

PRIESTHOOD, KINGSHIP, AND PROPHECY

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THE THREEFOLD office of Christ as priest, king, and prophet was one of the basic ideas introduced by Vatican II into its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, just at a time when the learned world was coming to realize that the Jews of the time of Christ were familiar with the idea that there would be a kingly Messiah and a priestly Messiah from the tribe of Judah and from the tribe of Levi. Chapters in the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* (Judah 24 and Levi 18) described the two individuals, but until the finding of the Qumran documents it was not safe to project back into the first century these Jewish works, which after all had come down to us through the care of Christian scribes.¹ In the second century, Christians were exercised by the question "How could Christ have been a member of the tribe of Judah and also that of Levi?" and Julius Africanus had to write his *Letter to Aristides* to tell him that it was no good to say baldly that the two genealogies in Matthew and Luke were meant to answer that question by showing that Solomon and Levi both figured in the lists. His own solution was that Matthan (who comes in Matthew's list) was of the house of Solomon, while Melchi (from Luke's list) was a Levite, and that both successively married a woman named Estha, whose name does not appear in the New Testament. Africanus was a native of Palestine and had some local knowledge of this woman's birthplace.² A prophetic Messiah was naturally not expected by the Jews, as he was to be the fulfilment of all prophecy, but here Christian tradition (Rev 19:10) made good that defect by presenting Jesus as "the prophet like unto me" of whom Moses spoke in Deut 18:15. Matthew's Gospel is built around the idea that Jesus is the second Moses and, though Paul and Luke are not so enamored of the idea, it appears again in John, where it is taken for granted that everyone knows of it.³

It was from Newman that Vatican II derived its teaching on the threefold office of Christ, and from Newman's Anglican days, for his

¹ The Greek version of the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* depends on the work of Christian scribes. Some fragments of the *Testament of Levi* have been found at Qumran in Aramaic; see Matthew Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (London, 1961) 31 and 147. The *Manual of Discipline* 9:11 mentions two Messiahs, not one.

² I have written the article on Julius Africanus for the new German *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 1/4 (Berlin and New York, 1978). Augustine, *Retract.* 2, 7, 2, accepted the view of Africanus.

³ The reading of the definite article before the word "prophet" at Jn 7:52 in Pap. 66 and Pap. 72 is obviously correct, though later scribes eliminated it from the major codices.

fullest exposition of the idea is in a sermon of 1840.⁴ He returned to the subject in the Catholic preface to the *Via Media* (Vol. 1, xlv-xciv), which he wrote in 1877, where he used the idea of the threefold office as worked out in the Church. Her government, her devotion, and her schools were derived from Christ as king, as priest, and as prophet, and the friction between these three spheres of activity explained many of the anomalies found in the history of the Church. He began by pointing out that Melchizedek was king and priest; David was prophet and king but not a priest; Jeremiah was priest and prophet but not a king; and only in Christ were all three offices combined. "Knowledge, power, endurance are the three privileges of the Christian Church." Knowledge flowed from the prophetic office, sovereignty over conscience from the kingly office, and endurance from its sacrificial priesthood. At this level of abstraction it is clear that questions can arise about how well the labels fit; that is but one of the occupational hazards of theology. Yet there remained a paradox: Catholic priests throughout history have been regarded as sharing in the priestly office of Christ, while the other two offices have been left to the bishop.

EARLY CHURCH

One may say at once that the bishop from very early times had the role of shepherd, a Christian version of the kingly office, and that this was carried out by his seeking out the sinner and, if possible, pardoning his sins. The image of Christ as the Good Shepherd returning with his lost sheep occurs eighty-eight times in the catacombs and is found at Dura and elsewhere. The bishop was meant to seek out the notorious sinner and deal with him, if possible, "between him and thee." If the sinner was obdurate, then the bishop returned with one or two of his deacons. That also failing, he "told the Church." This procedure is urged upon the bishop in the *Didascalía apostolorum*, as I urged against the late Bishop of Exeter, Dr. Robert Mortimer, forty years ago without challenge.⁵ Père Galtier made much of this passage in the *Didascalía*,⁶ for it explains what the great change in Church practice as between the second and fourth centuries was. Instead of waiting to be sought out, sinners by the time of Augustine were coming forward of their own accord to have the wounds of their souls healed. Yet the duty of seeking out the sinner was still enjoined on the bishop in the last edition of the Roman

⁴ John Henry Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day* 5, 52-62 (in the edition of 1879).

⁵ A review article on R. C. Mortimer, *The Origins of Private Penance in the Western Church*, in the *Month*, March 1940, was just in time to enable me to send an offprint to Père Galtier at Rome before communications were cut by the spread of the war in April of that year.

⁶ See R. H. Connolly's edition of the *Didascalía* (Oxford, 1929) 102-3.

Pontifical. He may no doubt exercise his duty vicariously by sending missionaries, but the duty was his. The old Saxon term for a diocese was a "shrift-shire"—which said it all.

