths” or “tabernacles” (Lev. 23), the day of atonement (Lev. 16).<sup>19</sup> Israel’s worship is thus a “liturgical expression into the history of Israel and her worship of the once-and-for-all events of Exodus and Sinai.”<sup>20</sup>

After the Exodus, the tabernacle and later the temple provided the exclusive focus for the understanding of “sacred space” in Israel’s worship. The temple was the location of the “holy of holies,” the place where the ark of the covenant was located, inside of which were the tablets of the Ten Commandments (Exod 40:20; 1 Kings 8:9). The Holy of Holies was the location of God’s “glory” where “God’s name” dwells (Ex. 40:34-35), and a space that the High Priest entered only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). The Psalms are full of references to the special significance attached to the temple as the physical location of Israel’s worship, the presence of God on “Mount Zion” (Psalm 29). At the same time, the temple also became the special object of criticism by Israel’s prophets who insisted that the temple provided no absolute guarantee of God’s presence (Jer. 7). The book of Ezekiel describes not only the departure of God’s glory from the temple (Ez. 8:5 ff.), but also the restoration of a new temple (Ez. 40 ff.).<sup>21</sup>

Finally, there is the role of the priest. The Israelite priesthood was hereditary, confined to descendants of Aaron. This restriction of the priesthood seems to have served two primary functions: (1) to provide historical continuity to the Mosaic period; (2) to maintain ritual purity. Priests were bound by laws of purity particularly in respect to marriage and to contact with the dead. They could not marry divorcees, prostitutes, or daughters of forbidden sexual unions. Priests were bound by the strict Old Testament dietary laws; they could not have physical blemishes; they could not participate in Old Testament rituals if they were in any way ritually unclean (Lev. 21-22).<sup>22</sup> It is sometimes asked why the Old

Testament restricts the priesthood exclusively to males. As I have argued elsewhere, the most logical explanation for this restriction has to do with Old Testament ritual purity. Because of ritual purity regulations concerning child-birth and bodily discharges, women would be ritually impure on a regular basis, and so would be unable to perform temple sacrifice.<sup>[23](#)</sup>

Before leaving discussion of the Old Testament priesthood, it is important to mention two final selections of passages – because of their importance for the later New Testament understanding of Jesus’ own priesthood and sacrifice: Genesis 14:19-20, describing Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek and the “suffering servant” passages of Isaiah (41:8 ff.; 42:1 ff.; 49:1 ff.; 50:4 ff; 53:13 ff.). Melchizedek was a Canaanite priest of “God Most High”( *El Elyon*) who blessed Abraham. Melchizedek is mentioned again in Ps. 110:4, and, in Hebrews 5-7, is interpreted as a type of Christ. The “suffering servant” of Isaiah is described in language reminiscent of Israel’s cult. Christians would later interpret Isaiah 53, with its description of a servant who “was led like a lamb to the slaughter,” and who was made an “offering for guilt,” as a “passion” text whose typology was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>[24](#)</sup>

## **Priesthood in the New Testament**

The New Testament uses the word “priest” (ἱερεύς, *hiereus*) in the following contexts:

First, “priests” refers to Jewish priests who exercise Jewish religious functions. John the Baptist’s father Zechariah was a priest to whom the angel Gabriel appeared and announced John’s birth, while Zechariah was offering sacrifice (Luke 1:8-20). When Jesus healed a leper, he instructed him to go to a priest and make an offering (Luke 5:12-14). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, one of those who passes by the wounded

traveler is a priest (Luke 10:29-37).<sup>25</sup>

Priests are often found among Jesus' enemies. They challenged Jesus' authority (Luke 20:1-8). Judas betrayed Jesus to the "chief priests," and when Jesus was arrested, the chief priests played a major role in his condemnation and execution (Mark 14:53-64, 15:10-11; Luke 22). The chief priests and scribes mocked Jesus on the cross (Mark 15:31-32). In Matthew's gospel, the chief priests used Judas' thirty pieces of silver to buy a field; they set a guard in front of the tomb of Jesus, and bribed the guards to spread the story that Jesus' body had been stolen (Matt. 27:6-10, 62-65; 28:11-15). All four gospels portray the temple priesthood and the Jewish leaders as responsible (along with the Romans) for Jesus' death.<sup>26</sup>

Second, the New Testament portrays Jesus' theological identity using the Old Testament symbolism of priest, sacrifice and temple.

