

## THE SEVEN ORDERS OF CHRIST

To regard the priest as in some sense another Christ is the common way of modern spirituality; it is, however, seldom now considered that Christ may be said to have sanctified the status of each of the orders through which the priesthood is approached. The early texts that tell of this sanctification were collected some years ago by Dom André Wilmart,<sup>1</sup> but since his day they have become somewhat clearer and it is possible to put them now into a more appropriate context than was then possible. It may not be without interest to attempt this here.

The earliest document which Dom Wilmart gave for the setting forth of this notion of Christ was the *Apothegmata patrum*, gathered by Palladius and others in the fifth century. The text may be cited from the translation made by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge in 1904:

On thy account . . . Christ was born, and the Son of God came that He might make thee to live. He became a child. He became a man, being also God. He who was the Lawgiver became a *reader*, and He took the book in the congregation, and He read, saying: The Spirit of God is upon Me; for this reason He hath anointed Me and hath sent Me to preach the gospel unto the poor. Like a servant (*subdeacon*) He made a whip of rope and He drove forth from the Temple all those who sold oxen and cattle and doves and other things. Like a servant (*deacon*) He girded a napkin about His loins and washed the feet of His disciples and He commanded them to wash the feet of their brethren. Like an elder (*presbyter*) He sat among the elders and taught the people. Like a *bishop* He took bread and blessed it and brake and gave to His disciples. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The words italicized show that the desert Fathers among whom these sayings circulated were familiar with a range of orders extending from lector, through subdeacon and deacon, to priest and bishop. The ambiguity of the terms used for servant in this version has masked the fact that in the Greek there was a clear distinction between the role of subdeacon and that of deacon. It was, of course, a familiar task then laid upon the subdeacon in Egypt that he should drive out of the church those who were not fitted to be present at the Eucharist. Thus, in the story, told by Palladius, of the subdeacon who drove out a harlot "as she entered the church and desired to pass inside the gates," it is clearly supposed that he was doing his duty correctly; for, though she complained to the bishop, it was not the subdeacon

<sup>1</sup> "Les ordres du Christ," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 3 (1923) 305-27.

<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Paradise of Palladius*, ed. and tr. E. A. Wallis Budge, 1 (London, 1904) 783.

but herself on whom his castigation fell.<sup>3</sup> A Latin version of the above catalogue was made in Rome about 550 by the future Popes Pelagius I and John III (*PL* 73, 1015), but as Rome did not observe exactly the same *cursus honorum* in the minor orders as was familiar in Egypt, it is obvious that adaptation would soon start work on the catalogue. But before turning to these adaptations, it may be worth while to look at the origins of the idea itself that is at the base of the catalogue.

Irenaeus had laid it down that Christ took upon Himself all the five ages of man.<sup>4</sup> He was an infant among infants, a child among children, a boy, a youth, and even a *senior* (i.e., according to the ancient usage, one over forty years of age); thus He sanctified the five ages of man. One need not tarry over the strange chronology of the life of Christ that Irenaeus here uses, but it is sufficient to see that there is a continuity of idea between Irenaeus, who would have Christ sanctify the five ages of man, and the unknown Egyptian monk who would have Him sanctify, by sharing them, the five orders of the Church. It should not, therefore, surprise us when we find that one of the Latin works in which this catalogue occurs ascribes it to St. Ephrem. The fact that the Egyptian author makes the highest function that of consecrating the Eucharist and subordinates to it that of teaching the people suggests that he is already adapting an earlier list to his own ideas. In the early age of the Church it would not have been easy to maintain that the priest was by function the teacher in the Church while the bishop was simply the principal officer of the liturgy. His other comparisons, between Christ and the lector, or the deacon, are apt enough, but over the priest he seems weak. He has been led astray by the verbal similarity between such an episode as Lk 20:1, where Christ is said to have been teaching the people in the Temple and to have been surrounded by the elders. It is not easy to see here any real likeness to the function of the priest, defined in the ordination prayer of Hippolytus (which should be valid for Egypt in the fifth century, if for anywhere) as that of an assistant governor or assistant director of the laity. Serapion of Thmuis, in the prayer for ordaining a priest which he himself composed, included three functions, those of governing, preaching, and celebrating the Eucharist,<sup>5</sup> and it may be that some priests in Egypt had

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 414.