The separation of the priest's ministry from that of the bishop is shown clearly in the fourth century, when the Council of Laodicea (can. 57) decreed that there must not be bishops in country places but a perambulatory priest (*periodeutēs*). The term was borrowed from the medical profession, and at first the Latin canonists who made translations of these decrees had no single word to describe the job of the priest, but later they called him *visitator*. The Councils of Sardica (can. 6) and Antioch (year 341, can. 8) have similar provisions, and these village priests begin to lead a life distinct from the priests of the city grouped around their bishop. The term *paroikia* is still kept for the diocese of the bishop until much later times. These priests obviously said Mass in the villages without any attempt at concelebration, and in the letters of Augustine one may see them at work. His one poltergeist tale (which comes in *De civitate Dei* 22, 8) shows a priest going to say Mass in a country farm that was infested; this was exactly according to what the fourth-century councils prescribed. Earlier still, there is the dramatic story in Denis of Alexandria's letter to Fabian of Antioch about the dying man who had yielded in the Decian persecution but had received viaticum from a priest in the countryside, since Denis had issued orders that this was not to be denied.⁷ When the power of the keys was thus held by the bishop, it was natural that the faithful should come to regard the priest as being principally the minister of the Eucharist.

The prophetic office of Christ was clearly understood in the early Church to have been carried on by the apostles. There is a brief Latin commentary,⁸ written between 280 and 325, on prophecy in the New Testament which gives a somewhat different account of the mission of Paul and Barnabas as related in Acts 13:1-3. The writer had a Western text of Acts and gives the passage thus:

There were in the Church Paul and Barnabas, prophets and teachers. On them Symeon that is called Niger, Lucius the Kyrenian (who survives till now), Titus from Antioch, and Manaen, comes of Herod the Tetrarch, imposed hands. They had received an answer from the Holy Spirit and therefore said: "Separate, we pray, Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them," that is, prophecy.

When prophecy is regarded as proclamation or the kerygma, this version of Paul's mission does not appear strange. The document cites 1 Tim 4:1 and 2 Tim 3:1 as prophecies by Paul in the more common sense of

⁷ The letter of Denis is preserved in Eusebius, *Church History* 6, 44.

⁸ *Prophetiae ex omnibus libris collectae* (PL Suppl. 1, 177-80).

forecasts, but the mission itself is seen to be an exercise in proclamation. The author, in North Africa, must have used a Western text which had the interpolation that identified Lucius the Kyrenian with Luke the Evangelist. This revised text of Acts seems to have been in use from about 130 or earlier,⁹ and Luke's longevity is remarked on by the Anti-Marcionite Prologues. Ephrem also accepted the identification. Clement of Rome speaks of the apostles proclaiming their faith in towns and villages and setting up their first fruits as their successors. Hermas sees the preaching as a great tree that covers the whole earth, even though it has suffered the loss of some of its branches.¹⁰

There is a passage in Irenaeus which Newman cited in the *Via Media* when he was considering the prophetic office of the Church; it assigns the prophetic office to bishops and does not mention priests. Of course, one might count up a number of homilies preached by simple priests in the early centuries which have come down to us, but Irenaeus was considering that bishops have the assured charism of truth. Out of such a belief would develop the idea of the guidance of councils by the Holy Spirit. Irenaeus stressed the uniformity of the kerygma: "Among the rulers of the Church neither he who is all-powerful in word speaks other doctrine, nor does the weak in word diminish the tradition."¹¹ When the Council of Arles met in 314, it began its letter to Pope Sylvester with the words: "Our decision has been made in the presence of the Holy Spirit and His angels." Thus, even though Origen might on occasion be called in to put a backward bishop right in his theology, as we now see from the *Dialektos* that he was called in, the prophetic office was appropriated to the bishop. The Ambrosiaster understood the task of prophets in the Church to be that of interpreting the Scriptures.

The three offices of Christ not being attributable to a simple priest in equal measure in the early days of the Church, devotional elaboration settled on the most obvious likeness of the priest to Christ, and this was found in the priestly action of the Mass. Towards the end of the fourth century Ambrose, with the precision of a Roman proconsul, set the worship of the Church (as image) midway between the shadow of Jewish temple worship and the reality of heaven.¹² To justify his calling it an image, he put forward the idea that at Mass Christ himself offers through his priest: "Though Christ is not seen to offer, yet he is himself offered on

⁹ I discussed the D-text of Acts in *TS* 18 (1957) 596-603, and thereafter E. J. Epp worked out his Princeton thesis on the anti-Jewish tendency of this revision of Acts. The events of the Second Revolt of the Jews (131-33), when Jewish Christians were put to death by the rebels, provided a motive for greater hostility on the part of a Christian reviser.

¹⁰ *1 Clem.* 42, 4; Hermas, *Shepherd* 67, 1-3 (GCS 48, 65).