The gospels portray Jesus as both priest and sacrifice. Jesus' prophetic ministry of teaching and performing miracles has a "priestly" dimension. As noted above, instructing the people of God is a primary priestly function. In speaking of his upcoming death as a "ransom for many" (Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28), Jesus identified himself with the "suffering servant" whose death was a sacrifice for others.<sup>27</sup>

All three synoptic gospels portray the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes as anticipating the Last Supper (Mark 6:30-44; Matt. 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17). (Note the verbal parallels: Jesus "took," "blessed," "broke," and "gave.") At his last supper with his disciples, Jesus used deliberately priestly language, identifying his death as a sacrifice in the "words of institution": "This is my body . . . This is my blood [of the new covenant]" (Mark 14:22-24; Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20). Jesus' language echoed imagery

of Old Testament sacrifice, of the “suffering servant,” and of Jeremiah’s “new covenant” (Jer. 31:31-33).<sup>28</sup>

John’s gospel portrays Jesus as both priest and temple. John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the “lamb of God” (John 1:29). The gospel identifies Jesus’ crucifixion as the time when he will draw all people unto him (John 12:32), and the time of his glorification (John 13:31). There are clear eucharistic references in Jesus’ invitation in John’s gospel to “eat my flesh and drink my blood” (John 6:51-58). John interprets the incarnation of the Word in Christ as a transference of God’s glory dwelling in the temple to now dwelling in Jesus (John 1:14). Jesus’ prediction of the destruction and rebuilding of the temple means that Jesus will replace the temple with his own body (John 2:18-22). Jesus’ discussion with the Samaritan woman indicates that a time is coming when it will no longer be appropriate to worship either in Jerusalem or Mt. Garizim (the location of the Samaritan temple), but will now “worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:19-26).<sup>29</sup>

Nowhere in his letters does the apostle Paul refer to Jesus as a “priest.” He does, however, identify Jesus with the sacrificial paschal lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Paul says that God put Christ forward as an expiation/atonement (ἱλαστήριον, *hilastērion*) “through his blood” (Rom. 3:25). (The term *hilastērion* refers to the Old Testament “mercy seat” or lid that covered the ark in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish temple. Paul is saying that Jesus’ death on the cross is a new “Day of Atonement.”) Significantly, Paul does not portray God as the recipient of the sacrifice, but as the one who offers sacrifice. Paul does not only portray Christ in sacrificial language, but also through the use of priestly metaphors. Paul writes that the risen Christ sits enthroned at the “right hand of God” and “intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:34).<sup>30</sup>

In his own description of the Last Supper, Paul speaks of Jesus’ death in sacrificial terms (1 Cor. 11:23-26). In Paul’s

recounting of the “words of institution,” Jesus speaks of the bread as his “body, which is for you,” and of the cup as the “new covenant in my blood.” Paul describes the “cup of blessing, which we bless” as a “communion (κοινωνία, *koinōnia*) in the blood of Christ,” and the “bread that we break” as a “communion (*koinōnia*) in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-21).<sup>31</sup>

Paul also uses temple and sacrificial language to refer to the church. Paul speaks of the church as the “body of Christ,” (1 Cor. 12:27), and of our physical bodies as “temples” of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20) because we were “bought with a price,” that is, the “price” of Christ’s death. Christians are called to present their bodies as a “living sacrifice,” which is their “spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1).<sup>32</sup>

The most lengthy discussion of the priesthood of Christ takes place in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews speaks of Christ as both priest and sacrifice. As “high priest,” Jesus has made “expiation/atonement for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17). Hebrews both compares and contrasts Christ’s sacrifice with that of the Old Testament priesthood. Unlike the Old Testament sacrifice of animals, Jesus died once for all (7:27); rather than sacrificing animals, Jesus offered himself (9:25-26). In contrast to the hereditary priesthood of the Old Testament, Jesus has an “eternal priesthood,” after the “order of Melchizedek” (5:6, 10; 6:20). Because Jesus did not sin, he did not need to offer sacrifice for himself, but only for sinners (2:17; 4:15; 10:11-12). Hebrews also portrays Christ’s priesthood using temple imagery. The Old Testament tabernacle was only a “shadow” of the true tabernacle, set up by God (8:2-5); the risen Christ has now entered this true tabernacle, where he continually intercedes on our behalf, in God’s presence (9:23-24). Christ’s sacrifice has provided a “new and living way” for those who have faith in Christ to “enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus” (10:19-22). As in Paul, Christian life is presented as “sacrificial.” The author

of Hebrews writes: “We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.” The readers are encouraged: “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.” (13:10, 15). <sup>33</sup>

