

tion, three principles are involved in such a discussion: the Principle of Perfection ('because Christ is the incarnate Son of God he must, in his human condition, have the maximum human perfection—of grace, knowledge, power and sensibility'); the Principle of Economy ('in order to carry out the work of man's redemption on earth Christ had to accept certain limitations and disabilities'); the Principle of Credibility ('Christ has to be not alone human but credibly human for those called to believe in him as their saviour'). St Thomas is thus much more balanced than are many modern scholars, who neglect, and sometimes flatly deny, the first of these principles; nevertheless, as Fr Walsh readily admits, modern exegetical studies and modern psychological research make it difficult to hold that St Thomas always applied the principles entirely satisfactorily. (It is interesting to note that twice in this treatise, III, ix, 4c; xii, 2c, the Angelic Doctor confesses to having changed his mind.) Where St Thomas is ahead of many of his successors is in his insight that, if God has in fact become man, manhood must have potentialities far exceeding those that it commonly manifests.

In expounding Christ's grace as Head of the Church and the various ways in which he is 'head of all men, but in different degrees', St Thomas wonderfully anticipates *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* of Vatican II. On the subject of Christ's human knowledge his thought may need some readjustment, but he has a far deeper understanding than many

modern writers of the extraordinary complexity of the activity of knowing and of the fact, familiar to psychologists, that the content of the mind is far more comprehensive than its manifestation on the level of consciousness. As Fr Walsh remarks, 'it will appear paradoxical to contemporary theologians and exegetes that St Thomas's elaborate theology of the knowledge of Christ is worked out precisely in order to affirm the truth of his humanity' (pp. 84f). On the difficult question of Christ's possession of the beatific vision throughout his earthly life Fr Karl Rahner's suggestion of 'attributing a direct union of his consciousness with God, a *visio immediata*, to Jesus during his earthly life, but this without qualifying or having to qualify it as "beatific"' (*Theological Investigations*, V, p. 203), may be fruitful. On a minor point it is interesting to see St Thomas anticipating the modern concept of orders of infinity and of the modern definition of an infinite aggregate as one whose members can be placed in biunique correspondence with those of a proper part of itself (III, x, 40).

Fr Walsh's translation is very readable and accurate and the often long footnotes in which he elucidates difficult passages are admirable. His rendering of *ordinatio victus* as 'balanced diet' and of *defectus virtutis formativae* as 'genetic defect' (p. 185) are memorable. On p. 35, l. 19, 'the Lord is with thee' is omitted. On p. 157, l. 6, for 'Christ' read 'the soul of Christ', and l. 19, omit 'which'.

E. L. MASCALL

WOMEN PRIESTS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH? by Haya van der Meer, S.J. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1973. 191 pp. n.p.

Although the possibility of ordaining women to the ministerial priesthood is a very live topic within the Anglican Church, there has been far less discussions about this subject in the Catholic Church. Since Vatican II, however, many more women have been assuming responsible and active posts in the Church's ministry, and there is now a growing awareness among Catholic women that through their baptism they should be more effectively and visibly one, with men, in Christ, and that the possibility of ordination should not be denied them. The present book reflects this changing attitude. Fr van der Meer, a Dutch Jesuit, researched this work for a doctoral thesis under Karl Rahner in 1962. It was not published in Germany until 1969, and only last year appeared in English, translated by two Americans, Arlene and Leonard Swidler. Leonard Swidler is Professor of Religion at Temple University and Arlene Swidler is the

author of *Woman in a Man's Church*. They have produced a readable translation of the original work and have also contributed a foreword and afterword. Both of these are well written and useful. In the foreword they review the current position on the ordination of women in other Christian churches in various parts of the world, and in the afterword they look at the situation in the Catholic Church and effectively bring the book up to date.

