

Concerning Women's Ordination: A Response to the "Ordination Challenge"

The following presupposes some familiarity with two earlier essays: Concerning Women's Ordination: The Argument "From Tradition" is not the "Traditional" Argument and Concerning Women's Ordination: The "Tradition" Challenge



A gentleman named Michael Joseph has responded to my "ordination" challenge.

1) C. S. Lewis once responded to an unsympathetic critic who had clearly gotten his views wrong: "[W]e all know too well how difficult it is to grasp or retain the substance of a book one finds antipathetic." I suppose I should not be surprised if a response to my essay seems rather seriously to miss much of the point of my argument. A key point in the misreading seems to be the presumption that I assume that the Church Fathers were simply irremediable sexists and had nothing good to say about women. Accordingly, the author presumes it sufficient to point out that if Tertullian says some good things about women or that Chrysostom speaks positively about women in marriage, or if Augustine does not believe that "Eve is by nature more a sinner" that this somehow invalidates my argument.

A single paragraph in my earlier essay should set straight that misunderstanding:

In making this point, it is not my intention to embrace the kind of diatribe that one occasionally encounters in revisionist feminist scholarship that portrays the entire history of the church as nothing but an unmitigated practice of oppressive subjugation and patriarchal abuse of women. Such one-sided readings can find their counterparts in equally one-sided accounts of how Christianity remarkably improved the status of women in the pagan world, and was, on the whole, a remarkably good thing for women. Nonetheless, it is not difficult to trace a consistent pattern in the history of the church that explains why the church has not ordained women. Some selective examples follow. (These are typical, but not exhaustive.)

So no, I do not at all believe that pre-modern church tradition is simply uniformly negative toward women. To the contrary, I state concerning Aquinas:

Thomas could speak in almost glowing terms of the relations between men and women. Asking whether woman should have been made of the rib of man, he responds with an illustration that points to the partnership and companionship of men and women, an adapted form of which has been used in countless wedding services . . .

Moreover, in my recent challenge I state: "It is not enough to provide some individual positive statement about women mentioned by a Patristic, Medieval, or Reformation author."

And indeed it is not. The same Aquinas who could speak so positively about Christian marriage could also write: "So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates."

The same Richard Hooker who could glowingly write about marriage – "The bond of wedlock hath been always more or less esteemed of as a thing religious and sacred." (Laws 5.73.3) –

could also write: “And for this cause they were in marriage delivered unto their husbands by others. Which custom retained hath still this use, that it putteth women in mind of a duty whereunto the very imbecility of their nature and sex doth bind them, namely to be always directed, guided and ordered by others” (*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book 5, 43.5)

So much of what Mr. Joseph says is simply beside the point of my argument. Tertullian, Chryostom and others could simultaneously say very positive things about women in some respects, while simultaneously agreeing that women could not exercise church office for the very reasons I mentioned – that in comparison to men they are less intelligent, more emotionally unstable, and more subject to temptation. Mr. Joseph’s assumption seems to be that it is impossible for a single person to hold both opinions. Since the church fathers say many positive things about women, he assumes that they could not simultaneously believe that women are ontologically inferior in certain respects. I agree that there should be a logical inconsistency here, but the inconsistency is not on the part of the one recognizing the inconsistency.

And it is this presumption that makes up almost the whole of Mr. Joseph’s argument. Over and over he follows the pattern:

Witt quotes A affirming X which Witt interprets to mean Y.

However, X cannot possibly mean Y because A also says Z, and no one who says Z could also believe Y.

Therefore, Witt has to be mistaken when he says that A affirms X, and whatever it sounds like A is affirming, A cannot mean Y.

However, the argument fails if it is possible that A might possibly affirm both Y and Z simultaneously. That the simultaneous affirmation Y and Z seem incoherent from our point of view does not give us permission to conclude that no

one could ever have thought differently.

And, of course, the key point of my argument concerning the new tradition concerning women's ordination is that all sides now agree that it really does not make sense to affirm both Y and Z simultaneously. Since the church really wants to affirm Z, it quietly quit affirming Y.

2) Joseph makes things easier for himself, but also concedes a central point in my argument by restricting the allowed time of discussion to the "first five centuries" of church history. To my claim that "a sizeable body of Patristic, Medieval, and Reformation" authors was presented, he responds: "A sizable body of early church writing was certainly not presented," and "Only nine quotes were provided . . . from the period from before 500 AD."

However, it was never my intention to provide an exhaustive discussion and I certainly never intended to restrict myself to the patristic era. I did not claim to be presenting a sizeable body of any single period, but a sizeable body of selective writers from the entire history of the pre-modern church. My intention was to be both representative and comprehensive – to include writers who were patristic, Medieval, Reformation, Eastern, Catholic, Protestant. Given that this was a blog essay (not an entire book), it could not be exhaustive. I wrote:

Nonetheless, it is not difficult to trace a consistent pattern in the history of the church that explains why the church has not ordained women. Some selective examples follow. (These are typical, but not exhaustive.)

However, by restricting the discussion to the patristic era, Mr. Joseph actually makes a major concession. The later writers that Joseph excludes from the discussion necessarily have to be excluded since they so inarguably confirm my claim.

At the same time, however, Mr. Joseph (perhaps unwittingly) makes things more difficult for himself because he is trying to make a case for a theology of ordination for which there is no evidence in the patristic period. There is almost no discussion of such notions as clerical priesthood, eucharistic sacrifice, or priestly representation in the patristic period because there is very little discussion about the priesthood of Christ. As I write elsewhere, "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."

If the discussion is to be kept to the first five centuries, it will be a very short discussion.

Now to the discussion of the specific texts:

3) Tertullian

Joseph tries to soften Tertullian's claim concerning women being the "devil's gateway" by claiming that Tertullian is simply following Scripture: "Is Tertullian not allowed to make this observation?" He then follows the pattern I mentioned above. Tertullian exhorts women to holiness. He calls them "fellow servants and sisters." Then the key quote: "Tertullian's tone dramatically shifts, doesn't it!" That is, because Tertullian affirms Z, he could not possibly have meant Y when he said X. (Oh, yes, Tertullian also says some critical things about men, so it all evens out.)

However, what if Tertullian could affirm both Z and Y, whether we ourselves find that consistent or not?

I included Tertullian as affirming "Statements that women are more susceptible to temptation than men:" Tertullian does not simply warn women against following Eve's example. He states that they too are Eve, and they are personally responsible for Eve's sin, and thus share her guilt. Because Eve yielded to temptation, the women Tertullian addresses yield to

temptation. Because they yield to temptation, they are “the devil’s gateway.” According to Tertullian, women (not men) are the “first deserter of the divine law.” And the women to whom Tertullian is speaking (not men) are those who persuaded “him (men) whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack.”

This goes beyond simply affirming the teaching of Scripture. Does Tertullian claim that women are more susceptible to temptation than men? Yes. (The devil was not valiant enough to attack the man because he would not have yielded.) Do women lead men into temptation? Again. Yes.

4) Epiphanius

Mr. Joseph selectively reads Epiphanius, whom I discussed at some length in my earlier essay. I acknowledged that Epiphanius refers positively to both the virgin Mary and the four daughters of Philip the Evangelist. But I then made the following points: 1) Epiphanius does not actually make any argument beyond appealing to historical precedent: Eve, Mary, and Philip’s daughters were not ordained. 2) At no point does Epiphanius make a connection between male ordination and the celebration of the sacraments. At no point does he suggest that the male apostles resemble a male Christ, or that there is a correlation between masculine priesthood and the eucharistic presidency.

Epiphanius does provide an explicit warrant against women’s ordination, however: “Women are unstable, prone to error, and mean-spirited.”

So what is the point of the appeal to Mary and Philip’s daughters? They provide a negative example against ordinary women. If Mary and Philip’s daughters were not ordained, then *a fortiori* we cannot ordain women who are “unstable, prone to error, and mean-spirited.”