Third, the New Testament also uses the word “priest” in reference to members of the church. In Rom. 15:15-16, Paul refers to his own ministry as “a minister (λειτουργός, *leitourgōs*) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service (ἱερουργοῦντα, *hierourgounta*) of the gospel of God, so that the offering (προσφορά, *prosphōra*) of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” 1 Peter speaks of Christ as a “living stone,” and of the church as “living stones,” “built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:4-5), and states a few verses later: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (2:9).<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, although the passage in 1 Peter speaks in a general way of how all Christians are “priests” (a “priesthood of all believers”), the New Testament never uses the word “priest” to describe those who exercise offices of leadership in the church. In his letters, Paul addresses the “bishops/overseers” (ἐπισκόποι, *episkopoi*), and “deacons” (διακόνου, *diakonoi*) (Phil. 1:1). The pastoral epistles speak of “bishops/overseers,” “presbyters/elders” (πρεσβυτέροι, *presbyteroi*), and “deacons” (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9). The Acts of the Apostles refers to “elders/presbyters” and “deacons” (Acts 11:30; 15:2,4,6; 16:4; 6:1-6). (A hoary debate concerns whether or not the offices of bishop and presbyter are distinct in the New Testament, or are simply different names for the same office.<sup>35</sup>) Setting aside for office seems to

have occurred through the “laying on of hands” (1 Tim. 4:14, 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6). Those who held these offices clearly exercised some sort of leadership, but the New Testament says nothing about what we would call their liturgical functions. The New Testament says nothing about the role of these leaders in baptizing, celebrating the Eucharist, or ordaining others in their succession.<sup>36</sup>

In short, the New Testament emphasizes three aspects of a Christian theology of priesthood and sacrifice: (1) the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ; (2) Christians as a new temple; (3) the priesthood and sacrifice of all Christians. At the same time, the New Testament does not use the word “priest” to refer to church office, and refers to Christian priesthood and sacrifice, “not in acts of ritual and liturgical worship but in the practical, ethical sphere of the lived Christian life.”<sup>37</sup>

### **Priesthood in the Early Church**

An examination of the writings of the church fathers finds a continuation of the themes noted above: (1) the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ; (2) Christians as a new temple; (3) the priesthood and sacrifice of all Christians. At the same time, there is not much discussion of these issues. As O’Collins and Jones, note: “The first millennium of Christianity provides some but not much explicit teaching about the priesthood of Christ. The references to him as priest are scattered and yield little by way of systematic thought.” The primary reason for this seems to have been that, although the Letter to the Hebrews was acknowledged as canonical in the East from the second century, it was not universally accepted in the West until the fourth century.<sup>38</sup>

The first post-New Testament document to deal with a controversy concerning the nature of ministry having to do with priesthood is 1 Clement. Clement refers to Christ three



times as the “High Priest,” and refers to “approved officers” (δεδοκιμασμένοι, *dedokimasmenoí*) who “offered sacrifices with innocence and holiness.”<sup>39</sup> What Clement meant by “sacrifice” is “unclear.”<sup>40</sup> Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* speaks of the “sacrifices” which the church offers in “the bread of the Eucharist, and also the cup of the Eucharist”; however, the immediate context makes clear that the “sacrifices” to which he refers are “prayers” – “the spiritualized sacrifice of the practical living of Christian life.”<sup>41</sup> Justin is clear that it is the “president” who offers “prayers and thanksgivings” at the Eucharist, but this tells us at the most that he had a “positive attitude toward the ministerial office.”<sup>42</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons echoes Paul’s threefold division of the theology of priesthood and sacrifice: he writes of Christ as the “high Priest,” and of the “offering” of his humanity to the Father<sup>43</sup>; Irenaeus refers to the Eucharist as a “pure sacrifice,” in which “the Church alone offers this pure oblation to the Creator, offering to Him, with giving of thanks, [the things taken] from His creation.”<sup>44</sup> Yet, again, however, as in Justin, the “sacrifice” that is offered seems to be the “spiritualized one of prayers of praise and thanksgiving.”<sup>45</sup>

