

[Barry University](#)  
[Institutional Repository](#)

[Theses and Dissertations](#)

1977

Women and Ministry in the Church

Rev. Tony O'Shea

THESIS

BV  
4415  
.C48  
W66  
1977

WOMEN AND MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

by

Rev. Tony O'Shea

*Barry University Library*  
*Miami, Fla. 33161*

A Research Paper submitted to the Graduate Department  
of Religious Studies at Barry College in partial ful-  
fillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Arts.

Miami, Fla.  
June, 1977

This Research Paper for the Degree of Master of Arts  
was directed and approved by Lester Mary Mullins

## WOMEN AND MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

CONTENTS	PAGE
Introduction	1
Chapter I - Present State of the Question	
A. Statements of Church and Secular Commentators	3-6
B. Factors Influencing the Question of Women's Rights Today	6-10
C. Women's Changing Role	10-14
Chapter II- The Historical Development of Ministry in the Church	
A. Connection of Ecclesiology with Women's Rights	15-16
B. New Viewpoints Arising From Modern Interpretation of Scripture	16-18
C. Dynamic Concept of Tradition	18-20
D. Old Testament Concept of Priest- hood	20-30
E. Priesthood in the New Testament	30-34
F. The Role of Women in Old and New Testament in the Writings of the Fathers	34-38
G. Conclusions from New Testament and Patristic Evidence	38-40
Chapter III- The Teaching Church and the Ordination of Women	
A. Women in Heretical Sects	41-42
B. Women in the Christian Community	42-46
C. Contemporary Statements on the Role of Women	46-65
Conclusion	64-65
Footnotes	66-71
Bibliography	72-74

## INTRODUCTION

A recent conference in Detroit, Michigan gave a new direction to the question of ministry in the Church. One thousand two hundred and sixteen persons made up the conference which was held under the title "Women in Future Priesthood Now: A Call to Action". Two Bishops were present but they were there as private individuals not as representatives of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops. One of the Bishops, Most Rev. Carroll T. Dozier of Memphis said,

The conference was such, that it must be taken seriously by the United States Church. Those present occupy positions of leadership in their religious orders and communities, and their intellectual credentials are superior.<sup>1</sup>

This was not a conference of frustrated women demanding ordination in a threatening way. Many of these women are already working in the ministry of the Church. They looked at the question of ordination of women in a very wide context, e.g., is the gospel message denied to people because of this refusal. They feel that the raising of this question will demand a new examination of other issues in the Church. People will have to ask, is the priesthood really serving God's people or is it lording it over them; has it become a power structure, a pawn in the game of power politics? The women at this conference do not want ordination to the priesthood as it now exists; maybe this is a starting point for dialogue.

There is no doubt, women have played a small role in the Church of the past. They had a prominent role in the New Testament Church



but from the post-Apostolic Church until now, that role has been eliminated and an ideology has been put forward to justify this exclusion. Many people react to the question of women priests in a negative way but they cannot give very good reasons for this reaction. It is not enough to say, there never have been women priests so it can never happen. The question really is, are men and women equal, or are they only equal up to the point of candidacy for ordination. Canon 968 of the Code of Canon Law states,

Woman is incapable of receiving the sacrament of orders.

As against this, Pope John said in his encyclical "Pacem in Terris",

Human beings have the right to choose freely the state of life which they prefer and therefore, the right to set up a family with equal rights and duties for man and woman and also the right to follow a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.<sup>2</sup>

In commenting on this text, Robert Kress states:

The crucial question, then, is whether the right to follow a vocation to the priesthood extends to all "human beings" and whether these "human beings" (who) have the right to choose freely the state of life which they prefer includes women as well as men.<sup>3</sup>

## CHAPTER I

### PRESENT STATE OF THE QUESTION

In the present age, consciousness of human rights has risen to a greater extent than at any other era in history. It is not surprising that women's rights would be discussed at this time and that the Church, which initially may seem to resist such efforts, by its actions brings them to the forefront.

Anti-feminism in the Church developed through certain well-defined historical causes. For a thousand years Catholicism upheld the Christian doctrine that there was neither "male nor female, Jew nor Gentile, Greek nor Roman" in the eyes of Christ Jesus, a doctrine which most historians on the subject are inclined to agree created the atmosphere of respect for women in which the feminist movement could begin; an atmosphere which existed in no other culture in the world, except the Christian. That the Catholic Church failed to follow its own insight to its logical conclusion must be rated as one of the great tragedies of its history.<sup>4</sup>

In its efforts to relate in a more meaningful way to the modern world, the Church has confronted many issues which previously were kept in the background. War and peace, atheism and poverty, ecumenism and religious liberty are among the many issues being discussed today. Women's rights and discrimination because of sex have not gone unnoticed in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

All men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image; they have the same nature and origin, and being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all men and it must be given ever greater recognition.<sup>5</sup>

In the same passage the Council continues in a more specific manner.

Undoubtedly not all men are alike as regards physical capacity and intellectual and moral powers. But forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design. It is regrettable that these basic personal rights are not yet being respected everywhere as in the case with women who are denied the chance freely to choose a husband, or a state of life, or to have access to the same educational and cultural benefits as are available to men.<sup>6</sup>

The Church indeed is aware of the need to end discrimination at all levels of society. There is an interplay between society and the Church in these efforts. In society, in general, the new feminist movement has been very active since its coming to the forefront in the sixties. Statements from spokespersons of both groups on this question are basically saying the same thing.

By now the dust has cleared. "Women's Lib" was not just a fad. It did not fade away. People began to realize that behind the bizarre elements played up by the media lay a serious reform movement. The new feminism is not about the elimination of differences between the sexes, nor even simply the achievement of equal opportunity; it concerns the individuals right to find out the kind of person he or she is and to strive to become that person.<sup>7</sup>

The author recognizes the efforts being made by the churches in the area of women's rights:

Within the Catholic Church activist nuns have



created a new umbrella organization "Sisters Uniting" with the objective of helping member groups play a more active role in religious political and economic affairs. The National Council of Churches has established a corporate information center with the purpose of evaluating the policies of American corporations regarding the hiring and promotion of minority groups and women. The president of the National Women's division of the American Jewish Congress urged an intensified drive for women's equality in housing, employment, social rights and other areas where stubborn discrimination against women as women has not yielded to the times. In the Protestant churches, women seminary students are demanding the opportunity not only to be ordained but also to fill jobs traditionally held only by ordained men.<sup>8</sup>

In the work of those who speak from within the Church, there is the same emphasis in regard to women's rights. The question of the ordination of women is only part of the wider question of rights for all people. Sister Ann Elizabeth Carr makes this point when she says,

Women faithful to their own experience , to conscience and common insight, have banded in a new sisterhood, a "fourth world". We in the West see our relationship to other oppressed groups in the world, and the consonance of our joint demands for liberation, justice and peace. We recognize, at the same time that our oppression is not the same as that of the third world; we know that we participate in the oppression of class and race when we struggle against the oppression due to sex.<sup>9</sup>

There is a raising of consciousness in the Church and society today in regard to women's rights. The discussion witnesses to years of oppression and denial of rights. Since Sister Carr mentioned this fact, it is worth comparing her statement to that of Father Andrew Greeley in order to realize where the Church is coming from and

where it must go in this question of women's equality as persons.

By both Cannon Law and Ecclesiastical tradition, women in the Church are subject to men. Even a woman who has tremendous responsibility in her religious community, college or hospital is still expected to show a respectful if not obsequious attitude towards the men who are technically her employees, but who actually view themselves as the Bishop's representatives in supervising the religious community. No nation in the modern world has as little regard for the rights of women as does the Catholic Church . . .

First of all, the legal structure and governance of the Church have historically been Latin, and the Reformation removed much of the non-Latin, northern European influence from the Church. Whether, because of the tradition of the Teutonic tribes or the development of Anglo-Saxon law or the more rapid progress of political democracy in Protestant nations, it does seem that the non-Latin elements in Western Christianity were quicker to develop a culture in which it was possible to think of women as equal to men, and not as second-class citizens. Even today, feminism is quite weak in most Latin countries and the partnership approach to the relationship between the sexes has been very slow in developing there.<sup>10</sup>

While the ordination of women is under discussion today the question of women's rights, in all areas of the Church's life, will continue to arise. Such questions as the role of women in the government of the Church are issues related to trends of the times in other areas of society.

It is difficult to believe that the problem (ordination of women) will come to Catholicism only from outside relationships, for the question of ordaining women is so much a part of the trend of our times that it is certain to arise from within the Catholic Church itself. The last quarter of this millenium is likely

to be dominated by the continuing quest for self-expression of the human person.<sup>11</sup>

The raising of consciousness regarding the rights of women has not gone unnoticed by the Bishops of the United States. Some of the following statements will show that they too are aware that a new day has dawned and that the events and movements in society demand that the issue be confronted. Bishop Michael McAuliffe of Jefferson City, Missouri, Chairman of the Bishops Ad Hoc Committee on Women in Society and the Church advocated the creation of a permanent office for women's concerns in the United States Catholic Conference. The Committee's report made in November 1975, called for an expanded and intensified effort by the Church in this area:

It is our considered judgment that we have in these topics very serious questions of theological content, juridical implication and pastoral practice. Moreover, the seriousness of the issues demands urgent and extensive attention from the Church at all these levels and the failure to provide such attention, we believe may prove costly.<sup>12</sup>

The Bishop's committee realizes that a new type of woman has come into American society in the course of the present century. This new woman has achieved a certain economic independence, an awareness of her personal freedom and a desire for a profound development of her personality.

A statistical survey published by the "Women's Bureau" illustrates the evolution of the woman in the United States in the following way: 50% of American women are married by the time they are 21 years old and have had their last child by the time they are 30. Thus they still have 30 years of active life ahead of them. Moreover from year to year the number of women who return

to professional life between 45 and 54 years is increasing. At the moment 43% of American women are exercising some profession (in France 35%). The cultural level is also constantly rising. Among 17 year old girls, in 1970 78% had a diploma of secondary education (20% in 1920) and among women of 21 years 19% had a degree in 1970 (2% in 1920).<sup>13</sup>

This is the woman, who is also a member of the Church. This means that her relationship with the Church will have to be different from what it was in the past. It is not surprising then that there are questions being discussed today which were never raised in the preceding ages of Christianity.

The theological studies dealing with this subject are on the increase. The number of eminent theologians who no longer find any objection to the ordination of women to major orders is constantly growing. The question from them boils down to a problem of a pastoral nature. Other theologians however do not allow the ordination of women or have not adopted any definite position on the subject. A serious study, undertaken for example by the international commission of theologians, could help the church leaders to make a definite stand on the question. But parallel with all this there can be seen developing in many feminine circles, especially among the young, a clear opposition to the insertion of women into the existing framework of the clergy. An observation published in Le Monde (25.12.1969) is significant on this subject: "They do not wish to inherit as such a condition and a responsibility which men are beginning to contest. Women do not have the vocation to pick up the broken pieces. They only think, together with many others, that it is the whole concept of the priesthood which must be rethought".<sup>14</sup>

This then is the challenge facing the Church today as it tries to apply the word of God to the issue of women's rights in the Christian community. The dialogue has begun and it seems that it will



continue. There is needed time for re-examination, of effort to discern where the spirit is leading the people of God today. As the dialogue continues, words like liberation, freedom to be a person, the role of culture and the part tradition plays will be recurring themes. Rosemary Ruether states:

Only today have large numbers of people begun to suspect that patriarchy, which has shaped human history until now, is unviable for future development and indeed is fast proving unable to maintain the survival of humankind on the planet. This is the period when the women's movement, properly understood encompasses all other liberation movements.<sup>15</sup>

On the other side of the issue Archbishop Bernardin states:

It is not correct to say that no serious theological obstacle stands in the way of ordaining women in the priesthood, and that the fact that women have not been ordained up to now can be explained simply by culturally conditioned notions of male superiority.