¹¹ Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1, 3 (Harvey 1, 94).

¹² Ambrose, on Ps 38:7 (PL 14, 1052).

earth when the body of Christ is offered, or rather, he is seen to offer in us, for it is his word that sanctifies the sacrifice that is offered." At about the same time Chrysostom was maintaining that the priesthood was a daunting life, full of fear and trembling. In his discussion of the priesthood he argued that Jewish worship in olden times had been awe-inspiring, but the Eucharist was more so, for the priest who was its minister. He was like Elias calling down fire from heaven, but now the task was not to burn up a pile of wood but to kindle the hearts of the faithful.¹³ (It is interesting that Chrysostom does not speak of the fire transforming the elements of the sacrifice.) Second in awesomeness to the ministry of a priest at Mass Chrysostom places the power of absolution. That he is not thinking of bishops here but of priests is clear from the fact that he cites James 5:14 about calling in the priests of the Church.¹⁴ The prophetic or preaching office is hardly touched upon by Chrysostom as a cause for concern in the life of a priest, perhaps because he was so good at it.

The late Edmund Bishop saw in Chrysostom an innovator who "is found again and again laying stress on and inculcating this feeling of awe and dread as attaching to presence at the Eucharist."¹⁵ He was inclined to ascribe this tendency to Antioch alone, though he had to admit that there were two similar passages in the *Mystagogic Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem.¹⁶ He maintained that in Sarapion there is no word expressive of fear in connection with the Eucharistic service, yet in the Preface of Sarapion's liturgy the priest has to say: "Give us Holy Spirit, that we may be able to tell forth and to enunciate thy unspeakable mysteries."¹⁷ If this is not religious awe, where is one to find it? The appeal to the Father to be reconciled "to all of us through this sacrifice" was made by Sarapion's priest between the two Consecrations of the Mass, and it was clearly the making of this prayer by the priest that Sarapion referred to in his ordination prayer for priests which asked that "he may be able to reconcile thy people to thee, the uncreated God." Sarapion was not innovating here, for his prayer is simply a working-out of what St. Paul said: "God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). Of all three offices of Christ, it was the priestly work that best expressed this function of reconciliation. The absolving of sinners took place privately if they yielded to the first approach of the bishop, and always privately on their

¹³ Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio* (ed. Nairne, Cambridge, 1906) par. 178-79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 195-96.

¹⁵ *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, edited by R. H. Connolly in 1909, had a long appendix by Bishop, who much preferred to put forward his own views under the auspices of another. The remark cited occurs on p. 94.

¹⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses mystagogicae* 5, 4 and 5, 9 (PG 33, 1112).

¹⁷ *Bishop Sarapion's Prayer-Book* (ed. John Wordsworth, 1910) 61-62 and 73.

deathbeds. That reconciliation did not occupy so large a place in men's minds as the frequently repeated reconciliation of the Mass.

An important factor in the growth of reverence for the priest's Eucharistic work may be found in the widespread belief that angels were present at Mass. Chrysostom tells the story of a vision of angels witnessed by "a certain worthy old man." St. Nilus, his disciple, transmits the story as if it happened to Chrysostom himself, and in the homilies of Narsai (who taught ca. 437-57) it occurs again: "The ranks of watchers surround the altar in that hour, as Chrysostom has borne witness who saw them."¹⁸ In the West the same idea appears in the pseudo-Germanus' *Expositio liturgiae*: "An angel of God comes down to the sanctuary above the altar, just like that angel who came down to the tomb and proclaimed the resurrection of Christ, and he blesses the host." This is said of the Mass on the Easter vigil.¹⁹ Christian reflection upon the words of 1 Pet 1:12 made this idea familiar to many and inspired the hymn of Charles Wesley: "Angels in fix'd amazement/Around our altars hover . . ."

Narsai gives a general view of the work of a priest in the following passage:

The priest received the power of the Spirit by the laying on of hands; and by him are performed all the mysteries that are in the Church. The priest consecrates the bosom of the waters of baptism; and the Spirit bestows the adoption of sons on those that are baptized. Without a priest a woman is not betrothed to a man; and without him their marriage festival is not accomplished. Without a priest the dead man also is not interred; nor do they let him down into his grave without a priest. Common water is not consecrated without the priest; and if there were no priest the whole house would be unclean. . . . They that possess not the order cannot celebrate [Mass], be they never so just. The righteous cannot by their purity bring down the Spirit; and the sinful by their sinfulness do not hinder His descent.²⁰

In another homily Narsai stressed the prophetic and kingly functions of the apostles and their successors:

They uprooted error and sowed the truth of the name of the Creator. They pardoned iniquity and they cleansed spots by help of the Spirit; and they taught men to hate the iniquity of their doings. As priests, they performed upon earth a mystery of the institution of the kingdom of the height To this end the high priest gave the priesthood to the new priests, that men might be made priests to forgive iniquity on earth. For the forgiveness of iniquity was the priesthood set

¹⁸ Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio* 195-96.