The Alexandrian theologian Origen drew on the imagery of the Old Testament Book of Leviticus rather than on the New Testament book of Hebrews. Origen may well have been the first church father to refer to ordained Christian ministers as “priests.” He speaks of Christian priests as imitating their “Teacher” by granting people the forgiveness of sins. Origen states that these priests “have a part in the divine sacrifice through the Eternal Priest, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”<sup>46</sup> At the same time, Origen seems to have understood all Christians to participate in Christ’s priesthood, so that ordained clergy differ only in function and not in nature from the priesthood that all receive through faith and baptism.<sup>47</sup>



One of Cyprian of Carthage's letters is an important early discussion of the nature of the Eucharist. In the letter, Cyprian views Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine as a foreshadowing of Christ's own offering of his body and blood, which was ritually enacted at the Last Supper: "For who is more a priest of the most high God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered a sacrifice to God the Father, and offered that very same thing which Melchizedek had offered, that is, bread and wine, that is, His body and blood?" Cyprian refers to the Eucharist as a "sacrifice" – "for the Lord's passion is the sacrifice which we offer" – and to ordained clergy as "priests" who "imitate" what Christ did:

*For if Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, is himself the chief priest of God the Father, and has first offered himself a sacrifice to the Father, and has commanded this to be done in commemoration of himself, certainly that priest (sacerdos) truly discharges the office of Christ, who imitates that which Christ did; and he then offers a true and full sacrifice in the Church to God the Father, when he proceeds to offer it according to what he sees Christ himself to have offered.*<sup>48</sup>

Might this be the first known example of an *in persona christi* understanding of eucharistic theology – that during the eucharistic celebration the priest is acting as a representative or icon of Christ? What does Cyprian mean when he suggests that the priest should "imitate" Christ? In the latter part of the letter, he asks: "For to declare the righteousness and the covenant of the Lord, and not to do the same that the Lord did, what else is it than to cast away His words and to despise the Lord's instruction, to commit not earthly, but spiritual thefts and adulteries?" Cyprian concludes in a manner that indicates that the "imitation" referred to is that of spiritual and moral discipleship: "Wherefore, if we wish to walk in the light of Christ, let us

not depart from His precepts and monitions, giving thanks that, while he instructs for the future what we ought to do, he pardons for the past wherein we in our simplicity have erred.” Of course, it is also possible that, by “imitation,” Cyprian simply means that the priest, in celebrating the Eucharist, patterns his actions on the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper: “[H]e [the priest] proceeds to offer it according to what he sees Christ Himself to have offered.” Whether Cyprian understood “imitation of Christ” to mean either Christian discipleship or basing the pattern of the Eucharist on the New Testament’s description of the Last Supper, there is nothing in the passage to indicate that Cyprian believed that the celebrant in his own person is acting as an icon of, *in the place of*, or in the “person of” Christ (*in persona Christi*).<sup>49</sup>

Two last figures are important as contributing to the patristic understanding of priesthood and sacrifice. John Chrysostom delivered thirty-four homilies on the *Letter to the Hebrews*. In these homilies, Chrysostom says much about Christ’s high-priestly role, particularly his role as mediator.<sup>50</sup> Chrysostom explicitly links Christ’s priestly sacrifice to the Eucharist, insisting at the same time, that the Eucharist is not “another sacrifice,” but the “same” as Christ’s once-and-for-all sacrifice.<sup>51</sup> Chrysostom emphasizes the *priestly sacrifice of all* Christians, citing Rom. 12:1, stating that “each one is himself the Priest” of the offerings of “moderation, temperance, mercifulness, enduring ill-treatment, long-suffering, humbleness of mind.”<sup>52</sup> What seems to be missing from the homilies is any discussion of the priestly nature of ordained ministry.

