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THE MINISTRY OF DISCIPLES: HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS PRIESTS

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THE ELEVENTH BOOK of John Cassian's treatise *On the Institutions of Common Life* deals with the spirit of vainglory, one of the eight "capital sins" or root vices in the spiritual life for which Cassian offers would-be monks a cure. Towards the end of the book, with tongue perhaps slightly in cheek, Cassian writes:

> There is an old maxim of the Fathers that is still current—though I cannot repeat it without a touch of shame, since I have not been able to avoid my own sister, nor escape the bishop's hands—namely, that a monk ought by all means to fly from women and bishops. For neither of them will allow a person who has once become bound to them by ties of familiarity to care, any longer, for the quiet of his cell, or to continue with pure eyes in divine contemplation, rapt in his vision of holy things."[1]

The statement is as remarkable for its perspicacity as it is for its irony: Cassian seems to be saying that fantasies of ecclesiastical power are as destructive of a monk's contemplative peace as sexual fantasies. Church office, conferred by the laying-on of episcopal hands, apparently could offer a strong attraction, in fifth-century Gaul as now, to the lusts of a struggling ascetic's heart—an attraction that could destroy a life of prayer and self-renunciation if it was not steadfastly resisted.

This passage, in one of Western Christianity's earliest and most influential works on the ideals of religious life, reflects a sentiment that has been widely shared by ascetical writers of East and West through the centuries. Monastic literature, from the Egyptian desert to medieval France, abounds in stories of the reluctance of holy men to be ordained: of their being made to accept holy orders only by trickery or by force, and of their fleeing to the hills or hiding in the fields to avoid it.[2]

[1] *De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis* 11.18 (ed. J.-C. Guy, SC 109.444; tr. E. C. S. Gibson, NPNF, 2nd series, 11.279, a translation I have partly used here).

[2] For stories of monks who sucessfully avoided ordination, see *Apophthegmata patrum* (Alphabetical Series), Theodore of Phermae 25; Isaac of the Cells 1; Macarius the Great 1 (PG 65.193 A10–B12; 224 B8–C5; 257 C2–6; tr. Benedicta Ward, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* [Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1975] 66, 84 f., 105). The lives of Pachomius tell of a similar ruse by the founder of coenobitism to avoid being ordained a presbyter by Athana-

Palladius, the fifth-century teller of monastic tales, relates that Ammonius the Tall, one of the most celebrated of the early Egyptian ascetics, was kidnapped by some villagers who wanted to have him ordained as their bishop, and cut off his own left ear to make himself unsuitable for the office; he threatened even to cut out his tongue if they refused to leave him alone.[3] In a less violent vein, Ignatius Loyola wrote some 12 centuries later to Ferdinand, brother of Emperor Charles V: "If I were to try to fancy or imagine some means of ruining the Society [of Jesus], I should look upon the accepting of a bishopric as one of the best, if not the best of all."[4] Besides the practical reasons Ignatius gives for his position—the small number of his companions, their need for mobility and availability if they are to meet the pastoral needs of the time—he offers the same spiritual argument one finds in the desert tradition: the prospect of ordination to church office (in this case, the episcopacy) inevitably exposes the community and its members to the spirit of ambition and competition, and strikes at the very heart of self-effacing Christian discipleship.[5]

Through 20 centuries of Christian literature, in fact, there is a recurrent pattern of tension, even of antagonism, between the roles of priest or bishop and the institution of religious life, between ordained ministerial office and the ascetical ideal. While bishops and pastors—since the fourth-century Synod of Gangra[6]—have frequently regarded the orga-

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sius' friend, Sarapion of Thmuis: First Greek Life 30 (ed. F. Halkin, Subsidia hagiographica 19 [Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1932] 19 f.; tr. A. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* 1 [Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1980] 317); Bohairic Life 28 (ed. L. Th. Lefort, CSCO 89.28 f.; tr. Veilleux 1.51 f.). Some, like the Egyptian monk-bishop Dracontius, fled into solitude again after ordination: Athanasius, *Letter to Dracontius* (PG 25.523–34; tr. NPNF, 2nd series, 4.557–60). Gregory of Nazianzus' second oration, the so-called *Apology for His Flight*, is an elaborate explanation of his own reluctance to take up the ministry of presbyter after his father had ordained him against his will. A similar reluctance of two ascetically inclined young men to accept episcopal ordination forms the dramatic setting for John Chrysostom's dialogue *On Priesthood*. For a comparable story in the early medieval West, see the *Life of Odo of Cluny* by John the Monk (PL 133.60 A15-C1). For other examples of this monastic *topos* in hagiographical literature, see Jean Leclercq, "On Monastic Priesthood according to the Ancient Medieval Tradition," *Studia monastica* 3 (1961) 141 f.

[3] *Lausiac History* 11 (ed. C. Butler, Texts 6.2.32 f.; tr. R. T. Meyer, ACW 34.46 f.). Later in the same work (46: ed. Butler 134.18; tr. Meyer 123), apparently the same monk is referred to as "Ammonius the Ear-lobe (*parôtēs*)"; along with his height, his gesture of refusal had become, it seems, a symbol of his public identity.

[4] Letter 149, to Ferdinand, King of the Romans (December 1546): *Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu* [MHSI], *Monumenta Ignatii*, Epp. 1 (Madrid: Gabriel Lopez del Horno, 1903) 451; tr. William J. Young, S.J., *Letters of St. Ignatius Loyola* (Chicago: Loyola Univ., 1959) 112.

[5] Ibid.

[6] This meeting of bishops from Paphlagonia, in northeastern Asia Minor, sometime in the early 340s, condemned Christian ascetics of the time whose austerity apparently led them to hold marriage, the institutions of civil life, and the devotional practices of ordinary

nized ascetical life as an elitist, divisive, even a dangerously antisocial phenomenon within the Church, ascetical leaders have, just as frequently, held themselves and their disciples aloof from the Church's ordained officials and have refused ministerial office for themselves, seeing in it only a temptation to compromise and worldliness, an end to discipleship, understood as the serious, radical following of Christ.

Yet there is another side to the story. Since the fourth century, Christian disciples have, in fact, repeatedly been commissioned as "apostles" or community leaders: religious have frequently been chosen to be bishops, often despite their protestations, because of their reputation for holiness and their experience in the things of God[7]—a practice still nominally followed in the Eastern Churches today. Since the fourth century, too, another form of religious life has existed in both East and West alongside strictly monastic or eremitical forms, in which men, and later women, dedicated to the following of Christ and to a life free of worldly involvement have associated themselves actively with the Church's public ministry. In the Western Church many groups of male religious, both active and monastic, have since the Early Middle Ages encouraged their members to be ordained deacons and presbyters, precisely as a way of realizing their life of discipleship more fully. If these ordained religious—whether deacons, priests, or bishops—have experienced in their own lives the contradiction we have mentioned, they seem to have found it a fruitful, even a life-giving tension, one that determines their own peculiar contribution to the Church's life. In fact, the apparent tension between church office and radical religious commitment seems, in itself, to be the product or result of tensions within both of those ecclesial realities—within the institutions of ordained ministry and organized asceticism—that are themselves also inescapable and have been major influences on their development through the centuries.

Christians in contempt. The object of their anathemas, the bishops at Gangra insist, is not the practices of virginity, voluntary poverty, or fasting, but the "arrogance" with which they are sometimes practiced (Canons: Epilogue), and the tendency of some idealistic Christians to "play Church outside the Church" (can. 6). For the text of the letter and canons issued by this synod, see J. D. Mansi, *Amplissima collectio conciliorum* (Mansi) 2 (Leipzig: Welter, 1902) 1095–1106; full French tr. J. Hefele–J. Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles* 1.2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1907) 1029–45; full English tr. NPNF, 2nd series, 14.87–101; annotated English tr. of main canons: J. Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies* (London: SPCK, 1966) 4 ff.

[7] Examples from the Egyptian desert are Ammonas (*Apoph. patr.* Ammonas 8, 10: PG 65.121 B1–C7; 121 D1–124 A8; tr. Ward 23 f.), Apphy (ibid.: PG 65.133 B11–C6; tr. Ward 30 f.), and Dracontius, whom Athanasius successfully persuaded back into public service (see n. 2 above). Many of the early monks of fifth-century Palestine later became bishops in various parts of the East; see, e.g., Cyril of Skythopolis, *Vita Euthymii* 3–4, 16, 20, 37 (ed. E. Schwartz, TU 49.2.10–13, 25 ff., 32 f., 55 f.; French tr. A.-J. Festugière, *Les moines d'orient* 3.1 [Paris: Cerf, 1962] 60–64, 79 ff., 86 ff., 110). See also Derwas J. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966) 32, 82–86.