It is a book that should be of interest to all Catholics who are concerned about the position of women in the Church today, not only those interested in the ordination question. For van der Meer has examined the various arguments that have been advanced within the Christian community against women in general, and shows that most of these (especially those that developed from the basic presupposition that women are inferior to

men by nature, intellectually, morally and spiritually) would not be accepted today. He is careful, however, to distinguish between those arguments that are just against women and those that are against the ordination of women. He also notes those places where a writer has jumped to the desired conclusion too quickly.

The relevant scriptural passages are considered in detail, not only because the early Fathers based most of their arguments on these texts, but also because one of the main traditional objections to the ordination of women is the fact that Jesus and the Apostles did not choose women as witnesses. Van der Meer, however, positions the NT Church against the socio-religious position of women in the Palestine of that time. Now it is recognised just how low was the legal status of Jewish women, even by contemporary middle-Eastern standards; being held responsible for the first sin, according to the rabbinic tradition of later Judaism, their voices were considered shameful and therefore not to be tolerated in public. They were not allowed to learn the Torah or teach their children. The author therefore argues that they could not possibly have been added to the apostolic college as witnesses to the Resurrection, for, as they did not know the Law, how could they know it had been fulfilled in the person of Jesus? Moreover, the witness of a woman would not have been held valid by a Jew. As the position of women within the Christian community is different today, he reasons that it is illogical to assume—as has been done by so many people—that the choice of men as witnesses by Jesus and the Apostles is binding on all times.

The other traditional objections to the ordination of women stem from St Paul, and van der Meer considers the relevant passages in great detail. As with the other NT writers, he positions Paul against his background, and suggests that at times Paul thought as a rabbi and as a result accommodated himself to temporal circumstances. But he questions whether this attitude should be determinative for us, especially as at other times Paul transcended his rabbinism—particularly in the well-known text of Gal.3.28 concerning salva-

tion, in which there is neither 'slave nor free, male nor female'. Commentators may argue that this is an 'eschatological statement', not a revolutionary manifesto, but van der Meer urges that 'the new era, much as it is still to come, nevertheless is already begun!' Therefore, he says, the sociological structure of the Church should be altered to accommodate itself to the new situation.

I found little inspiration in the chapters of this book expounding what has been said about the status of women by the early Church Fathers, the Magisterium, and by speculative theologians from St Augustine and St Thomas up to the present day; I was saddened to read how low a regard one half of Christianity has had for the other. I even wondered if Christianity means something different for women than for men. Certainly it is shown here that the early women martyrs were a problem for the Church Fathers. The author also quotes some of the tortuous arguments used to exclude women from office even though women were showing themselves to be quite capable of exercising spiritual jurisdiction as abbesses in monasteries.

However, having revealed that most of the arguments against the ordination of women up to the pre-Vatican II period are at least ambiguous, van der Meer nevertheless concludes that as we have only known a masculine priesthood, it would be inappropriate for women to enter such a priesthood, for they could not take on this type of ministerial function without losing their femininity. This might have been the complete answer in 1962, when this book was written and when our ideas on priesthood were closed, but since Vatican II (as is pointed out in the afterword), there has been a development in the Church's understanding of herself. The search for renewal of the priesthood has meant that our ideas on priesthood and ministry are now open, and within this new spirit of openness we may discover forms of priesthood in which both the masculine and the feminine can be effectively represented. The translators indeed argue that the priesthood *cannot* be reformed and renewed without both male and female theologising and experience.

EILEEN WILKES

ESSAYS ON FREEDOM OF ACTION, edited by Ted Honderich. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, London and Boston, 1973. 215 pp. £3.

This book is a collection of nine independently written and previously unpublished essays by Mary Warnock, John Watling, Harry G. Frankfurt, Anthony Kenny, David Pears, Donald Davidson, D. C. Dennett and Ted Honderich, who also provides a short introduction.

All, with the exception of Mary Warnock, who writes about Sartre's view of human freedom in *L'être et le néant*, contribute to current debate. This ensures enough interrelation to provoke the wish that the collection had been given a more deliberate unity. The essays are exploratory, defining issues and