There is a serious theological issue. Throughout its history the Catholic Church has not called women to the priesthood. Although, many of the arguments presented in time gone by on this subject may not be defensible today, there are compelling reasons for this practice.<sup>16</sup>

Thus there are different viewpoints on the role of women in the Church. Many even interpret the same evidence in opposing ways. Depending on different ecclesiology and different approaches to Scripture and tradition this is to be expected. One voice which can be said to speak a viewpoint held by many is that of Hans Kung:

The Church's ministry of leadership does not have to be exclusively male; it need not be a men's association. Full participation of women in the



Church's life, on the basis of equal rights is something that belongs to a suitably renewed Church today. This means not only including women as corresponsable in the different advisory and decision-making bodies (in the Catholic Church, this means everything from the parish council to the - as yet only a hope - church-wide lay senate), but also the admission of women to all the Church's special ministries and to ordination. (But we should no more speak of a priesthood of women (priestesses) than of a priesthood of men). Sociocultural reasons have been advanced against the ordination of women for a territorial and perhaps even for a non-territorial ministry of leadership, but no decisive theological reasons have been presented. The New Testament too must be seen here in its time-conditioned character (e.g., Paul's prescription that the Corinthian women wear veils at prayer) and interpreted in the light of what we have described above as the radical "obliteration," in Paul's sense, of the difference between man and woman.<sup>17</sup>

In the last half century, the concept of woman has changed very much in the Catholic Church. Women had been regarded as inferior, as temptress, as dangerous, not worthy or capable of being educated, and as being incapable of achieving what men are accustomed to do. These myths may even be thousands of years old but they are influential in the present time. The Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts in opposing women's suffrage in 1920 declared:

That for women to enter the sphere of politics was tantamount to becoming a "fallen woman". She gains nothing by that journey. On the other hand she loses the exclusiveness, respect and dignity to which she is entitled in her home.<sup>18</sup>

Only a few years ago the Episcopal Bishop of California denied the capacity of women for ordination on the grounds that only males

possess the capacity for "initiative" that represent the "potency" of God. So Rosemary Ruether concluded:

Maleness is identified with intellectuality and spirituality, femaleness is identified with the lower material nature. This also defines the female as ontologically dependent and morally inferior to maleness.<sup>19</sup>

These recent statements are not very different from statements made thousand of years ago. Aristotle believed that every male seed should normatively produce its own image in another male. Females result only as an aberration in which the lower material principle subverts the male formative principle. Origen states that:

What is seen by the eyes of the Creator is masculine, not feminine, for God does not deign to look at that which is feminine and fleshly.<sup>20</sup>

Attitudes towards women down through the centuries have often been the cause of grave injustices. It is not by accident that the witch hunts of the late middle ages chose women as their victims. A certain philosophy was coined in order to justify this action. In the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which sums up three centuries of official theory, it can be seen why women would be the victims of witch hunts:

When a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil.  
I have found woman more bitter than death  
and a good woman subject to carnal lust. They  
have slippery tongues. . . Since they are  
weak they find an easy and secret manner of  
vindicating themselves in witchcraft. They  
are feeble both in mind and body. It is not  
surprising that they should come more under  
the spell of witchcraft. As regards intellect  
or understanding of spiritual things they seem  
to be of a different nature than men. Women  
are intellectually like children.<sup>21</sup>

The women's rights movement within the Church is faced with many false conceptions from the past. Woman in the Church is the victim of certain world views, from which she must be freed. The question of equality cannot be discussed if many sincerely believe that equality is not part of God's plan for the sexes. This type of thinking does not lend itself to honest discussion. George Tavard gives a good insight into the viewpoints about woman which caused injustices in past centuries and even now in some circles still operate today.

Our historical investigation has shown that a large amount of early writing considered some aspects of woman's life, particularly in the ethical dimension. With many authors, the subject for fashion and make-up has been a favorite. From the considerations of Tertullian on "female dress" to the recent lucubrations of the late Father Francis Connell and other moralists about the amount of female flesh that may be bared without sin, theologians have wasted a great deal of time writing against the current fashions of their times. Yet this has not been sheer stupidity. They did so only because they saw Eve the temptress within every woman. They worked on the hypothesis that Eve, being herself deluded, still approaches Adam with an illegal fruit to be shared, the fruit now being her own body. And being themselves Adam, they took measures to avoid being tempted by Eve. Woman, in this case, is perceived as evil, not the absolute evil of hell, but the relative evil of falling and fallen mankind.<sup>22</sup>

The debate on woman's rights in the Church continues, and the primary effort will be to eliminate the excess baggage of past traditions and distinguish what is the product of a certain era and cultural conditions and what is valid irrespective of such conditions.

Paul Lakeland S.J. says:

The first and most important step is to open up the Church at all its administrative levels to the representation of women, not as trusted slaves or just to show that we are broadminded, but on a basis of equality. This in itself presupposes the even more important declericalization of the institutional church. Bishops and priests are pastors and teachers; the Church's civil service need not and probably should not be staffed by such people. Men must relinquish their hold on the Church's life and allow women their say, and the clerical bureaucracy must be the first to do that. The Church should be allowed to breathe. Perhaps then the Church which is after all metaphorically a "she", would move more closer to a balance and away from its present oppressive masculinity.<sup>23</sup>

In order to show that this last statement is not an exaggeration, a prayer used in the liturgy of the Church states:

O God, who among other miracles of your powers, gave the victory of martyrdom even to the weaker sex.<sup>24</sup>

This prayer is used in the liturgy as the opening prayer for the Mass of a virgin martyr.

A lot of honesty and demythologizing will be necessary in the years ahead if woman is to share equality with man in the Church of the future. While discouragement and despair may be the lot of those who strive for this end, it might be good to ponder the words of Andrew Greeley. Speaking of the clergy of the future, he states:

It seems very likely given the feminist movement, the number of women who are considered to be clergy will increase, although there will be great resistance to accepting them as equally clerical with men. The Roman Catholic Church is in a rather peculiar position in this respect from the point of view of



functional sociology. It has for a long time had far more female "clergy" than male, since the religious sisters play an obviously clerical role and are obviously intended to be "holy women". However, they have also been, not unexpectedly, perhaps, second class clergy, in that they were denied the central powers of rule and worship. In practice many of them did rule in convents and colleges and hospitals with more power and more effectiveness than male clergy. Nevertheless, even though it is now conceded that the deaconesses of the early church were actually considered to be in "sacred orders", Catholic women have been denied access to the priesthood and the episcopacy. It seems almost certain to the present prognosticator that pressures from women for access to these positions in the clergy will increase between now and the year 2000. How successful they will be remains to be seen. The prognosticator is forced to observe that over the very long run the pressure for equality for women in the clergy is likely to overcome even the most unassailable of theological arguments. 25



## CHAPTER II

### THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

In dealing with the ordination of women and their rights in the Church, it is necessary to realize that ministry in the New Testament Church was a much wider concept than it is today.

First of all, it is obvious that pluriform structure is general in the New Testament. Nothing suggests a uniform structure imposed from above. This does not imply that development beyond the New Testament is impossible or undesirable; it does imply that such a development when it occurred, was based on other than biblical reasons. To the degree to which these reasons were historical other structures can be suggested by other historical reasons. Pluriformity is not contrary to the New Testament, whatever else it may be contrary to.<sup>26</sup>

This statement indicates that tradition may not be as easily deciphered as statements of the past seemed to be saying. In examining the historical development of ministry, different views of what tradition means, how scripture is to be interpreted and finally how one views the Church will determine the conclusion to be reached after this historical survey. First, in regard to the Church, Raymond Brown states:

If I am wary of predicting the future it is because I remember that no one in the Catholic Church in 1955, not Pope, Bishop or theologian could have predicted what the Catholic attitude toward ecumenism would be in 1965. Am I wrong in 1975 in suspecting that the Holy Spirit who moved the Roman Catholic Church through an amazing decade of change with regard to ecumenism might very well move the Church through another amazing decade of change as regard the role of women.<sup>27</sup>

Raymond Brown's view of the Church allows for growth and leaves room for the prompting of the Spirit. This view of the Church is not a blueprint view viz. that Christ established a church that had no further need of development. Richard McBrien agrees with Brown that the Church indeed is a dynamic church and it must continue to grow and evaluate itself.

One cannot speak about the Church as if it were so thoroughly divine that only the slightest and most inconsequential items can be regarded as human and therefore subject to change (e.g., whether olive oil or vegetable oil may be used for anointing of the sick and whether Catholics shall eat meat on Friday). Such a view assumes, at a deeper level, that the Church and the Kingdom of God are identical (a position impossible to sustain biblically, doctrinally or theologically) and that the idea of a substantial reform of the Church is always without merit (a view contradicted in practice, not only by Vatican II, but by such earlier thorough going renovations as the Gregorian Reform of the eleventh century).<sup>28</sup>

Efforts are being made today to return to the sources viz. the New Testament and post Apostolic Church. Depending on whether one takes a literalist approach to Scripture or treats Scripture in the light of the findings of modern scholarship, the answer will differ in both instances. In answer to Sister Elizabeth Carroll's talk on women in the Bible at the Ordination of Women Conference in Detroit, Scripture scholar Carroll Stuhlmueller stated:

The Bible therefore asks us to perceive the literal sense of the Scriptures within the living circumstances of our own day. How to unfold the ideals and norms of Scripture and Church tradition for priesthood and leadership today is the biblical task in which we are engaged . . .

Again the Bible assists us in this on-going task of reinterpretation. First, a careful study of leadership in biblical times concludes that forms not only of civil authority but also of religious government are not directly revealed by God. Biblical people absorbed them from the combined social and religious environment of their time, whether these be prophecy (1 Kgs. 18;22), priesthood (Jdg. 17:5), royalty (1 Sam.8;5), judgeship (Judg. 8:16), or a system of elders and scribes (Ex.18). New Testament documents show how Jesus and the early Church fitted into the sociological patterns of their time. They did not reveal new forms of leadership but rather they saw new insights in the old forms.<sup>29</sup>

In using Scripture to bolster one's viewpoint in regard to a particular dogmatic question one must distinguish between the cultural and time-bound elements in contrast to the elements that should be valid for all times.

On June 30, 1976, Father Raymond Brown gave a lecture at the Catholic University of Louvain in which he discussed the difficulties in using the New Testament in American Catholic discussions. Much of what Brown said would apply to the question of women and ministry in the Church. Talking about the attempts to solve modern critical problems on the basis of dogmatic statements phrased in a pre-critical era, he states:

Numerous Church statements (or theological positions) refer to institution or foundation by Christ or by Jesus Christ e.g., Christ founded the Church; Christ instituted the Sacraments; Christ instituted the apostles priests. These statements were phrased before the insight now accepted by the Church that the Gospels give a picture of Christ that goes considerably beyond the historical

ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, such dogmatic statements do not necessarily refer to what Jesus did during his ministry, often they are a distillation from the whole New Testament picture and from the whole of first-century Christian history.<sup>30</sup>

Father Brown then states an example which pertain particularly to this study.