What I shall do here is reflect, first, briefly and in broad general terms, on some features of the history of ordained ministry and of religious life that seem to illustrate these tensions within and between them, and then offer some suggestions, against that background, on what the peculiar role of the ordained religious in the Church is and might be. Most of what I have to say about the history of these institutions is already well known; but it may help our understanding of the special ministry of religious priests in today's and tomorrow's Church if we consider in summary fashion some main points in the growth of both dimensions of their life.

I

The New Testament does not speak of the leaders of the Christian community in terms of priesthood: in terms of the role of liturgical mediator between God and His people, of being representative and spokesman for God before the people and for the people before God, that characterized the hereditary office of priest in ancient Israel.[8] For one thing, the first followers of Jesus apparently remained part of the Jewish community of worship at least until their expulsion from Jerusalem in the late 60s; it would hardly have been appropriate for their leaders, most of whom were apparently not from the priestly families of Israel, to claim any kind of priestly role for themselves. For another, when the New Testament writings do use the language of cult and sacrifice, they usually apply it, in a typological or metaphorical sense, to the sufferings and death of Jesus. In the only extended treatment of priesthood in the New Testament, the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is, of course, Jesus alone who is called "the apostle and high priest of our confession,"[9] and who is presented as having reconciled humanity to God for all time by his own single act of self-sacrifice.[10]

The religious leaders of the early Christians seem to have been designated, in fact, by quite different terms. First of all, we read in the New Testament of "apostles," a word used in the Pauline corpus to refer not simply to "the Twelve" chosen by Jesus, but to a larger group of traveling preachers who were recognized by the early communities as people "sent" by the Spirit of the risen Lord, commissioned to bear authoritative

[8] For a survey of the role of priests in Israel, and of the differences in understanding of community leadership between OT and NT, see Raymond E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop* (New York: Paulist, 1970) 5–45; Nathan Mitchell, *Mission and Ministry: History and Theology in the Sacrament of Order* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1982) 15–200; Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest according to the New Testament* (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede's, 1986).

[9] Heb 3:1.

[10] Heb 4:14 f.; 5:5–10; 7:23—8:6; 9:11–15, 23–28; 10:11–13.

witness to his Lordship and to found and shape new communities of his disciples.[11] Though these apostles seem to have held ultimate authority in the Christian centers for the first few decades, other wandering preachers apparently also played an important, if subordinate, role in communicating and interpreting the gospel: preachers, presumably, like the "prophets" and "teachers" mentioned in 1 Cor 12:28. But as the communities became better established and more self-sufficient, perhaps by the 80s or 90s of the first century, they seem generally to have developed permanent local structures of leadership that functioned alongside these charismatic, nonresident offices referred to by Paul.[12] *Episkopoi* or "supervisors," *presbyteroi* or "elders," and *diakonoi* or "servers" (in its Latin equivalent, "ministers") are mentioned in different contexts in the Pauline and deutero-Pauline letters,[13] although their exact functions and their relationship to each other are not at all clear. There and in the *First Letter of Clement*, a Roman document from about the year 96, *episkopos* and *presbyteros* seem to be used interchangeably and refer

[11] In Paul's letters the role of apostle is mentioned as the first "gift" or charism God has given for the benefit of the Church, followed by other gifts such as those of "prophet," "teacher," and "worker of miracles" (1 Cor 12:28). Paul is convinced that he himself has received the charism to be an apostle, even though he never met Jesus during his lifetime (Rom 1:1; 11:13; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:9; 2 Cor 12:11 f.; Gal 1:1). He mentions a number of others besides the Twelve who are also apostles (e.g., Rom 16:7), and some who claim falsely to be so (2 Cor 11:4 f., 13; 12:11 f.). According to other parts of the NT, the "apostles and prophets" lay the foundations of a new Christian community, making it part of the "holy people" of the OT (Eph 2:20; cf. Rev 18:20).

[12] This change is especially evident in the *Didache*, a moral, liturgical, and disciplinary collection probably compiled in Syria in the late-first or early-second century. Wandering "apostles," "prophets," and "teachers" are to be welcomed and revered in the community, if their doctrine and life are credible (11.3–12; 13), but the community is also told to elect "bishops" and "deacons" who will fill, on the local scene, the role the apostles and prophets have been exercising more broadly (15). The Pastoral Epistles of the NT seem to reflect this same transition from a fluid to a stable system of Church leadership: see Brown, *Priest and Bishop* 63–78, esp. 69 f. Apparently itinerant "apostles" and "teachers," however, are still referred to in the *Shepherd* of Hermas, a document which seems to have taken its present form in Rome around 140 (*Vis.* 3.5; *Sim.* 9.15 ff., 25). The transition apparently moved with various speeds in various places.

[13] "Overseers and ministers" ("bishops and deacons"): Phil 1:1; Phoebe, the "minister of the Church at Cenchreae": Rom 16:1; Paul and Apollos as "ministers through whom you believed": 1 Cor 3:5; Paul's own work as "minister of the new covenant": 2 Cor 3:6. See also Paul's references in 2 Cor to the "ministry of the Spirit" (3:8), the "ministry of righteousness" (3:9), and the "ministry of reconciliation" (5:18), all of which may be ways of talking about his work as a recognized apostle of the risen Lord. Cf. Eph 3:7 (Tychicus) and Col 1:23, 25 (Paul as "minister of the gospel" and "minister of the Church"). "Overseers" are referred to, apparently as holding a set office in the community, in 1 Tim 3:1–7 and Titus 1:7. "Elders" (presbyters) in the community are mentioned often in Acts (11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18) and are alluded to as worthy of respect in the Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5); see also Jas 5:14 and 1 Pet 5:1.

apparently to the members of a senior council, perhaps led by a single chairman or "chief supervisor," who may have held a kind of supreme authority in some places.[14]

In the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, on the other hand, written about the year 115 to several churches in Asia Minor, the three offices of bishop (*episkopos*), presbyter, and deacon are clearly distinguished and subordinated. Each church, as Ignatius describes it, has one *episkopos* or bishop, who is the center of the community's liturgical and social activity. Even if he does not himself perform all the functions of leadership, even if he remains silent much of the time,[15] he is the ultimate norm of Christian authenticity within the community: "Do nothing without the bishop," Ignatius constantly urges.[16] The deacons, on the other hand, are the active workers within the community: the doers, the "ministers," as the Latin translation of their title suggests.[17] If the bishop represents God the Father by his remote but central position within the community, Ignatius suggests in one famous passage, the deacons represent Jesus, who worked among us and laid down his life in the service of his friends.[18] The presbyters, on the other hand, seem in the Ignatian letters to be an advisory council of senior members of the community, who support and surround the bishop: they correspond, he says, to the "council of the apostles"—to the Twelve perhaps—in the primitive Church.[19] There is

[14] The equivalency of *episkopos* and presbyter in these early writings is suggested by Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7. In *1 Clem.* 44, those who exercise the office of supervisor (*episkopē*) are apparently referred to as "elders" (*presbyteroi*) who fulfil a "ministry" (*diakonia*) in the Church. The *Shepherd* of Hermas, in passages that may be contemporary with *1 Clement*, refers to the leaders of the Roman Church, including Clement himself, as "elders" (*presbyteroi*): *Vis.* 2.4; the "overseers" (*episkopoi*) in the community, on the other hand, are those in charge of its hospitality to strangers, the poor, and widows among the "servants of God" (*Sim.* 9.27).

[15] So Ignatius, *Eph.* 6.1; *Phld.* 1:1. The characteristics Ignatius singles out for comment in bishops are their meekness (*Trall.* 3.2), their calm harmony with God's commands (*Phld.* 1.2), their youth and inexperience (*Magn.* 3.1)—never what we would think of as executive skills.

[16] So *Eph.* 5.3 ("Let us be careful not to oppose the bishop, so that we may be obedient to God"); *Magn.* 7.1 ("Do nothing without the bishop and the presbyters"); *Trall.* 2.2 ("You must not do anything without the bishop"); *Phld.* 3.2 ("Whoever belong to God and Jesus Christ, they are with the bishop"); *Smyrn.* 8.1 ("All of you, follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father"); *Pol.* 6.1 ("Be attentive to the bishop, that God may also be attentive to you"). *Smyrn.* 8.2 puts the ecclesial importance of the bishop more strongly still: "Where the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Christ Jesus is, there is the universal Church." Cf. *Trall.* 3.2: "Without them [i.e., the deacons, the bishop, and the council of presbyters] we cannot speak of a church."