5) I’m not sure what point Joseph is making in reference to the Augustine quote. In my challenge essay, I had included

Augustine as an example of "Claims that women are subordinate to men." In my original essay, I had written that Augustine was "typical" of the claim that even before sin, women had been subject to their husbands. This claim is certainly correct. Joseph asks "Is Augustine's argument that Eve is by nature more a sinner?" Well, no. But I had affirmed no such thing.

6) Chrysostom

Joseph seems to have completely missed the point of my Chrysostom citation. Again, he follows his predictable pattern. Chrysostom says lots of good things about how men should love their wives. Joseph then makes much of a sentence I quoted that "the modest woman pierces and disturbs the mind."

However, he completely ignores two more crucial quotes:

First that the bishop must have more care for the "female, [in the congregation], which needs more particular forethought, because of its propensity to sins."

Second, Joseph insists that Chrysostom's claim that women are more adept at household management while men are better at worldly affairs is simply an affirmation of what he calls a "complementarian" outlook. He misses, however, that in an agrarian society, management of worldly affairs would certainly have been associated with greater intelligence. To the extent that women could not be ordained because they presumably lack these skills, there would certainly be an understanding of not just difference but deficiency. Moreover, Joseph ignores Chrysostom's explicit statement about why women cannot teach: "Why not? Because she taught Adam once and for all, and taught him badly. . . . Therefore let her descend from the professor's chair! Those who know not how to teach, let them learn. . . ." This is not simply an affirmation of gentle love and complementarity. And, again, given that

Chrysostom's position is a kind of "complementarianism," restrictions on women's teaching "because they taught Adam badly" points to an ontological incapacity.

And, finally, even if Chrysostom's argument is that women cannot be ordained because of different kind of intelligence related to household management, this corresponds to no contemporary argument against WO. Contemporary complementarians studiously avoid making those kinds of claims. Contemporary sacramentalist arguments are not interested in gender differences at all except insofar as they relate to an ability to resemble a male Christ.

7) The Obsession with Complementarianism

Joseph anachronistically describes the position of Chrysostom and others as "complementarianism" and "headship" and also refers positively to the organization CBMS and the Danvers Statement. In so doing, he ignores a crucial point of both of my earlier essays. The "complementarian" position has been explicitly repudiated by both the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. It is because of this explicit repudiation that new arguments have had to be embraced concerning masculine sacramental representation.

To the extent that Joseph repeatedly characterizes the church fathers as "complementarians," he confirms my point. Insofar as the contemporary Catholic position repudiates complementarianism, it is at odds with the historic position.

At the same time, there is something odd about appealing to the church fathers to support what is actually a Protestant argument. However, even here, as I've again made clear, Tertullian, Chrysostom et al, do not simply affirm the contemporary complementarian argument. They do indeed claim that women are less intelligent, more subject to temptation, etc., which is contrary to the complementarian position. That they can also say nice things about women does not somehow

undo this.

8) Apostolic Constitutions

Joseph claims that my quote from The Apostolic Constitutions is simply another example of “complementarianism.” However, the connection between the man being the “head” to the “unreasonableness” of the body (the woman) governing the head indicates not merely a subordination, but a subordination rooted in a difference in intelligence. According to AC, it is only “reasonable” that the “head” (the thinking and talking part) governs the body (the irrational part).

Joseph appeals to the Apostolic Constitutions speaking positively about women (there’s the standard argument again) and to the claim (as in Epiphanius) that Jesus did not ordain women. Actually, the claim is that Jesus was not *baptized* by his mother. (Of course, contrary to AC, the modern church does allow women to baptize.) But again, the historic argument is rooted in hierarchical authority of men over women, specifically including teaching. There is nothing here of the modern Catholic argument concerning sacramental resemblance to a male Christ, and, again, as noted above, the most straightforward reading has to do with rationality: it is not “rational” for the body to govern the “head.”

Joseph also makes the odd claim that because the *Didascalia Apostolorum* is essentially contained in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, it is “not really a separate quote.” However it says something about the transmission of a tradition that a distinct community takes up an earlier writing and incorporates it again as a new text. We would not argue that Luke’s gospel is not really a separate witness because Luke incorporates material from Mark’s gospel.

In the end, my reading of the texts still stands.

Some final observations. I stand by my claim that the new complementarian and sacramentalist arguments against W0

represent new traditions insofar as they depart from the logic of the earlier tradition.

I find it ironic that I was challenged for providing insufficient patristic evidence for my argument – “A sizable body of early church writing was certainly not presented – and then Mr. Joseph concludes with a series of suggestions about early church history that are entirely speculative, and without any patristic textual evidence whatsoever. The advantage of my argument is that it is at least based on actual textual citations. It is also confirmed by the readings of other scholars who may not agree with my position concerning W0, but who acknowledge that a genuine change has taken place. Sara Butler, whom I cite as the preeminent advocate for the new Roman Catholic position, acknowledges that the position introduced by Pope Paul VI is not the historic position, and the the historic arguments are no longer considered tenable.

I also find it ironic that Joseph appeals to a Protestant “complementarian” reading of the patristic tradition to justify what is actually a “Catholic” position concerning the normativity of church tradition. He does not acknowledge that the Evangelical “complementarian” position is at odds with the new Catholic sacramental position. Both the Roman Catholic Church as well as the Orthodox Church have rejected complementarian understandings of the relationship between men and women, and are emphatically clear that they do not base their opposition to W0 on complementarian grounds. So to the extent that Joseph affirms a complementarian reading of the patristic tradition, the more difficult it becomes to make the claim that the current Catholic position is not a departure from that tradition.

Finally, Joseph repeatedly makes reference to an “apostolic tradition” based more on speculation than textual evidence. He refers to a “mind of the early church” and an “apostolic consensus.” But we know that “mind” only from actual texts,

which don't say a whole lot about ordination, and even less about women's ordination. Insofar as they address women's ordination at all, they provide problematic arguments against it. Moreover, the primary concern in these patristic arguments has nothing to do with sacramental practice (the Catholic concern), but is entirely about authority of men over women. Insofar as the question is raised as to why women cannot exercise authority over men, there is a consistent answer – which I've documented, and which appears again and again in the later history of the church.

Joseph states that “Jesus Christ, the GodMan, apparently had compelling reason(s) to not clearly ordain women . . .” To the contrary, Jesus Christ did not ordain anyone. Jesus did call twelve Jewish male apostles, but the typologically symbolic reasons for that are obvious. Jesus could not have called women apostles for the same reason that he could not have called Chinese apostles or fifty-seven apostles. Although it can be argued that clergy are successors to the apostles, there is no more reason that they would have to be male than that they would have to be Jewish or that their numbers would be restricted to twelve.

Finally, I note that Joseph responded to my challenge by addressing a different issue instead – that I was mistaken in my reading of certain of the church fathers. He did not make the case for explicit parallels to either the modern Complementarian nor the modern Catholic sacramentalist position. (Pointing out that the fathers say some nice things about women does not cancel out what they also say about why women cannot teach or exercise authority – which is the crucial patristic argument against WO). Interestingly, although his appeal to “tradition” presupposes a “Catholic” position, he argued instead that the patristic tradition actually has affinities with the Protestant Complementarian position. He quietly avoided discussing the issue of sacramental resemblance to a male Christ, but that would be an

extremely hard argument to make insofar as the fathers simply do not make that argument.

Concerning Women's Ordination: The "Tradition" Challenge



Recently, I posted the following on Facebook in response to the recent ACNA College of Bishops Statement on Women's Ordination:

As a member of the ACNA, I was a consultant to the ACNA Women's Orders Task Force. When the ACNA was founded, it was decided that we would be a "large tent" representative of orthodox Anglicanism, extending hospitality to those Anglicans who could not affirm women's orders, even though they held a minority opinion within worldwide Anglicanism. I am happy that the ACNA has continued to recognize that there is room for disagreement on this issue.

However, I am unhappy with this statement in particular, which does not tell the whole story: "However, we also

acknowledge that this practice is a recent innovation to Apostolic Tradition and Catholic Order."