As an example, let me mention the Roman Catholic position that only a male ordained by a Bishop through the laying-on of hands can validly celebrate the Eucharist. Some want to argue that this was and even had to be the situation in New Testament times, and they would regard as disloyal (or worse) a Catholic exegete who finds no such regularity in the Scriptures. Yet, the New Testament is virtually silent as to who celebrated the Eucharist.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, a look at tradition will indicate that a more dynamic view as contrasted with a static view is more in keeping with modern scholarship. Paul Lakeland's statement on tradition is helpful in putting this whole question into focus:

The theology of tradition makes a distinction between apostolic and ecclesial tradition, a theory tied up with the belief that "revelation ended with the death of the last apostle". This suggests too clean a break; the exercise of the human understanding and the reflection of believers upon the gospel continued, and was part of both the apostolic age and the post-apostolic time. It would be entirely false to try to draw a line after which everything and everyone had to fall into a wooden subservience to the belief that the apostles had "implemented the intention of Christ". The apostolic age itself, as we have already hinted, was a time of pluralism; the fact that we can talk, for example of a Pauline and a Johannine theology bears witness to this. As the apostles gave way to the bishops/presbyters of the early church, in a way of which we can know nothing in detail, so that apostolic



merged into the ecclesial age, and the tradition developed (not 'left') by the apostles continued to develop in the church.<sup>32</sup>

In order to appreciate the questions that arise today in regard to woman's role in the Church, it is important to realize that the questions being asked are legitimate questions and in the light of the approach to the Church, Scripture, and tradition that have been presented these are questions that must be faced in the belief that the Spirit has brought us to this point. Not everyone would agree with these approaches to Church, Scripture and tradition. As a result of this, there will be opposition to the forces advocating a greater role for women in the Church. The words of Mary Daly, an American, holder of a doctorate in Sacred Theology from the University of Fribourg are apt in this situation, as she poses the question, why not women priests.

One can only hope that it will be given fair consideration and that those who are too prone to give specious arguments will think seriously of all that is involved. In an age in which there is a crying need for priests in many countries, it is possible that the exclusion of women from Orders will have tragic consequences. In any case, the ambiguity concerning the status of Catholic women, an ambiguity in which anachronistic ideas and practices meet realities in head-on collision, cannot continue without increasing harm to women as persons and to the Church as a society.

Urged to speak and to lead in public life, but condemned within the Church to silence befitting their predecessors of nineteen hundred years ago, Catholic women feel the forces of contradiction and look hopefully to the future. The anti-feminist tradition within the Church is



having a hard time finding firm legs to stand on. The props offered in the past by existing social conditions, by false biological and philosophical theories and by anti-feminist legislation have melted away.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to the approach of Dr. Daly it might be helpful to examine the teaching church's stand in regard to Scripture and tradition. The following statement is taken from a report issued by the National Catholic Conference of Bishop's Committee on Pastoral Research and Practices entitled "Theological Reflection on the Ordination of Women".

Revelation is made known to us from tradition as well as from Sacred Scripture (c.f. Constitution on Divine Revelation, #8-10). It is then necessary for theology in this question to look to the life and practice of the Spirit-guided Church. The constant practice and tradition of the Catholic Church has excluded women from the episcopal and priestly office. Theologians and canonists have been unanimous until modern times in considering this exclusion as absolute and of divine origin. Until recent times no theologian or canonist seemingly has judged this to be only of ecclesiastical law. It would be pointless to list the many authorities and the theological note that each assigns to this teaching. However the constant tradition and practice of the Catholic Church against the ordination of women, interpreted (whenever 'interpreted') as of divine law, is of such a nature as to constitute a clear teaching of the Ordinary Magisterium of the Church. Though not formally defined, this is Catholic doctrine.<sup>34</sup>

Among the chosen people of the Old Testament as well as in the religions of Mesopotamia and Egypt the King was assisted by priests who constituted a hierarchical, hereditary priesthood and formed a separate caste. In the age of the Patriarchs, there was no special

priesthood. There was no temple, so the Patriarchs built altars of stone and offered sacrifices. This was known as a familial priesthood. The only priests mentioned in the Book of Genesis are strangers, for example, Melchizedek and the priests of Pharoah. When Israel became a nation a certain class was set apart to take care of the sanctuaries. Moses himself was a Levite and the tribe of Levi began in the age of Moses to acquire a special status:

When Moses realized that, to the scornful joy of their foes, Aaron had let the people run wild, he stood at the gate of the camp and cried, "Whoever is for the Lord, let him come to me". All the Levites then rallied to him and he told them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, put your sword on your hip, everyone of you! Now go up and down the camp, from gate to gate and slay your kinsmen, your friends and neighbors". The Levites carried out the command of Moses, and that day there fell about three thousand of the people. Then Moses said, "Today you have been dedicated to the Lord, for you were against your own kinsmen, to bring a blessing upon yourself this day". (Exodus, 32:25-24)

The Hebrew word for priest is "Kohen", its meaning is uncertain but the role of the priesthood and its development can be learned by examining the functions of a priest in the Old Testament and in the literature of other ancient peoples. Among the priests in all regions and in all times certain common characteristics can be noted: The priesthood is generally hereditary; it is divided into a large number of class and specialized functions, some of which are obscure; the priesthood is headed by a chief priest or chief priests; and the priestly class includes divines and magicians.

Among the Jews, the temple personnel included women, and priests were often included with scribes and teachers. In Assyria, at least

at some periods, priests were exempt from taxes and military service. In Egypt, sometimes priests were exempt from taxes and forced labor. There were large numbers of priests in Egypt and they also functioned as magistrates and judges. Little is known about the priests of Canaan. The Old Testament origins of the priesthood are very obscure.

The first function of the priest in Israel was to take care of the sanctuary. This is called the office of worship. Priests were officially assigned to this duty. The Levites lived in close connection with the Ark of the Covenant. When Israel entered the Promised Land, the Ark was always attended by the priestly class, both before and after the building of the temple.

In the early development of the priesthood there is an emphasis on the oracular functions of the priest. The people came to a priest so that he could consult God on their behalf. In Mesopotamia and Egypt this knowledge depended on a process of divination. In Israel priests used the urim and thummin. There is also a mention of the Ephod, an article of priestly apparel, which was perhaps at some stage a distinctive priestly garb. When the priestly vestments became more ornate, the ephod was worn for symbolic rather than functional reasons. The ephod was used as a receptacle for the urim and thummin. These latter may have been sticks, stones, dice or some other objects of contrary significance.

The oracular function of the priest declined with time. The Urim and Thummin were no longer used after the time of David, when the

oracular role was taken over by the prophets. The role of the priest teacher continued. The law (Torah) was his special province. Law here does not refer to law in the juridical sense but rather to teaching and instruction. The priest then was the teacher of religion, instructing the people in the truths of revelation, as well as being their guide for their moral conduct and a director of their intimate personal relationship with God.

In this role also the priest was replaced. By time of the exile, the distinction between Levites and priests was becoming clear and the Levites took over the priestly duty of teaching. As the synagogues were built a new group of teachers emerged, namely, the scribes and doctors of the law. This group was made up of priests, Levites and laymen. Instruction was no longer an exclusive office of the priest.

The offering of sacrifice was always characteristic of the priests but at first it was not reserved to them. At the time of the judges others offered sacrifice with divine sanction. The Kings also offered sacrifice, usually on solemn occasions (c.f. 2 Sam 6:13).

"As soon as the bearers of the Ark had advanced six steps, David sacrificed an ox and a fatling."

The characteristically priestly act of offering sacrifice consisted in pouring blood (or sometimes it was sprinkled) of the victim on the altar or in placing its flesh on the altar. The actual killing was done by someone else. Usually the person who supplied the victim killed it. If he was ritually unclean one of the temple attendants



substituted for him. With the passing of time the offering of sacrifice became the exclusive right and the essential function of the priest.

In Israel priests were not ordained in the sense of being divinely called and officially deputed to carry out their duties. The priesthood was hereditary. God chose the tribe of Levi and Israelites became priests by being born into this tribe. There was a ceremony called "filling his hand".

"Stay with me", Micah said to him. Be father and priest to me and I will give you ten silver shekels a year, a set of garments and your food. (Judges 17:16)

Some texts suggest that this ceremony could refer either to the placing of part of the victim to be sacrificed into the priest's hands or to the payment of the priest's salary at the time he was engaged for service in the sanctuary.

Anointing has been suggested as characteristic of the rite of priestly installation. Anointing the high priest is described in the books of Exodus and Leviticus but many authors hold that this reflects a post exilic custom. In post exilic times, the high priest was really a civil ruler so the anointing was more a royal ceremony than a priestly one. The anointing of ordinary priests was introduced later.

The priest by the fact of his office and the nature of his functions was a man apart. He was "holy", in other words set apart from the profane and dedicated completely to the service of the Lord. He was at home in the sanctuary, he could touch the sacred vessels, partake of the food offered in sacrifice and do many things forbidden to



ordinary Israelites under pain of sacrilege. He had to observe a greater ritual purity than laymen, he could attend funerals of only close relatives, he could marry only a virgin and he was forbidden to take strong drink or even wine before entering the sacred precincts.

In several passages a sharp distinction is made between priests and Levites; in other passages the terms are used synonymously. The impression is given that all the descendants of Levi were priests by hereditary right. The Levites occupied a unique position; they were not included in the census of the people. After the conquest they received no territory but were given towns scattered throughout the land and supported by the other tribes. There was a hierarchical distinction within the Levites; for example, the sons of Aaron were promised a perpetual priesthood.

In the early days there are priests who are not of the tribe of Levi. Eleazer, the sons of David, Ira and Eli, who was in charge of the Ark, were all priests but none was a Levite. In this early period there was a marked preference for Levites when priestly work had to be done, and early in the eighth century the tribe of Levi had assumed exclusive charge of the priesthood.

Deuteronomy, edited during the royal period, seems to make no distinction between priest and Levite but there are some passages that indicate a trend in this direction. Deuteronomy is preoccupied with unity of sanctuary: in this case the temple in Jerusalem. The temple could not employ all those who were serving the other shrines so the Israelites were asked to be faithful in supporting the Levites,

now classified with strangers, widows and orphans. So with the suppression of the sanctuaries, even though in fact the Levites were priests, they could no longer perform priestly functions.

Even before there was any strong official action taken to restrict worship to the temple, the great sanctuaries at Bethel in the north, and Jerusalem in the south, drew more and more people away from the lesser sanctuaries. These latter continued to function, for example, at Arad, but the steadily decreasing attendance made it impossible for them to maintain large staffs. Increasingly, priests had to abandon their positions and throw themselves on the mercy of their compatriots, the situation envisioned by Deuteronomy. The reform of worship undertaken by Hezekiah (710) and Josiah (622) led to much the same result and by the time of Ezechiel (580), the distinction between priests and Levites was an accepted part of the structure of the clergy.<sup>35</sup>

After the exile more priests than Levites returned and some priestly families were descended from non-Levite origins. The high priest was chosen from the line of Eleazer and there were regal aspects to the high priesthood as well as an anointing ceremony, which was later abandoned. The priests became leaders of the people and the high priest in fact used the title of King. In the Maccabean period the office of high priest became a political prize and the civil rulers appointed men subservient to their ends. High priesthood became a social and regal rather than a religious class.

Councils of ruling presbyters or elders are found in the Old Testament and in most contemporary cultures of the ancient world. As representatives of the people in political and religious matters they are often associated with their leader when he exercises authority.

