

#18

Unprocessed manuscript for circulation
to committee readers only. Not for
duplication or distribution in any form.

TYPES OF ROLES AVAILABLE FOR ORDAINED WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

BY

Leona Glidden Running

Andrews University
Berrien Springs, Michigan
1973

TYPES OF ROLES AVAILABLE FOR ORDAINED WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

by Leona Glidden Running

By way of introduction, here are a few thoughts from Dorothy L. Sayers:

"What is repugnant to every human being is to be reckoned always as a member of a class and not as an individual person." (Unpopular Opinions, p. 130, cited in A Matter of Eternity, p. 94.)

"It is ridiculous to take on a man's job just in order to be able to say that 'a woman has done it--yah!' The only decent reason for tackling a job is that it is your job, and you want to do it." (U.O., p. 133, cited ibid.)

". . . there is perhaps only one human being in a thousand who is passionately interested in his job for the job's sake. The difference is that if that one person in a thousand is a man, we say, simply, that he is passionately keen on his job; if she is a woman, we say she is a freak." (U.O., p. 135, cited ibid., p. 95.)

"I think I have never heard a sermon preached on the story of Martha and Mary that did not attempt, somehow, somewhere, to explain away its text. Mary's of course was the better part--the Lord said so, and we must not precisely contradict Him. But we will be careful not to despise Martha. No doubt, He approved of her too. We could not get on without her, and indeed (having paid lip-service to God's opinion) we must admit that we greatly prefer her. For Martha was doing a really feminine job, whereas Mary was just behaving like any other disciple, male or female; and that is a hard pill to swallow." (U.O., p. 148, cited ibid.)

Nancy Hardesty wrote a letter printed in Christianity Today, August 11, 1972, concerning "Edwin M. Yamauchi's use of the woman issue to illustrate the problems of 'Christianity and Cultural Differences.'" She said that his

use was "quite apt," but "unfortunately, however, he seems to have succumbed to the temptation he was warning against: making our own cultural ideas the norm for the New Testament or uncritically transposing first-century norms into the twentieth." She says: "In a modern democracy where woman (as an outgrowth of New Testament teachings) is seen to be a full person in her own right, are we to impose a role on her which is left over from the days when women, like slaves, were considered the property of the 'master'? After 1,800 years Christians managed to decide that the Bible no longer decreed that we must live in a slave-master culture. When are we going to apply the same kind of thinking to the woman issue?"

The book Women's Liberation and the Church, edited by Sarah Bentley Doely, states in an appendix: ". . . Nowhere is the situation of women better illustrated than in our male-dominated and male-oriented churches. The church, both in its theology and in its institutional forms, is a reflection of culture. It has shown no propensity to transcend culture as regards the status of women, although it knows that it ought. Indeed, the church has too often maintained anachronistic attitudes and practices long after other societal institutions have begun to shift." (P. 99.)

You would expect from a language teacher a few thoughts concerning our male-dominated language. I have a purpose in citing them:

Georgia Harkness wrote in Women in Church and Society (1972), p. 148: ". . . the fact that throughout all Judeo-Christian history God has been referred to as 'he' has inevitably left a residue of maleness in the thought of deity. I do not recommend that we now substitute 'she' or 'he-she' or 'it'; either of the first two would be ridiculous and the third would carry an impersonal connotation altogether too prevalent today. Even to address the deity as 'Father-Mother-God,' as I have heard it done, seems like straining the point further than is necessary. We have to use a pronoun, and 'he' has

the force of such a long tradition that there is no need now to alter our language. What is needed is to recognize that the masculine pronoun came to be used both for generic Man and for the deity because of an assumption, deeply embedded in human society, of the inherent superiority of the male. This is an assumption which the priestly creation story [Gen. 1] does not validate."

Prof. Peggy Ann Way of the University of Chicago Divinity School says in her chapter, "An Authority of Possibility for Women in the Church," in Sarah Bentley Doely's 1970 book Women's Liberation and the Church: "As a notation to these comments about history, let me add that men are also held captive to certain myths about masculinity, not the least of which is the felt right to phrase all theological writing in the masculine gender. . . . Perhaps one of the reasons that pride has been such a high concept in the orthodox tradition is that it tends to be an aspect of masculine experience, related to men's activities and aggressiveness in the world. Thus there has been a strong identity between pride and sinfulness. For women, however, sinfulness might be more appropriately related to lack of pride and self-affirmation, and unquestioning acceptance of roles where responsibilities for church and world are severely limited. . . ." (P. 86.)