<sup>4</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 2, 33, 2 (Harvey 1, 330); cf. also 3, 19, 6 (Harvey 2, 101).

<sup>5</sup> Serapion's prayer (13, in most editions of his *Prayer Book*) asks that the priest may be a steward of the people, an ambassador of the divine oracles, and one who reconciles the people to God. From his use of the word for reconciliation (*katallaxis*) in the prayer the priest has to speak between the two consecrations at Mass, Serapion shows that he takes this work of reconciliation to be accomplished by the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

more extended powers than were usual for the time. While it is hard to be sure, one might conclude that the Egyptian writer had amplified a catalogue of five degrees out of a simpler form where Christ's likeness to bishop and deacon was set down as it is to be found in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (*Magn.* 6, 1 and *Trall.* 3, 1 for the deacon, and *Eph.* 6, 1 for the bishop).

Serapion regarded the lesser posts, subdeacon, reader, and interpreter, as not a proper subject for special ordination, and he composed no prayers for them. They were largely interchangeable functions in early times, and their duties all came within the scope of that general service which the synagogue-attendant had rendered to the Jews and which his Christian counterpart was expected to give in early times. It was this role which Christ had once carried out at Nazareth when He took the scroll and read from Isaiah; and thus, whereas the likeness between the bishop or the deacon and Christ as observed by Ignatius was one that depended on a certain literary ingenuity, the likeness of His role then to what these minor officials performed at the weekly liturgy or at the more frequent meetings for Scripture-reading was immediate and striking to all intelligences. With these elements one may easily understand how the notion of five orders of Christ was launched, whether by Ephrem in Syria or by an unknown in Egypt.

The subsequent development of the notion from five orders to seven is part of the history of minor orders, a very tangled subject. Pope Cornelius in his famous letter to Fabius of Antioch (Eusebius, *H.E.* 6, 43) presents the local church of Rome as possessed of the full gamut of these lesser orders, deacons, subdeacons, and acolytes, so many per class, and then a general mob of exorcists and readers with doorkeepers, not differentiated statistically. But this elaboration did not last; for the canons of Sardica<sup>6</sup>—which had much authority in the Rome of the fifth century—do not require any other preliminary to the priesthood than some time spent as reader and as deacon. Two papal decretal letters, the one of Siricius to Himerius of Tarragona and the other of Zosimus to Hesychius of Salona (*PL* 13, 1142 and 20, 672), make it clear that the *cursus honorum* was not a single path of ascent through all the degrees of office, but that, as in the imperial practice, it was possible to regard the post of reader and that of exorcist as equal in rank, and similarly those of acolyte and subdeacon. As the external conditions of the Roman see became more disturbed, it was obviously hard to keep up a strict routine in what, after all, were not essential features of ecclesiastical life. It

<sup>6</sup> C. H. Turner, *Ecclesiae occidentalis monumenta iuris antiquissima* 1, 2, 3, 514: "Non prius ordinetur nisi ante et lectoris munere et officio diaconii et ministerio praesbyterii fuerit perfunctus, ut per singulos gradus . . . ascendat ad culmen episcopatus."

is not in Rome that one would expect to find much theorizing about the mystical hallowing of each of these posts by some act of Christ.

The liturgical edifice built by Duchesne<sup>7</sup> is now generally admitted to be in ruins, and one of the main arches of his construction was the bold linkage which he threw up between the Gallican Church and the document known as the *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua*. Since his day difficulties against his theories have accumulated, and it now seems quite impossible to attribute these canons to the circle of Caesarius of Arles. An Italian home has been suggested for them, but without much evidence, and it seems best to remain content with the original verdict of the Ballerini brothers, who first discussed them, and to say that they are a collection of Eastern and Western canons made by an unknown between 450 and 500. They end with a *recapitulatio ordinationis officialium ecclesiae* which gives formulae and actions for the ordination of each of the normal four minor orders and for the psalmist or cantor, while describing without formulae how the three major orders are given. The presence of a paragraph on the cantor need not mean more than that the collector found it in some book or other that lay before him and set it down for completeness' sake; it need not mean that in his own church cantors were initiated by this act and formula.