[17] So *Trall.* 2.3; cf. *Phld.* 4 (deacons are Ignatius' "fellow slaves"); *Magn.* 6.1 (deacons have been entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ).

[18] *Magn.* 6.1.

[19] Ibid. Cf. *Trall.* 3.1; *Smryn.* 8.1 (bishop as symbol of God the Father; presbyters, of the "council of apostles"). Ignatius also likens the council of presbyters to a woven crown or

no mention of any direct leadership role or concrete ministerial activity that is clearly and peculiarly theirs.

Ignatius' conception of the local church is what would today be called a "Eucharistic" one, built on his vision of the community gathered around the Eucharistic table.[20] Yet if the surviving documents are representative of second-century theology, it was not until the Eucharist itself had become more clearly ritualized, and more definitely identified, in sacrificial terms, with Jesus' offering of himself at the Last Supper, that the role of presidency at the Eucharist came to be clearly defined and—more important for us here—to be conceived in terms of priesthood. References to "priestly service" and to God's gift of a "priestly Spirit" appear in the ordination rituals for bishop and presbyter—but expressly not in that for deacon—in Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition*, composed in the early third century.[21] In both Eastern and Western writings from the early third century on, the bishop, as head of the Christian Eucharistic community, is commonly referred to as *sacerdos*.[22] The Christian Church's break from Judaism had become complete, and her rivalry with the public religious institutions we call paganism was growing more obvious; now Christians, too, could think of their leaders in cultic, priestly terms.

After the peace of Constantine, the rapid growth of Christian numbers led to an equally rapid program of church-building and to a need for new

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wreath (*Magn.* 13.1) and to the strings of a lyre, all of which are in tune with the bishop (*Eph.* 4.1). Clearly they are meant to act as a single body within the community.

[20] See *Phld.* 4 ("one flesh of our Lord . . ., one cup for unity in his blood, one altar, as there is one bishop with the council of presbyters and the deacons"); *Smyrn.* 8.1 ("only consider that Eucharist valid which is held by the bishop or one whom he delegates"). This image of the Church as primarily the local Eucharistic community, under the leadership of a single bishop with his ministers, is the basic model for contemporary attempts, particularly by Eastern Orthodox theologians, to develop a "Eucharistic ecclesiology." See esp. John D. Zizioulas (now Metropolitan John of Pergamon), *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's, 1985).

[21] *Trad. apost.* 3 (ed. B. Botte, SC 11[bis].44: prayer of ordination for bishop, comparing the bishop's role to that of OT priests and asking for "the high-priestly Spirit" to be given him); ibid. 4 (ed. Botte 52: bishop and presbyterium, leading the Eucharistic prayer, refer to their collective role as "offering priestly service [*sacerdotium*]"); ibid. 8 (ed. Botte 58: a deacon, unlike a presbyter, is ordained by the bishop alone, "because he is not ordained for priesthood, but for the service of the bishop").

[22] See *The Teaching of the Apostles* 8 f. (*Didascalia apostolorum*, ed. R. H. Connolly [Oxford: Clarendon, 1929] 80, 86), an early-third-century Syrian liturgical collection which insists that the high priests of the new covenant are the bishops, while the presbyters are the priests, and the deacons the Levites. Tertullian, *De pudicitia* 1.6 (written 222–23: ed. E. Dekkers, CCL 1.2.1281 f.), refers apparently to the bishop of Rome as "the high priest [*pontifex maximus*: a term from Roman religion!] or bishop of bishops"; cf. his *De baptismo* 17.1 (written between 198 and 204: ed. J. G. P. Borleffs, CCL 1.1.291) which refers to the local bishop as *summus sacerdos*. Cyprian of Carthage, in the 250s, regularly speaks of bishops as "priests (*sacerdotes*)," who offer Christ's sacrifice to God (e.g., *Ep.* 59.12 f.; 63.14; 66.8 f.: ed. W. Hartel, CSEL 3.2.680–84, 712 f., 732 ff.).

structures of leadership. The Christians of a small Hellenistic or Roman city could no longer be gathered each Sunday around a single altar, and the bishop's presbyters seem now to have been regularly delegated to preside at satellite Eucharistic gatherings in suburban areas.[23] Although deacons remained the most important group of active church functionaries in many places—the pool, often, from which future bishops were drawn[24]—the fourth century was really the century of the presbyter, the century when the presbyter's quasi-episcopal role, as delegated head of the neighborhood community or parish, became established.[25] It was also the age in which theological reflection on the Church's sacramental life was first explicitly undertaken. Ambrose and Augustine in the West, Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom in the East all stressed, in their own terms, that it is Christ himself who touches us in the holy rites of the Church: Christ who baptizes, Christ who offers us his flesh and blood as Eucharistic food.[26] The role of the Church's minister came

[23] See the discussion in Mitchell, *Mission and Ministry* 241 ff. On the relation of bishops to their colleges of presbyters during the first four centuries, see B. Botte, "'Presbyterium' et 'ordo episcoporum,'" *Irénikon* 29 (1956) 5–27.

[24] This seems to have been a fairly common practice in all the major sees, at least from the third century on. In the late sixth century, Eulogius, patriarch of Alexandria (580–607), alleged that it was the traditional practice at Rome for the archdeacon of the city to succeed to the episcopate (see Photius, *Bibliotheca* 182 [ed. R. Henry 2; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960, 193]). In fact, of the 34 popes and antipopes recorded between Liberius (elected in 352) and Gregory the Great (died 604), two were subdeacons at the time of their election and at least 20 were deacons, of whom at least seven were archdeacons. There is evidence, too, that deacons in the fourth century—particularly in the Church of Rome—had begun to usurp some of the liturgical role of the presbyters: see canon 18 of Nicaea (Mansi 2.676; tr. J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius* [London: SPCK, 1957] 363); Jerome, *Ep.* 146 (ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 56.308–12). Cf. F. Prat, "Les prétensions des diacres romains au quatrième siècle, " *RSR* 3 (1912) 463–75.

[25] Jerome is a leading spokesman for presbyters in their new self-consciousness as church leaders. In a few letters he points out, correctly, that NT language uses "presbyter" and *episkopos* interchangeably (*Ep.* 69.3 [ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54. 683.19 ff.]; *Ep.* 146.2 [CSEL 56.311.19 f.]) and asks pointedly, "What can a bishop do that a presbyter cannot, except ordain?" (*Ep.* 146.1 [CSEL 56.310.12 f.]). In his *Commentary on Titus* (written about 387/88), he goes so far as to assert that the superiority of the bishop's rank over that of presbyter is simply a matter of custom, the Church's response to the spirit of dissent and ambition that Satan has sown among the originally equal presbyters (PL 26.597 f.). This same view of church office is found in the document called *De septem ordinibus ecclesiae* (PL 30.152–67), probably composed by a Pelagian in Southern Gaul in the early fifth century. The *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua*, a canonical collection probably drawn up in the same region late in the fifth century, largely in defense of the rights of presbyters, ordain that the bishop "recognize he is a colleague of the presbyters when at home," even if "he sits in a higher place among the company of presybters in church" (can. 2 [ed. C. Munier, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960, 79]). This same collection insists on the subordination of deacons to presbyters (canons 57–59 [ed. Munier 89 f.]) and on the bishop's obligation to consult his "fellow presbyters" before ordaining other clerics (can. 10 [ed. Munier 80]).

[26] See, e.g., Ambrose, *De sacramentis* 4.14 (ed. B. Botte, SC 25bis.108 ff.: the minister of

to be seen more and more as an instrumental one, within the saving mystery of the human Church founded by the Incarnate Word; so, as the number of designated heads of local Christian communities increased, their role became at once less personal, less mundane, and more exalted—less a matter of individual pastoral engagement and more one of making present the enormous power of God's eternal plan of redemption.[27]

By the Early Middle Ages, especially in the West, a thorough transformation of the early Christian understanding of church office had taken place. Part of this was due to changes in liturgical theology. As the Eucharist came to be understood more and more as a divine action, realized in human symbols but accomplished by the eternal Son beyond time, its role as the community's celebration of thanks and praise became less and less clear. Understood, above all, as an incomparably powerful act of intercessory and propitiatory prayer—as Jesus' prayer, offered again by us—the Mass gradually became detached from its original ecclesial setting; the private celebration of the Eucharist and the offering of repeated Masses as prayer for a single intention became customary in the West in the late sixth century[28] and were greatly emphasized by Carolingian times, when ritual became the Latin Church's chief preoccupation. Part of the medieval understanding of church office, too, was political in origin. With the struggle of the Roman Curia and its jurists, in the period of the "Gregorian Reforms," to emphasize the historical, inner-worldly distinctiveness of the sacred over against the secular realm, to safeguard the Church's integrity and freedom of action within a violent and politically unstable society, it was natural to appeal to the power of

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the Eucharist speaks Christ's own words); Augustine, *Tractatus in Johannis evangelium* 6.7 f. (ed. R. Willems, CCL 36. 57: Christ is the one who baptizes, not the minister); Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homilies* 15.21 (ed. R. Tonneau and R. Devreesse [Vatican City: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1949] 497: the minister of the Eucharist is himself an active representation, an *eikōn*, of Christ the priest); John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Catecheses* 2.26 (ed. A. Wenger, SC 50.147 ff.: the Trinity actually performs baptism, the minister's role is declaratory); *Hom. in Act.* 14.3 (PG 60.116, ll. 16–20: it is God who ordains ministers, God's hand which is laid on their heads); *In ep. 2 ad Tim. 1, hom. 2* (PG 62.612, ll. 49–58: Christ is still the one who offers sacrifice in the Church). For a useful summary of the growth of patristic understanding of sacramental ministry, see Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacrament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 554–73.