¹⁹ The *Expositio liturgiae antiquae Gallicanae* was edited by E. C. Ratcliff for the Henry Bradshaw Society in 1971; see Part 2, par. 13.

²⁰ Narsai, *Homilies* (Connolly 21-22).

among mortals, for mortal man has need every hour of pardon. . . . The art of forgiving iniquity the priest has learned from the King.²¹

Narsai in this last sentence has kept the balance between the three offices which Christ passed on to the Church by asserting that the kingly office is paramount. Yet the mystique of Eucharistic consecration continued to grow in the fourth and fifth centuries, at a time when the earliest surviving prayers of the Latin liturgy became available to the searcher.

The Ambrosiaster has an interesting comment on Eph 4:11, where Paul gives a list of offices in the Church:

All orders are in the bishop, who is prince of priests, prophet, evangelist, and the rest, to complete the work of the Church in ministering to the faithful. Among those who come after the bishop he is understood to be greater who by his unfolding of the hidden sense of Scripture is said to be a prophet, especially as he brings out words that contain hope for the future. This order cannot belong to priests.²²

A medieval scribe changed this text to read "now belongs to priests." This may be an intelligent correction of what seemed a stupid text; for those who come after the bishop in the fourth century are priests or deacons, and Ambrosiaster was not fond of deacons. Moreover, he was living at a time when Jerome, a simple priest, was unfolding the hidden sense of many texts of Scripture. Many copies of his work exist from the ninth or tenth centuries, and all read *non*, while the Oxford codex which reads *nunc* for *non* belongs to the fourteenth. It clearly has the better reading, but many in the Dark Ages must have been convinced by their codices that a priest did not have a share in the prophetic office of Christ.

A prayer in the Leonine Sacramentary claimed that "as often as the renewal of the Victim pleasing to thee is attended, the work of our redemption is thrust forward."²³ The word *exeritur*, which means to "bring forward" or "present," is a rare word and was not understood by later scribes. When the Old Gelasian Sacramentary was produced, probably in northern France, ca. 750, though from much earlier material, this prayer was not understood and the scribe put down the word *exercitum* quite ungrammatically in place of *exeritur*. Thus the sense now became that at Mass the work of our redemption is carried out. Vatican II (in *Lumen gentium* 3) used the passage, and when I saw this in the draft, I pointed out to Bishop Butler (who was a member of the Council's Theological Commission) that the reading had no backing in antiquity. All that came of my protest was that the quotation was left in the text of the decree, while the reference to the Roman Missal was discreetly

²¹ Ibid. 63-64.

²² CSEL 81, 99.

²³ *Sacramentum Veronense* (ed. L. Mohlberg, Rome, 1956) par. 170 and 1196.

removed. What had been a careful statement of the relation of Mass and Calvary was thus blurred for the modern theologian. One might add that the original reading *exeritur* gives an example of the *cursus tardus*, whereas *exercetur* gives no sort of *cursus* at all, and hence the near certainty of the reading *exeritur* going back to the time, if not to the hand, of Leo the Great is established.

The prophetic office having been denied to priests by the Ambrosiaster, emphasis was laid the more heavily on the priestly office, in proportion as the understanding grew of the fact that at the Consecration of the Eucharist the priest spoke in the person of Christ. Such personal action by the priest was not seen so clearly in the work of absolution from sin, as the absolution was not then conferred by judicial sentence in the name of Christ. Rather was there a prayer that the sinner might be forgiven. Leo the Great wrote that when a priest sinned, he was not to receive imposition of hands in penance but to be deposed; this was, he thought, apostolic tradition and depended on the words of Scripture, which Leo read (in 1 Sam 2:25) as saying: "If a priest sins, who shall pray for him?"²⁴ Basil also taught that deposition and admission to lay communion was the lot of a priest who sinned gravely. The protracted ordeal of public penance, where the penitents had to come to church and be prayed over many times (e.g., on the days of Lent), also made more difficult the acceptance of the idea that a single act of the priest effected remission of sin. Hence it is not surprising that the priestly office of consecration loomed larger than the kingly office of ruling a shrift-shire.

The growth of private celebration of Mass, as distinct from concelebration, was also a factor in this change of emphasis. This was in part a natural development as the Church grew and spread out into the countryside. But there were also theological reasons at work. The Muratori fragment is at pains to explain that the seven churches written to by St. Paul and St. John are one Church, and this idea that the seven are really one took hold of the Celtic mind. After all, the Muratori fragment survived by being in the keeping of St. Columbanus. Moreover, there was circulating in Spain a homily on the Canticle attributed to Gregory of Elvira which said: "All the churches, because they make the one Catholic Church, can be called young maidens [after Cant 1:3], not old in sin but young in grace."²⁵ This spiritualizing of the many and the one was favored in Ireland. The historian of Irish architecture wrote long ago: "The favourite number of churches for a complete ecclesiastical establishment was seven, as in Greece, this being the number identical with that of the seven Apocalyptic churches of Asia. Thus there are seven at Glendalough, seven at Cashel, and the same sacred number is found at several other

²⁴ Leo the Great, *Ep.* 167 (PL 54, 1203).