Yes, the practice is recent, but so is the recognition that women are of equal moral, intellectual, and spiritual status with men. The historic argument against women's ordination was that women lacked intelligence, were emotionally unstable, and were more subject to temptation than men. Given that the current arguments against WO are NOT this argument, the continuing opponents of WO are as much endorsing a "recent innovation" as those of us who favor it.

I accompanied the post with a link to this page:

Concerning Women's Ordination: The Argument "From Tradition" is not the "Traditional" Argument.

I quickly discovered that posting this was a mistake, as I received responses like the following that made clear that people read my statement, but had not actually read my essay:

Who has made this "historic argument"?

To make matters worse, my statement was shared elsewhere without the link to my accompanying essay, where it received responses such as the following:

I would truly love for someone to post even one demonstration of the Early Church arguing specifically that women cannot be ordained due to their inferior intellectual, moral, or spiritual state, or even an inferior ontology. Just a quote from them that speaks for itself.

The substance would be giving a quote from the Early Church that shows – rather than assumes – that they argued from a view that women are inferior:

– not merely subordinate, but inferior, for assuming that subordinate implies inferior merely assumes what Witt needs

to demonstrate,

– not merely that a writer or several made an observation or rebuke or rhetorical flourish against the female sex (for they did that against men, too)

Basically, just someone, provide something from the early church that clearly shows that they said, basically, “the mind of the Church is that women can’t be priests because women are without exception intellectually incapable/wanton/etc.”

Lots of words, lots of assertions, lots of analogies, lots of debate over whether the analogies are valid... but no early church quotes, viz, no actual evidence.

I am tempted to respond by again referring back to my earlier essay, but that would be too easy. I’m more than willing to accept a challenge, and will raise the challenge with one of my own.

So first a response to the above challenge.

My argument consists of the following two assertions:

First,

The historic argument against women’s ordination was that women lacked intelligence, were emotionally unstable, and were more subject to temptation than men.

This can be broken down as follows.

First is what I will call the “ontological deficiency” claim. Writers in the tradition claimed (all quotations are from my original essay):

(A) Women are less intelligent, more emotionally unstable, and more subject to temptation than men.

Claims that women are less intelligent than men:

“To woman is assigned the presidency of the household; to man all the business of state, the marketplace, the administration of government . . . She cannot handle state business well, but she can raise children correctly . . .”
John Chrysostom

“[T]he female is more prudent, that is, cleverer, than the male with respect to evil and perverse deeds, because the more nature departs from the one operation, the more it inclines to the other. In this way, the woman falls short in intellectual operations, which consist in the apprehension of the good and in knowledge of truth and flight from evil. . . . Therefore sense moves the female to every evil, just as intellect moves a man to every good.” Albert the Great

“For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates.”
Thomas Aquinas

Their [women’s] “judgments are commonly weakest because of their sex.” Richard Hooker

“And for this cause they were in marriage delivered unto their husbands by others. Which custom retained hath still this use, that it putteth women in mind of a duty whereunto the very imbecility of their nature and sex doth bind them, namely to be always directed, guided and ordered by others” Richard Hooker

Statements that women are emotionally unstable compared to men:

“[G]enerally, proverbially, and commonly it is affirmed that women are more mendacious and fragile, more diffident, more shameless, more deceptively eloquent, and, in brief, a woman is nothing but a devil fashioned into a human appearance”

.” Albert the Great

“Nature I say, doth paynt them furthe to be weake, fraile, impacient, feble and foolishe.” John Knox

Statements that women are more susceptible to temptation than men:

“And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil’s gateway: you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack.” Tertullian

“For it is not possible for the Bishop, and one who is concerned with the whole flock, to have a care for the male portion of it, but to pass over the female, which needs more particular forethought, because of its propensity to sins.” John Chrysostom

“Therefore there is no faithfulness in a woman. . . . Moreover, an indication of this is that wise men almost never disclose their plans and their doings with their wives. For a woman is a flawed male and in comparison to the male, has the nature of defect and privation, and this is why naturally she mistrusts herself. And this is why whatever she cannot acquire on her own she strives to acquire through mendacity and diabolical deceptions.” Albert the Great

“Women are unstable, prone to error, and mean-spirited.” Epiphanius

Second is what I will call the “exclusion by nature of subordination” claim:

(B) Ordination necessitates exercising authority over others, particularly teaching and speaking in an authoritative manner.

Women cannot be ordained because they are necessarily subordinate to men, and therefore cannot exercise authority in this manner. This is primarily an exclusion from women exercising any authority whatsoever over men, and only secondarily a specific exclusion from ordination.

Claims that women are subordinate to men:

“Even before her sin, woman had been made to be ruled by her husband and to be submissive and subject to him. But . . . the servitude meant in [Genesis 3:16] denotes a condition similar to that of slavery rather than a bond of love.”
Augustine

“For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates.”
Thomas Aquinas

Eve “had previously been subject to her husband, but that was a liberal and gentle subjection. Now, however, she is cast into servitude.” John Calvin

“He [the man] will dominate you [the woman], that is, you will decide nothing by your private inclination but will act in everything by the inclination of your husband.” Heinrich Bullinger

“And for this cause they were in marriage delivered unto their husbands by others. Which custom retained hath still this use, that it putteth women in mind of a duty whereunto the very imbecility of their nature and sex doth bind them, namely to be always directed, guided and ordered by others” Richard Hooker

“So, I say, that in her greatest perfection woman was created to be subject to man.” John Knox

Claims that women cannot be ordained because they are in a state of subjection to men, and therefore cannot teach or exercise authority over men:

“It is neither right nor necessary that women should be teachers, and especially concerning the name of Christ and the redemption of his passion. . .” Didascalia apostolorum

“But if in the foregoing constitutions we have not permitted them to teach, how will any one allow them, contrary to nature, to perform the office of a priest?” Apostolic Constitutions

“Why not? Because she taught Adam once and for all, and taught him badly. . . . Therefore let her descend from the professor’s chair! Those who know not how to teach, let them learn. . . . If they don’t want to learn but rather want to teach, they destroy both themselves and those who learn from them. . . .” John Chrysostom

“Accordingly, since it is not possible in the female sex to signify eminence of degree, for a woman is in the state of subjection, it follows that she cannot receive the sacrament of Order.” Thomas Aquinas

“To make women teachers in the house of God were a gross absurdity, seeing the Apostle hath said, ‘I permit not a woman to teach.’” Richard Hooker

“I am assured that GOD hath revealed unto some in this our age, that it is more than a monster in nature that a Woman shall reign and have empire above Man.” John Knox

“The apostle taketh power frome all woman to speake in the assemblie. Ergo he permitteth no woman to rule aboue man.” John Knox

Third is what I will call the “inherent correlation” claim.

(C) Proposition (B) is a direct corollary or consequence of Proposition (A). Women are necessarily subordinate to men, and cannot exercise authority over them because of an ontological incapacity located in a deficiency in reason, emotional instability, and susceptibility to temptation. Because of this ontological deficiency, they cannot exercise authority over or teach men, and so cannot be ordained.