Cantors as officials of the church are first required by the fourth-century Council of Laodicea (canon 15), and there are inscriptions to show that the church of Mertola in Portugal had a *princeps cantorum* by 525, while Lyons had a *primicerius* in 551. To take the singing away from the people, as was done at Laodicea, may have been a necessity when large numbers of new converts were causing the audiences in church to grow beyond all bounds and were leading to confusion in singing the traditional chants; and when the Church came face to face with Western barbarians, it would similarly be necessary to have professional singers at first, though their work may often have been assigned to the readers. The temporary character of the office is shown by the fact that in all the lists of the seven (or eight) orders of Christ it is never said that He sanctified the office of cantor by sharing it.

A Lambeth MS, which was published by Dom Germain Morin in 1897,

<sup>7</sup> His *Christian Worship* (5th English ed.; London, 1919) pp. 350-52, shows too great a readiness to accept the *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* as Gallican. Their list of orders was identical with the list which is still used in the very ancient prayer for all classes of people in the Church, to be found in the Good Friday service of the Roman Missal, with only one difference: where the Roman Missal mentions *confessores*, the *Statuta* have *cantores*. Duchesne argued that the two names meant the same thing, and in this view he was followed by many who should have known better, for there is really no chance at all that singers could be described as *confessores*.

gives what is obviously a British version of the seven orders.<sup>8</sup> It is in the form of question and answer and is called a *Responsum s. Severi*. Now there are about twenty saints of this name who might compete for authorship honors, and it would not be safe to say what a scribe of the ninth century would have thought about them. One might almost suspect that the scribe was an Irishman; for while he calls his list a tradition about the seven orders of Christ, he gives only six. They are as follows:

When was He bishop or priest? Now there are two works that belong to Him: at the offering He broke the bread and blessed the chalice; then He was in these grades. When was He deacon? On the day when He washed the feet of His disciples and wiped them with the towel with which He was girt. . . . Tell me, was He subdeacon? Surely was He; when He bade the disciples draw water and fill the water-pots on the marriage-day at Cana of Galilee, when He turned water into wine and His mother was present. It was on the day of Epiphany. . . . When was He exorcist? When He rebuked one possessed man who was distraught and fell into water and fire and could not be freed by the disciples. . . . Tell me, was He reader? Surely was He, as it is read in the Law: "When the Jews were gathered together and Jesus sat amongst them, and He took the book and began to read. . . ."

One can here note several changes from the earlier version of the Egyptian monk. The subdeacon is thought of as having his usual Western function of taking up to the altar the offerings of the faithful for the sacrifice; hence Christ is said to have fulfilled this office when commanding His disciples to do a similar act at Cana, and not by His own act of changing the water into wine. The added remark that the Cana miracle took place on the Epiphany is a clear Irish symptom; for the *natalis calicis*, which the Irish Stowe Missal attributes to this day of the Epiphany,<sup>9</sup> was simply this miracle of the wine at Cana. A way of hallowing the office of exorcist has been thought out, although this office cannot have retained its old function of preparing the

<sup>8</sup> *Revue bénédictine* 14 (1897) 100: "Ubi fuit episcopus vel presbyter? Sed duo opera conveniunt ei. Iuxta offerendum fregit panem et benedixit calicem. Tunc fuit in istis gradibus. Ubi fuit diaconus? In illo die quando lavit pedes discipulorum . . . tunc fuit diaconus. Dic mihi si fuit subdiaconus? Vere quod fuit. Quando iussit discipulis suis aurire aquas et implere hydrias in diebus nuptiarum in Chana Galileae . . . tunc fuit subdiaconus. Ubi fuit exorcista? Quando increpavit unum daemonium lunaticum qui semper cadebat in ignem et aquam . . . tunc fuit exorcista. Dic mihi, fuit lector? Vere quod fuit, sicut legitur in lege: cum essent Iudaei in unum et sedit Iesus inter illos et accepit librum et coepit legere: tunc fuit lector."