²⁵ Gregory of Elvira, *Explicatio in Cantica canticorum* 1 (PL Suppl. 1, 502-3).

places.²⁶ The necessity of multiplying Masses in the one place, because of the seven churches there, had thus a mystical sanction, and with this came a further enhancing of the priestly office. Nestorius had put down private Masses when he took over as patriarch at Constantinople.²⁷ He may have had his reasons, when so many factions, Arian, Quartodeciman, Pelagian, and Macedonian, flourished in the precincts of the imperial court and the many monasteries of the city, but Nestorius was soon caught up in his well-known battle that ended at Ephesus and his efforts did not have a lasting effect.

A group of conciliar decisions from the Gallican Church of the early sixth century has been seen as an attempt to put down the practice of private Mass. At Agde in 506 (can. 21), at Orléans in 511 (can. 25), and again at Orléans in 541 (can. 19) various penalties were pronounced on a priest who said Mass at Christmas or Easter in a private oratory. But it is the Council of Epaone in 517 (can. 25) that shows us what was in fact happening. That Council decreed that where relics were venerated there should be provision of clerics "who might do service to their sacred ashes by frequent singing of psalms." Psalm-singing implies the celebration of Mass, in all probability, and the cult of relics developed apace in the sixth century. What it was like can be seen from two letters of Gregory the Great towards the end of the century.²⁸ He writes to Palladius of Saintes, a worldly and loose-living bishop who petitioned through one of his priests for relics to put in four of the side altars of his basilica. Nine altars were already supplied, and four still lacked relics; they would be dedicated to Peter and Paul, Laurence and Pancras, and would the Pope oblige? By the same courier Queen Brunhilde petitioned for relics, and when he had replied to these requests Gregory sat down to write commendatory letters for Augustine of Canterbury, who was about to start on his expedition. It would seem that Palladius had in his basilica a main altar and thirteen side altars, thus making a double-seven array. Perhaps his faithful had learnt from Columbanus that the seven churches are one Church. However that may be, it is clear that multiplication of Masses was hastened by the cult of relics, and the office of priest was magnified all the more, to the disadvantage of the kingly and prophetic offices.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Throughout the early centuries there was one liturgical text which kept before the minds of men the threefold office of Christ. It is a prayer for

²⁶ J. Fergusson, *The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture* 2 (London, 1855; 2nd ed., 1859) 915.

²⁷ Nestorius inspired the law in *Codex Theodosianus* 16, 5, 65; see Socrates, *Church History* 7, 29 (PG 67, 804).

²⁸ Gregory the Great, *Ep.* 6, 49 (PL 77, 834).

the blessing of oil, "from which thou hast anointed priests, kings, and prophets."²⁹ All those anointed were Christs, partaking in one or other of his offices. The prayer is met with in the Latin version of the *Traditio apostolica*, prepared probably for some Arian Goths at Verona ca. 500. It is also encountered in the Euchologion of the White Monastery in Egypt, where martyrs are added in the fourth place. This arrangement appears in the Old Gelasian, while the Ethiopic version of the *Traditio apostolica* has only priests and prophets who are to receive the oil. The *Missale Francorum* and the Bobbio Missal speak only of the example of Samuel anointing David as king and prophet when they are providing a prayer for the new custom of anointing the hands of a priest at ordination. As that custom spreads (from 750 to 900), the linking of priest, prophet, and king becomes a matter of course.³⁰ The False Decretals have lifted a passage from the Clementine *Recognitiones*: "What is more glorious in our days than a prophet, more famous than a pontiff, more lofty than a king? For every pontiff, anointed with holy chrism and learned in the Scriptures, should be dear to his fellow citizens when he has been established in a city." In 906 Regino of Prüm cited a canon from an earlier Council of Tours ordering that chrism must always be kept under lock and key, "lest that by which we are incorporated into Christ and by which kings and priests are anointed should be touched by any layperson. . . ." ³¹ It is to be noted that in most of these prayers priestly anointing is put first, before that of the king. But when a Byzantine Emperor could write to a Pope saying "I am king and priest," this precedence would not count for much. The Pope in question, Gregory II in 730, gave as good as he got: "Dogmas do not belong to the king but to the high priest."³² It is obvious that bishops generally had to stress the priestly office of Christ if they were to hold emperors at bay.