Moses established a college of seventy elders and it is upon this body that the Jewish and Christian concepts of the presbyterate are based:

Gather for me seventy elders of Israel, whom you know to be elders of the people and officers over them; and bring them to the tent of meeting and let them take their stand there with you. And I will come down and talk with you there, and I will take some of the spirit which is upon you and put it upon them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone. (Numbers 11:16:17)

The elders helped to bear Moses' burden while remaining subordinate to him. They are known as the Elders of Israel, of the city, of the people, and of Jerusalem. In the early monarchy, these elders served as the King's council and they kept a check on his power. By the time of the Roman occupation every Jewish community in Palestine and in the Diaspora had its own Sanhedrin of elders, elected by the people to administer the community affairs. The Jewish elders or presbyters were not of the priestly line, but were ordained for their task by a laying-on of hands. The local Jewish presbyterates of the Roman period were lay bodies dealing with civil government and judiciary matters. In the Diaspora they acted as liaison between the

Jewish community and the Gentile government.

The most notable council of elders was the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem which consisted of seventy elders and a patriarch. This council was concerned with religious law, priesthood and temple service. There was a lesser Sanhedrin consisting of twenty-three elders which acted as supreme court in criminal cases. The Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem was derived from the tradition of Moses and the seventy elders. It consisted of priests and clan chiefs. Simon the Righteous (c.230 B.C.) admitted plebian scholars, namely men of learning coming from humble origins.

The qualifications of an elder are thus described:

None are to be appointed to the Sanhedrin, but men of stature, wisdom, good appearance, mature age, with a knowledge of sorcery and who are conversant with all the seventy languages of mankind in order that the court should have no need of an interpreter.<sup>36</sup>

Learning, knowledge of the Scriptures and fluency in languages were necessary also for members of the lesser Sanhedrins. In New Testament times the leadership of the Sanhedrin may have alternated between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Although the New Testament often describes the high priest as the head of the Sanhedrin Gamaliel also shows true leadership (c.f. Acts. 5:34,50).

Delegates known as apostles were the foremost ordained scholars of their generation, empowered to act in the place of the patriarch or Nasi. As the Nasi's representatives they carried the message of Jewish piety and learning to the diverse Jewish communities and in



turn they informed him of the situation in the Diaspora. With letters from the Nasi, announcing their mission and introducing them as apostles, they presided over local courts and even had the authority to appoint ruling presbyters when requested by the community.

From Moses and the Seventy, the tradition of ruling and judging elders came down to the first Christian century. The Local Sanhedrins, probably dependent on their apostle and ultimately on the Nasi in Jerusalem were likely models for the first Christian presbyters. Many of their functions were similar, namely, ruling, judging, forming a liaison with the civil government. From this basic structure under the guidance of the Spirit was to develop the Christian ministry.<sup>37</sup>

In ending this historical survey of the Old Testament priesthood, it is now necessary to ask what is the role of woman in all of this. Woman was not regarded highly in Old Testament times but there were some hopeful signs of her dignity:

According to some experts the legal status of women among the Hebrews was possibly poorer than among the other citizens of Mesopotamia. Although there are laws which afford women special protection (see, for example, Deuteronomy 21, 22), they are most notable for their scarcity. This is counter-balanced, however, by women's greater social status and mobility . . .

Although women did not generally enjoy full access to temple worship and knowledge of the Torah, they were not simply and totally excluded. In fact, their singing and dancing were a major contribution to the religious celebration (Exodus 15:20, Samuel 18:6). They also were able to take part in the great cultic festivals . . .

Indeed, sometimes it is the woman who must give to the male the adequate theological explanation

of a ritual sacrifice, as Samson's mother, Manoah, did (Judges 13:23). Women are also capable of going on pilgrimage to holy places, as did Hannah - nor does Hannah seem to be overwhelmed by timidity in her conversation with either Yahweh or her other Lord, Elkanah, her husband (1 Samuel 1) . . .

Very important is the fact that women had at least some access to the sanctuary, even if it was restricted to festivals. In the sabbatical year women were also allowed to be present at the reading of the Torah during the feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:12).<sup>38</sup>

The Old Testament is not totally one-sided in regard to the status of women. There is a certain ambiguity about her role and status.

Although she is supposed to be inferior and weaker than the male nevertheless she is also apparently the responsible one.<sup>39</sup>

In examining the New Testament evidence on priesthood, a wide concept of ministry and a pluriformity of ministry is noted.

The New Testament contains nothing which would impose uniformity; it even appears, although our lack of information makes a definite statement impossible, that such pluriform ecumenical structures would not exceed in diversity the ministerial structures of the New Testament Church. Once again, at the risk of becoming tedious, it is necessary to point out that the Roman Catholic Church has the problem of explaining why it has adopted titles and offices which the New Testament does not use.<sup>40</sup>

In talking about ministry it is necessary to see if women played any role whatsoever in New Testament times. As will be seen women played a greater role than might first be expected especially after examining some of the statements made in regard to their role and status. Father Vincent Micelli states:

*Barry University Library  
Miami, Fla. 33161*

Certainly from our soundings in Holy Scripture we can safely say that women are not called by God to the ministry of the priesthood.<sup>41</sup>

Father McKenzie does not agree with this statement:

The second question is the ministry of women. The New Testament knew the "ministry" of women; we can wish Paul had said more about the place of Priscilla in the structure (Acts 18-26). On the other hand Paul was a Jew; and it must be remembered that in Judaism women are not religious persons. It is time for the Christian churches to ask whether their ministerial structures have echoed Paul's Judaism or Paul's Christianity.<sup>42</sup>

Father Kress indicates that women were thought highly of in the New Testament Church.

Women are not only recipients of the good works of the Church, like the widows in Acts 6:1, they are also active agents of these good works like Dorcas in Chapter 9. In turn she receives the Church's greatest temporal gift; her life is restored to her by Peter. Clearly in the earliest history of the Church women were active in the whole life of the Church. They were by no means restricted to menial tasks.<sup>43</sup>

From a consideration of priestly ministry in New Testament sources, it is clear that there are Jewish priests and pagan priests but no individual Christian is called a priest. In the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus' priesthood is contrasted to the priesthood of the Old Testament. The priesthood of Jesus is not associated with the Eucharist or Last Supper, neither are other Christian priests in the likeness of Christ.

Why is the New Testament silent about Christian priests? Some authors hold that in New Testament times all Christians were regarded as priests. Luther was strong on this idea. Two texts were used to

bolster this argument. One from Exodus,

You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. (Exodus 19:6)

was applied to the Christian community of the New Testament. The other text from the first epistle of Peter.

You, however are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people He claims for His own to proclaim the glorious works of the one who called you from darkness into His marvelous light."  
(1 Peter 2:9)

A Lutheran scholar, J. H. Elliot has examined this text and concluded that it is referring not to priestly functions but to priestly holiness. He states that the royal priesthood of the people did not exclude a specific priesthood in Old Testament times and the same applies to the New Testament period. Therefore, the concept of the priesthood of the faithful is not the reason why priests are not mentioned in the New Testament.

A more traditional Catholic explanation is usually given, namely, the apostles who presided at the Eucharist were priests in everything but name only, since the use of the term priest would be too closely identified with the Jewish priesthood. This presupposes that at this early period the Eucharist was regarded as a sacrifice and associated with priesthood.

There is no proof that the Christian communities who broke the Eucharistic bread after the Resurrection would have thought that they were offering sacrifice. I am not questioning the legitimacy of the development in later theology whereby the Church came to understand the Eucharist as a sacrifice.<sup>44</sup>



Father Brown gives this reason for the silence of the New Testament in regard to Christian priests:

I suggest that the early Christians acknowledged the Jewish priesthood as valid and therefore never thought of a priesthood of their own. Many of our assumptions about early Christian community flow from the erroneous supposition that Christianity was thought of as a new religion with its own religious institutions but our best evidence is to the contrary.<sup>45</sup>

In the Acts of the Apostles, it is stated that

They went to the temple area together everyday while in their homes they broke bread. (Acts 2:46)

The early Christians did in fact go to the temple as late as 58 A.D. This fact explains why no Christian was identified as a priest during this time. Certain changes had to occur in order that a Christian priesthood could emerge.

In the beginning, Christians did not think of themselves as a distinct group. This consciousness occurs with the Hellenists but it is not a dominant feature of the New Testament until after 70 A.D. After 70 A.D., the Gentiles became more numerous, Jerusalem Christians lost their leadership, the temple was destroyed, and the Jews became narrow-minded, excommunicating sectarians including Christians from the synagogue.

Secondly, Christians needed a sacrifice at which a priest could preside only when the Eucharist came to be seen as an un-bloody sacrifice, replacing the blood offerings no longer offered in the temple, did this come about.

Such a picture of the development of the Christian priesthood must of necessity modify our understanding of the fact that historically Jesus instituted the priesthood at the Last Supper. <sup>46</sup>

These statements indicate a certain evolution in the office of priest. This evolution seems to have come as a result of changing circumstances and new challenges. That is why the advocates of women's ordination feel that their demands are brought about by situations which are unique to our times. The activity of the Spirit knows no boundaries as the following statement indicates.

Moreover, the difference between early Christianity and Judaism relative to leadership within the community is closely bound up with the viewpoint reflected in the description of Pentecost in Acts 2. Here, in the speech of Peter the claim is made that charism as a basis for special ministry is not confined to an elite within the Christian community. Instead, since this is now "the day of the Lord", the promised Spirit of God is poured out on the entire people, all share in diverse ways in the special guidance of this Spirit, the entire people is prophetic. The Spirit is a radically democratic principle in the communal life of the disciples of Jesus; no one because of his particular gift is permitted to ignore the manifestation of the Spirit in each of his brethren. <sup>47</sup>

As in the Old Testament there was a certain ambiguity in regard to woman, so likewise in the New Testament even though here her role was very significant.

Already in the gospel it is clear that Christianity rejects the system of the Rabbinic concept of woman in its entirety. It is not necessary here to point out the various aspects; polygamy, the bill of divorce, etc. But even in Paul it can be seen particularly in those places where he is not speaking in exhortation, and thus does not need to be concerned with the existing circumstances but stands in the center of the Christian message of salvation, as in Gal. 3,28. But it is not only in the letter

to the Galatians. He recognizes prophesying women; that too is Rabbinism transcended. He also recognizes in 1 Cor. 7 the woman who can abandon her husband, which is an almost impossible idea for a Rabbi. And the relegation of the woman to the household sphere, which we read in 1 Tim. 2, is transcended by the frequent mention of feminine activity in the congregation. In Rom. 16,3, Prisca is given the same title as Timothy in verse 21: fellow worker! <sup>48</sup>

St. Paul has often been quoted as an anti-feminist. A literal acceptance of Scripture leads to this accusation. The conclusion of Van Der Meer seems more acceptable.

To the question of whether this attitude toward women should be determinative for us, the answer in this case is clear. Paul's regulations are to a certain extent a regression to Rabbinic Judaism which is so much the more easily comprehensible because the primitive community wished no revolution, in any case not in the social area. And office is a social function in Christianity! On the matter of salvation the correct concept of woman was clearly comprehended. On the matter of salvation-service, thus in the external-juridical-sociological aspects, existing sociological structures were accommodated to, just as had been done in reference to the sociological phenomenon of slavery. How could it be otherwise? Moreover, was not the second coming of Christ in His glory near and would not a new order begin then?