[27] It is interesting to note, however, that one of the classic expressions, from this period, of this more exalted view of Christian priesthood (a term still understood as referring, when used without modifiers, to the office of bishop), John Chrysostom's dialogue *On Priesthood*, seems not so much to see the priest's "awe-inspiring" power as that of intercession or consecration, but rather as that of pastoral leadership, administration, and preaching the gospel: see esp. 3.4–6, 12–14 (ed. A.-M. Malingrey, SC 272.142–56, 200–224).

[28] On the growth in frequency of the "private" celebration of the Eucharist in late antiquity, parallel to the growing emphasis on its character as intercessory prayer, see esp. Josef A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum sollemnia)* 1 (New York: Benziger, 1950) 214–21.

priesthood, of a divinely sanctioned *sacerdotium*, in contrast to secular *imperium*, as the irreducibly distinctive heart of church office.[29]

For early medieval theology, then, and even in the classic 13th-century formulation of St. Thomas Aquinas, the role of the ordained in the Church was no longer conceived of in a primarily functional way, as "episcopate" or "presbyterate," or even as "ministry" (*diakonia*), but rather as "priesthood," *sacerdotium*: as the possession of a sacred power not to be accounted for in social or political terms. The core of this priesthood was the God-given power to consecrate, to make present in the sacramental acts of the Church the sanctifying and saving work of Christ.[30] It was the Eucharist, the repeated offering in sign of the single sacrifice that "takes away the sins of the world," that was, for St. Thomas, the "sacrament of sacraments": the center of this sacramental system and indeed of the reality of the Church.[31] As a result, those who normally acted as celebrants of the Eucharist, those who could themselves offer this sacrifice, were understood to possess the essentials of Christian priesthood. So the presbyter, not the bishop, became now the prime analogate of a minister, the model of Christian priesthood; a bishop, in scholastic theology, was generally understood to differ from a presbyter not in priestly power as such, but only in the fulness of its possession or in the extent to which he was allowed to use it.[32]

[29] The best general survey of this medieval struggle, and of the origins of its terminology, is still Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages* (3rd ed.; London: Methuen, 1969). See also Christian Schneider, *Prophetisches Sacerdotium und heilsgeschichtliches Regnum im Dialog, 1073–1077* (Munich: Fink, 1972).

[30] Accepting Peter Lombard's definition of the sacrament of order as "a sign of the Church, by which spiritual power is given to the person ordained" (*Sent.* 4, dist. 24, c. 13), St. Thomas defined this power as essentially related to the Eucharist: either the power of consecrating the Eucharistic elements, which is proper to the order of priesthood, or the power to perform some other ecclesial service related to the Eucharistic celebration, which can be seen in the lower clerical orders (*Sum. theol.* 3, suppl. 34, a. 2; 37, a. 2). In this view the "Eucharistic ecclesiology" of the second century is revived in a strikingly new form, reflecting the vast changes in the understanding of the Eucharist itself that had taken place in the Latin West since late antiquity.—On the medieval Western understanding of ordained ministry, see Cooke, *Ministry* 574–90.

[31] *Sum. theol.* 3, suppl. 37, a. 2, borrowing the phrase "sacrament of sacraments" from Ps.-Dionysius, *Eccl. hier.* 3.1 (PG 3.425).

[32] Peter Damiani, e.g., in his *Liber gratissimus* 15 (PL 145.118 C9–D10), argued that the office of bishop is not a new sacramental order beyond that of presbyter, but simply a more excellent level of the same order of priesthood. While bishops have privileges and powers that presbyters do not have, "that which is greater than all"—the power of "offering the mystery of the Lord's body and blood"—"they have in common with other priests." St. Thomas, who, like his contemporaries, used the word *sacerdos* to refer simply to the presbyter, argues that the additional powers of a bishop are not just a matter of greater jurisdiction, since some of these powers (e.g., that of ordaining major clerics) cannot be delegated, as jurisdiction can, and since these are precisely instances of "power in hierar-

In the 11 or 12 centuries between Ignatius of Antioch and the Latin scholastics, then, the understanding of ministry and ordained office within the Church had undergone a remarkable change in emphasis: from being conceived primarily in the functional terms of the proclamation of the gospel and pastoral leadership within a small local community, as in the Pastoral Letters and the letters of Ignatius, to being conceived in the essentially cultic terms of an individual's God-given power to consecrate, to work saving acts in liturgical signs, as in Carolingian and medieval treatises. The line of demarcation between bishop and presbyter, vague in the earliest stage of the evolution of Christian ministries because the functions of each were not yet clearly defined, had become vague once again in early medieval theology, by being absorbed into the single notion of priest (*sacerdos*), while the concept of ministry (*diakonia*), of office as an appointment to preaching, leadership, and practical community service, receded into the theological shadows.

But this change of emphasis, surely, does not mean that either end of the spectrum—the pastoral or the priestly, the ministerial or the cultic—was ever completely absent from the Church's actual practice. The two ends or extremes always seem to have been present in a kind of tension, pulling in opposite directions, yet unified in the enduring, ever-changing reality of an apostolic, sacramental Church: the human society sent into the world by the Spirit of the risen Lord to be both people and sacrament, community and saving mystery. Whether the implied image of the Church was the small, visible, structurally differentiated gathering of Ignatius' time or the world-wide spiritual realm of the Gregorian Reforms, it was the Eucharist, offered by the Church's ordained representatives and realizing in shared bread and wine the sacrifice of Jesus' flesh and blood, that gave both Church and ministry their ultimate meaning for theologians throughout this development, as sacraments of the Word-made-flesh. But within the continuity of a Church and a ministry formed by the Eucharist, tension certainly remained.

II

Alongside this evolution of the forms and theological understanding of church office—and to a large extent interwoven with it—the forms and theological understanding of what we know as religious life have also undergone profound changes. Central to the phenomenon of religious

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chical acts with respect to the Mystical Body," constitutive of the Eucharistic community. Still, because these additional powers of the bishop do not directly concern the celebration of the Eucharist, they do not require a distinct sacramental order in the full sense (*Sum. theol.*, suppl. 37, a. 2; 40, a. 5, resp. and ad 3). They are a fuller realization of the one sacramental order of "priesthood."

life, of course, is not so much *apostolate*, or official ministry, as *discipleship*, the following of Christ. Every Christian believer, as such, is called to be a disciple; but the Church has always had members who have chosen to realize that discipleship in a radical way: to make the following of Christ, as thoroughly and as concretely as possible, into the external pattern and central preoccupation, the root and anchor, of their lives. In the early fourth century, this quest for full discipleship led Antony and a few of his Egyptian contemporaries to flee into the desert, where their struggles against the powers of darkness and their utter dependence on God could take on dramatic clarity, unhampered by social restraint. At the same time, it led another Egyptian peasant, Pachomius, to found sizable new Christian villages of men and women who wanted to shape their lives around prayer and mutual charity in the light of the gospel, and to live and work together in profound simplicity, convinced that they would find God's rule in a common life lived under obedience to a single teacher and leader.[33] Whether in the free, essentially solitary form of eremitical discipleship or in the highly structured life of large communities, monasticism always begins in the decision of those who want to follow Christ to withdraw from "the world": to leave behind them ordinary public life and its spectrum of values and demands.[34] Initially, in Egypt, this may have implied a partial withdrawal from the life of the Church as well; the first monks probably had to go into the neighboring villages from their desert retreat in order to attend the Sunday Eucharist, but lived otherwise outside the customary boundaries of Christian social life. Suspicion, even hostility, on the part of church officials, was occasionally the result. Pachomius, for instance, was tried by a local synod after founding a new community near Latopolis in 345—apparently because the bishop of the place mistrusted his charismatic ability to read human hearts and to discern the movements of spirits.[35] But monastic communities soon grew into self-sufficient local churches themselves,

[33] The classic modern account of the Eastern origins of monasticism is Derwas J. Chitty, *The Desert a City* (see n. 7 above). For a careful and thought-provoking study of Pachomian monasticism in its social and ecclesiastical context, see Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1985).