Recently the Strasbourg liturgist Cyrille Vogel has provided what might appear to be a complete answer to the problem why the priestly office of Christ eclipsed the other two in Catholic thinking.³³ He sees private Mass as the operative factor. Sinners sought to have their penances commuted into the payment of a stipend, so that Mass could be

²⁹ The prayer is found in the *Missale Francorum*, par. 34; in the Bobbio Missal, par. 242; in the Old Gelasian, par. 388; in the Euchologion, PO 28, 393. I have discussed the transfer of this and other liturgical features from East to West in *Studies* (Dublin) 65 (1976) 87-99.

³⁰ Gerard Ellard, S.J., in his *Ordination Anointings in the Western Church before 1000 A.D.* (Cambridge, Mass., 1933) 52, printed the Clementine passage and the False Decretal in parallel.

³¹ Cited by Ellard, *ibid.* 68.

³² The reply of Gregory II to Emperor Leo III (in Greek) was printed by E. Caspar in *ZKG* 52 (1933) 84-89.

³³ C. Vogel, "Le passage de l'Eucharistie communautaire à la Messe privée," *ReuScRel* 54 (1980) 231-50.

said in expiation of the sin. Hence priests were much in demand as "fixers," and the idea of the Massing priest supplanted the earlier idea of concelebration in the city church. He does not seem to have used the admirable edition of the Irish Penitentials by Ludwig Bieler, wherein the first two tables of commutations that have survived may be found.³⁴ These tables are prior to 800, whereas Vogel's examples are all later and are Anglo-Saxon or Gallican. In the Irish tables Mass is not mentioned save twice, once when it means the Divine Office and once when the *hearing* of Mass is enjoined as a substitute. In general, the substitute acts are all short and sharp penances, e.g., three days of absolute fast in an open grave with the dead body of a holy man, instead of a year's ordinary penance. After 800 the practice of saying private Masses was well established and it had come in during the two centuries before that. It is only by juggling with the dates that one can make out a case for the importunate sinner bringing about a revolution in Church thinking about priesthood.

There is a statute attributed to Sonnatius, Archbishop of Rheims (who ruled there 593-631), but which must come from a later period, which runs: "Remission of sins and their expiation rests chiefly on the blood of Jesus Christ and depends thereon."³⁵ This could have led, and perhaps did lead, to sinners having Mass offered in expiation of their sins, but at a much later period. Another of these statutes is taken by Vogel as an order to priests to offer Mass at least twice a month, but the plain sense of the Latin is that they are to go to confession at least twice a month. That would suit the ninth century rather than the early seventh. The idea that the existence of collections of votive Masses in liturgical books led to an increase of private Masses, an idea favored by Vogel, who derives it from Nussbaum,³⁶ puts the cart before the horse. Alcuin, we are told, had a collection of votive Masses arranged for the days of the week, but this was because he already wanted to say Mass every day. The Old Gelasian has texts for "Mass in a monastery," and here the *Hanc igitur* speaks of the Mass as being "ob devotionem mentis suae."

When St. Boniface anointed Pippin as King of the Merovingians in 751, the practice of anointing bishops and priests was already being observed in some parts of the Church. In 787 Offa, King of Mercia, had his son Ecgrith anointed king, and the Synod of Chelsea in the same year was careful to instruct kings (there were several of them in England then) "to obey their bishops from the heart and with great humility, because to the bishops are given the keys of heaven and they have the power of binding and loosing." To distinguish the kingly office of bishops from the Anglo-

³⁴ L. Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials* (Dublin, 1963) 163-66, 277-83.

³⁵ PL 80, 443.

³⁶ O. Nussbaum, *Kloster, Priestermonch und Privatmesse* (Bonn, 1961)

Saxon monarch, it became necessary to hold the coronation of kings before Mass and not after the Gospel and Creed, as the original practice was.³⁷ The Leofric Missal, the so-called Egbert Pontifical, and the Pontifical of Lanalet all have kings consecrated at the Offertory, as were bishops, but the coronation *Ordo* devised by St. Dunstan for Edgar in 973 marks the change. Illiterate spectators must not be allowed to gather the impression that the king was receiving a sacrament like a bishop. The popular chant of the *Christus regnat* was used to the same effect. A clash between spiritual and earthly lordship was avoided by the convenient assumption that the bishops were all-powerful in the places that belonged to them, i.e., in church, while the king had authority elsewhere. The Admonition delivered by Anglo-Saxon bishops to their king at coronation ran thus: "in as much as you look forward and see the clergy nearer the altar, in so much may you be mindful to give them greater honor in the places that belong to them."

Regalist propaganda in the Early Middle Ages asserted that the king was the image of the divinity of Christ, while a bishop or archbishop was merely the image of the humanity of Christ.³⁸ Pope John XXII had to write to Edward I of England to deny that coronation conferred a "character" like confirmation. This would imply that coronation was at most a sacramental. When controversy raged about investiture and so much bad theology was in circulation, it is understandable that bishops and clergy did not stress their kingly office but concentrated on the priestly, which all the world could see was quite different.