Claims that women cannot exercise authority over men because of an intellectual, emotional, or moral incapacity (which necessarily implies that they cannot be ordained):

“To woman is assigned the presidency of the household; to man all the business of state, the marketplace, the administration of government . . . She cannot handle state business well, but she can raise children correctly . . .”
John Chrysostom

“Nature I say, doth paynt them furthe to be weake, fraile, impacient, feble and foolishe: and experience hath declared them to be vnconstant, variable, cruell and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment. And these notable faultes haue men in all ages espied in that kinde, for the whiche not onlie they haue remoued women from rule and authoritie, but also some haue thoght that men subiect to the counsel or empire of their wyues were vn worthie of all publike office.”
John Knox

Actual claims that women cannot be ordained because of such an incapacity:

“Never at any time has a woman been a priest. . . . And who but women are the teachers of this [that women can be ordained]? Women are unstable, prone to error, and mean-spirited.” Epiphanius

“For if the ‘man be the head of the woman,’ and he be originally ordained for the priesthood, it is not just to

abrogate the order of the creation, and leave the principal to come to the extreme part of the body. For the woman is the body of the man, taken from his side, and subject to him, from whom she was separated for the procreation of children. For says He, 'He shall rule over thee.'" Apostolic Constitutions

"For 'if the head of the wife be the man,' it is not reasonable that the rest of the body should govern the head." Apostolic Constitutions

"So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates. . . . Accordingly, since it is not possible in the female sex to signify eminence of degree, for a woman is in the state of subjection, it follows that she cannot receive the sacrament of Order." Thomas Aquinas

"Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprized to find it done at all." Boswell's Johnson

"The apostle taketh power frome all woman to speake in the assemblie. Ergo he permitteth no woman to rule aboue man." John Knox (compare with the above statement by Knox)

The above should be enough to make clear that there is a traditional understanding of why women cannot be ordained which can be expressed in terms of the inherent connection between propositions (A), (B), and (C). Any argument against women's ordination that does not include all three propositions is not the traditional argument, but an innovation.

This leads to my second affirmation:

Given that the current arguments against WO are NOT this argument, the continuing opponents of WO are as much

endorsing a "recent innovation" as those of us who favor it.

To elaborate this claim, there are three *new* positions concerning women's ordination: (1) The Egalitarian position that women can and should be ordained; (2) The Protestant "Complementarian" position that women cannot be ordained. (3) The Catholic "Sacramental" argument that women cannot be ordained. All are innovations insofar as they reject some element of the traditional argument. This can be illustrated by the following propositions.

(A1) Women share an equal intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacity with men. They are not less intelligent, emotionally unstable, or more subject to temptation than men.

Egalitarians, Evangelical Complementarians, and Catholic Sacramentalists equally affirm (A1).

But (A1) is directly contrary to (A).

I have yet to find a contemporary opponent of W0 who will acknowledge that (A) is inherent to the traditional position, but the above citations clearly demonstrate that it is.

The (1) Egalitarian position is that in light of (A1), there is no valid argument against W0, and therefore women should be ordained. The (2) Complementarian and (3) Sacramentalist positions argue that despite (A1), women should still not be ordained.

The (2) Protestant Complementarian affirms (A1), but also continues to affirm (B). However, because the Complementarian does not affirm (A), he (or she?) cannot affirm (C). Rather, the Complementarian affirms:

(C1) Although (A1), women still cannot be ordained because God has created different "gender roles" rooted in "male headship."

For Complementarians, men can exercise any role in the church that women can fulfil, but women have the exclusive role of always being in submission to male authority. In a religious setting, women cannot teach, speak publicly where men might be present, or exercise authority over men.

Complementarians do affirm (B), but rather than affirm (A) and (C), they affirm (A1), and (C1), and are thus an innovation in relation to the previous tradition.

The (3) Catholic sacramentalist also affirms (A1), but differs from the (2) Complementarian in the following:

(B1) The argument from authority no longer applies. Women can exercise any role of teaching, exercising authority, and speaking, and even preaching within the church. (There are no "gender roles" rooted in "headship.")

Rather, the sacramentalist affirms:

(B2) The distinct function of ordination has to do with presiding at the sacraments. The presiding minister (the priest) represents Jesus Christ, that is, acts in the "person of Christ" (*in persona Christi*) when presiding at the sacraments. Because Jesus Christ is a male, only a male priest can represent a male Christ.

(B1) and (B2) are decided departures from the historic traditional arguments against women's ordination. To the best of my knowledge, no traditional theologian raises this sacramental argument against WO. It does not appear until the 20th century, first in essays like C.S. Lewis's "On Priestesses," but most definitively in Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Inter Insigniores*. Non-Roman Catholics (Orthodox and Anglo-Catholics) borrow the argument from Roman Catholics.

(B1) and (B) are also in opposition. Complementarians continue to affirm (B), but Sacramentalists do not.

(C2) Because women do not resemble a male Christ, women cannot be ordained.

(There is a variation of the above argument that does not strictly follow the Roman Catholic position that the priest acts *in persona Christi*, but still appears to “male/female” symbolism. Because only a male priest can symbolize a male Christ, only males can be ordained. The substance of the argument is still the same.)

Thus, (1) Egalitarianism, (2) Evangelical Complementarianism, and (3) Catholic Sacramentalism equally represent innovations to the tradition.

In light of (A1), (1) Egalitarians are an innovation in advocating the ordination of women, but only in the sense of recognizing the implications of what Scripture teaches about the intellectual, moral, and spiritual equality of men and women. Women’s ordination is the logical consequence of a Christian doctrine of vocation.

In addition to (A1), the Egalitarian would affirm:

(B3) The primary call of the ordained minister is to service (Matt. 20:26-28; 1 Pet. 5:1-14). Insofar as the ordained minister has a representative function, the minister first represents the church as the body of Christ, and the (female) bride of Christ. Insofar as the minister represents Jesus Christ, the minister represents Christ as the head of the church which is his bride, but most significantly through cruciformity, by pointing away from him- or herself to the crucified and risen Christ, and through following Christ in suffering. The ordained minister represents Jesus Christ as a “jar of clay.” This sort of Christocentric representation is not gender-specific, not unique to men or women, to clergy or laity, but is at the heart of discipleship for all Christians (Eph. 5:1, 2; Phil. 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 4:5-12).

(C3) Insofar as the call to ministry is primarily a call to

service, and the minister represents first the female Church (as the bride of Christ), and, second, Jesus Christ in terms of the cruciform pattern to which all Christians are called, ministry qualification is determined by Spirit-gifting and vocation, not by gender.

However, (2) Evangelical Complementarians and (3) Catholic sacramentalists are just as much positions of innovations as are Egalitarians. No one holds to the traditional position.

Rather than affirming (A), (B), (C), (2) Complementarians affirm (A1), (B), and (C1). Complementarians reject two of the original three indispensable premises of the traditional position.

Rather than affirming (A), (B), (C), (3) Catholic sacramentalists affirm (A1), (B1), (B2), and (C2). They reject all three of the original indispensable premises of the traditional position.

Moreover, the only position of agreement shared between (2) Complementarians and (3) Sacramentalists is (A1), not only a departure from the tradition, but also an agreement with (1) Egalitarians. Evangelical Complementarians continue to affirm only one of the original premises (B), while Catholic Sacramentalists affirm none, and Complementarians and Sacramentalists disagree not only with the tradition, but with each other concerning (B) (which Sacramentalists reject), (B1) and (B2) (which Complementarians reject), and (C1) and (C2), about which Complementarians and Sacramentalists disagree.

I think the above adequately addresses the original challenge. However, I conclude with a challenge of my own. I have argued that Evangelical Complementarians and Catholic Sacramentalist opponents to women's ordination represent innovations to the historic tradition. Their advocates insist that they do not, and are simply following the historic tradition. My challenge:

Provide an actual historical reference from the Christian

tradition that corresponds to what I have called the Complementarian or Sacramentalist positions. It is not enough to provide some individual positive statement about women mentioned by a Patristic, Medieval, or Reformation author.

Rather, from a discussion that specifically deals with the issue of women's ordination and opposes it, provide an example from a Patristic, Medieval, or Reformation author (or authors) that clearly endorses either (A1), (B), and (C1), or (A1), (B1), (B2), and (C2) as a coherent and integrated position. It is not enough to find individual quotations from an author that can be read to endorse any single one of the above propositions. Rather, in the same way that I have shown through detailed quotations that there is a sizeable body of Patristic, Medieval, and Reformation writers who endorse (A), (B), and (C) and bring them together to form a coherent argument against women's ordination based on female ontological incapacity, an adequate demonstration that what I have called the (2) Protestant Complementarian or (3) Catholic Sacramentalist positions are not innovations to the tradition would have to substantiate with actual textual references that one or the other of these two was an actual position that was held by someone in the history of the church before the mid-twentieth century.