One would like to think that the new order is already in process; it comes through more and more in this age. The eschatological word of Gal. 3,28, is already true. Should not then the sociological structure of the Church also be altered as soon as it is possible in the concrete situation? To those to whom this seems to be true, it would have to be incontestably shown that God has willed it otherwise, that is, it would have to be demonstrated either that today's secular development is a false development or that the matter is different in the

religious sphere than in the secular. 49

In examining the statements of the Church fathers, it is important to distinguish what is said in the context of a particular dispute in contrast to the overall approach to a particular topic. Undoubtedly, because of the background Patristic regard for woman would not be very high. Yet, if statements are isolated from the particular cultural milieu in which they are spoken, the Fathers may not be as harsh towards women as may first appear. The following are a sampling of some statements made by the Fathers in regard to women and their role in the Church. Tertullian wrote as follows:

You give birth, O woman, in pain and anxiety, and your desire is for your husband, who will lord it over you. And everyone of you should be clothed in mourning and tatters . . . God's judgement on your sex continues to live in the present. Thus it cannot be otherwise than that your guilt is still alive. You are the door that gave entrance to the devil . . . you too are the one who persuaded him whom the devil was not able to attack . . . As a result of your guilt the Son of God had to die. 50

In this passage Tertullian has clearly sided with that dubious misogynist interpretation of Genesis which puts all the blame on Eve. However, there is another side to him. He can also write lyrically about the beauty and holiness of marriage blessed by Christ. To this marriage Tertullian applies the words of Jesus. "For where two or more meet in my name, I shall be there with them." (Matthew 18:20)<sup>51</sup>

Clement of Alexandria was much more cosmopolitan and humanistic than many of his contemporaries; he could still comment that a woman should be covered with shame at the very thought that she is a woman. In defense of woman he did oppose compulsory marriage. In one of his major works, Tutor (Paedagogus), he defends marriage against



the Gnostics, who maintained that it was evil.<sup>52</sup>

Origen, likewise, was not favorable towards women but there is also a certain ambiguity. He states,

What is seen by the eyes of the Creator is masculine, not feminine, for God does not deign to look at that which is feminine and fleshly.<sup>53</sup>

Misogyny was exploited by Origen as a literary, allegorical and philosophical theme. In some of its aspects, it was also taught by him as a disciplinary principle, as a Scriptural doctrine and as a theological tradition.<sup>54</sup>

Not all the Fathers had the negative attitude of Origen. A few actually recognized that a woman can be even more gifted than her husband and that she then should guide him.

Gregory of Nazianzus wrote of his dead mother:

To my father the woman whom God had given him was not only a helpmate . . . she was also a guide . . . She believed that it was best to accomodate herself to the law of marriage and thus to subordinate herself to her husband, yet she was not ashamed to offer herself as a teacher in religious questions . . . through remonstrance, instruction, intercession, discretion.<sup>55</sup>

Augustine felt that woman was only created for the reproduction of the human race.

But if it is asked why this help (woman) was created, it is probable that there is no other reason than for the generation of children, just as the earth is a help for the seed . . . For if woman were not created as such a help for man, to produce children, for what other help could she be made? If also to till the earth, it must be answered that there was no laborious task for which man needed her help, and if there were, a man should be a better helper. The same can be said of his companionship, if the man perhaps were bored with

his solitude. For how much more fitting for common life and conversation would it be if two male friends rather than a man and a woman lived together . . . Could anyone say that God was able to create only a woman from man's rib and not a man - had he so wished? Therefore, I cannot see how woman should be made a help to man except by childbearing.<sup>56</sup>

This same idea is found in Thomas Aquinas. According to his teaching, woman was created only "as an aid to generation". Van Der Meer comments:

Here Augustine and Thomas are as rabbinic in their reference to women as the rabbis were only in their worst moments.<sup>57</sup>

Jerome states:

As long as woman lives for birth and children, there persists between her and man the same difference as between body and soul; but if she wishes to serve Christ more than the world she will cease to be a woman and will be called "man".<sup>58</sup>

Many other statements could be quoted from the Fathers, statements where women do not fare too well. However, there are positive statements.

In conclusion, it can be said that nowhere in the entire Patristic literature on the priesthood of woman did we meet any deliberation that rejected the priesthood of woman on essential grounds. We found only considerations such as these: apostles sent forth no women; Mary did not baptize Jesus; Eve was seduced; woman did once teach man - in paradise - and nothing but damnation came from that; Paul forbade it; and so on. Only two reasons can refer to essential structures: the lower status of woman, and an apparently assumed connection between a female priesthood and female deities.

Now the first is far outdated by temporal conditions and the second we would rather see proved than assumed.

Thus, the yield from the Fathers is at this point only slightly relevant theologically. Naturally, if the Fathers give a correct interpretation of Paul in this connection, their witness is certainly relevant. But this does not advance theological reflection. And that is what concerns us here. The Fathers have shown nothing that would give us an indication that we should see essential structures in manhood and in office which would exclude the possession of office by a woman. And that seems significant to me. For in that case no connection with dogma is present, at least not in the concept of the Fathers. And that would leave room for further development.<sup>59</sup>

One final point, made by Robert Kress, is worth noting in that it sets the tone for future attitudes towards woman.

Nevertheless certain theological metaphors (Mary-Eve, the Church as woman or mother, the individual soul and whole world as feminine) stood in the way of a simple suppression of woman in the Church. The increasing devotion to Mary in the Church also served to promote the dignity and status of woman. A disadvantage for women was in the emphasis on virginity as the means to escape the primal curse and to achieve freedom and equality with men. Although this doctrine entailed a positive and affirmative view of feminine human nature formally, its material content - namely, virginity - automatically and severely restricted the number of women who could benefit from it. It also supported and furthered the increasing elimination of women from the "public" and "official" life of the Church. More and more women were removed from the public diakonia or service of the Church, to the monastery. They were no longer to be deacons, but to become ascetics. Their churchly lives would not be in terms of their "natural" womanly (sexual) nature but in terms of their ability to "overcome" this world. Their freedom in Christ is seen to originate less from the Sacrament of Baptism and more from the achievement of their ascetic love of God. There has been, indeed, a certain

"denaturing" of woman as a condition for her participation in the Church and freedom of Christ. The ambivalence which haunted women throughout the Old Testament has not simply disappeared in the New. The Church will have to continue to struggle against those demonic powers and principalities which still harass the world although their power has been broken in principle by Christ.<sup>60</sup>



### CHAPTER III

#### THE TEACHING CHURCH AND THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

The historical examination of woman's role in the Church may appear discouraging; however, a deeper study for the purposes of finding a good solid theological reason why women should not be ordained may be more encouraging. It must be remembered that the rejection of women as priests led to their rejection from other ministerial roles within the Church. There were women priests among many heretical groups in early Christian history, a fact that was not acceptable to the Church fathers. The most famous of these groups was known as the Montanists.

Epiphanius of Salamis confirms that these heretics (Montanists and Cata-Phrygians) permit women "to be leaders and priests". Speaking of the Montanist prophetesses Maximilla and Priscilla, he especially reproaches Maximilla for asserting that she was the last prophetess. He tells of the Phrygians that they ascribed to Eve a special grace because she was the first to eat from the Tree of Knowledge; they call Miriam the sister of Moses, a prophetess as a precedent for their own women clergy. The same is said of the daughters of the deacon Philip. Among these heretics women are Bishops, presbyters and so on. For, they say, there is no difference between man and woman, and on this point they cite Gal. 3,28. Epiphanius however refutes them with the following texts: Gen 3,16; 1 Cor. 14,34; 1 Cor. 11:8; and 1 Tim. 2,14.<sup>61</sup>

George Tavard deals with this same issue:

Montanism brought several women into prominence. Since apostolic times, women had been admitted to some official church functions. They were deaconesses, especially entrusted with the pastoral and, in regard at least to the unction of baptism, the sacramental care of women. They were prophetesses,

like the four daughters of the deacon Philip (Acts 21:9), of which the churches of the province of Asia were so proud that they argued from the location of their burial place in Asia to prove their own apostolic origin over against the apostolic claims of Pope Victor. Widows had official standing in the Church. Early, although, how early escapes us, an official order of virgins was established for women who consecrated their virginity to the Lord and who spent their life, under the watchfulness of the Bishop, in prayer and good works. With Montanism, several women prophets rose to the leadership of an important spiritual revival. Beginning in Phrygia (whence the name of Phrygian prophets sometimes given to the adepts of the movement) with the preaching of Montanus, Alcibides and Theodotus, Montanism presented itself as a spiritual awakening. It marked, or so was it taken by its followers, the Advent of the Paraclete. Far from being a heresy, it neither deviated from the traditional teachings of the churches, nor did it organize, like so many heterodox groups, a hierarchic structure of its own.<sup>62</sup>

In his discussion of the role of woman in the early Christian church, George Tavard cites women as deaconesses, widows, prophets and virgins who consecrated their virginity to God. Before examining the role of these women, it might be noted that there existed in the early church Agapite monasteries. In these monasteries men and women virgins lived together. Unmarried priests, deacons and monks shared their living quarters with women dedicated to the virginal state. The ideology for this came from the Second Epistle of Clement:

For the Lord himself when asked by someone when would his kingdom come, said, "When the two shall be one, and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female, neither male nor female." And "the male with the female neither male nor female" means that a brother seeing a sister has no thought of her as female, nor she of him as male.<sup>63</sup>

Just as women served Jesus in His lifetime, many after His death, served Him in His church, in His apostles and in the poorest members of the community. At Joppa, a woman named Tabitha, who "was full of good works and acts of charity" made tunics and other garments, which she gave away. Mary, the mother of John-Mark, opened her house for gatherings of the Christian community of Jerusalem. Lydia, a seller of purple goods in the city of Thyatira, compelled Paul and his companions to stay at her house. Phoebe is characterized as being a helper of many and of myself (Paul) as well. The description of Phoebe as the diakonos of the church at Cenchreae indicates the point where the original charisma is becoming an office. Paul calls Prisca his fellow worker.

In short, there is no doubt that Paul often benefited from the cooperation of women in his apostolic labors and that the women did not prove themselves less fervent than the men in spreading the good news. 64

The evangelist Philip, "one of the seven", with whom Paul stayed at Caesarea on his last journey to Jerusalem had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. In Corinth, women as well as men prophesied and prayed aloud. Paul had no objection to this practice, but he held firmly to the custom that women had to have their heads covered when they prophesied. Widows are also mentioned in the early church:

In 1 Timothy 5, an extended text deals with widows . . . According to some scholars, widows appear already in this text as an order invested with properly clerical functions. Others vehemently reject the idea that the widows referred to in this passage are anything else but women assisted by the Church.

For the former scholars, who are inclined to compare the ministry of widows to that of deaconesses, the widows appear as the subject of the diakonia of the church, but for the latter they are only the object of this diakonia, as in chapter 6 of Acts, where the Hellenists complain that their widows are neglected in the daily diakonia.<sup>65</sup>

Besides widows and "senior women", Clement of Alexandria and Origen likewise wrote about "women deacons".

It is simply a fact that there were such things in the ancient church and that they - and their successors, the abbesses of the canonesses foundations (not those of monastic cloisters) - did much in the ecclesiastical and cultic area which is now forbidden to women. The real problem is whether they received an actual sacramental consecration - rather than merely a benediction - and whether this consecration also imparted to them the sacramental character as did that of the deacon. This problem is still not resolved. But it does not appear to be decisive for the question of a female priesthood. It would certainly be interesting if it were established that the ancient church had actually seen deaconesses as incumbents in a hierarchical office which was a major order, as members of the hierarchy. It would be clear proof that the church had already overcome its low interpretation of woman. But it is not decisive. For no matter how high the position of deaconesses can be fixed, the fact still remains that no one among the orthodox Catholics at that time had the remotest idea that a woman could be ordained a priest.<sup>66</sup>

Definitely, woman plays a role in the early church. However small that role is it must be taken into account as the question of women's rights and ordination is being discussed today. The following two statements are conclusions reached after examination of woman's role in the early church.



The New Testament in general does not face the problem of women in ecclesiastical offices. But it can safely be said that the general attitude of the New Testament, just as that of Christ, represents an innovation in regard to women, an innovation which, in fact implies a promotion.