The mystique of the seven orders of Christ, which I studied here many years ago,³⁹ has now been documented from many unpublished sources by Roger Reynolds. It is clear that many of the faithful could answer the question "When was Christ a lector or an exorcist?" but they would have been hard put to it to reply if asked how the prophetic office of Christ or his kingly office continued in the Church. St. Thomas was not helpful in his treatment of the sacrament of order in the *Sentences*, and he gave up the *Summa* before he had reached order in his treatise on the sacraments. He had advanced from the notion that each of the seven orders conferred

³⁷ E. C. Ratcliff, when called upon to revise the coronation service for Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, went back to the earliest Anglo-Saxon usage of the Egbert Pontifical and put the crowning after the Gospel reading.

³⁸ The *Libelli de lite* (MGH, *Libelli*), edited by E. Dümmler in 1891, contain tracts by the Norman Anonymous (sometimes called the Anonymous of York) which claim that the kingly office of Melchizedek prefigured the divinity of Christ, while the priestly office foreshadowed the humanity of Christ, so that in effect bishops were subordinate to kings.

³⁹ "The Seven Orders of Christ," *TS* 19 (1958) 81-93. Roger Reynolds has gone over the ground again, bringing in a number of codices that had not previously been examined; see *The Ordinals of Christ from Their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Berlin and New York, 1978).

a sacramental character, and by the time he reached baptism in the *Summa* (3, 63, 3c), he was clear that every sacramental character is a participation in the priesthood of Christ; but he never came to the point of describing how the sacrament of orders is the fulness of the priesthood of Christ. It was his own definition of what a character was that appeared in the *Summa*, and he did not derive it from any known source. But he does not seem to have considered how the prophetic office is shared in by the Church.

St. Thomas (*Summa* 3, 59, 2) considered that the judicial power of Christ belonged to him as God but that it would be exercised in his human nature for various reasons. This aspect of the kingship of Christ was discussed at length by medieval theologians, but they did not seem to be so concerned with the legislative and executive aspects. The tendency was to contrast Christ (and his representatives) as priest with earthly monarchies as examples of a lower type of office. The thought of the power of the keys giving kingly status was not much in view. In a work like that of John of Paris on *Royal and Papal Power*, the power of consecration is set down as the chief legacy of Christ to St. Peter.⁴⁰ After this come the power of the keys and authority to preach, and then certain executive powers. Christ is said to be a king because he through his vicar institutes, orders, and blesses kingly power. Priesthood is called royal in the first Letter of Peter (2:9) because it directs men to the kingdom of heaven. Such ideas turn the mind away from the kingly office of Christ as seen by the Fathers of the Church.

FROM TRENT TO VATICAN II

It is notorious that when the Council of Trent came to consider the sacrament of orders, it was in a hurry to finish its work, being subject to manifold political pressures. The untidiness in which the theology of orders had been left by St. Thomas was a further reason for not going deeply into disputed questions, and the opinion of Durandus that the diaconate was not part of the sacrament was left uncondemned. The first canon of the Council defined that the power of consecration and the power of the keys were the main powers of the office of priest and that it could not be reduced to the power to preach the gospel. Thus the priestly and kingly offices came to be regarded as much more important than the prophetic office. In spite of the growth of literacy and education, on which the Reformers had concentrated, the Church settled the pattern of her ministry that would last for the next four hundred years by giving

⁴⁰ An English version of John of Paris on *Royal and Papal Power* was published by Arthur P. Monahan (New York, 1974). It is a scholastic *quaestio disputata*, with arguments pro and con. The emphasis on the power of consecration can be seen on p. 58.

priority to the act of consecration, in which the priest acts in the person of Christ. Doctrinally this was sound, but sociologically the absence of any positive teaching about the prophetic office was a weakness that became apparent with the lapse of time. Bérulle and his disciple Thomassin, using the idea derived by Origen from Philo that worship is paid to God by means of God, propagated the idea that Christ is priest in his divine nature. Thus they exalted the act in which a human priest shares in the office of Christ, ousting the true tradition, asserted by Cyril of Alexandria, that Christ was liturgist in his humanity. The discovery of Origen's *Dialektos* (as I pointed out here at the time⁴¹) makes clear the source of this error.

Cardinal Manning, at the outset of his book on *The Eternal Priesthood*, showed the limitations of the theology of his day.⁴² He begins by saying: "In these two powers [consecration and absolution] the priesthood was complete." Nothing is said about the prophetic office. It is true that he goes on to say that the pastoral authority and world-wide commission of the apostles were not yet given when the two powers had been conferred, but he thinks of the world-wide commission as something belonging to bishops alone. He later comes to the divine power inherent in the priesthood: "The words we speak are not ours but his; not human but divine." The words of consecration are certainly theandric as spoken by Christ, but to deny that they are human obscures the fact that Christ is our priest in his humanity. Manning had still some trace of the Berullian theory of a divine priesthood. Manning wrote: "Next to the Incarnation there is no action so transcendent, so purely divine, as the consecration."