Finally, Augustine is important for something new he brings to the discussion – that it is the risen Jesus Christ who is the central actor in the sacraments. Augustine regularly uses *sacerdos* in reference to Christ, but rarely applies the term

to bishops or presbyters. Against Donatism, Augustine is critical of the notion that “the ordained minister was the source rather than the merely visible mediator of holiness.”<sup>53</sup> The efficacy of the sacrament does not depend on the personal holiness of the priest because it is the risen Christ who performs the sacrament, acting through the visible signs of sacramental grace. Augustine was addressing the sacrament of baptism in his debate with the Donatists; it was only later that this principle could be applied to the Eucharist as well.<sup>54</sup>

In summary, the church fathers largely repeat the three key themes of the New Testament writings concerning priesthood and sacrifice: (1) Jesus Christ is both high priest and sacrifice; (2) the authors recognize the sacrificial context of Jesus’ Last Supper, and there is, among some at least, the beginnings of a notion of “eucharistic sacrifice” – not that the Eucharist is a “repetition” of Christ’s once-and-for-all sacrifice, but that, in the celebration of the Eucharist, the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice is “remembered” in such a way that it is “made present” or re-enacted. In the words of Chrysostom, “it is not another sacrifice . . . but the same.” (3) The authors speak of the priesthood of all Christians, which they interpret in spiritual and moral terms; this notion of sacrifice is “not a cultic but rather an ethical idea.”<sup>55</sup> (4) the writers assume some kind of relationship between the priesthood of Christ, and the priesthood of ordained clergy. When the celebrant presides at the Eucharist, he is presiding over a “sacrificial” action. At the same time, in the earliest examples, the sacrificial action is not understood to be the liturgical rite itself, but the prayer of the celebrant and the community. In later writers like Cyprian and Chrysostom, the Eucharist is itself spoken of as a sacrifice in the sense of a re-presentation of Christ’s once-and-for-all sacrifice. With this understanding of eucharistic sacrifice, Cyprian also uses the word “priest” (*sacerdos*) to refer to the celebrant of

the Eucharist. At the same time, as made clear in Augustine, the primary celebrant of the sacraments is the risen Christ himself: "It is the one High Priest who now offers the Eucharist for Christians everywhere."<sup>56</sup>

What is missing from the writings of the church fathers is any detailed discussion of this relationship between Christ's priesthood and the priesthood of the ordained clergy. There is one passage (in Cyprian) that has been appealed to as an early example of an *in persona Christi* theology of ordained ministry, but this is almost certainly a misreading. There is no warrant in the writings of the church fathers for the claim that the church should exclude women from ordination because the priest represents Christ, and only a male can represent Christ. If the reference to "this teaching" in Cardinal Ratzinger's "*Responsum Ad Propositum Dubium*" is to the teaching of *Inter Insignories* concerning the priest acting *in persona Christi*, then it is simply not the case that it is "founded on the written Word of God, and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church." To the contrary, there is no such teaching either in Scripture or in the patristic tradition of the church. To discover the origins of the notion that the priest acts *in persona Christi*, it is necessary to look to the theology of the later Medieval period, and particularly to Thomas Aquinas.

1 Sara Butler, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2006) regards this as a crucial distinctive for the Catholic position: "The ministerial 'priesthood' differs 'in kind' or in essence from common priesthood." (56).

2 Ecumenical progress between Roman Catholics and Lutherans on the question of eucharistic sacrifice were reached as early as 1967: Roman Catholic/Lutheran statement on "The Eucharist"; <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/lutheran/eucharist.cfm>; Anglican and Roman Catholic agreement on eucharistic sacrifice can be found

in the “Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine” in the ARCIC (Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission) Final Report (1982); [http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e\\_arcic\\_eucharist.html](http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/arcic/doc/e_arcic_eucharist.html). Further clarification is found in “ARCIC’s Clarification of Certain Aspects of the Agreed Statements on Eucharist and Ministry” (1993); [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_199309\\_clarifications-arcici\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_199309_clarifications-arcici_en.html).

3 “Concerning Women’s Ordination: The Argument “From Tradition” is not the “Traditional” Argument”; <http://willgwitt.org/theology/concerning-womens-ordination-the-argument-from-tradition-is-not-the-traditional-argument>.