<sup>9</sup> *The Stowe Missal*, ed. G. F. Warner (*Henry Bradshaw Society* 32; London, 1915) p. 11. The text is clear enough, but failure to see that the Epiphany could be the birthday of the chalice by its being the liturgical anniversary of Cana has led the editors into emendations in order to change the day to Maundy Thursday.

candidates at baptism by taking them through the preliminary renunciation of the devil before they are taken into the water by the deacon. The Lambeth document is also careless about the division of function between bishop and priest. It was plainly unreal in its time and clime to present the bishop as *the* liturgical functionary and the priest as teacher of the faithful. Rather would one gather from the statement here that there was little or no difference between the two, and judging by the popularity of St. Jerome (and the pseudo-Jerome) in the West, one might consider that the author was trying to put this conclusion forward as the truth.

What was the missing seventh grade in the Lambeth document? It cannot have been omitted by careless copying, for the scribe puts his *explicit de VII gradibus* at the end of his page, but it must have been abandoned as no longer having any meaning. In the *Chronicon palatinum* (PL 94, 1162) the list of seven grades occurs, and here the second is that of *fossor* or grave-digger, an office long ago discontinued.

Christ was doorkeeper when He opened the door of the ark and closed it again. He was grave-digger when He called forth Lazarus from the tomb where he had been four days corrupting. He was reader when He opened the book of Isaiah the prophet in the midst of the synagogue and read it in the hearing of the people. . . . He was subdeacon when He poured water in a basin and humbly undertook to wash His disciples' feet. He was deacon when He blessed the chalice and gave it to His apostles to drink. He was priest when He blessed the bread and gave it likewise to them. He was bishop when He taught the people in the temple about the kingdom of God.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Hostiarius fuit quando ostium archae aperuit et iterum clausit. Fossarius fuit quando Lazarum de monumento quarto iam foetidum evocavit. Lector fuit quando librum Esaiæ prophetae in medio synagogae in aures plebi aperuit . . . Subdiaconus fuit quando aqua in pelve misit et . . . pedes discipulorum lavit. Diaconus fuit quando calicem benedixit et apostolis suis ad bibendum porrexit. Presbyter fuit quando panem benedixit et eis similiter tradidit. Episcopus fuit quando in templo populos . . . regnum Dei docebat. Et haec quidem etiam S. Ephrem commemorat similiter."

L. Traube, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 4 (1895) 489-92, wanted to date the *Chronicon* in the early part of the eighth century and to locate it in Rome. The location depended on one Roman topographical reference in the *Chronicon*, but in fact the shrines of Rome were known well enough in Anglo-Saxon times in England, and other signs in the *Chronicon* point to England. In fact, the chief pointer that can be noticed in the context of the codex in which the *Chronicon* is found is that there is an anti-Irish bias. E. A. Lowe, when discussing the codex in his great work, *Codices latini antiquiores* (1, n. 91), dates it in the middle of the eighth century and inclines towards Lorsch or North Italy for the place of transcription. The enormous interest shown at that period by Anglo-Saxons in the geography and history of the Roman world is perhaps the best motive that could be supplied for the compilation of the *Chronicon*.

This list is ascribed to St. Ephrem: "these things indeed St. Ephrem records in like manner." Either the doorkeeper or the grave-digger is the person missing from the Lambeth document, but how is one to decide between them? Christ's role in the drama of Noah is not gathered from the Gospels, as are all the other terms of comparison. This in itself might make it seem to be a later addition, but it must be admitted that Ephrem in one of his odes does speak of Christ having dealings with Noah.<sup>11</sup> It was much more common for the Fathers before Augustine to treat the anthropomorphic language of the Old Testament as if it described so many apparitions of Christ to the patriarchs; it may, therefore, be that this comparison of Christ with the doorkeeper is really due to Ephrem. If so, the writer of the *Chronicon* will have the earlier list, from which the Lambeth document will have been formed by the addition of the office of exorcist and the omission of two offices that did not seem to fit in with the circumstances of the writer, who was thus left with only six offices.