[34] Typical of the experience of many early ascetics is the story told of Arsenius, a Roman aristocrat and tutor of the imperial princes Honorius and Gratian, who later became one of the heroes of the Egyptian desert. While still living in the palace, he was said to have heard a voice saying: "Arsenius, flee from human company and you will be saved" (*Apoph. patr.*, Arsenius 1: PG 65.88 B14–C1; tr. Ward 8). This urge to flee, seen as an impulse from God and as the condition for salvation, was the usual subjective basis for monastic *anachōrēsis*.

[35] Greek Life 1.112 f. (ed. Halkin [n. 2 above] 72 f.; tr. Veilleux 375 ff.). See Rousseau 171 f.

building central places of worship within their own territories and even—in Palestine and the hermit colonies of Egypt, though curiously not, during the founder's life, in the Pachomian order—allowing some of their own brethren to be ordained in order to minister to the community's needs.[36]

St. Benedict, in the sixth-century West, urged his disciples to be cautious in accepting priests into their monastic communities or in presenting members of a community for ordination. Like Cassian and the Eastern monks, he was acutely aware that church office—or the prospect of it—can stimulate vanity and ambition, and that the very possibility of ordination could destroy the peace and order of an ascetical brotherhood. As long, however, as the priests within the monastery were willing to take their ordinary place in the rank and file when not officiating at the altar, Benedict was ready to include them.[37] And as the liturgical and theological changes in the role of the priest, which we have already outlined, slowly took place—most of them within the three centuries after Benedict's death—it was the religious priest, the priest-monk, ironically enough, who seemed to realize both the priestly ministry and the monastic ideal at their deepest level. As a man of God, whose life was dedicated to God's praise in a kind of continual sacrifice, the monk seemed more suited than the ordinary parish pastor to offer Christ's Eucharistic sacrifice to the Father. So, as Dom Jean Leclercq has pointed out, the Carolingian era saw the evolution, within the monastic tradition of the West, of a "contemplative" or "charismatic" conception of Christian priesthood: an understanding of sacramental ministry that saw the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice as the culmination of a life of contemplative and liturgical prayer, and that regarded ordination as a kind of sacramental seal placed on a holy life, for the benefit of the monastic community and for the deeper sanctification of

[36] For a description of activities at the central church in the monastic colony of Nitria in early-fifth-century Egypt, see Palladius, *Lausiac History* 7 (ed. Butler [n. 3 above] 24 ff.; tr. Meyer 40 f.). Early priest-monks in Egypt include Pambo (ordained about 340; see *Apoph. patr.*, Macarius 2: PG 65.260 B10 f.; tr. Ward 106), Isidore the Priest (*Apoph. patr.*: PG 65.233 D6–236 C5; tr. Ward 90 f.), and Isaac of the Cells (ordained about 395; *Apoph. patr.*: PG 65.224 B8–228 A8; tr. Ward 84 ff.)—all at the monastic colony of Nitria. A letter of Pachomius' friend and fellow abbot, the presbyter Theodore of Tabennisi, to "the presbyters and deacons and monks in the mountain region of Nitria," dating from about 356, is preserved in Bishop Ammon's letter on Pachomius and Theodore (Halkin, *Pachomii vitae* [n. 2 above] 118), and indicates a clear hierarchical sense among some monks, even at that early date. See Chitty 31 f.; Rousseau 170 f.

[37] *Regula sancti Benedicti* 60, 62 (ed. Adalbert de Vogué, SC 182 [*La règle de s. Benoît 2*] 634 ff., 640 ff.). For a full commentary on these chapters, their parallels, and their implications, see de Vogué, *Règle* 7 (1977) 398–414.

the monk himself.[38] The Carthusian tradition is, indeed, a striking heir to this conception of monastic priesthood.

Running parallel to monasticism, however, the Church has also witnessed, since the fourth century, another form of religious life, in which Christians have realized their desire for radical discipleship not so much by physical withdrawal from the world as by a new kind of engagement in it: an active or pastoral discipleship, modeled consciously on the life of Jesus' own followers as it is depicted in the Synoptic Gospels. So Basil of Caesarea organized groups of men and women within the small cities of fourth-century Asia Minor to combine a life of ascetical renunciation and contemplative prayer, of strict poverty and unquestioning obedience, with active ministry to the poor and sick and homeless of the cities they lived in. When he became bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Basil used these "active" monastic communities as one of his principal resources for reforming the pastoral ministry of his church.[39]

In the West, Eusebius of Vercelli apparently lived, as bishop in fourth-century central Italy, in a kind of monastic community,[40] and Augustine—who had tried since his conversion to live an ascetical and contemplative life in a community of friends—was unwilling, at least in the

[38] Jean Leclercq, "On Monastic Priesthood" (n. 3 above) esp. 151–55. See also Dom Leclercq's illuminating article "La sacerdoce des moines," *Irénikon* 36 (1963) 5–40.

[39] The best annotated translation of Basil's works on the religious life (contained, in Greek, only in PG 31.620–1438), is that of W. K. Lowther Clarke, *The Ascetic Works of Saint Basil* (London: SPCK, 1925). See also Clarke's excellent earlier study of the practices of Basilian monasticism, *St. Basil the Great: A Study in Monasticism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1913), and E. F. Morison, *St. Basil and His Rule: A Study in Early Monasticism* (London: Frowde, 1912). For the theology of the spiritual life evident in Basil's ascetical works, see D. Amand (=E. Amand de Mendieta), *L'Ascèse monastique de saint Basile: Essai historique* (Maredsous: Editions de Maredsous, 1948); and for the structural and practical features of Basilian monastic life, E. Amand de Mendieta, "Le système cénobitique basilien comparé au système cénobitique pachômien," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 152 (1957) 31–80. See also Konstantinos G. Bonis, "Basilios von Caesaraea und die Organisation der christlichen Kirche im vierten Jahrhundert," in Paul J. Fedwick, ed., *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981) esp. 296–308; and Thomas Špidlik, "L'Idéal du monachisme basilien," ibid. 361–74.—Basil's "active" version of radical discipleship was sharply criticized by contemporary monastic writers in Asia Minor, especially by the fifth-century Evagrian Nilus of Ancyra, as a secularization of the monastic ideal. See esp. Michael L. Birkel, *The Contemplative as Prophet: Monastic Authority in the Works of Nilus of Ancyra* (Diss. Harvard 1986).

[40] So Ambrose writes to the Church of Vercelli in 396, during the interregnum after Eusebius' death, that "in the Church of Vercelli two things seem to be equally demanded of a bishop: the self-control of the monastery and the discipline of the Church. Eusebius, of holy memory, was the first in the West to join these two mutually different things, so that, even when he was installed [as bishop] in the city, he observed the monastic way of life and ruled the Church sobered by fasting" (*Ep.* 14 [63] 66: ed. M. Zelzer, CSEL 82.270.674–79).

early years of his episcopacy, to ordain anyone for ministry in the Church of Hippo who would not live with him in the monastic community he had established in the bishop's house.[41] The main emphasis in Augustine's idea of monasticism seems to have been on prayer, poverty, and the sharing of goods in common life—a model consciously drawn from the picture of the early Christian community in Acts 4:32.[42] Yet his monks were also an indispensable aid to Augustine's episcopal ministry, as he assures the layfolk of the city in one of his late sermons; they provided the hospitality expected of a bishop and carried out many of the duties of his assistant clergy, as well as being a model of evangelical community life for the wider world.[43]

This model of "ministerial monasticism," in which the clergy of a diocese were gathered, at least in large part, into a kind of monastic community presided over by the bishop, played, as is well known, an important part in the early ecclesiastical organization of Gaul and Britain, reviving in a new, more explicitly ascetical form the early Christian institution of the college of presbyters supporting the bishop.[44] In the

[41] Possidius of Calama, *Vita Augustini* 3, 5, 11, 25 (ed. M. Pellegrino [Rome: Edizione Paoline, 1955] 48 ff., 52 ff., 72 ff., 132 ff.; tr. M. M. Muller and R. J. Deferrari, *Early Christian Biographies* [FC 15; New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1952] 76 f., 78 f., 85, 104); Augustine, Sermon 355 (*De vita et moribus clericorum suorum* 1 [delivered in the beginning of January 426] 2, 6; PL 39.1569 f., 1572 f.).

