

CHEMNITZ, CHYTRAEUS, AND ANDREAE ON GENDER AND THE MINISTRY

...when Paul and the other apostles had been called out of this world, and John had been banished to Patmos, ...a certain presbyter in Asia, a follower or partisan, for so he boasted, of Paul, ...spread a certain story bearing the title *De periode Pauli et Teclae*, or as Gelasius, dist. 13, quotes the title, *De actis Pauli et Teclae* [*The Acts of Paul and Tecla*]. The sum of the story was this, that Tecla, a noble Iconian virgin, had been betrothed through the will and consent of her parents to a certain Thamirus, but that, when Paul had come to Iconium, he had preached about virginity in such a way that Tecla had renounced her bridegroom and against the will of her bridegroom and her parents had vowed celibacy, and that Paul had for many years led this Tecla about with himself and had finally consecrated her with a sacred veil and given her power to teach, baptize, and to veil and consecrate virgins with the vow of perpetual celibacy. This was just about the sum of the fraud, as one can see from Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, from Ambrose, *De virginitate*, and from the legends of Tecla. Now, because the authority of Paul was great in the church, many set this example in opposition and preferred it to the writings of Paul and of the other apostles. However, when John had been restored to the church from exile he saw that this story was not in agreement with the constant teaching and opinion of Paul, who even as he did not permit a woman to teach publicly in the church so also forbade an espoused woman to undertake celibacy against the will of her bridegroom and parents (1 Cor. 7:10), for a betrothed woman is judged to be in the same case as a wife (Deut. 22:22-29). Therefore John convicted that presbyter publicly before the church of having disseminated a false and counterfeit book under the name and title of Paul. ... John removed him from the ministry in order that, for the sake of posterity, that invention about Tecla might be rejected with a public mark as not genuine but a counterfeit. Thus Tertullian describes the story, *De Baptismo*, and Jerome, *De scripturis ecclesiasticis*. Nevertheless afterward, in the time of Tertullian, certain women tried to lay claim for themselves to the ministry of Word and Sacraments in the church on the authority of this Tecla, whom Tertullian repulsed with this story of the apostle John. (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part III [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986], pp. 151-52)

Since, however, that is catholic, as Vincent of Lérins not improperly defines it, which always and everywhere has constantly been accepted by all believers on the basis of Scripture, also this observation must be added, that there was in those times not only doubt about the invocation of the saints, when it had begun to be introduced into the church from private devotions of the common people and of women, but that it was also clearly and with great zeal rebuked and placed into the catalog of heresies by Epiphanius, who lived at almost the same time. ...Epiphanius seizes upon the gross excess of certain Thracian women, also in Arabia and in the upper parts of Scythia, who set out a loaf or cake on a square chair covered with a cloth, and offered it in the name of Mary. ... He not only insists that women are not permitted to sacrifice and perform other acts which belong to the public ministry of Word and sacrament, also that sacrifice is to be made only to God, but he goes further, for he says that when those women offer that cake it is a profession that worships and adores Mary. ... Such sacrifices, that is, such adoration, which asks for benefits and aids in needs, Epiphanius argues, is worship belonging only to God. (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part III [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986], pp. 466-67)

...Paul...had spoken of the duty of women in general in [1 Timothy] ch. 2, and was going to speak about widows and deaconesses in ch. 5... (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part III [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986], pp. 130-31)

To begin with, it is not necessary to search out by conjecture or to learn from the writings of the fathers what was the nature of the association of widows at the time of the apostles. For there are clear descriptions (Acts 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:3 ff.), namely, that the church customarily received into its care poor widows who had neither parents nor children nor friends nor household, nor were able to perform work by which they could sustain themselves, in order that they might be sustained by the alms of the church, and that they should be considered by the deacons in the daily distribution of alms. ... And that the church in turn for this support used their work for the care of the poor, of strangers, of the afflicted and the sick (as the ministry of the deaconesses is described in the history of the church) can be gathered from this, that Paul