I do not think that this challenge can be met, and so I stand by my initial claim: *Given that the current arguments against WO are NOT this argument, the continuing opponents of WO are as much endorsing a "recent innovation" as those of us who favor it.*

A New Page: A Guide to My Essays on Women's Ordination

Over on my "Pages" section, I have added a A Guide To My Essays About Women's Ordination. This likely will prove helpful in navigating the forest.

I Don't Get Mail or Anticipatory Responses to My In Persona Christi Argument

The following is a response to some (not recent) criticisms of my argument against the "Catholic" position that women cannot be ordained because only a male priest can represent Christ. To get to my actual response, you'll need to read past the list of argumentative propositions.



In the most recent post in my series on women's ordination, I addressed the definitive *new* Catholic argument against women's ordination, which can be summarized as follows:

If

(a) the priest represents Christ in celebrating the eucharist (acts *in persona Christi*),

then

(b) the priest must be male

because

(c) Jesus Christ is male

and

(d) only a male priest can represent a male Christ.

Or, conversely

(di) a woman priest cannot represent a male Christ.

However

(ai) the priest does represent Christ in celebrating the eucharist (acts *in persona Christi*);

Therefore

(dii) a woman cannot be a priest.

Note that in order for the argument to work, each one of the above propositions must be true. However:

If

(a) it is not the case that a priest *exclusively or necessarily* represents Christ in celebrating the eucharist

or

(d) it is not the case that only a male priest can represent Jesus Christ

because

(c) what is important in representing Christ is something besides his masculinity;

then

(dii) it does not follow that a woman cannot be a priest.

My response to the new Catholic argument can be summarized as follows:

(a) the priest does not necessarily or at least exclusively represent Christ in celebrating the eucharist

because

(ai) on the Eastern model (which has increasingly been adopted in recent ecumenical discussion and revised eucharistic rites), the priest represents the church and so acts *in persona ecclesiae*.

However if

(ai) the priest represents the church

then either

(b) the priest must be female

because

(c) as the bride of Christ, the church is feminine

and

(d) only a female priest can represent the female bride of Christ;

Or, conversely

(di) a male priest cannot represent a female church.

Alternatively, if

(di) it is possible for a male priest to represent the female bride of Christ

then

(dii) it must be equally possible for a female priest to represent a male Christ

because

(ci) what is important about representing either Christ or the church must be something besides the sexual identity of the priest

or else

(di) is false.

Or, if sexual identity is still crucial, then

(diii) both men and women should be ordained

because,

(div) insofar as the priest represents both Christ and the church, men best represent the male Christ and women best represent the female bride of Christ.

As the argument stands, it is valid. The only way to refute it is to deny one of the premises; so, if it is the case that only a male priest can represent a male Christ, then, it follows just as inevitably that only a female priest can represent a female church. Conversely, if it is possible for a male priest to represent a female church, then it follows just as inevitably that it is possible for a female priest to represent a male Christ. What would not be logically consistent would be to argue that (1) only a male priest can represent a male Christ because *there must be a gender correspondence between represented and representer*; nonetheless, (2) a male priest can also represent a female

bride of Christ even though the priest is *not* female, (and (1) should imply that a male priest should not be able to represent a female church because there is no gender correspondence between represented and representer); (3) nonetheless, a female priest cannot represent a male Christ, again, because she is *not* male (no gender correspondence); but (4) neither can a female priest represent the female bride of Christ *even though* she is a female (and a female priest should be able to represent a female church because there *is* gender correspondence between represented and representer).

Once grant that the priest represents the [female] church (acts *in persona ecclesiae*), either exclusively, or in addition to representing the [male] Christ (the priest acts both *in persona Christi* and *in persona ecclesiae*), and the argument from gender necessarily collapses. One cannot have it both ways. If a female priest *cannot* represent a male Christ, then a male priest *cannot* represent a female church. If a male priest *can* represent a female church, then a female priest *can* represent a male Christ. If a male priest can represent a male Christ, then a female priest can represent a female bride of Christ. If it is necessary to have male priests to represent a male Christ, then it should be just as necessary to have female priests to represent a female church.

I presented this argument in a condensed form a number of years ago, as a side comment on an internet blog discussion. I was not aware that the argument was immediately pounced on and created an intense internet discussion on another blog. As the respondent stated: "An entire forum of learned theologians have answered one person's questions . . ." (Certainly what I wrote must have touched a nerve!) However, since I was not informed about the discussion I obviously could not respond. I only found out about the discussion recently. As this discussion has already been linked to recently as the definitive response to my argument, I would imagine that these counter-arguments might appear again. What follows is

therefore my response to actual objections that have been raised to my argument. What strikes me most about the counter-arguments is that they consistently fail to address the actual argument I raised. (I have arranged the responses in a more or less logical order rather than the actual order on the blog).

The first response is to deny (ai):

1) *Nowhere in the tradition that I'm aware of is the priest said to act "in persona ecclesiae." To say that he does shows already that we have lost the full sense of persona – we have turned it into a functional role, or a legalism. . . . The priest does not act in persona ecclesiae, because he does not represent, iconically, in his personal and therefore sexed humanity, the figure of the Bride of Christ, the mystical body which is the Church. He speaks pro ecclesia, on behalf of the Church, as a delegate or ambassador of the church appealing to the Father on her behalf.*

The above is simply mistaken, as I document in my essay. The historic Eastern understanding is that the priest does indeed represent the church. As Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware writes: "In the medieval West, as in most Roman Catholic thinking today, the priest is understood as acting *in persona Christi*. [When the priest says the words of institution,] he speaks these words as if he were himself Christ; or rather, at this moment Christ himself is understood to be speaking these words through the priest." In contrast, in the Byzantine rite, throughout the eucharistic prayer, "the celebrant speaks not *in persona Christi* but *in persona ecclesiae*, as the representative not of Christ, but of the Church."

Indeed, my earlier essay shows that the patristic church seems to have understood the priest to be acting only *in persona ecclesiae*. Thomas Aquinas seems to have been the first to have formulated the understanding that, when he recites the words of institution, the priest is acting *in persona Christi*. The Eastern position that the priest acts *in persona ecclesiae* is

the historic position, and the Western *in persona Christi* is actually the innovation. Moreover, the argument that the priest represents Christ in his "sexed humanity," is an even more recent innovation – appearing no earlier than Paul VI's *Inter Insigniores*. Aquinas certainly did not say that! It is, in fact, this new argument first appearing in opposition to the ordination of women, that has sexualized the role of the priest by insisting that in celebrating *in persona Christi*, the priest "represents, iconically, the priest in his personal and therefore sexed humanity." If the Orthodox never did this in reference to the church as the bride of Christ, it is because no one ever did this – whether in the East or the West! It is the modern argument in opposition to the ordination of women that has, for the first time, claimed that the priest represents Christ in his "sexed humanity."

And, of course, if the notion that the priest acts *in persona ecclesiae*, makes the priest's role "functional," a "legalism," then (as Edward Kilmartin argues) the notion that the priest acts *in persona Christi* turns the priest's role into that of enacting a drama, of playing the part of Jesus at the last supper. Of course, neither of these is what actually happens in the eucharistic prayer, which is a prayer, not a drama, addressed by the priest to the Father, as a representative of, or on behalf of the church (*in persona ecclesiae*).

One writer thinks that the solution is to quibble over dates, and to challenge the notion of a "moment of consecration":

2) *The Eastern Christian argument that the epiclesis is the decisive moment of consecration is relatively new, dating to the counter-reformation, and represents nothing except a reflexive mirroring of the Latin position regarding the Institution the Orthodox Church. Modern liturgical theology has recovered the patristic view that the entire anaphora is a consecratory prayer, in which it is impossible to point to a single consecratory moment (in fact, the oldest liturgies lack either an explicit Institution, or an explicit Epiclesis, or*

both).