[42] So Possidius, *Vita* 5 (ed. Pellegrino 53 f.; tr. Muller and Deferrari 78 f.); Augustine, Sermon 355, ibid.; Sermon 356.1 (PL 32.1574 f.). The "Rules" of St. Augustine (PL 32.1449–52, 1377–84) have been translated and commented on by several recent scholars: Adolar Zumkeller, *Die Regel des heiligen Augustinus* (2nd ed.; Würzburg: Augustinus, 1962); Luc Verheijen, *La règle de saint Augustin* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1967); Athanase Sage, *La vie religieuse selon saint Augustin* (Paris: La vie augustinienne, 1971). For recent English translations, see Mary T. Clark, ed. and tr., *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist, 1984) 481–93; Tarsicius J. Van Bavel (intr. and comm.) and Raymond Canning (tr.), *The Rule of St. Augustine* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image, 1986); and now George A. Lawless, *St. Augustine and His Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987). The best general study of Augustine's conception of monastic life is still Adolar Zumkeller, *Das Mönchtum des heiligen Augustinus* (Würzburg: Augustinus, 1950).

[43] Sermon 355.2, 4 (PL 39.1569 f., 1571 f.).

[44] For Gaul see, e.g. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini* 10 (ed. J. Fontaine, SC 133.272 ff.), on Martin's establishing in 370–71 a semieremitical community near Tours (Marmoutier), where he lived as bishop among his monastic disciples; see also the comments on this passage by Jacques Fontaine, SC 134.661–90. For Britain, see the letter of Gregory the Great to Augustine of Canterbury cited by Bede (*Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* 1.27; ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors [Oxford: Clarendon, 1969] 78 ff.), which shows that Augustine, at least, continued to live in England in a clerical-monastic community not unlike his namesake's at Hippo. Bede asserts that Aidan of Lindisfarne established the same system in northern England (ibid. 4.27 [25]: ed. Colgrave and Mynors 434); cf. Bede's letter to Egbert, Archbishop of York, 10 (ed. C. Plummer, *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica* 1 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1896] 413). For the subsequent medieval institution of the monastic cathedral in England, in which a monastic community, headed by the bishop as abbot, took

Irish Church of the sixth and seventh centuries, it was the monastery with its dependent area, rather than the diocese, that became the main unit of church government and pastoral practice. Bishops were ordained for sacramental purposes—sometimes, apparently, in great numbers; but they seem, at least in some places, to have remained subject to the jurisdiction of their abbots, most of whom were simple presbyters—both in their personal lives and in the exercise of their ministry.[45]

In the Middle Ages and afterwards, this active, directly ministerial or pastoral conception of religious life swelled, in the Latin West, into new forms and families of Christian disciples, whose work has deeply shaped the development of Western Christianity. Most of these active religious groups were composed predominantly of ordained priests from the start, and became, in fact, the main channel for the reform of clerical life and the reactivation of a genuinely pastoral ministry in the Church. The canons regular of the 11th and 12th centuries, like the Augustinians and the Premonstratensians, grouped ordained priests around large collegiate churches in the towns, to provide centers of rich liturgical life, study, preaching, and pastoral activity.[46] The Dominicans, in the early 13th century, brought Christian apostolic ministry in its most primitive form—preaching—to the front lines of contemporary controversy, in the streets and the lecture halls. The Franciscans, who began in the same years as a largely lay confraternity, were also soon clericalized, mainly because of their own emphasis on popular preaching.[47] In the 16th century the fully professed ranks of the new Society of Jesus were entirely

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the place of a cathedral chapter, see David Knowles, *The Monastic Orders in England* (Cambridge: University Press, 1941) 619–31; *The Religious Orders in England* 1 (Cambridge: University Press, 1948) 254–62.

[45] See James Bulloch, *The Life of the Celtic Church* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew, 1963) 159–62, 170. On the monastic organization of the Irish Church in the sixth and seventh centuries, and on the complicated (and disputed) question of the relation of monk-bishops to abbots and abbesses who were not bishops, see John Ryan, *Irish Monasticism: Origins and Early Development* (2nd ed.; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ., 1972) 167–90; Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* (London: Methuen, 1966) 57–90. A fascinating example of such an unusual arrangement is the allegedly co-ordinate position of Brigid, abbess of Kildare, and her successors with the archbishop of Armagh, as the chief leaders of the Irish Church in the late sixth century; see Cogitosus. *Vita sanctae Brigitae,* Prologue (PL 72.777 f.). For reports in some early Irish sources that Brigid had actually been ordained a bishop herself, see Ryan 183 f.

[46] Although the first groups of canons regular, formed in the 11th century, seem to have aimed simply at extending and adapting the monastic ideal for the clergy of a large church, they soon came to lay much greater stress on their collective responsibility for the *cura animarum*; see Jean Leclercq, "La spiritualité des chanoines réguliers," *La vita comune del clero nei secoli XI e XII* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1962) 117–35.

[47] See Lawrence C. Landini, *The Causes of the Clericalization of the Order of Friars Minor, 1209–1260* (Chicago: privately published, 1968).

composed of ordained presbyters; the aim of the Society, as a group of vowed religious, was precisely to carry out the pastoral ministry of the Church, with new commitment and expertise, in places where the need was greatest—to be a special college of presbyters under the episcopal direction of the pope, dedicated to sharing his pastoral care for the universal Church beyond the boundaries of local diocese or culture.[48]

Once again, the history of religious life in the Church presents us with a tension between two contrasting, sometimes opposed, ideals: withdrawal from the world, the quest for contemplative solitude or contemplative companionship, on the one hand, and dedication to active work for the gospel among the people, on the other. Priesthood, sacramental orders, has been a part of both forms of religious life, taking its shape and the practical manner of its exercise from its religious context. Yet there are elements of both poles, necessarily, in every life of genuine discipleship, just as both were present in the life of Jesus: prayer, discipline, self-renunciation, and the quest for God in solitude, joined in life-giving tension with charity, compassion for the "crowds," and the readiness to share what one has received with others. The unifying whole, the constant that holds these disparate emphases together for the Christian disciple, is clearly to be sought for in the following of Christ: in the fact that any kind of radical Christian discipleship must ultimately be rooted in the imitation of Jesus, in personal and corporate union with him in his paschal mystery. Whether active or contemplative, priest or lay person, preacher or farmer, the Christian religious seeks to form his or her life, ultimately, by personal conformity to the life and work of the Lord.

III

We have been considering the history of ordained ministry and religious life in the Church, if only in the broadest of terms, because history is the observation of growth, the study of change. Before reflecting on some of the implications of this history for our own time, it might be useful to sum up, in some general statements or theses, what I, at least,

[48] See *Prima Societatis Iesu Instituti Summa* 2 ff. (MHSI, Mon. Ign. 3.1 [Rome: Gregorian Univ., 1934] 16–19); Julius III, Bull *Exposcit debitum* (1550) 3 f. (ibid. 375–79; tr. George E. Ganss, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* [St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970] 66–69). During the 1540s, early Jesuits in Italy were sometimes referred to, with a certain amount of suspicion, as "pilgrim priests" (*preti pelerini*) or "reformed priests" (*preti reformati*): clearly they were perceived not as monks or friars, but as a new brand of presbyters, not definable by the normal boundaries of parish, diocese, or clerical tradition. For references, see Brian E. Daley, *"In Ten Thousand Places": Christian Universality and the Jesuit Mission* (Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits 17.2 [St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985]) 29 f., n. 12.

see as the main principles underlying this process of change and revealed in its course.

1. In the history of Christian life and practice it is important to distinguish the role of the *disciple*, or committed follower of Jesus, from that of the *apostle*, or authorized witness to the gospel. Every Christian, as a hearer of the word of God that Jesus reveals, is a disciple of Jesus. Since the time of Jesus, however, not every disciple has been considered an apostle, not every believer publicly recognized as a representative of the believing community.

2. Religious life, as it has developed through the centuries, has taken many forms: communitarian and eremitical, active and contemplative, centered on liturgical prayer and centered on preaching and public ministry. From its origins, however, it has always been, first of all, an attempt to realize Christian *discipleship* in a profound and radical way, as a full-time, lifelong occupation: a way of "selling all that one has" to follow Jesus (see Mk 10:21).

3. For this reason every form of religious life has stressed ascetical practice in some way—classically, in the Western Church, through the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience—as well as a serious commitment to prayer and union with God; these have been understood to be central to a religious group's identity, whatever other activities its members may undertake.