All this is not very conclusive, however, in the matter of admitting women to ecclesiastical office. The admission, moreover, depends on the judgement and decision of those who hold the full ministerial authority and the power to share their own power with whomever they deem it fit. Ecclesiastical office is not a right, it is a privilege. Not all Christians were chosen by Christ to share in His authority: He shared His authority with those He chose, they did not have any more right to this than all the others, but they were given this privilege. The juridical situation remains the same today. Expediency, too, is a consideration which certainly has to be taken into account.<sup>67</sup>

There is one circumstance in the question of deaconesses which is important for us. Because the interpretations were by no means unanimous (and they are still not, among historians), either on their official character or on their authority, it becomes even clearer that the citing of individual restrictions and condemnations of and by themselves say nothing on the question of whether the Fathers or the magisterium exclude woman from the priestly office. Careful investigations must study how things were ordered, which abuse each prohibition was intended to meet, which statements are isolated cases, which are contradicted by other practices and other statements, what was permitted in the East but condemned in the West, and so on.

Nicea seems not to count deaconesses among actual clergy; Chalcedon on the other hand does. Chalcedon and later Synods establish a minimum age for the ordination of deaconesses; Arausicanum I and the Synod of Epaon forbid the ordination of deaconesses. Thus before the prohibition on ordination is quoted as a witness that the Church desired no women in

office, there remains the task of investigating with care what these Synods intended by the prohibition and whether other Synods held the office of deaconess so important that they protected it with practical measures against immature incumbents. And in all this citation of restrictive measures it must never be forgotten that Popes permitted the ordination of deaconesses and even performed such ordinations themselves up into the eleventh century. To put it briefly; contemporary scholarship finds that nothing decisive, either for or against the priesthood of women, can be derived from the institution of deaconesses. Just one thing: that we must be very careful in citing the various statements.<sup>68</sup>

In the face of considerable historical evidence and theological speculation the question of priestly ordination for women receives strong opposition in the contemporary Church.

The Spirit-filled church continues to move on this question with the hope that through events in history the Spirit will guide the Church to an understanding of the issues involved. The proponents of women's rights within the church had hoped that their efforts would lead to an examination of many related questions. This may be happening as greater attention is paid to the issues of ministry and evangelization and the role of women in these areas. This is happening both within the Christian churches and in dialogue between the churches.

The role of women in evangelization is dealt with in a statement issued by the Pastoral Commission of the Sacred Congregation for the evangelization of peoples (originally issued in Rome, March 1976). It states in reference to women in parish activities :

The considerations which follow are based no more than the preceding ones on the need to 'supply' for the absence of a priest even though this is bound to be increasingly the case. They spring from the natural potentialities of women in society and in the church, potentialities that are being revealed more and more rapidly.

For convenience we may divide these activities into two groups . . . the first group of parish activities in which feminine qualities will be useful may be roughly termed "administrative" . . . the second group of activities and the more important one is directly pastoral . . . a great deal of the apostolate of preparation for the sacraments is open to them as to priests whether it be for baptism, confession, confirmation, marriage or the anointing of the sick. It is to be hoped that priests, often overburdened in this area, will find women to be valued associates in it. They will give them the responsibility and independence due to their personal qualifications . . .

Women will be particularly capable of apostolic contact with nonchristian women and family circles. Indeed in certain cultures, they will be the only ones able to undertake this work.<sup>69</sup>

Studies on ministry strive to find a scriptural basis for the position of woman as the following statement indicates:

The question of the ministry of women in the church arises today with ever increasing insistence. The adherents of the status quo readily claim a tradition which goes back, so they say, to antiquity; the partisans of evolution reject this argument as insufficient. Generally, however, neither one side nor the other has a precise knowledge of the early tradition of the Church in this matter. While this study does not take the position of either side, it recognizes that a lack of historical understanding is the reason why, without being adequately informed in this area, one side invokes this ancient tradition and the other challenges

it. This study therefore, sets out to examine exactly what this ancient tradition involves. One thing is undeniable: there were in the early church women who occupied an official position, who were invested with a ministry, and who, at certain times and places appeared as part of the clergy.<sup>70</sup>

Bernard Cooke points out the connection between the theology of the church and its ministry. His statements continue to stress the point that discussion must delineate the implications of what ministry involves. He says that the "basic inadequacy of our present understanding of Christian priesthood and ministry is only too painfully apparent". He then states six reasons why this is so.

First, the notion of 'priesthood' that prevailed in Roman Catholic circles for many centuries was formed in a period of history when legal categories were dominant way of thinking about human society, whether ecclesiastical or civil.

Secondly, the Roman Catholic view of ministry has been strongly influenced by Papal theology, which is the final intensification of the dichotomy of the church into clergy and laity.

Thirdly, the backdrop for Catholic thought about the ordained ministry has been the division of the Christian community into the parish structure . . . But it is one form of organizing a Christian community. And in the present day world of increasing urbanization it is questionable how effective parish structures are in many instances. . . It limits one's understanding of what may well be the most basic finality of the ministry, its purpose of creating Christian community for it tends to see the parish as the community par excellence, and any other grouping of Christians is thought of as accidental and only improperly a true Christian community.



Fourthly, it is generally assumed that all the clearly Christian things an ordained priest has done he has done by virtue of his priestly ordination - an apparently logical but really misleading assumption . . . But what is important, if one is to understand the nature and limits of the ministry as such, is that one distinguish between the functions a man performs by virtue of his ordination to the ministry.

Fifthly, Roman Catholic thinking about priestly ministry has been controlled by a view of sacramental causality that employed the phrase "ex opere operato" without at times understanding it too accurately.

Sixthly, Catholic thought about the ordained minister and his functions is closely linked to the understanding of terms like "sacrifice", "dedication", "sanctification"; and as current theological reflection reexamines the meaning of these there is a concomitant questioning of "priesthood".<sup>71</sup>

Bernard Cooke in these statements is showing the need for study and the re-examination of many related theological questions. He points out that the theology of the church as the people of God will have an effect on the theology of priesthood and ministry. Theological study of other questions will have a bearing on this issue also. For this reason a good relationship is needed between the Church and its theologians. Eugene Biser makes this point when he states:

"Whoever surveys the relationship between church and theology in the period after World War II had to acknowledge a series of missed opportunities, such as the campaign against the nouvelle theology, the suppression of the priest workers, the curial attack on the theological pluralism, the attitude of the church at manifestations of spontaneous religious enthusiasm. In consequence,

the relations between the church and theology have been strained, if not disrupted.<sup>72</sup>

He then talks about the power relationship between the church and theology when he states:

The church attentive to the sermon on the mount, must be ready to place the light entrusted to it in the form of theology on the candlestick instead of under the bushel basket, that it may illuminate the whole house. And theology, for its part, must understand that its own light will blow out in the storm of time if it does not shine in the shelter of the church.<sup>73</sup>

The question of women and ministry has come about as the preceding statements indicated from a raising of consciousness on the part of women, and from a constant reevaluation of many theological concepts previously considered beyond examination and therefore beyond discussion. This applies to the churches as individual churches but it also applies when these questions become the subject matter of dialogue between the churches. The question of the ordination of women has been discussed in the Episcopal church for sometime with considerable influence on Catholic thinking. Many feel that this question may lead to strained relationships between the Catholic and Episcopal communities and affect the progress made in recent years in the field of Ecumenism. This ambivalence can be seen in a letter from Pope Paul VI to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In such a spirit of candor and trust you allude in your letter of greeting to a problem which has recently loomed large: the likelihood, already very strong it seems in some places, that

the Anglican churches will proceed to admit women to the ordained priesthood. We had already exchanged letters with you on this subject and we were able to express the Catholic conviction more fully to Bishop John Howe when he brought your greetings.

Our affection for the Anglican communion has for many years been strong and we have always nourished and often expressed hopes that the Holy Spirit would lead us in love and in obedience to God's will, along the path of reconciliation. This must be the measure of the sadness with which we encounter so grave a new obstacle and threat on that path.

But it is no part of corresponding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to fail in the virtue of hope. With all the force of love which moves us we pray that at this critical time the Spirit of God may keep us in the way of reconciliation according to His will.<sup>74</sup>

As each church dialogues with the other, there will be many different viewpoints even within the particular church. Jacqueline Means, a forty year old nurse and prison chaplain, became the first woman officially admitted to the Priesthood of the United States Episcopal Church.

As the service was getting under way, Robert Strippy representing the conservative American church union rose to denounce Means' ordination as 'an act of heresy opposed to the mind of the church and the will of God'. With that a small band of sympathizers marched out in protest . . . The coalition for the Apostolic Ministry (CAM), a group that includes twelve Bishops, met in Chicago last month to work for repeal of the new laws. The Traditionalist Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen (FCC) is threatening schism. And one church, St. Mary's in Denver has already seceded and labeled itself an 'independent parish'.<sup>75</sup>

In spite of all this the ordination of women in the Anglican church will continue and likewise the conflicts will continue.

Presiding Bishop John Maury Allin, who admits he is not 'convinced theologically' of the validity of women priests says he will simply encourage dissenters to seek out all male bastions.<sup>76</sup>

The Rt. Rev. William H. Folwell D.D., Bishop of Central Florida is one of the Bishops in the Anglican Church who does not agree with the vote of the majority of the Bishops favoring women's ordination. One of the reasons he is against it is that there is no basis for it in Scripture. He says,

I am not a literal fundamentalist, but I have a little trouble finding justification from Scripture for ordaining women to the priesthood. There are scholars who feel differently, basing their views especially on Paul's statement that in Christ there is neither male nor female. But the combination of Scripture and 4,000 years of Judeo-Christian history makes it difficult for me to vote for it. I would have to be more positive this is of God. But you know Paul also said women weren't even supposed to speak in church, and we haven't paid attention to that for a long time.<sup>77</sup>

Bishop Leo Maker of San Diego in a pastoral letter in July 1974 asked how can the church best relate to modern woman's struggle for liberation. He states,

Women's liberation must be achieved by actualizing their full human potential. Primarily they must come to see themselves as the unique persons they are, and not merely the fulfillment of the expectations of others. Ultimately women's liberation is a matter of liberating persons both men and women. Immeasurable potential may be lost to the church and society



by too rigidly exclusive male and female roles . . . The dignity and rights of women, and equally, the dignity and rights of men, depend on an open-ended exploration of untapped potential in all persons and the true freedom for each to grow into the unique spiritual being he and she is capable of becoming.<sup>78</sup>

Bishop Maker draws on the statements of II Vatican Council to develop his points.

Sister Margaret Brennan IHM, General Superior of the Sisters Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary spoke on "Women in the Family of God" at the Serra International Convention in London, England on July 16, 1974. She posed a series of questions at the end of her talk which are similar to the sentiments expressed by Bishop Maker in his pastoral letters.