Actually, as I show in my essay, the disagreement seems to have arisen first in the fourteenth century, not “dating to the counter-reformation.” Moreover, it was not the Orthodox who were reflexively “mirroring . . . the Latin position,” since it was the Western theologians who originally raised objections to the presence of the *epiclesis*. I am all in favor of the view that the “entire anaphora is a consecratory prayer, in which it is impossible to point to a single consecratory moment.” (This is at the heart of Kilmartin’s argument.) But such a concession rather takes the wind out of the argument that the priest must be male because he acts *in persona Christi*. The *in persona Christi* argument necessarily presumes that it is when the priest recites the words of institution that he represents Christ. If we acknowledge that the “entire anaphora” is consecratory, then we also need to acknowledge (as Behr-Siegel, Ware and Kilmartin point out) that the “entire anaphora” is a prayer, that the priest prays the entire prayer as a representative of the church (“we,” “us”), and thus acts *in persona ecclesiae*. But again, the church (as the bride of Christ) on whose behalf the priest addresses the prayer, is symbolically female.

Another writer thinks that the problem is solved if one views the Eastern and Western positions as complementary rather than antagonistic:

(4) The differences between Eastern and Western traditions on Eucharistic theology are matters of emphasis and are not mutually exclusive. . . . Differences over the formulation of transubstantiation notwithstanding, both systems are recognized by both East and West as valid. Furthermore, they are essentially differences of emphasis. Can not a priest function both in persona christi and in persona ecclesiae, [one at the] epiclesis and the [other at the] consecration?

Well, yes, but this rather makes than refutes my point. If a

priest can function both *in persona Christi*, and *in persona ecclesiae*, then the argument that a priest must be male because only a male priest can represent Christ turns on itself. If a male priest can function *in persona ecclesiae*, thus representing the church as the [female] bride of Christ, then the argument from sexual identity collapses. If it is possible for a male priest to represent the female church, then it is equally possible for a female priest to represent a male Christ. If a male priest can function both *in persona Christi* and *in persona ecclesiae*, then a female priest can function both *in persona ecclesiae* and *in persona Christi*.

Similarly, another writer presumes that my point is to deny that the priest represents Christ:

(5) *There are two poor assumptions that Witt makes here:*

1. *That any shift in emphasis on the part of the West from the words of institution toward epiclesis implies a shift from in persona christi toward in persona ecclesiae. While Rome's system links the two issues, the East does not.*

2. *If a shift toward an emphasis on in persona ecclesia is occurring at all officially (and I haven't seen evidence for that), it is not in any case a denial of in persona christi, as these are complementary conceptions, not mutually exclusive ones.*

However, nothing in my argument presumes a denial of the priest acting *in persona Christi*. All that is necessary for my argument is the denial that there is an inherent connection between Christ's sexuality as male and the priest's sexual identity. If (as the writer concedes) *in persona Christi* and *in persona ecclesiae* are complementary, then the same priest can represent both a male Christ and a female church. If sexual identity is definitive for one, then it must be definitive for the other; however, if it is conceded that sexual identity is not definitive for one – and this must be

the case if a male priest can act *in persona ecclesiae* – then it is begging the question to assert that it must be definitive for the other. Again, if a male priest can represent both a male Christ and the church as the female bride of Christ, then certainly a female priest can represent both the church as the female bride of Christ and the male Christ. What's good for the gander is good for the goose as well.

Other arguments get further and further afield to the point where they are really addressing arguments I never made.

One writer agrees that the priest does represent both Christ and the congregation, but misses the point that the Catholic argument rests on the specific point that the male priest represents a male Christ during the eucharistic prayer, to argue instead the *different* position that only males can represent humanity in general.

(6) [T]he reply re: women priests is simple—at times in the eucharist, the priest does indeed represent the church; he is a member of the congregation, speaking for us. But at other times, he specifically represents Christ, as Christ in the incarnation represents all of humanity, which requires that he be male. See Romans 5. Anyone, male or female, can represent Christ—but only men can represent Christ *as he represents all of humanity to the Father*. Otherwise Genesis and St Paul make no sense, and we are reduced to a gnostic conception of human nature in which sex (or gender if you prefer) is of no ultimate significance. Or to put it another way: in the eucharist, the priest stands in persona Christi totius humanitatis repraesentantis, something that encompasses both in persona Christi and in persona ecclesiae. The incarnation requires no less—otherwise Genesis 2, Romans 5 and I Cor 11 make no sense.

My initial point is conceded – the priest (when celebrating the eucharist) represents both Christ and the Church – which,

of course, undoes the whole point of the *in persona Christi* argument. However, the crucial argument here turns on a matter of biblical exegesis. According to the writer, only a man can represent Christ as he “represents all of humanity to the Father,” and the appeal is made to Genesis 2, Rom. 5, and 1 Cor. 11. I have already dealt with Genesis 2 and 1 Cor. 11 in previous essays. The writer seems to be presuming that the point of Genesis 2 and Romans 5 is that Adam represents all of humanity because he is male. As I pointed out in my essay on Genesis 2, this is a misreading of the text. The Hebrew “*ha’adam*” simply means “human being,” not “male human being.” The Hebrew word for “male human being” (*’is*) does not even appear until the woman (*’issa*) is introduced on the scene, and the point of the passage is to emphasize the commonality and equality of male and female, not to emphasize the male’s representation of the female. The woman is the man’s equal companion (*’ezer kenegdo*), the one whose role is to be called alongside of and to be a help and be a companion for the man. Nothing in the passage suggests that the man has a representative role because of his male sexuality.

Similarly, Romans 5 says nothing about a representative function of either Adam or Christ as male. The Greek word translated “man” (v. 12, 17) in older translations is not *aner* (male human being), but *anthropos* (generic human being). *Anthropos* is used to describe both Adam and Christ. The important thing about Adam is that he was the human being (*anthropos*), who introduced sin and condemnation into the world; the important thing about Christ is that he is the human being (*anthropos*), who brought grace and justification into the world. The passage does not say that human beings sinned “in Adam” as the Vulgate mistakenly translated the passage, but that they sinned because of (*eph ho*) Adam. Again, nothing in the passage suggests that either Adam or Christ have representative roles because of their male sexuality.

As I wrote elsewhere:

The argument seems to miss the point of how typology functions in Paul's writings. Paul is quite capable of using female types to make a point. So, for example, in Galatians 4, Paul uses the female figures of Hagar and Sarah as types representing the two covenants of Sinai, the old covenant ("present Jerusalem") and the new covenant ("Jerusalem above"). Nothing in the typology suggests that either Hagar or Sarah are "representative" because of their sex.

Similarly, nothing in the Adam/Christ typology suggests that Adam is "representative" because of his gender. Rather, it makes sense that in making a typological comparison pointing to Jesus Christ, Paul would have used the male figure of Adam to pre-figure Jesus, since Jesus was himself a male. Moreover, it also makes sense to draw a parallel between Adam (whose name "Adam" means "human being") as the first human being through whom sin originated, and Jesus Christ as the new creation of God (the second Adam or human being) through whom sin is destroyed.

But it is certainly possible to use the figure of Eve in a similar way; in the second century, Irenaeus drew a similar typological parallel between Eve and the virgin Mary as the second Eve. As Eve brought sin into the world through disobedience and lack of faith, so Mary was instrumental in bringing salvation through obedience and faith.

Finally, the point of the reference to the man being "head" of the woman in 1 Corinthians 5 is neither about authority, nor representation. The point of the passage has to do with interdependence between men and women. The man is "head" in the sense that he is the "source" of the woman's origin; she came *from* the man in the Genesis story of creation. Nevertheless, men and women are interdependent now because every man is born of a woman (every man comes *from* a woman), and all human beings are dependent on God, through whom all things come.

Genesis 2, Rom 5, and 1 Cor. 11 make perfect sense without being used to beg the same question twice. A poor argument that a male priest must represent a male Christ does not become stronger by appealing to equally poor exegesis about the representative role of the male sex.

But the historic Catholic position (whether Eastern or Western) was never that Christ has a representative role because of his sexuality. As Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware has written: "What matters for [the church fathers] is not the fact that he became male (άνήρ, vir) but the fact that he became human (άνθρωπος, homo)."