4 John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1988/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_15081988\\_mulieris-dignitatem.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_15081988_mulieris-dignitatem.html)

5 Sara Butler, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2006), 47.

6 Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration Inter Insigniores: On the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood*; [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19761015\\_inter-insigniores\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19761015_inter-insigniores_en.html).

7 John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem: On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1988/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_15081988\\_mulieris-dignitatem.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_15081988_mulieris-dignitatem.html).

8 John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis: On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031992\\_pastores-dabo-vobis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html).

9 John Paul II, “Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*: On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone”; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1994/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_19940522\\_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html).

10 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Responsum Ad Propositum Dubium Concerning the Teaching Contained in Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*”; [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19951028\\_dubium-ordinatio-sac\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19951028_dubium-ordinatio-sac_en.html).

11 Butler, 2. In May 2011, Pope Benedict XVI removed Bishop William Morris of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba in Australia from his position, shortly following the release of a pastoral letter by Morris, calling for the discussion of the ordination of married men and women.

Nonetheless, a serious question remains concerning whether *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* meets the formal criteria of papal infallibility for the Roman Catholic Church. Numerous Roman Catholic theologians have insisted that it does not. Representative challenges to its infallibility can be found here:

[http://www.womenpriests.org/teaching/mag\\_con2.asp#cathol](http://www.womenpriests.org/teaching/mag_con2.asp#cathol).

In a commentary on *Ad Tuendam Fidem* (For the Defense of the Faith), then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger stated:

*A similar process can be observed in the more recent teaching regarding the doctrine that priestly ordination is reserved only to men. The Supreme Pontiff, while not wishing to proceed to a dogmatic definition, intended to reaffirm that this doctrine is to be held definitively, since, founded on the written Word of God, constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church, it has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal magisterium. As the prior example illustrates this does not foreclose the possibility that in the future, the consciousness of the Church might*

*process to the point where this teaching could be defined as a doctrine to be believed as divinely revealed.*

Among other things, Ratzinger created serious problems for ecumenical relations when he stated in this document that among “truths connected to revelation by historical necessity and which are to be held definitively, but are not able to be declared as divinely revealed” was Pope Leo III’s “apostolic letter *Apostolicae Curae* on the invalidity of Anglican ordinations.” Whatever authority these recent papal statements might have for Roman Catholics, Anglicans should take them with exactly the same seriousness as they take papal rejection of the validity of Anglican orders.

[12](#) Kallistos Ware, “Man, Woman, and the Priesthood of Christ,” *Man, Woman, and Priesthood*, Peter Moore, ed. (London: SPCK, 1978), 68-90; <http://www.womenpriests.org/classic/ware.asp>. It will be noted in a later essay that Bishop Ware changed his mind on this question.

[13](#) Jonathan Baker, ed., *Consecrated Women? A Contribution to the Women Bishops Debate*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2004), 45-46 (sentences rearranged to indicate logical progression).

[14](#) Brevard Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 149-150; Walther Eichrodt, *The Theology of the Old Testament Volume 1* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 395-396; T. F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry* (Continuum: T & T Clark, 1955, 1995), 3. Also, see the discussion on Old Testament sacrifice in Robert J. Daly, S.J., *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 11-45, and *Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background Before Origen* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1978), 11-135. Further references to Daly will be to *The*



*Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice.*

[15](#) Gerald O'Collins, S.J. and Michael Keenan Jones, *Jesus Our Priest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

[16](#) Childs, 155.

[17](#) Childs, 157.

[18](#) Torrance, 3.

[19](#) Childs, 162-163; Eichrodt, 119-133.

[20](#) Torrance, 4.

[21](#) Childs, 163-165.

[22](#) Paul L. Reddit, "Book of Leviticus," *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, et al, eds. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 447.

[23](#) "Concerning Women's Ordination: A Presbytera is not a Priestess" (Part 1: Old Testament Priesthood); <http://willgwitt.org/theology/concerning-womens-ordination-a-p-resbytera-is-not-a-priestess-part-1>.

[24](#) O'Collins and Jones, 2; Torrance, 6.

[25](#) O'Collins and Jones, 8-9.