If one now compares the Ephrem list (as it may be called for convenience) with the Egyptian list, it becomes clear that their main difference is over the place of the teaching office: does this go to the bishop (Ephrem) or to the priest (Egyptian)? I think there can be no doubt that the Ephrem list here represents the normal practice of the early Church. One might reply that it was equally the practice for the bishop to celebrate the Eucharist, but I think that the prohibitions at Nicaea (canon 18) and Arles (canon 15) against *deacons* holding a Eucharist imply that it was then quite common for *priests* to do this and they were not forbidden. The part given to the deacon in the Ephrem list, of giving the chalice to the communicants, is equally ancient, though it cannot be said that they "blessed" the chalice also. All in all, it would seem that the Egyptian list has been formed from the Ephrem list by reversing the duties of bishop and priest, by suppressing the connection of the deacon with the chalice and assigning the subdeacon's task to the deacon, and by accepting for the subdeacon the duty of doorkeeper, which in Egypt fell to these lower officials. The Lambeth document, being from a region where the teaching office of bishops was negligible, keeps the two liturgical offices for bishop and priest, and, not being able to show the subdeacon doing what he did in Egypt, gives him also his liturgical function, that of collecting the offerings of wine (and bread) at the offertory procession, a function which the subdeacon exercised in many of the early *ordines* and which goes back to the pseudo-Jerome *De septem ordinibus*, in which the subdeacons are said to "receive the offerings in the temple of God."

<sup>11</sup> Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena* (ed. Bickell, p. 72): "Ita salutiferum erit utrumque signum Tuum, mihi crux Tua et Noe arcus Tuus. Crux Tua scindat mare aquarum."

In the Egbert Pontifical<sup>12</sup> there appears an alternative theory of how Christ sanctified the office of bishop: "He was bishop when He raised His hands and blessed His disciples and apostles in Bethania, and leading them forth was taken up to heaven." In this list the use of Noah and the ark has been felt to be rather unsatisfactory as an explanation of the doorkeeper's role; it is still given, but alongside it there has been added the incident when Christ opened the gates of hell. That Christ made the apostles bishops at the ascension, laying His hands upon them, as was the manner of the Jews to bless, is the very ancient belief of some parts of the Church. It is found in the Syriac *Doctrina Addai*, and in the *Acts of Peter* it is taken for granted as "those on whom Christ laid His hands." The *Quaestiones veteris et novi Testamenti*<sup>13</sup> assert it, and from there it descends to Isidore and so into the Western tradition. Salmeron wished to have it defined at Trent, but nothing was pronounced about it by the Council. In the spread of belief in the idea this list of the orders of Christ has played a large part, and anyone who is but moderately interested in the development of the doctrine of the sacraments must give it his attention.

A slight variation of the Egbert type of list is to be found in the Bobbio Missal,<sup>14</sup> where the office of doorkeeper has been put next to that of bishop, thus securing a more or less chronological sequence of episodes in the life of Christ at the cost of a ludicrous disturbance in the hierarchy of the Church. Other MSS which give this curious inversion of order are reported by Dom Wilmart from Freising, Vienna, Cologne, and St. Gall.<sup>15</sup> None of these MSS is earlier than the ninth century, and if the Bobbio Missal is placed in the eighth, as Lowe would place it, then that book, or its Irish prototypes, will have been the source of the attempt to make the orders chronological at the expense of their rank or dignity.