The last few objections do not even pretend to address the original argument. Since I mentioned the Orthodox position, some seemed to think that no one would notice if they talked about the Orthodox instead of the argument:

(7) For the Orthodox, as a practical matter, the ordination of women is such a fundamental violation of Tradition as to end any possibility of communion.

The preface by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (which I cite in my most recent essay) addresses this: "The Orthodox, and Roman Catholics, too, must rethink the problem of women in the light of the Scriptures. They must not make hasty statements about her being and work in the work of salvation to which God has called us to be witnesses."

Kallistos Ware writes: "What I would plead is that we Orthodox should regard the matter as essentially an open question."

(8) ...I think Witt is mistaken about the East copying the West's position of in persona Christi when in fact the Eastern position of the multi-dimensional theology of icons is at the basis of their argument that we find in the writings of many early eastern Fathers particularly St. John of Damascus. I think he's blowing smoke here!

Quoting Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware again:

“How hard it is for us Orthodox to speak with our own true voice! . . . all too often we have borrowed our theological categories from the West, sometimes using Roman Catholic arguments (especially when opposing Protestantism), and sometimes using Protestant arguments (especially when opposing Roman Catholicism). Orthodox opponents of the ordination of women have often relied, for example, on the papal statement concerning women and the priesthood *Inter Insigniores* . . . without enquiring how far the conception of priesthood assumed in this document in fact corresponds to the Orthodox understanding.”

(9) Witt can go on all he wants about in persona Christi as a “western” idea, but the Orthodox have always laid great stress on the priest as the icon of Christ.

In an earlier essay, Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware did indeed write:

“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.”

But more recently:

“At this crucial moment [the *epiclesis*] as throughout the eucharistic prayer, he is not Christ’s vicar or icon, but – in union with the people – he stands as a suppliant before God,” and “At the most important of all priestly acts, then, the recitation of the eucharistic *anaphora*, according to the Orthodox understanding the celebrant does not serve as an icon of Christ.”

Someone else thought it would be a good idea to talk about the Montanists:

(10) This is all speculation, of course, but what is not speculation, but fact, is that these "presbytides" appear to have existed only in that heartland of Montanism.

Okay, and my argument appeals to historical precedent – Montanist or otherwise – where? My argument is not that women *have* been ordained, but that there is no good reason that they should not be.

Then there's Mary:

12) Mary is a metaphor; she stands in loco ecclesiae. A priest is Christ in the eucharistic celebration as the elements are His body and blood; he (and they) are in persona Christi.

Mary does not represent, iconically, the Church, in the same way that the priest at Mass.

The above is a classic example of *petitio principii*. It is simply a statement of the historic Western Catholic position that the priest acts *in persona Christi* as if that in itself were an argument. But I have never denied that. To the contrary, my argument is based on the assumption that this *is* the Western position (at least since Aquinas), and I appealed to the example of the virgin Mary not once. However, regardless of what Western Catholics say about Mary, the Orthodox church historically has said that the priest does indeed act *in persona ecclesiae* – which is *not* the Western position!

Someone thought it would be a good idea to introduce an issue that I have already addressed in an essay on "non-theological" objections to women's ordination – that exclusively male ordination is not *really* discriminatory, at least not in a bad sense:

11) But even in the calling of SOME people to the ordained ministry, we have discrimination: drawing a line between some people who are called, and some people who are not. The

offense then is not the discrimination but the criterion.

In that previous essay, I wrote: "To the best of my knowledge, the prohibition against the ordination of women is the only case in which the church discriminates against a particular class of people solely because they belong to that class. Women are not discriminated against because of an incapacity. Women can preach. They can provide pastoral leadership. There is nothing either in an incapacity to inform intentions or inherent physical limitations that would prevent them from celebrating the sacraments. The presumption against women's ordination is not then based on a moral disqualification or physical impairment. It is a discrimination against women as a class simply because they belong to the class."

And, of course, as I document in another essay, the historic reason for refusing to ordain women was indeed discriminatory in a "bad sense" – because women were inherently less intelligent, more emotional, and more subject to temptation than men. The *in persona Christi* argument is a new *ad hoc* argument to continue to justify a discrimination that can no longer be justified for the historic reasons.

There was one last attempt to make the case by using something like a theological argument, by shifting the grounds to the theology of eucharistic sacrifice:

13) Witt performs a slight of hand by making all his Eucharistic references to meal rather than to sacrifice. This is a convenient way to avoid all sacerdotal arguments against WO. The "Holy Table" is in both East and West an altar of sacrifice. . . . No, they do not merely preside (stand over) at Eucharist, but they are priests of the sacrifice of Calvary who offer this sacrifice to God. . . . Thus, we have to look at the priestly antecedents of Christ, the apostles and their successors. These would be the Levitical priesthood of the Temple.

This is indeed a *different* argument. The *in persona Christi* argument does not say that a woman cannot be a priest because women cannot offer sacrifice, but because women cannot represent a male Christ.

I have addressed issues of eucharistic sacrifice in other essays.

First, as I point out in my essay on "priesthood and sacrifice," the church fathers say very little about eucharistic sacrifice: "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."

Second, Augustine brings the new item to the discussion that it is the risen Jesus Christ who is the central actor in the sacraments. It is Jesus Christ who is the priest who offers his once-and-for-all sacrifice. The ordained priest offers no sacrifice of his or her own.

Third, the church fathers, later theologians like Thomas Aquinas, and modern ecumenical discussion make clear that the eucharistic sacrifice is not *another* sacrifice, but simply the church's *anamnesis* and re-presentation of the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ. It is neither a repetition nor a new sacrifice. The ordained presbyter is a "priest" only in the sense that he (or she!) is pointing away from him- or herself and re-presenting Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice. As several of the theologians I have considered in my most recent essay insist, the priest is not "another Christ" (*alter Christi*). Moreover, as Aquinas makes clear, the *character* that

makes priestly ordination possible is the *same* character that makes all worship possible; all the baptized receive this character, and *equally* share in Christ's priesthood.

Fourth, the New Testament model for priesthood is not that of the Old Testament Levitical priesthood, but that of the epistle to the Hebrews. The Levitical priests were male, but they were also necessarily Jewish, descendants of Aaron, and had to be always ritually pure. As I have argued elsewhere, Levitical priesthood would have been impossible for women primarily because of issues concerning ritual purity. However, Christ's priesthood has effectively done away with issues concerning ritual "cleanness" and "uncleanness." Ordained Christian ministers do not have to be male for the same reason that they are not forbidden to eat pork or shellfish.

Some complained that my argument was "novel."

13) Witt has invented a novelty with his idea of in persona ecclesiae. There is nothing about this in the Tradition, and even so there would be no reason to connect it to the modern (equal and opposite reaction) of making the Eucharist the central part of the Liturgy.

The bad news for William Witt is that the old argument still holds.

Well, yes. My argument is necessarily novel because I am addressing a *new* argument against the ordination of women. No one argued that a woman could not be ordained because only a male priest could act *in persona Christi* until Paul VI's *Inter Insigniores*. All subsequent appeals to the necessity of a male priest acting *in persona Christi* echo *this* argument. It would be more honest to say about the *in persona Christi* argument against women's ordination: "There is nothing about *this* in the Tradition!" As I have documented elsewhere, the historic argument against women's ordination is that women are ontologically inferior – and no one is arguing that now. So,

no. The “old argument” does not still hold. The *new* argument, which did not exist until Paul VI came up with it, necessitates a “novel” response, because, by definition, any response to a new argument will be novel – which I have provided.

Finally, there was the almost obligatory *ad hominem* attack.

14) I was informed of a comment . . . the theology and history of the comment having no merit, and exemplifying the kind of sophistry that makes banality seem profound. Unfortunately, like the famous El Greco Fallacy, the comment has the danger of creating an idea that will catch on unless it is nipped in the bud. Therefore, not to pick on a man who flew too close to the Sun, but simply to prevent a dangerous bit of Gnostic “reasoning” from catching on, I post here the comment and some very good responses that refute it well . . .