Newman, by contrast with Manning, set out clearly, in his comments on Athanasius, the doctrine that Christ was priest in his humanity: "The Arians considered that Our Lord's priesthood preceded his Incarnation and belonged to his divine nature and was in consequence the token of an inferior divinity."⁴³ As Manning was writing in old age, it is clear that he never looked into Newman's *Athanasius*, where he might have discovered something to his advantage. The First Vatican Council did not go into the theology of the threefold office of Christ; that was left to Vatican II, and in the meantime there had been great progress in assimilating Newman's theology, especially in Flanders and Germany.

⁴¹ "The *Dialektos* of Origen and John 20:17," *TS* 11 (1950) 368-73; there I discussed some of the novelties of the *Dialektos*. Cyril of Alexandria is quite explicit in one place (PG 76, 1398) that Christ is priest in his humanity, but elsewhere (PG 68, 625) he expresses Origen's view that priesthood belonged to the divinity.

⁴² Henry Edward Manning, *The Eternal Priesthood* (London, 1883; New York, 1884) 14-16.

⁴³ John Henry Newman, *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius* 2 (Oxford, 1888) 245-46. This was the fourth edition, the first having appeared in 1842, when Manning could have read it.

The Constitution on the Church in Vatican II drew upon the theology of the threefold office in order to give substance to the idea of the general priesthood of the faithful, even while it distinguished this, "in kind and not merely in degree," from the ministerial priesthood. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent*⁴⁴ had differentiated the two priesthoods as external (for all) and internal (for the ministry). Now an attempt was made to describe each in terms of worship, rule, and evangelization. It may seem surprising that there was any desire, even in 1963-64, to show that the laity shared in the kingly office of Christ, but there it is in the Constitution: "Christ through death . . . entered into the glory of his kingdom, and all things are made subject to him. This power he shares with his disciples, so that they too may be established in kingly freedom."⁴⁵ Their kingship is exercised over temporal affairs, ordering them towards the kingdom of God. They may also rule by serving their brethren, for the leading of others to Christ is a kingly task; to serve him is to reign.

Priests in the ministerial order are told in the Constitution that they share in the prophetic office by preaching and in the priestly office by their liturgy, while they are said to "fulfil the office of Christ as shepherd and head in the measure of their share in the authority of the Church."⁴⁶ Bishops are reminded of their *regimen pastorale* and are told that one of their chief offices is to preach and teach. Less emphasis is placed upon the bishop's priestly office in worship. What is added by the Constitution to the Tridentine notion of the power of consecration and power of the keys is a generalized idea of pastoral care: "Bishops function by their own authority for the good of their faithful, or rather for that of the whole Church." What is perhaps more striking is the admission that "members of the ministerial priesthood can sometimes be occupied with secular matters, even practicing a worldly profession."⁴⁷ Was this a canonist's attempt to safeguard the status of the priest members of Opus Dei? Or was it simply speculative analysis on the part of those who felt that the distinction of layman from priest needed further clarification? The ministry depends on the positive will of God and not on the nature of things in themselves.

The Council's special Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, which was produced in answer to pleas from Archbishops Heenan and Dwyer

⁴⁴ Trent's *Catechism* (2, 7, 23), which was the work of three Dominicans and a bishop in 1564, chose the two terms "internal" and "external" to indicate that the ministerial priesthood was not the same as the general priesthood of the faithful about which the Reformers wrote, but the terms remain, like Melchizedek, without ancestry among the Fathers and without progeny in later theology.

⁴⁵ *Lumen gentium* 31 with 36.

⁴⁶ This phrase is in *LG* 28. The work of bishops is described in *LG* 23 and 25.

⁴⁷ This qualification is introduced in *LG* 31 after the lay state has been described.

from England, quoted the words of Trent about the office of priesthood, but added to them the clause, "They discharge in the name of Christ the priestly office in public for the benefit of mankind."⁴⁸ Vague words these may seem to be, but they betoken a desire to enlarge the concept of priesthood and to go beyond the two powers of consecrating and of absolving. This addition does at least leave room for the prophetic office of a priest in bearing witness before men to Christ's calling. There will be many priests who can recall that some of the most fruitful works of their ministry arose from an apparently casual witnessing by them to Christ's calling. The Church in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries labored under Bourbon-Hapsburg controls of various kinds, one of which was the idea that the eldest son of a noble family was to inherit the estates, the second son was for the army, and the third son for the Church. The Austrian cardinals who vetoed Rampolla in 1903 were products of that mentality. The clarification of the teaching of the Church about the threefold office of Christ and about how this is shared by men was due to the quiet revolution started by Newman in Birmingham in 1870, which took nearly a century to come to maturity.

⁴⁸ *Presbyterorum ordinis* 2.