<sup>12</sup> The Egbert Pontifical was published by W. Greenwell in the *Surtees Society* 27 (1853). It dates from the tenth century as a whole, but it would be very unsafe to assume that all its contents belong to that period. There is a tendency abroad to regard such liturgical MSS as indivisible wholes and to assign them dates and locations as if they were so many living beings. It would seem much safer to start on the opposite tack and to assume that each element had a separate date and provenance. The Egbert Pontifical is chiefly famous for its coronation *ordo*, which has some well-marked Celtic (non-Frankish) elements.

<sup>13</sup> The passages are: *Doctrina Addai* (in Pratten's *Syriac Documents*, p. 13); *Acts of Peter* 10; *Quaestiones VT et NT* (PL 35, 2296).

<sup>14</sup> *The Bobbio Missal*, ed. E. A. Lowe, 2 (*Henry Bradshaw Society* 58; London, 1920) 178.

<sup>15</sup> The Freising MS (Munich 6330) was published in *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuse* 4 (1899) 93. The others are Vienna 806; Cologne (Chapter House) 15, fol. 93; and St. Gall 230.

The Irish Collection of Canons,<sup>16</sup> which was composed about the end of the seventh century, is the earliest to have the term *sacerdos* in place of *presbyter* to describe the simple priest in its list of the seven orders, and as it has also the idea that the blessing of the apostles at the ascension was their bishoping, it may be taken as the forerunner in this respect of the Bobbio and Egbert lists, though both of these keep to the term *presbyter* for priest. Dependent on the Irish Canons are the St. Gall MS 40, of the ninth century, and Verona XXXVII(35), of the tenth. A Monte Cassino MS (217, of the eleventh century) is also of the same family, save that it has added an eighth order, giving an occasion when Christ sanctified the office of acolyte: "when He took the incense and the candlestick and said: 'Part of my inheritance.'" This is suspiciously like what the *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua* require for the ordaining of an acolyte, and it is strange that it should have been supposed that Christ underwent such a rite. The Monte Cassino MS has yet other lapses from the sound theology of its predecessors: it claims that Christ was a deacon when He consecrated the chalice (not mentioning the giving of the chalice to the others), and it makes a combination of two incidents, the ascension and the giving of the Holy Ghost to the apostles at Easter for the forgiving of sins, claiming that thus did Christ sanctify the office of bishop.

A ninth-century Fleury MS (Florence, Ashburnham 32), which depends on the Irish Canons by its repetition of their opening phrase ("Hic sunt VII gradus in quibus Christus adfuit"), has some further experimentation with the theology of the matter. Christ is said to have been a priest (*sacerdos*) "when He offered His body on the cross." Clearly the external parallel between Christ's consecration of the bread at the Last Supper and the action of the priest at Mass did not satisfy this Irish monk, who wanted a fuller theology of sacrifice. He seems to have searched for older lists of the parallels and not to have been content with copying out what lay before him in a single codex, for he sets down as the first order these five words: "Hostiarius fuit quando in templo" ("He was doorkeeper when in the Temple"). What this meant to him we cannot say, but he may have seen a MS in which the old Egyptian list was included and thus have been going back to the idea that Christ at the cleansing of the Temple was sanctifying the doorkeeper's office. When the period of early Scholasticism is reached, one can find Ivo of Chartres (*PL* 162, 514) repeating this same idea with more detail.

The Scholastics accepted the lists quite naturally and they can be found utilized by Honorius of Autun (*De sacramentis* 24; *PL* 172, 759), by Hugh

<sup>16</sup> F. W. Wasserschleben, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* (2nd ed.; Leipzig, 1885) p. 26: "Liber VIII: De recapitulatione VII graduum."

of St. Victor (*PL* 176, 423), and by Peter Lombard (*Sent.* 4, dist. 24), whence it became common property. In his capacity of a gatherer of the inheritance of the past, Peter Lombard has picked up another line of traditional explanation for some of the orders when he says of the exorcists that they were founded by Solomon: "This order seems to have come down from Solomon, who discovered a method of exorcizing by which devils through conjurations were driven out of bodies which they infested."<sup>17</sup> This appeal to the Old Testament can be found much earlier, in such a work as the Durham Ritual, where 1 Esdras 2:36-43 is cited for its list of "priests, levites, Nathinites, and singing men" as forerunners of the Christian orders.<sup>18</sup> The use of the title *Nathinaei* for the subdeacons is also a habit of the pseudo-Jerome *De VII ordinibus*. Not everyone, then, had accepted blindly the exemplar causality (if it may so be described) of Christ in the origin of the orders of the Church.