[26](#) O'Collins and Jones, 9-12.

[27](#) O'Collins and Jones, 16-17.

[28](#) O'Collins and Jones, 17-24.

[29](#) Torrance, 7.

[30](#) O'Collins and Jones, 27-28,30-32.

[31](#) O'Collins and Jones, 28-30.

[32](#) O'Collins and Jones, 32-35.



[33](#) O'Collins and Jones, 45-56; Daly, 69-76.

[34](#) O'Collins and Jones, 34-37; Daly, 65-67.

[35](#) For a recent argument that the offices were distinct, see Alistair C. Stewart, *The Original Bishops: Office and Order in the First Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

[36](#) O'Collins and Jones, 281-284.

[37](#) Daly, 82. Daly continues: "[T]he commonly accepted methods of modern scholarship prove beyond reasonable doubt that the primary ethical concept of Christian sacrifice is indeed the one that is operative in the New Testament." (82-83).

[38](#) O'Collins and Jones, 68.

[39](#) 1 Clement 44. 4-6. trans. C. C. Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 64; <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.vi.i.iii.html>.

[40](#) Daly, 86; O'Collins and Jones refer to Clement's "ambiguities" (69).

[41](#) Justin Martyr, *Trypho* 41; "Now, that prayers and giving of thanks, when offered by worthy men, are the only perfect and well-pleasing sacrifices to God, I also admit." Justin Martyr, *Trypho* 117:1-3, *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994); Daly, 90.

[42](#) Justin, *1 Apology* 65; Daly refers to the "meager evidence supplied by Justin." Daly, 90.

[43](#) Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.8.2; 3.19.3, *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1*.

[44](#) Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.18.

[45](#) Daly, 96.

[46](#) The reading is uncertain because we only have Rufinus' Latin translation of Origen's Greek text. The "ministers and priests" are called *ministri* and *sacerdotes*. The latter may be a translation of *hiereis*. Hom. 5.3.2, 5.12.9 in Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus 1-16*, trans. G. W. Barkley (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1990), cited by O'Collins and Jones, 74, 75.

[47](#) O'Collins and Jones, 76; "[W]e must take note how Origen's idea of sacrifice has so little to do with liturgy or ritual." Daly, 127.

[48](#) Cyprian of Carthage, Letter 63 (62).17,14, *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994); O'Collins and Jones, 76-79. Cyprian is the first Latin writer to refer to the presider of the Eucharist as a *sacerdos*; O'Collins and Jones, 78 note.

[49](#) *Inter Insignories* cites this letter to affirm that the "priest truly acts in the name of Christ," but the context indicates this a misreading. O'Collins and Jones write: "[T]here is little dispute over Cyprian's call to his episcopal colleagues to walk in the light of Christ, follow him, and to observe his commandments." O'Collins and Jones, 78.

[50](#) Hom. 16.2; O'Collins and Jones, 79-80.

[51](#) "What then? do not we offer every day? We offer indeed, but making a remembrance of His death, and this [remembrance] is one and not many. How is it one, and not many? Inasmuch as that [Sacrifice] was once for all offered, [and] carried into the Holy of Holies. This is a figure of that [sacrifice] and this remembrance of that. For we always offer the same, not one sheep now and to-morrow another, but always the same thing: so that the sacrifice is one. And yet by this

reasoning, since the offering is made in many places, are there many Christs? but Christ is one everywhere, being complete here and complete there also, one Body. As then while offered in many places, He is one body and not many bodies; so also [He is] one sacrifice. He is our High Priest, who offered the sacrifice that cleanses us. That we offer now also, which was then offered, which cannot be exhausted. This is done in remembrance of what was then done. For (saith He) "do this in remembrance of Me." ( Luke 22:19.) It is not another sacrifice, as the High Priest, but we offer always the same, or rather we perform a remembrance of a Sacrifice." Hom. 17.6, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 14: Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Philip Schaff, ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994); O'Collins and Jones, 83.

[52](#) Hom. 11.5; O'Collins and Jones, 81.

[53](#) O'Collins and Jones, 88.

[54](#) *De Baptismo* 3.15; O'Collins and Jones, 95-96.

[55](#) Daly, 140.

[56](#) O'Collins and Jones, 104.