I don’t know if I appreciate more being called a “sophist,” a “gnostic,” “banal” or “dangerous,” or having it pointed out that my argument has “no merit.” (Really? No merit whatsoever, not even as a kind of “sophistic,” “gnostic,” “banal,” “dangerous,” pretense of an argument?) I do admire the creativity of suggesting that I “fly too close to the sun.” The reader can decide about the quality of my “reasoning” by reading my own responses to the above “good responses” that have refuted me so “well.”

Bought With a Price: A Sermon

1 Corinthians 7:1-9



Sometimes a preacher looks at the lectionary passages and finds himself tempted to preach on the Psalm. I am going to look at the 1 Corinthians passage this morning – precisely because it is such a difficult passage, and precisely because it is so misunderstood. The apostle Paul is sometimes accused of being a misogynist sexist and of being against sex in general – and some consider this first verse in 1 Corinthians 7 as a prime example because it has both – a negative statement about women and a negative statement about sex. But modern commentators tell us that this is almost certainly a misreading. The clue is what comes first in the passage: “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote.” In 1 Cor. 7-8, Paul is responding to a letter that has been written to him by the Corinthians in which they ask a number of questions. What follows is his response to these questions.

In chapter 7, verse 1, most scholars agree that Paul is almost certainly quoting from the Corinthians’ letter to him. In the original Greek, the sentence can either be a statement or a question. So the Corinthians were either offering their opinion: “It is good for a man not to touch a woman,” or asking the question “Is it good for a man not to touch a woman?” In light perhaps of Paul’s own example of celibacy, and perhaps in response to Paul’s warnings not to follow the bad examples of pagan culture, some of the Corinthians apparently thought that it might be good advice to avoid sex

altogether – perhaps even for married people.

In the section from this morning's lectionary, Paul is actually responding to questions about two different groups of people. The first group is married couples; the second group are widows and, perhaps likely, widowers.¹ In today's passage, Paul is then dealing with two sets of questions: 1) Is it better for married Christians to avoid having sexual relations with one another in order to devote themselves to prayer instead? 2) Should widows and widowers stay single? Throughout the rest of the chapter, Paul addresses other questions having to do with marriage or sexual practices: Can Christians get divorced? What about Christians who are married to non-Christians? Wouldn't it be better to separate from them? What about single people? Is it okay for them to marry or is it better to stay single? Finally, he addresses some other questions: What about slaves? Should they try to obtain their freedom? Is it okay to eat food that has been offered to idols?

When we look at Paul's responses to these questions, we notice a common pattern. First, Paul does not give absolute "yes" or "no" answers to these questions. Rather, in each case, Paul examines the question from different angles and poses both reasons for and reasons against. When discussing eating meat offered to idols, Paul points out that idols do not actually exist, and so there is no harm in eating this food. He says, "food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do." (1 Cor. 8:8). On the question of whether a slave should seek his or her freedom, he states that, generally, people should remain in the condition they are in when they become Christians; on the other hand, if slaves can get their freedom, they should avail themselves of the opportunity (1 Cor. 7:17,21).

In this morning's passage, when Paul addresses the question of whether widows should re-marry, he suggests that it would be

good for them to remain single and gives himself as an example, but if they cannot resist sexual temptation, it would be better to marry. As he says, "it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion." (1 Cor. 7:9).

In response to these married couples who thought that they were so high-minded that they could devote themselves to prayer and refrain from the less spiritual practices associated with marriage like having sex – Paul basically responds: "Don't try to be more spiritual than God!" God invented sex. Paul writes that because of sexual temptation each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.² If they want to refrain from sex and devote themselves to prayer for awhile, that's fine, but only for a limited period, "so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." (1 Cor. 7:5).

Paul also introduces a second principle – the principle of love for fellow Christians. We cannot make our decisions based on how they will affect us alone. So, in discussing the question of food offered to idols, we need to take into consideration that some with sensitive consciences might be scandalized by our behavior: "And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died." (1 Cor. 8:11). In discussing marriage, Paul points out that the first concern of husbands and wives needs to be their spouses. On the one hand, Paul states something that would not at all have been controversial in either Jewish or pagan culture at the time: "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does." But then Paul says something that would have been truly shocking in ancient culture: "Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." (1 Cor. 7:4). Paul understands marriage to have an equality and a mutuality in which each member of the couple yields to the wishes of the other. This passage is one of the great challenges to those who read Paul as advocating some kind of absolute authority of

husbands over wives, or men over women. Marriage is not about the control of one spouse over another, but of each spouse yielding to the wishes and needs of the other.

There is finally a third principle, and this is the most important one. Paul does indeed challenge the questions of the Corinthians, and he does introduce the notion of freedom and liberty. In some cases, there is no single right or wrong answer. He also points out that in making decisions, we need to take into consideration how our decisions affect others, and those decisions need to be affected by love and concern for the other's good. But Paul is not just telling people that it's okay to do your own thing as long as no one else gets hurt – which seems to be the common ethic of much of contemporary culture. Paul is not telling people that they need to be true to themselves.

Instead, Paul appeals to what we might call a Christological principle that is a key theme throughout his letter. In the first chapter, he criticizes those Corinthians who claimed to be following Apollos or Cephas or even himself by asking “Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:13). He then reminds them that he preaches “Christ crucified,” which is foolishness to Jews and Greeks, but the wisdom of God and the power of God (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

In the context surrounding 1 Cor. 7, Paul appeals over and over again to the crucified Christ. In the chapter previous to the reading we read this morning, when Paul was warning about the danger of sexual immorality, he had reminded his listeners that they were bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20). When addressing the question of freedom for slaves later in this morning's chapter, he again reminds his listeners that “You were bought with a price,” and states that “he who was free when called is a slave of Christ,” so “do not become slaves of men.” (1 Cor. 7:22-23). When discussing meat offered to idols, Paul warns that when we wound someone's weak conscience, we sin against Christ (1 Cor. 8:12). And when discussing questions

of sexual self-control in marriage and whether widowers should remarry, he reminds them: "Each one has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another."(1 Cor. 7:7).

Paul thus introduces the crucial point that all of our ethical decisions must flow out of our relationship with Christ and must reflect the pattern of his own death for us on the cross. We are not free to make our own decisions because we are being true to ourselves. The kind of freedom we have is the kind of freedom of those who do not belong to themselves; we are slaves of Christ because we have been bought with his blood. And it is because we have been bought with the blood of Christ that we exercise our freedom by being slaves to one another.

This recognition that we belong to Christ relativizes some of the things that our culture thinks are so important. Husbands and wives love and serve each other because we are mutually slaves of Christ, and so our bodies do not belong to ourselves but to one another. Sexual fulfillment is not the end-all and be-all that contemporary culture seems to think that it is because ultimately we do not find our identities either in sexuality or in sexual relationships with other persons, but in Christ. Whether we get married or stay single is not so important because in either case there are ways to be faithful servants of Christ. How we treat other people – both our fellow Christians and non-Christians – becomes radically transformed when we recognize that like ourselves, they are they also are those for whom Jesus Christ died. Career and income and status – perhaps the most important things in contemporary culture besides sexual fulfillment – are also not that important. What we own is not nearly so important as who owns us – we belong first and foremost to Christ who has paid for us with his blood. The cross of Christ is indeed foolishness to those who think life is about being true to yourself – but as Paul wrote, to those of us who have been bought with Christ's blood, the cross is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Commentators note that the Greek word for “widowers” (*kheros*) is not found in the New Testament time period when *koine* Greek was being used. Paul’s word translated “unmarried” (*agamois*) is likely Paul’s word for “widowers.” Paul addresses the “never married” later.

2 Commentators point out that Paul’s reference to “having” a wife or husband is not referring to the practice of being married, but to “having” sexual relations; cf. 1 Cor. 5:1.

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.”¹

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.