

THE VALIDITY OF CONSECRATION BY A FEMALE PASTOR

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE PAPER BY H.F.W. PROEVE

1. Definitions
 - a. For us Lutherans validity is not basically a legal but a liturgical category, since it has to do with the right preaching of the gospel and the evangelical administration of the sacraments (see the use of 'recte' in AC VII which is explained in the German text by 'according to the gospel').
 - b. The authorisation for the valid performance of any Christian rite is given by Christ through his apostles.
 - c. In our Lutheran tradition only those aspects of worship which have been instituted and so authorised by Christ and his apostles are held to be binding on the church at all times and in all places.
 - d. A rite is invalid if it is conducted
 - by an unauthorised person
 - in an unauthorised circumstances
 - in an unauthorised way
 - to or for unauthorised recipients.
2. The Lord's Supper would therefore be invalid in the following cases:
 - a. If it was performed by an unauthorised person, such as a child at play, or a lay person, or a self-appointed pastor, or an actor on a stage. See the case in the letter in Ignatius to the Magnesians, 4, which deals with the performance of services by people apart from their bishop: 'Such people do not seem to me to act in good conscience, because they do not meet validly in accordance with the commandment'.
 - b. If it was performed in an unauthorised way, such as with chips and coke rather than bread and wine, or with a personal paraphrase of the words of institution, or without the distribution, or, perhaps even, without a prayer of thanksgiving.
 - c. If it was performed in unauthorised circumstances, such as by a pastor at a booze up in a pub, or by a pastor as part of his family evening meal.
 - d. If it was performed for the wrong recipients, such as for a group of pet animals, or for unbaptised people, or for an audience in a theatre.
3. Even though the sacrament could perhaps still be efficacious in some way in these cases, it would be invalid and so have the following effects.
 - a. It would give no sure foundation for the faith of its recipients and so be unable to assure their consciences that they were receiving forgiveness of sins, life and salvation through the body and blood of Christ. (cf AC XXIV,30)
 - b. Their consciences could not be certain whether they were receiving the sacrament beneficially or detrimentally.

- c. Their consciences would have no assurance that their communion service was pleasing to God.
 - d. Their consciences could not help but wonder whether they had thereby involved themselves in disobedience to Christ and in the desecration of his sacrament.
4. The question of validity for us as Lutherans has to do with the conscience, for 'God is pleased only with services instituted by his Word and done in faith' (Apol XXVII, 70; cf XV, 14, 17).
- a. Many of us who oppose the ordination of women because we believe that it is contrary to Christ's command which makes them ineligible for the office, hold that the consecration of the Lord's Supper would be invalid if it were performed by a woman.
 - b. We could not therefore in good conscience receive the sacrament from a woman pastor, for that would implicate us in an act of disobedience to Christ and the possible desecration of the sacrament.

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