1. Are women themselves ready and able to redefine themselves as persons in themselves - and not in relation to men and children?
2. Will women be able to liberate themselves without resorting to violence, aggressiveness, competitiveness and enmity toward men as their oppressors?
3. Are men allowing women to decide who they are? Is the lack of a fundamental masculine identity in the church impeding women from discovering who they are? In other words, is the emerging feminine consciousness a threat to an unresolved masculine consciousness?
4. Is there evidence that the ministries to which women are called forth are expressive of the dimensions of femininity?
5. Is the church providing a forum in which women are encouraged to resolve these issues?
6. How do we promote vocations to women in the church when there is obvious inequality in the church? <sup>79</sup>

Speaking of the ordination of women in the Catholic Church the editor of "America" states,

The declaration (that women are not to be ordained) is of course, a severe disappointment to those Catholics, still only a minority although an important one, for whom the ordination of women is a major priority. Of greater fundamental importance, however, than this relatively narrow question is the whole range of women's equality in the church. The declaration hails the possibilities of a fuller participation by women in the life of the church. If such possibilities are not realized in action, the declaration betrays itself.<sup>80</sup>

Following on such statements it will be helpful to see the trends taking place as statements are issued concerning ministry in the church. The question of women's ordination and their rights within the church arise whenever ministry is discussed. Views on ministry are taking new directions. Father Kerkhofs is general secretary of the Pro Mundi Vita Research Center in Belgium. In September 1973, Pro Mundi Vita sponsored an international colloquium on new forms of ministry in Christian communities. He made some points which are worth noting:

Because of this lack of ministers of the traditional kind, and particularly in order to meet new needs, new forms of ministry have sprung up or old formulae have been given a new application (e.g. the catechists, the community leaders, the deacons, the worker-priests, and the growing need to incorporate women in the ministry). On this point the Church has entered upon a creative stage in her development. St. Paul's words on the one Spirit and the variety of ministries have

a new relevancy. For many reasons, the most important of which is perhaps, the shift of emphasis brought about by Vatican II, the ministries are now more generally seen as ways of serving the Christian community rather than as exercises in a hierarchically structured power-system.<sup>81</sup>

Father Kerkhofs then quotes a statement from Bishop Trevor Huddleston, of Stepney in London:

Without a change in the pattern of ministry, it is profoundly unlikely that the Christian community can change fast enough to be an effective instrument of the gospel. Time is not on our side.<sup>82</sup>

Continuing through the year 1974 there is a positive attitude on the Church's part towards the role of women in society and in the Church. 1975 was observed as International Women's year. Mrs. Helvi Sipilä of Finland, Assistant General Secretary for Social Development and Human Affairs of the United Nations and General Secretary of International Women's year, met in private audience with Pope Paul VI on November 6, 1974. The Pope on that occasion stated:

We very willingly greet in you, this morning, the representative of the commitment assumed by the United Nations for the "International Women's Year" proclaimed for 1975: This meeting offers us the opportunity to express the goodwill and attention with which we wish to follow this initiative.

In fact the initiative does not find the Church inattentive to the problem or lacking in a clear desire to solve it. On the contrary: in the contemporary effort to promote the advancement of women in society, the church has already recognized "a sign of the times", and has seen in it a call of the Spirit.<sup>83</sup>

Archbishop Bernardin in a statement on January 13, 1975 in regard to International Women's Year continued in the same vein as the earlier statement of Pope Paul VI. He stated,

Many issues concerning the role of women have lately been raised within the Catholic Church. Women have made significant progress in assuming leadership roles in the Church, and this process should and will continue. The Church has grown more aware of the variety of ministries open to women and has encouraged them to play a more active part in the life of the Christian community.<sup>84</sup>

In January Of 1975 Bishop Carroll T. Dozier of Memphis wrote a pastoral letter on women which was positive in its approach. Bishop Dozier stated:

It is a distortion of the Good News, surely, to relegate committed and earnest Christian women of our day to second-class citizenship. Women are making a contribution to renewed awareness in the Church today. The Church needs the woman's gift, the Church needs the Christian woman in an ecclesial role that enriches her life and the life of her church community with Christian vitality.<sup>85</sup>

The United States Catholic Bishops' Committee for the Bicentennial sponsored their first justice hearing in Washington, D.C. on February 3 - 5, 1975. Sister Elizabeth Carroll RSM, a staff associate at the Jesuit-sponsored Center for Concern in Washington, D.C., was one of the women who testified during the hearing. Speaking of Women in Church Law and Tradition, Sister Carroll said:

The need for the Church to commit itself to the full inclusion of women is intensified as knowledge spreads about the destructive traditions concerning women which form part



of its heritage.

These traditions must be judged in terms of the scientific knowledge of their day and the actual legal and social order dominating them. Nevertheless they present an infrequently broken record of male superiority complex which has shaped the organization and law of the Church.<sup>86</sup>

Sister Carroll quotes St. Augustine and St. Thomas in this regard.

St. Augustine says,,

In woman the good Christian . . . likes what is human, despises what is feminine.

St. Thomas deduces,

The reason women are in a subordinate position is because they lack sufficient reason, which a leader above all needs.<sup>87</sup>

Other points made by women witnesses at the justice hearing were as follows:

1. The equal rights amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution should be supported;
2. The United States Catholic Conference should employ more women in decision making positions;
3. Bishops should relate to women as Jesus did - treating them as full adult persons;
4. Women's drive for equality should be seen as an integral part of the development of all oppressed people without which world peace is impossible;
5. More women should be on Seminary faculties;
6. More mothers should be on the decision-making boards that disburse the Church's money. Mother's are notorious for sacrificing on behalf of the young and the sick;
7. Ordination should not be limited to men.<sup>88</sup>

As their 1974 convention at St. Louis (August 14 - 18) the members of the National Assembly of Women Religious resolved to seek the "prompt restoration of the diaconate for women in the Roman Catholic Church". This resolution and a written rationale was sent in 1975 to various United States religious organization. One of the statements in the rationale said,

So long as the call of the Spirit to the diaconate, which some Christian women today sincerely experience, continues to be denied . . . there continues to be the sad possibility that...the Church of Jesus actually is quenching the Spirit in the hearts of these women.<sup>89</sup>

On April 18, 1975, Pope Paul VI spoke to a Vatican Committee studying the Church's response to the 1975 United Nation's sponsored International Women's Year. In this particular address, the Pope stated,

Christ did not call women to the ordained ministry saying, We cannot change the behavior of Our Lord nor His call to women . But, we must recognize and promote the role of women in the mission of evangelization and in the life of the Christian community. This will not be a novelty in the Church, many traces of it are found in the primitive communities and thereafter in many pages of history of the Church through the centuries, in different ways. But today a more clear-cut thrust forward takes shape. Effectively, for several decades, a great many Christian communities have benefited from the apostolic commitment of women, most especially in the prime area of pastoral work with families. At present, certain women are even called to participate in sessions of pastoral reflection, either on the level of the dioceses, or on that of parishes and deaneries. It goes without saying that these new experiences need to mature. The Apostolic See, as you know, has itself called some particularly qualified women to take places on certain working groups.<sup>90</sup>

In June 1975 two important events took place. Sister Margaret Brennan, IHM, addressed the conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) at New Orleans on June 17, 1975. She said,

The deepest meaning of the women's movement for men is yet to be discovered. I believe that the women's struggle for human rights especially in the Church cannot really be understood and supported by you until you also recognize more deeply your own need for liberation.<sup>91</sup>

Sister Brennan called on the male religious superiors to reflect on their own unchallenged stereotypes and unquestioned expectations and to examine how these may hinder them from understanding the "woman problem".<sup>92</sup>

Another event of June 1975 was the meeting of twenty theologians in Cincinnati from June 22 - 25 as special consultants to the permanent United States Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue group. This particular meeting was convened by the two chairmen of the United States Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue group, Bishop Charles Helmsing of the Catholic Kansas City-St. Joseph diocese and Bishop Arthur Vogel of the Episcopal diocese of West Missouri. The theologians at the meeting issued the following statement in regard to the ordination of women:

In considering the relation of the question of the ordination of women to the authority of the churches' tradition, the following considerations must be kept in mind:

1. There is what may be called an "essential tradition", which as witnessed in the Scriptures, the Ecumenical creeds, the Church's liturgical tradition and its proclamation and teaching, constitutes the basic identity of the Christian community. This tradition has as its fundamental

content the relation of human beings to the God and Father of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

2. This tradition is variously elaborated and interpreted in dogma and doctrinal tradition according as inquiry and change within the Church or confrontation with intellectual social or political movements in the world require the Church to move towards a deeper self understanding through explication of the tradition which constitutes its identity. It thus faces from time to time, novel issues which demand that on the basis of its given self understanding, it explain itself in new ways for the sake of fidelity to the Gospel.
3. In the current situation the question of the ordination of women has raised issues which cannot be answered adequately by the mere citing of traditional practices or beliefs. Current discussion of the issue has showed that traditional reasons for refusing the ordination of women are not universally acceptable. It has further showed that problems relating to the doctrine of God, of the incarnation, and redemption are at least indirectly involved in its solution, so that any decision, whether for or against the ordination of women will in fact require the Church to explain or develop its essential tradition in an unprecedented way.<sup>93</sup>

In November of 1975 the Anglican-Roman Catholic statement explained what would happen to the dialogue between the churches if they took different positions in regard to the ordination of women. This statement of November 7, 1975 talked about full communion and organic unity.

It then stated,

If this goal is thought of as requiring uniformity in doctrine and discipline . . . the problem would indeed be a serious one. But there is another view of Church unity, which accepts diversity as a gift



of the Holy Spirit. The ecumenical task is to inquire whether one church can fully recognize another in the midst of differences . . . Even the things we do not agree with in each other's traditions may have something to teach us about God's will for his people.<sup>94</sup>

The discussion on women's rights and the ordination of women continued throughout the year 1976. In 1973, at the request of the 1971 Synod of Bishops Pope Paul VI created a special commission to study the role of women. The Pope spoke to the commission at their final plenary session on January 31, 1976. He stated on that occasion,

Men and women are equal before God: equal as persons . . . equal in dignity, equal also in their rights. But authentic Christian advancement of women is not limited to the claiming of rights. It also obliges men and women alike to remember their proper duties and responsibilities.<sup>95</sup>

A major event in regard to the role of women in the Church took place in 1976, namely, the Pontifical Biblical Commission's report on the question: Can women be priests? Seventeen members of this commission agreed unanimously that the New Testament by itself does not seem able to settle in a clear way and once and for all whether women can be ordained priests. The members voted 12-5 that Scriptural grounds alone are not enough to exclude the possibility of ordaining women.

Important points are made in the introduction of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's report. It states,

The question for which an answer is especially sought is whether or not women can be ordained to the priestly ministry (especially as minis-

ters of the Eucharist and as leaders of the Christian community). In making this biblical inquiry, one must keep in mind the limits of such a study.

1. In general the role of women does not constitute the principal subject of biblical texts. One has to rely upon often on information given here and there. The situation of women in the biblical era was probably more or less favorable judging from the limited data we have at our disposal.

2. The question asked touches on the priesthood, the celebrant of the Eucharist and the leader of the local community. This is a way of looking at things which is somewhat foreign to the Bible.<sup>96</sup>

On January 27, 1977, the Vatican declaration on ordination of women was released. The document did not give much hope to women,

The Christian priesthood is therefore of a sacramental nature: the priest is a sign, the supernatural effectiveness of which comes from the ordination received, but a sign that must be perceptible and which the faithful must be able to recognize with ease . . .

The same natural resemblance is required for persons as for things: when Christ's role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be this "natural resemblance" which must exist between Christ and his minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man: in such a case it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ. For Christ himself was and remains a man.<sup>97</sup>

The debate continues, twenty-three theologians from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California, dissented on the Vatican declaration:

The Doctrinal Congregations January 27th declaration on the ordination of women erred in

arguing the case against women priests on the basis of dogmatic impossibility. To say that we have never ordained women in the past, and therefore, cannot do so now, is to ignore the fact that the issue has never arisen in precisely these contemporary terms and within the new realization of women's place in the world.<sup>98</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The question of women's rights and their ordination is a complex question. It will demand openness, prayer and a community willing to listen to the voice of the Spirit. The tension between past tradition and today's new situations and changing role for women will have to be faced honestly and in a spirit of scholarship. This is a question for the whole Church and its resolution satisfactorily could see a whole new era begin for the people called by God to be one in Christ.