4. Religious life is thus essentially a *prophetic* style of life; its very forms imply a Spirit-filled criticism, in the name of Jesus and his kingdom, of the generally accepted values and goals of human society and even of religious institutions.

5. As a realization of the response incumbent in some degree on every believer to follow the call of Jesus, religious life is also inherently a *lay* reality: i.e., it is open to all the people of God, and can be undertaken by any Christian, regardless of sex or status in the Church's institutional structure. It is the qualitative intensification of Christian practice, rather than a structural element in Christian institutions.

6. Priesthood (presbyterate) and the other forms of ordained ministry (diaconate, episcopate) are, by contrast, ways in which, through the centuries, Christian *apostleship* has been realized: ways in which individual Christian disciples have been officially designated by the Church as authoritative witness to the gospel.

7. For this reason ordained ministry is not so much the response to a vocation as it is the reception of an *office*. Since office is, of its nature, a relatively permanent, publicly recognized position within an institutional structure, the ordination or designation of officers in the Church is the basis of their being distinguished as a special *class* (Greek: *klēros;* English:

"clergy") over against the whole "people" (Greek: *laos;* English: "laity"). The basis of the distinction between clergy and laity, in other words, is institutional function, not personal holiness or commitment to Jesus or ascetical practice.

8. Though exercised in different ways by bishops, presbyters, and deacons, office in the Christian community seems to have had, through the centuries, two central components: *preaching* and *presiding.*

a) Preaching is communicating to one's contemporaries the original, founding message of Christianity: the news that Jesus is risen, that the kingdom has come in his Lordship. It is, for this reason, essentially also the preservation and elaboration of a tradition, a received word. The authority of the preaching office is the delegated responsibility for judging, in one's own time and place, the authenticity of the ways in which this word is being handed on.

b) If preaching is the preservation of the founding message of the Church, presiding is the preservation of church order: the supervision of the exercise of charisms, the care that the whole community of believers remain in the harmony of faith and love communicated by the Spirit of God. Because the Christian community is most intensely realized in the act of liturgical prayer, presiding includes leadership in prayer, presidency of the Eucharistic assembly, and a central role in the other sacramental acts of the Church.

9. The word "ministry" has traditionally been applied to office-holding in the Church, as a metaphor reminding the community that its leaders are to conceive of their role as one of selfless service, modeled on the leadership of Jesus (see Mk 10:42–45). Today the word is used more broadly in the American Catholic Church, to refer to the service of others to which every Christian is called as a disciple. In this sense one can speak of a special ministry exercised by religious in the Church, and even by the whole laity, without necessarily implying formal office.

10. The combination of religious life, or organized, radical discipleship, with ordained ministry, or the holding of office within the Christian community, is a phenomenon fruitfully realized in practice since at least the fourth century, but one that has always been attended with peculiar tensions. The chief danger in such a combined pattern of life is that one aspect will so dominate the other as to rob it of its central characteristics: that the ordination of religious, for example, will "domesticate" their countercultural charism as disciples, or that the membership of ordained ministers in a religous community will so privatize and spiritualize their role in the Church as to rob it of its public value.

The lines of demarcation between discipleship and apostolate, of course, are rarely so clear as these ten sweeping theses might imply. Both

priesthood and religious life have clearly influenced each other strongly, borrowed each other's traits, in the course of their history. As monastic life became more and more clericalized, for instance, in the Carolingian West, diocesan priests were drawn to seek the stability and contemplative quiet of a monastic community, a movement that led to the formation of the canons regular. In the centuries after Trent, on the other hand, the new religious communities of men that have been founded have almost all been engaged in active apostolic work, supplementing the pastoral care provided by the diocesan clergy; most of them have been composed preponderantly of ordained members. Monastic communities of men in these post-Reformation centuries have often been forced, by pastoral necessity as well as by Roman policy, to shoulder part of the Church's active ministry, and some have only begun reclaiming their contemplative life-style, with some difficulty, in this century. By contrast, the spiritual formation of diocesan clergy in seminaries since Trent has largely been in the hands of religious and has traditionally been conducted in ways that seem more appropriate for religious living in community than for parish priests.

Both priesthood and religious life too—both organized, official Christian ministry and organized, radical Christian discipleship—have themselves grown and changed constantly through the centuries in their concrete exercise and in their self-understanding. They have moved within a range of emphases that I have described as a tension of polarities: for priesthood, the tension between pastoral leadership and sacramental intercession, the ministerial (presbyteral, episcopal) and the sacerdotal; for religious life, the tension between contemplative and active life-patterns, withdrawal from the world and engagement in it. It is important to remind ourselves that none of these patterns is, of itself, necessarily right or wrong, authentic or inauthentic as a style of Christian living. All of them, and the whole range of combinations that lies between them, can correspond, in context, to genuine Christian needs, and all of them bear the potential for petrification and institutional self-absorption. The challenge to the creative powers of the Church has always been to find the right combination of elements for each time and place and public within these ranges of possibility—to find kinds of ministry and forms of religious life that help people in each age find God through Jesus in his Spirit.

The documents of the Second Vatican Council challenged Western Christians, among many other things, to think in new ways about both ministry and religious life by becoming more aware of our origins and our histories and by seeking forms of each that correspond to the needs and desires of today's Christians. In its decrees on the Church and on the liturgy, the Council led us to a renewed sense of the diversity of roles

that can and must exist in the Church's structure and worship.[49] To that degree it urged on us a certain declericalization of worship and ministry, a softening of the boundaries between the ordained and the nonordained that have held fast since the Gregorian Reforms, an inclusiveness that is intended to make more real for all Christians the responsibility for the Church that is theirs by baptism.[50] "Ministry," since Vatican II, has come to be a fashionable word among English-speaking Catholics: a word applied now, as I have said, not just to the work of the ordained or of full-time Church employees, but to every kind of Christian activity done in imitation of the serving Christ. A certain amount of confusion has inevitably resulted about what is and what is not the proper role of ordained ministers, and a certain amount of anger and frustration has been generated as well. Within this complicated pattern of roles and functions, the work of the ordained—especially as it is described in *Presbyterorum ordinis*—seems to be essentially twofold: to lead, guide, and co-ordinate, according to the norms of the gospel, the many different activities that are done as ministries in the Christian context, and to be, through one's sacramental ministry and through one's personal behavior, a life-giving model for the whole community, a kind of living sacrament, of what self-effacing service or ministry in the name of Jesus really is.[51] It is significant that Vatican II's document on the ministry and life of priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, prefers the word *presbyter* to the word *sacerdos* in referring directly to the holders of presbyteral office, and uses *sacerdos* often to refer either to Christ as priest or to the presbyter insofar as he is called to be conformed to Christ in his life and work.[52] A more

[49] So *Lumen gentium* (*LG*) 13, 32, on the multiplicity of gifts and functions within the one people of God; ibid. 23, on the role of the various local churches as the bodies "in which and from which the one and unique Catholic Church comes to be." So also *Sacrosanctum concilium* (*SC*) 26, 28–30, 32, on the diversity of roles to be encouraged in the celebration of the liturgy; ibid. 14, on "the full and active participation by all the people" as the chief aim of the liturgical reforms initiated by the Council.

[50] See, e.g., *LG* 30 (clergy are not responsible for carrying out the Church's mission by themselves); *Apostolicam actuositatem* 3 (lay people have a share in the Church's mission directly from the Lord, conferred in baptism); *Presbyterorum ordinis* (*PO*) 9 (priests should work with lay people in a fraternal, collaborative way and encourage their initiatives).

[51] See, e.g., *PO* 4–6, where the ministry of the ordained is described, first of all, as the preaching of the gospel (which includes presiding at the Eucharistic assembly), then as the sanctification of the community by means of the sacraments and by leading the community in prayer, and finally as pastoral leadership and the fostering of Christian community.—On the notion of ordained ministry as a state of life intended to be, in itself, a kind of lived sacrament or efficacious sign of Christian service, see my article, "Ordination: The Sacrament of Ministry," *America* 147, no. 19 (Dec. 11, 1982) 365–69.

[52] *PO* refers to presbyters and their work some 130 times by the words *presbyter*, *presbyterium*, and *presbyteratus*, as against only 62 uses of *sacerdos*, *sacerdotium*, and *sacerdotalis*. Of the latter group, only 21 instances seem to be direct and unqualified

functional, more pastoral, and more community-centered conception of priestly ministry than that of the scholastic tradition is clearly implied in this return to presbyteral language.