wants such a one to be enrolled who has before shown hospitality to strangers and performed humane works for the afflicted. It seems also to have been the duty of widows to wash corpses and to wrap them (Acts 9:37). And Paul gives the instruction of young girls and young women to older women (Titus 2:3 ff.), which passage can, however, be understood generally about all matrons of more advanced age. ... Since Paul says [1 Tim. 5:11-15] that those fallen widows had condemnation, and had turned back after Satan, the question is what that dreadful sin of theirs was which made them enemies of Christ, slaves of Satan, and worthy of damnation. The papalists say that wanting to marry after taking the vow is so great a sin. But let us see whether Paul says this. ... In 1 Cor. 7:39 Paul teaches that pious widows may marry whom they will, only that it be in the Lord, that is, in fear and with invocation of the Lord, or not to marry with denial of faith and godliness. But these widows wanted to marry, not in the Lord, but sportively and insolently in wantonness against Christ. This is certainly a dreadful description of a dreadful sin. Therefore it is not simply and *per se* wanting to marry, but wanting to marry in the way Paul describes here, that is damnable. For he mentions four sins one by one: I. They had grown wanton against Christ; II. When they ought to have ministered to the poor, to strangers, to the afflicted and sick, they neglected and cast off the duties of their ministry, and gadded about from house to house in idleness, as gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. And because Christ says, Matt. 25:45: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to Me," therefore Paul says that these widows have been wanton not only against the poor, but against Christ Himself; III. He says that by that wantonness they had given occasion to the enemy to speak evil of and blaspheme the sound doctrine of the Gospel; IV. He says that some of them were finally turned back after Satan. ... Therefore it means that complete apostasy or defection of these widows from faith and the religion of Christ finally followed. For when they had first grown wanton against Christ, there finally followed outright defection from Christ, and following after Satan... For to do the duties of their ministry fraudulently, and to grow wanton against Christ, as Paul says of these widows, are sins which drive out faith. (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part III [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986], pp. 100-04)

With respect to custom, no matter how ancient, Gratian furnishes us an answer from the sayings of the fathers, dist. 8: "Cyprian says that custom without truth is the antiquity of error." And Gregory quotes from Cyprian: "The Lord says in the Gospel, 'I am the truth.' He does not say, 'I am the custom.' Therefore all custom, no matter how universal, must always be esteemed less than the truth. And any custom which is contrary to the truth must be abolished." ... According to Justin the deacons give the bread and wine which have been consecrated by means of thanksgiving to all who are present, and the same elements are given to deacons to be carried to those who are absent. ...from the assembly of the church they carry it to those who are absent in order that they may commune. ...in the ancient church...it was given to boys to be carried away; according to Dionysius of Alexandria, to women... ..it is simplest, most correct, and safest that this whole matter should be examined according to the norm of the institution of Christ and that we should consider what comes closest to what is prescribed in the institution, agrees best with it, and serves for edification of the church. ... The matter is not obscure if we set before ourselves as norm and rule the description of the institution. For Christ first of all used His words, which He wanted to have come to the element in order that it might become a sacrament; He used them in the place and at the time where and when He was about to distribute Communion, and in the presence of those to whom He wanted to communicate His body and blood. Therefore it agrees better with the description of the institution and the example of Christ to recite the words of institution and by means of them to bless the Eucharist at the place and time of Communion, in the presence of those who are to be communed... For these reasons our men, in the Communion of the sick, recite the words of the Supper, which are in fact the consecration, in the presence of the sick person. Neither has anyone the right to reprove or to condemn us on account of this custom; for we are following both the prescription and the example of Christ, concerning whom the Father called out from heaven: "Hear Him." It is manifest that this custom agrees with the institution of Christ. And, according to Augustine, what decides in matters of faith is not: "This I say; that you say; that he says," but: "Thus says the Lord." And, speaking of the Supper, Cyprian says: "We ought not to give heed to what someone before us thought should be done, but to what He, who is before all, did first." ... Yes, in a rural house where there was no special prayer chapel a presbyter celebrates the Eucharist, as reported by Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Bk. 22, ch. 8. (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978], pp. 293-94, 301, 303, 311-13).

For Martin Chemnitz, Anna [cf. Luke 2:36-38]...is proof for all women that, despite Eve's sin, they too can be saved. Without such biblical examples women might despair, since Christ was a man and not a woman. The fact that Anna was

allowed, like Simeon, to preach and teach in the temple, both publicly and privately, should give comfort to pious women that “they also, as well as men, belong to the kingdom of Christ” [*Postilla* (1594), p. 187]. Chemnitz does not indicate that women should learn from this example to take on the role of public teachers or preachers, for he stresses that Anna had the office of prophet, which gave her a special and unusual status. Along with her duties of washing and cleaning, her main responsibilities were in the girls’ school, where she would have taught Scripture along with proper behavior and modesty. Along with her special comfort to women in the knowledge that they too are children of God, Anna is also a comfort to the elderly, especially widows. However, Chemnitz warns, widows must remember to care first for their own families, children, grandchildren, and parents. Only if they are alone without such family responsibilities should they take on the role of serving the church, and then only if they meet the moral requirements of such a position; that is, if they have led a life of piety and moderation. Such aged widows, whom Chemnitz terms “beguines,” would have a home and continued care provided for them by the community. Even such a home, however, is only for women who “are peaceful, conducted themselves well and honorably in their youth, and are worthy of such alms” [pp. 191-92]. ...Chemnitz, who specified an order of widows for the church, tightly restricted those who could participate in such an order. (Beth Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], p. 75)