St. Thomas does not seem to have made up his mind about the significance of the seven orders of Christ, as he passes over in his commentary all that Peter Lombard has to say on this point. He is quite summary in dealing with other theories, dismissing them with a curt phrase: "Sed hoc nihil est."<sup>19</sup> He will not have Stephen Langton's explanation that the orders are seven because there are seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, nor that of his otherwise cherished Denis, that they are seven because they are modeled on the heavenly hierarchy and share in its activity of purging, enlightening, and uniting with God. Instead, he puts down his own view that there are seven orders since all look to the Eucharist, the priest, deacon, subdeacon, and acolyte being concerned in it, while the doorkeeper holds aloof the unworthy, the lector instructs the catechumens, and the exorcist deals with the *energumeni*, for whom the early Church provided at Mass something like the "crying-pen" which modern churches set aside for babies and their mothers. It is a neat schematization, as it allows St. Thomas to bring out the theory—which he held on other grounds—that the episcopate is not strictly a separate order, for a bishop and a priest have substantially the same powers with regard to the Eucharist.

St. Thomas is not disposed to divide the seven orders into one group of sacramental and another of non-sacramental orders; for he considers that though only priests and deacons are of apostolic institution, yet in the

<sup>17</sup> "Hic ordo a Salomone videtur descendisse, qui quemdam modum exorcizandi invenit quo daemones adiurati ex obsessis corporibus pellebantur."

<sup>18</sup> *Rituale ecclesiae Dunelmensis*, in *Surtees Society* 140 (1927) p. 194. "Exorcistas refert Iosepus regem Salomonem excogitasse suamque gentem docuisse. . . Subdiaconi qui apud Graecos eppidiaconi vocantur et apud Hebraeos in Ezra Nathinaei."

<sup>19</sup> *In 4 Sent.*, d. 24, q. 2, a. 1, sol. 2.

## THE SEVEN ORDERS OF CHRIST: CONSPECTUS OF THE TRADITION

	<i>"Ephrem"</i>	<i>Egypt</i>	<i>Lambeth</i>	<i>"Egbert"</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Irish Canons</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Ashburnham</i>
O	Ark			Ark and hell gate	Hell gate	"quando in templo"
F	Lazarus					
L	Nazareth	Nazareth	Nazareth	Nazareth	Nazareth	Nazareth <sup>3</sup>
Ex			Lunatic boy	Seven devils	Seven devils	Seven devils
S	Pedilavium	Whip in temple	Cana	Cana	Cana	Cana
D	Chalice at supper	Pedilavium	Pedilavium	Feeding of 5000 or Pedilavium	Pedilavium	Pedilavium
P	Bread at supper	Teaching in temple	Chalice at supper	Bread and chalice	Bread at supper	"quando obtulit corpus in cruce"
Ep	Teaching in temple	Bread at supper	Bread at supper	Blessing at ascension	Blessing at ascension	Bread at supper and blessing at ascension

Key: O = *Ostiarius*; F = *Fossarius*; L = *Lector*; Ex = *Exorcista*; S = *Subdiaconus*; D = *Diaconus*; P = *Presbyter*; Ep = *Episcopus*.

<sup>1</sup> Of the two lists in the Lanalet Pontifical (ed. G. H. Doble, 1937), the second (p. 49) is identical with "Egbert," save for its omitting mention of the chalice.

<sup>2</sup> The first list in the Lanalet Pontifical (p. 40) is identical with the Irish Canons, save that it omits all mention of the bishop; the Bobbio Missal has a list identical with the Irish Canons, except that it puts the doorkeeper sixth in the enumeration and follows "Egbert" for the priest's items.