LG and *PO* also make it clear that the ordination of bishops is a distinct sacramental act, "the fulness of the sacrament of orders,"[53] and that the role of presbyters is to be the assistants and coworkers of bishops.[54] In these documents, as in the documents of the first three centuries that we considered earlier, it is the bishop, not the presbyter, who is taken as the norm for ordained ministry in the Church. Whatever its practical results may be for the actual exercise of authority, this change of emphasis clearly implies a change in the theological model of ordained ministry that is at work: from an understanding of it as centered on the power to consecrate, to one focused on leadership, preaching, and the unitive function of headship—a model much closer to that used by the writers of the Pastoral Letters, by Ignatius, Hippolytus, and Cyprian, than to the medieval conception. Like the bishop of Ignatius's Asian communities in the second century, the ordained minister is not envisaged by *LG* or *PO* as simply one who can enter sacramentally into the intercessory prayer of Christ, nor is he to be a clerical clinician who deals in professional religious services, or a clerical factotum who runs everything in the community himself. He can be silent, can "let a thousand flowers grow" around him, provided he remains at the center of the community's life, quietly but constantly connecting it, by his evangelical word and example, with Christ the Servant.

On the subject of religious life, the documents of Vatican II challenge communities of men and women to learn and appreciate their own histories once again: to rediscover the original charisms and goals of their founders, and to find ways of translating that spirit into equivalent forms

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references to the life and work of presbyters as a separate order. Another nine refer to the common priesthood of bishops and presbyters. Twelve are references to Christ the priest, six are references to OT priesthood, and 14 refer in one way or another to the ministry of presbyters as a share in the priesthood of Christ. For a detailed commentary on *PO*, as well as essays on the new theological perspectives it opened in the Western Church, see Jean Frisque and Yves M.-J. Congar, eds., *Les prêtres: Décrets "Presbyterorum ordinis" et "Optatam totius"* (Unam sanctam 68; Paris: Cerf, 1968) esp. 123–85 (commentary on *PO*), 193–232, 261–88.

[53] *LG* 21.

[54] *LG* 21, 28; *PO* 2. In this last passage presbyters are said to "share in the authority by which Christ himself builds up, sanctifies, and rules his Body" only insofar as they are "connected with the order of bishops." In one sense this is a complete reversal of the scholastic notion that bishops—even the bishop of Rome—are, on the sacramental level, no more priests than any presbyter is, because they have no greater power to realize the Eucharistic mystery of Christ in the community.

of life appropriate for our own world.[55] The result has again been a certain amount of confusion: disputes about the "essentials of religious life," experimentation with surprising new styles of it, anxiety about its viability and its future. Yet surely the heart of religious life remains, for the present and the future, what it has been through all the changes of history: the desire to leave all other things—family, possessions, career, status, power, security—in order to be with Christ, to know him, and to follow him on his way. It is the attempt to realize Jesus' style of life as concretely and thoroughly as possible in the terms of our own society, our own particular gifts and interests, our own perception of the world's needs. Surely there is a kind of public ministry here, if not necessarily an official or structurally acknowledged one. The ministry, the service all religious give to the Church, whether they are ordained or nonordained, women or men, hermits or social activists, is to live this radical commitment, publicly and unmistakably, for the sake of the Church and of all people. It is to be living sacraments—efficacious signs—not so much of Christian ministry, of active Christian service of others in imitation of Jesus, as of Christian discipleship.

Religious priesthood, then, in our own time is understandably loaded with all the uncertainties, all the signs of change, that have clustered around the constantly developing forms of ministry and religious life through the centuries. Its meaning today, its role in the Church's future, cannot be separated from the organic changes—the signs of life and growth, as well as of pain and decay—now going on in the Church's institutions of pastoral leadership and radical discipleship. But the peculiar role of religious priesthood in the Church seems to come from the fact that it has always been something of a lived paradox: that in yoking together two realities that are always themselves in tension, it becomes itself the field of a tension that is even more obvious—the tension that caused Abba Ammonius to cut off his ear, and Ignatius Loyola to tremble for the future of his Company. The costs, the almost unbearable demands of religious priesthood, come from the fact that it yokes together discipleship and apostolate: being "called" and being "sent," the relational and the structural, following Jesus on his way and being officially delegated by him to do his work.

These two aspects of the Christian life are, of course, clearly linked and seem inseparable from each other in the pages of the Gospels. No one can be a disciple of Jesus without sharing, in some way, his passion for proclaiming the coming kingdom of God; no one can be a witness, in faith, to his resurrection without receiving the commission, implied in that faith, to communicate that witness, to be salt for an insipid earth.

[55] See especially *Perfectae caritatis* 2.

And since office in the Christian community really grows out of preaching the resurrection and Lordship of the Crucified One, as the Pastoral Epistles continually remind us,[56] a condition of its authenticity is that it never lapse into being a disguised attempt at human lordship or domination.

Christian leadership, in fact, is only theologically legitimate to the degree that it points to the Lord who "emptied himself" in obedience to God and in service to His people (Phil 2:4–8). So, since the turn of the second century, the peculiar titles for leaders in the Christian community have been, besides the neutral term "elder" (*presbyteros*), those of "overseer" or "supervisor" (*episkopos*) and—more characteristic still—"servant" (*diakonos*). The language of the cultic functionary (*pontifex, sacerdos*, hierarch) comes into use only later, the language of the tribal leader (patriarch) later still, and the language of despotism or monarchy has never been accepted at all, except in the context of some rather extreme conceptions of papal primacy. Terminology and its nuances are important clues to a practical ideal. St. Augustine, towards the end of his life, in extolling the value of a life of active Christian service alongside that of contemplative leisure (*otium*), put this point strongly, perhaps as a kind of apologia for his own busy episcopal career: from its very etymology, he argues, one can see that "episcopate is the name of a responsibility (*operis*), not of an honor . . . so that one should realize he is not a bishop if what delights him is a position of eminence (*praeesse*) rather than one of service (*prodesse*)."[57]

Christian office, then, and Christian self-renunciation ought, as ideals, to be complementary aspects of a single life of faith. As study and experience remind us, however, they have tended to fly apart throughout the history of the Church: apostolate growing into institutionalism and clericalism, discipleship growing into anticlericalism, fanaticism, or simple withdrawal. Religious and clerical vocations have, quite naturally, different interests, despite the fundamental complementarity of ministry and asceticism. Radical discipleship tends to be critical, prophetic, challenging to stable religious institutions, as the Synoptic Jesus is, while church office tends to be conciliatory, preservative, based on moderation, in order that the community of the gospel might survive. Religious life, as we have seen in the Rule of St. Benedict, naturally tends to relativize clerical status, to be critical of clerical privilege, and sensitive to the danger of clerical ambition; it emphasizes self-effacing service, communitarian equality, and intense spiritual commitment. Ordained ministry

[56] The bishop as preacher: 1 Tim 4:13; 6:3 f.; 2 Tim 4:1–5; Titus 1:9; 2:1–10; 3:1 f., 8. "Paul" as preacher: 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11, 13; 2:8.

[57] *De civ. Dei* 19.19.

naturally tends to look out for the good of the whole Christian community, not just for that of the radically committed, and to be suspicious of the extremist or sectarian tendencies that charisms can spawn.

The challenge facing the religious deacon, priest, or bishop is somehow to keep discipleship and apostolate together despite these tensions: to be a commissioned, recognized office-holder within the institutional Church without letting one's position be a means for personal power, wealth, or comfort; to be a leader who is also genuinely a colleague and a follower, a presider who is unreservedly a servant; to be an elder of the community, a presbyter in the true sense—a trusted and mature believer, who does not shrink from being identified with the Church as it is, or from accepting his share of responsibility for it—while remaining a poor follower of Jesus, a prophet capable of seeing beyond present institutions, a disciple genuinely nourished by solitude and prayer, a sincere practitioner of the common life, a person of transparent chastity and simplicity of heart, a companion ready not only to co-operate but to obey.

Being a religious priest is, quite clearly, living a kind of paradox. Fundamentally, it is the same paradox that any Christian office-holder, any Christian who wishes to be both leader and disciple, is forced to live; but the religious priest, in virtue of his ordination and his profession, lives it in public, as part of his chosen identity. By challenging its practitioners to constant self-examination and renewal, the paradox of religious priesthood can, at its best, give their lives an even more intense sacramental value for the rest of the Church than being either a priest or a religious alone. Yet the results are obviously not guaranteed. If religious priesthood simply means being a cleric with a better retirement plan, a comfortable padre who has someone else to talk to in the evenings, it seems to have little distinctive value. But if it can become a way of letting ordained office and charismatic discipleship nourish and challenge each other, so that the priest's ministry is permeated by a radical commitment to the values of the gospel and his discipleship is firmly identified with the sacramental, concrete Church, then religious priesthood can be a powerfully challenging, life-giving sign to both Church and world.