The ecclesiastical polity of the Roman Catholic Church does not permit an issue of such magnitude to be settled at the local or national level. This means that each area of the universal church must treat aspects of the issue that it would ordinarily for cultural and historical reasons overlook, put to one side, or consider insignificant or irrelevant. For the American Catholic Church this means we cannot pass over or dismiss arguments as readily, for example, as the Episcopal Church.<sup>99</sup>

Recent advances by Scripture scholars continue to indicate that the early Christian community adapted the message of Christ to particular situations. The Christian community today meets this same challenge. In secular society woman is playing a much more significant role than in previous centuries. It is evident in contemporary society that women are capable of great accomplishments that contribute much to human progress.

The Catholic Church cannot afford to ignore these achievements. In an age where dialogue is so important the hierarchy must not continue to ignore what women are saying, as they strive to build up the



body of Christ. Although recognizing the rightful place of women in the Church will mean the rejection of traditional concepts and the acceptance of new challenges, both Scripture and theology indicate the urgency of this step in the present cultural and ecclesiastical milieu.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Impressions from Detroit". America, Jan. 17, 1976, p. 26.
2. Robert Kress, Whither Womankind. (Indiana: Abbey Press, 1975) p. 236.
3. Ibid.
4. Andrew M. Greeley. The Crucible of Change. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 147.
5. Austin Flannery, O.P., Ed. "Church in the Modern World", Vatican Council II, Sec. 29, p. 929.
6. Ibid.
7. Maren Lockwood Carden. The New Feminist Movement. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1974) p. 2.
8. Ibid., 160.
9. "The Church in Process: Engendering the Future", Women and Catholic Priesthood. Gardiner, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) p. 77.
10. Greeley, The Crucible, pp. 145-147.
11. Raymond E. Brown. Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church. (New York: Paulist Press, 1975) pp. 45-46.
12. "Office for Women's Concerns Proposed". Origins, Dec. 11, 1975, p. 396.
13. Dominga Zapata. Women in Ministry: A Sisters' View. (Chicago: NAWR Publications, 1972) p. 21.
14. Ibid., 34.
15. Rosemary Radford Ruether. New Woman/New Earth. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975) p. 1.
16. Gardiner, p. 193.
17. Hans Kung. Why Priests? (New York: Doubleday Company, 1972) p. 22.
18. Ruether, New Woman, p. 22

FOOTNOTES - continued

19. Ibid., 14.
20. Kress, Whither Womankind, p. 150.
21. Ruether, New Woman, p. 97.
22. George M. Tavard. Woman in Christian Tradition. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973) p. 71.
23. Paul Lakeland, S.J. Can Women Be Priests? (Hales Corners: Clergy Bood Service, 1975), p. 71.
24. Tavard, Woman in Christian, p. 130.
25. Andrew M. Greeley. Religion in the Year 2000. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), p.21.
26. Hans Kung and Walter Kasper, Eds. The Plurality of Ministries. (The New Concilium), p. 21.
27. Brown, Biblical Reflections, p. 61.
28. Richard P. McBrien. The Remaking of the Church. (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 109.
29. "Women's Place: A Biblical View", Gardiner, pp. 26-17.
30. Raymond E. Brown, "On the Use of the New Testament in American Catholic Discussions", Catholic Mind, June 1977, pp. 17-19.
31. Ibid.
32. Lakeland, Can Women Be, pp. 17-18.
33. James Colaianni. The Catholic Left. (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1968) p. 190.
34. Gardiner, pp. 195-196.
35. John J. Castelot, S.S. "Religious Institutions of Israel", Jerome Biblical Commentary. (Prentice Hall, 1968), 76:18.
36. James A. Mohler S.J. The Origin and Evolution of the Priesthood. (Alba House, 1969) p. 6.

FOOTNOTES - continued

37. Ibid., 7.
38. Kress, Whither Womankind, pp. 32-33.
39. Ibid., 43.
40. John McKenzie, "Ministerial Structures in the Church", Plurality of Ministries (The New Concilium), p. 22.
41. Vincent Miceli, "Woman and the Priesthood, Homilectic and Pastoral Review, Aug.-Sept. 1976, p. 66.
42. McKenzie, "Ministerial Structures", Plurality (Concilium), p. 22.
43. Kress, Whither Womankind, p. 79.
44. Raymond E. Brown, Priest and Bishop (New York: Paulist Press, 1970) p. 16.
45. Ibid., 17.
46. Ibid., 19.
47. Bernard Cooke, Ministry to Word and Sacraments, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1976), p. 45.
48. Haye Van Der Meer, S.J., Women Priests in the Catholic Church, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), pp. 43-44.
49. Ibid., 45.
50. Kress, Whither Womankind, pp. 117-118.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 119.
53. Ibid., 150.
54. Tavard, Woman in Christian, p. 68.
55. Van Der Meer, Women Priests, p. 65.
56. Ibid., 69.



FOOTNOTES - continued

57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., 80.
59. Ibid., 88-89.
60. Kress, Whither Womankind, pp. 145-146.
61. Van Der Meer, Women Priests, p. 47.
62. Tavard, Woman in Christian, p. 54.
63. Kress, Whither Womankind, p. 151.
64. Roger Gryson, The Ministry of Women in the Early Church, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1976), p. 5.
65. Ibid., 8-9.
66. Van Der Meer, Women Priests, pp. 86-87.
67. Manuel Miguens, O.F.M., Church Ministries in New Testament Times, (Arlington, Virginia: Christian Culture Press, 1976), p. 140.
68. Van Der Meer, Women Priests, pp. 87-88.
69. Crux of the News, (Albany, New York: Clarity Publishing), Crux Special, October 4, 1976.
70. Gryson, The Ministry, p. XI.
71. Cooke, Ministry to, pp. 21-23.
72. Eugene Biser, "Theology and Church", Theology Digest, Spring 1976, pp. 22-23.
73. Ibid.
74. Origins, January 6, 1977, p. 459.
75. Newsweek, January 17, 1977, p. 85.
76. Ibid.
77. William H. Folwell, "Should Women Be Priests", Logos, March/April 1976, p. 14.

FOOTNOTES - continued

78. Leo Maher, "Women in the New World", Origins, August 1, 1974, p. 113.
79. Ibid., 115.
80. America, February 12, 1977, p. 119.
81. Jan Kerkhofs, S.J., "New Ministries", Origins, September 26, 1974, p. 219.
82. Ibid.
83. Study Kit, International Women's Year 1975, (Washington: United States Catholic Conference), p. 486.
84. "International Women's Year", Origins, January 23, 1975, p. 486.
85. Carroll T. Dozier, "Women/Intrepid and Loving", Origins, January 23, 1975, p. 481.
86. "Voices of Women", Origins, February 20, 1975, p. 557.
87. Ibid., 555.
88. Ibid.
89. NAWR/Restore Women to the Diaconate. Origins, April 10, 1975, p. 667.
90. "Women/Disciples and Co-workers". Origins, May 1, 1975, pp. 718-719.
91. "Women's Liberation/Men's Liberation". Origins, July 17, 1975, p. 97.
92. Ibid. 97.
93. "Ordination of Women/An Ecumenical Dialogue". Origins, July 17, 1975, p. 100.
94. "Christian Unity and Women's Ordinations". Origins. November 20, 1975, p. 349.
95. "Women/Balancing Rights and Duties. Origins, February 19, 1976, p. 549.

FOOTNOTES - continued

96. "Biblical Commission Report-Can Women Be Priests?" Origins, July 1, 1976, p. 92.
97. Catholic Mind, May 1977, p. 59.
98. "Letter to the Apostolic Delegate". Origins, April 7, 1977, p. 661.
99. John T. Finnegan. "An Agenda for Dialogue Between Catholic Feminists and Church Authorities". Sexism and Church Law, James Coriden, Ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 144.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

Bianchi, Eugene C. and Rosemary Ruether. From Machismo to Mutuality. New York, Paulist Press, 1976.

Brown, Raymond E. Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church. New York: Paulist Press, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. Priest and Bishop. New York: Paulist Press, 1970.

Carden Lockwood, Maren. The New Feminist Movement. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1974.

Colaianne, James. The Catholic Left. Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1968

Cooke, Bernard. Ministry to Word and Sacraments. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.

Coriden, James. Ed. Sexism and Church Law. New York: Paulist Press, 1977.

Daly, Mary. Beyond God the Father. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.

Gardiner, Anne Marie. Ed. Women and Catholic Priesthood. New York: Paulist Press, 1976.

Greeley, Andrew M. Religion in the Year 2000. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Crucible of Change. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968.

Gryson, Roger. The Ministry of Women in the Early Church. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1976.

Hellwig, Monika. Tradition The Catholic Story Today. Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum Publishing, 1974.

Kress, Robert. Whither Womanhood? Indiana: Abbey Press, 1975.

Kung, Hans. Why Priests? New York: Doubleday and Company, 1972.

\_\_\_\_\_, and Walter Kasper, Eds. The Plurality of Ministries. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972.



#### BIBLIOGRAPHY - continued

- Lakeland, Paul. Can Women Be Priests? Hales Corners, Wisconsin: Clergy Book Service, 1975.
- McBrien, Richard P. The Remaking of the Church. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
- Miguens, Manuel. Church Ministries in New Testament Times. Arlington, Virginia: Christian Culture Press, 1976.
- Mohler, James A. The Origin and Evolution of The Priesthood. New York: Alba House, 1969.
- Ruether, Rosemary. Liberation Theology. New York: Paulist Press, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. New Woman/New Earth. New York: The Seabury Press, 1975.
- Tavard, George H. Woman in Christian Tradition. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973.
- Van Der Meer, Haye. Women Priests in the Catholic Church. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973.
- Zapata, Dominga SH. Women in Ministry. Chicago: Nawr Publications, 1972.
- Flannery, Auston O.P. Ed. Vatican Council II. Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company.
- Murphy, Roland E., O. Carm., Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J. Eds. The Jerome Biblical Commentary. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

#### Periodicals

- Berry, Michele. "Should Women Be Priests?" Logos. Vol. 6, No.2, March-April, 1976.
- Biser, Eugen. "Theology and Church". Theology Digest. Vo. 24, No. 1, Spring, 1976.
- Brown, Raymond E., S.S. "Difficulties in Using the New Testament in American Catholic Discussions". Catholic Mind. Vol. LXXV, No. 1314, June 1977.

BIBLIOGRAPHY - continued

Miceli, Vincent P. "Woman and the Priesthood". Homiletic & Pastoral Review. Vol. LXXVI, Nos. 11-12, August-September, 1976.

Montagno, Margaret, Laurie Lisle. "Religion-Women Ordained". Newsweek. Vol. LXXXIX, No. 3, January 17, 1977.

Origins. "Authority in the Church". Vol.6: No. 32, January 27, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Women's Ordination". Vol.6:No. 9, August 12, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Difficult, Practical Phase of Shared Responsibility". Vol. 6: No. 5, June 24, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Religious Priests and Brothers". Vol. 5: No. 44, April 22, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. "La Causa Chicana/a revolution yet to come". Vol. 4:No.43, April 17, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Agony of Vietnam". Vol. 4:No. 42, April 10, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Pope Paul VI: Women/Balancing rights and Duties". Vol. 5: no. 35, February 19, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Towards a Domestic Food Policy". Vol. 4: No. 45, May 1, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Justice \_\_\_\_ Hearings". Vol. 4: No. 34, February 20, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Women/Intrepid and Loving". Vol. 4: No. 31, January 23, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Interamerican Conference of Religious". Vol. 4: No. 22, November 21, 1974.

"International Women's Year 1975". Vatican Study Commission on Women in Society and in the Church. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference. Study Kit.