<sup>3</sup> The pseudo-Jerome *De septem ordinibus ecclesiae* (critical edition by A. Kalf [Würzburg, 1937] p. 35) has the words: "Dominus noster legens in templo formam lectoris assumpsit"; but, as it elsewhere compares the deacons to the seven angels of the churches and the *fossarii* to Tobias, it does not seem to have followed a complete list such as the above.

diaconate all other minor orders were implicit. Peter Lombard had said that subdeacons and acolytes owed their institution to an act of the Church in later times,<sup>20</sup> and this view St. Thomas applies to lectors and exorcists as well, but he must have had some reason for saying that all these diverse functions were implicit in the office of deacon. If the argument had been continued after his reply by pointing out on the other side that Stephen and the other six in Acts had quite a determinate function and could not have been meant to carry out general duties of service beyond those functions laid down for them, St. Thomas might have answered by an appeal to the fact that Christ had sanctified all these functions by acts of His earthly life, not exactly instituting them thereby, but indicating to the Church that in such and such activities there might be the means of grace. Just as the whole earthly life of Christ led up to and in a manner looked to His sacrifice, with its two phases of Calvary and the Eucharist, so the miracle at Cana was the "birthday of the chalice," the cleansing of the Temple looked forward to the need for a guard over the performance of the Christian liturgy, the healing of the lunatic boy to the work of the exorcist, the Maundy to the work of the deacon, and so on. St. Thomas did not make this reply, but he would not have been inconsistent had he done so. When Trent defined (DB 962) that minor orders were steps by which approach is made to the priesthood (not saying how many they were nor how far apart), it was saying little more than that the lower ministrations of the Church look to the Eucharist even as the lesser acts of Christ looked to the culmination of His sacrifice.

When St. Thomas is faced with the straight question, how the work of an ordained doorkeeper in opening and shutting doors differs from that of a paid man,<sup>21</sup> he replies that the one does it *ex officio*, the other not. This is to make the difference lie in what one might loosely call jurisdiction. He refers to the view of others who say that the ordained doorkeeper has some God-given power enabling him to exclude the unfitted from the Christian assembly, just as Christ had when He cleansed the Temple, but this, says St. Thomas, is more like a charismatic gift than an order. He is not here rejecting outright the whole idea of the seven orders of Christ, but will not accept that the original act of Christ was in this case the *institution* of a particular order. But St. Thomas has not made his distinction simply on the lines of that which is today commonly made between casual labor and union-organized labor. His ordained doorkeeper would have something more

<sup>20</sup> "Subdiaconos vero et acolythos procedente tempore ecclesia sibi constituit." *In 4 Sent.*, d. 24, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2m: "Postea ampliatus est cultus divinus et ecclesia quod implicite habebat in uno ordine explicite tradidit in diversis."

<sup>21</sup> *In 4 Sent.*, d. 24, q. 2, a. 2, ad 9m.

than a union card. His work would look to the Eucharist and be quickened with the life of the Body of Christ in a way that the other's was not.

Dom Wilmart, when he edited these lists some thirty years ago, came to the conclusion that they originated from the brain of an Egyptian monk who for purposes of edification devised these comparisons and all unwittingly started them on a life of some ten centuries.<sup>22</sup> I think it will have been gathered here and there in the present article that there is a much more substantial and more ancient pedigree for them, and that they would not have proved uncongenial to such a writer as the author of the *Didascalia* (ed. R. H. Connolly, p. 150), who could write: "If then our Lord did thus [casting a linen cloth about Him and washing their feet . . .], will you, O deacons, hesitate to do the like for them that are sick and infirm, you who are workmen of the truth and bear the likeness of Christ?" And once we have found kindred thoughts in Irenaeus, Ignatius, and this early *Didascalia*, can we be sure that the idea is not part of the legitimate tradition of the Church?

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<sup>22</sup> *Art. cit.* (supra n. 1) p. 325: "A son insu, un solitaire anonyme avait inventé un type littéraire dont la fortune devait durer près de dix siècles."