The universality of this [New Testament] priesthood is also shown by the characteristic functions of these priests, which are: to offer sacrifices to God; to approach Him, i.e. to pray for oneself and others; to confess and teach God’s Word; to pass judgment on all doctrines and spirits; to baptize and administer the Eucharist; to bind and loose sins; etc. That all these activities are appropriate and common to all Christians and are equally required of all believers, lay and clerical, is manifestly clear from the testimonies...of Holy Scripture. ...the privilege of administering and receiving the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper also applies to all members of the church, not just to sacrificing priests who have been anointed and tonsured. The truth of this is shown by the fact that even women are permitted, in case of necessity, to baptize – to administer the life-giving Word of God by which man is regenerated and freed from sin, death, and the power of the devil. And with regard to the Lord’s Supper, Christ says to all Christians: “This do in remembrance of Me.” We have definitely established, then, that the priesthood of the New Testament and all the sacerdotal functions connected with it are equally common to all Christians and that the New Testament sets forth no particular priestly order distinct from the laity – that, to the contrary, all alike who have been reborn by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word and believe in Christ are priests and truly spiritual persons. Thus Paul calls the ministers of the church – those in charge of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments – not “priests” or “spiritual persons” (for these designations apply equally to all Christians ruled by the Holy Spirit) but “ministers,” “pastors,” “bishops,” “deacons,” “elders,” “stewards,” “servants,” etc. Now although the New Testament priesthood is universal, no one in the public assembly of the church should appropriate or discharge on his own authority this right which is the common property of all. Rather, some men who are particularly fitted for the task are to be chosen and called by general vote to carry out publicly – in the name of all who have the same right – the functions of teaching, binding and loosing, and administering the sacraments. For necessary to the public execution of the priestly office of instructing, consoling, exhorting, denouncing sins, judging controversies over doctrine, etc., is a thorough knowledge of Christian theology, a faculty for teaching, skill in languages, speaking ability, and other gifts, and these are not equally manifest in all whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated; therefore those who lack these talents rightly yield their privileges to others better endowed than themselves. For God is not the author of disorder and *ακαταστασια* [confusion] but of order and peace. Therefore, so that all things might be done *ευσχημονως* [decently] and in order and to prevent barbaric confusion and a Cyclopean *αγορα εν η ακουει ουδεις ουδεν ουδενος* [assembly where nobody heeds anybody in anything] from existing in the church, Paul himself established a particular order of vocation and commands that this ministry be committed to suitable and faithful men who should teach others. In Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim. 3:1-7, he sets forth at length the qualifications of the bishop or minister of the Gospel who has the duty of performing and administering sacerdotal functions in the public assemblies of the church. Paul does not differentiate bishops, presbyters, and pastors; he assigns precisely equal dignity of rank and the same office to presbyters and to bishops – and it is in fact clear that there were many such in individual towns. In Acts 20[:28], Paul says to the presbyters of the church at Ephesus whom he has called to him: “Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God.” Note also Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1,2; etc. Later, by human authority, ranks were established among the ministers and bishops, and within the presbyterate there appeared the ostiary, the psalmist, the lector, the exorcist, the acolyte, the subdeacon, the deacon, and the priest. One bishop – or overseer, or superintendent – was placed in charge of many presbyters or

pastors of individual churches. An archbishop, or metropolitan, came to exercise authority over the bishops. ... This episcopal order and the ranks connected with it are not evil in themselves. They should not be disparaged when they serve to uphold the unity and harmony of the church in true evangelical doctrine and the preservation of Christian discipline and peace; when they maintain and spread right doctrine and reverent worship of God; when they do not claim that they possess the illicit power to interpret Scripture arbitrarily, to establish new articles of faith, to legislate in matters of doctrine and worship; and when they do not assume tyrannical authority over the other members of the church; etc. (David Chytraeus, *On Sacrifice* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962], pp. 95, 97-102)

...for children who stand in danger, who are weak after birth, a woman is allowed to baptize in such an emergency. ... In the same way, in time of need, especially when a man is in his final struggle and lies near death and there is no servant of the church [*Ecclesiae Ministris*] or other man present, then a pious woman is allowed to comfort the dying man with the preaching of God's Word and the divine promises and to absolve him of all his sins (For what is the preaching of the Gospel and the announcing of the promise of divine grace offered in Christ, other than an absolution from sin? [*quid enim praedicatio Euangelii, & annunciatio promissionis gratiae Dei in Christo exhibitae, aliud est quam absolutio a peccatis*]). ... So in a similar way, in time of emergency, when a church servant [*Ecclesiarum Ministris*] or other man is not present, a woman is allowed to baptize. ... He [Paul] does not simply say: A woman may not teach; but adds: *in the church*; that is, in the public gathering... [*Ideo non simpliciter dicit: Mulier non doceat: sed addit, IN ECCLESIA, hoc est, in coetu publico...*] [cf. 1 Cor. 14:35]. (Jacob Andreae, *Acta colloquii Montis Bellisgartensis*; quoted in Mark D. Tranvik, "Jacob Andreae's Defense of the Lutheran Doctrine of Baptism at Montbeliard," *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. VI [new series], No. 4 [Winter 1992], pp. 431-32, 436)