Eve Merriam wrote in After Nora Slammed the Door: "Now that Nora has slammed the door [an allusion to Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play 'The Doll's House'], is it not time for our vocabulary to reflect that change? Space-age words are adopted into our speech; slang is given not merely currency but cachet in new dictionary editions. The old folkways of male supremacist language persist unaltered. It is anachronistic for woman to go on being subsumed under man. More than anachronistic, it is inhibiting and reactionary; such language patterns help hold women back from their full share in the world's activities, since they are still written about and spoken of as either non-men or a subheading under the main billing (when we say men, we mean women, too).

"But what words can we use that will not be cumbersome? Agreed that it would be awkward to speak of the brotherhood and sisterhood of man and woman; pedestrian to rewrite the lofty question into what is man and what is woman that Thou art mindful of him and her.

"We might begin by substituting the already available phrase the human race for mankind. We could even be more accurate in doing so, since man (this includes woman) is not always kind to his (this includes her) fellow (this includes female) creature. We could also invent words, as the technological world does almost daily. . . ." (Pp. 209, 210.)

Mary Daly has some pertinent observations in her 1968 book The Church and the Second Sex: "On the whole, then, the Fathers display a strongly disparaging attitude toward women, at times even a fierce misogyny. There is the recurrent theme that by faith a woman transcends the limitations imposed by her sex. It would never occur to the Fathers to say the same of a man. When woman achieves this transcendence which is, of course, not due to her own efforts but is a 'supernatural' gift, she is given the compliment of being called 'man' (vir). Thus there is an assumption that all that is of dignity and value in human nature is proper to the male sex. There is an identification of 'male' and 'human.' Even the woman who was elevated by grace retained her abominable nature. No matter what praise the Fathers may have accorded to individuals, it is not possible to conclude that in their doctrine women are recognized as fully human." (P. 47.)

"Three German women theologians also presented petitions to the Council [Vatican II]," Mary Daly states. "Josefa Munch petitioned for changes in canon law, setting forth reasoned grounds for holding that Canon 968, which limits ordination to men alone, is of human tradition rather than divine origin. In another petition on the liturgy and women, the same author cited a seemingly minor point of sexual discrimination by recalling her conversation

with one of the Council Fathers. When she suggested to this bishop that the words Orate fratres ('Pray, brothers'), spoken by the priest just before the Prayer over the offerings at Mass, be changed to Orate fratres et sorores ('Pray, brothers and sisters'), she found the bishop completely opposed to her request. What was significant was the reason given for his opposition. He did not reject the idea because it seemed trivial, or because he thought the proposed new formulation was too long, or because 'brothers' also implies 'sisters'. Rather he claimed that the basic reason for addressing the people as 'brothers' was that in principle a woman cannot offer sacrifice to God. He maintained that a laywoman has a much lesser share in the sacrifice of the Mass than does a layman. Frau Münch's point was that such weird and distorted theological notions are encouraged and perpetuated by practices such as exclusively masculine forms of address used by churchmen in speaking to an audience made up of both men and women." (P. 83.)

Mary Daly further says: "The ecclesiastical custom of addressing mixed audiences as if there were no women present was also criticized. A prominent German woman pointed out that in a papal audience the Pope addressed a mixed group as 'My sons' and another mixed gathering simply as 'Messieurs'. The letter of an American woman expressed her dismay that when Pope Paul visited New York he addressed a mixed audience as 'Sons and brothers'. These objectors were not preoccupied with etiquette for its own sake, but with the thought-patterns reflected in an outdated protocol: they saw the omission as symbolic of the failure of the hierarchy in thought and action to take into account the real existence and importance of women in the Church." (P. 84.)

The following letter, handwritten, was sent by a bishop of the Episcopal Church in reply to a letter sent by Phyllis Ingram to every active bishop and some retired bishops: "Your letter to the bishops of the Episcopal Church

which was received prior to our recent meeting touched me deeply. I can find no theological reason against the ordination of women to the sacred ministry, and no practical reason that would not be equally valid for arguing against their admission to the fields of law, medicine and a score of other professions in which they have proved themselves as competent as men. There remains only prejudice--as strong apparently and unfortunately among the women of the laity as among the men. If as is [staying in the laity] is insufficient, if your vocation leads you beyond, I should understand your making application to a branch of the Church which currently accepts women for the sacred ministry, for I have no doubts as to the validity of such a ministry or of the denominations in which it may be exercised." (Cited by Elsie Gibson in When the Minister Is a Woman, p. 29.) Mrs. Gibson added: "Mrs. Ingram is now an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, serving as assistant pastor in a large city parish."

As Mrs. Gibson also reported, "Hans Küng told Mrs. Elizabeth Bussing, Secretary of the Committee to Study the Proper Place of Women in the Church's Ministry (Episcopal), in a telephone interview, 'There are two factors to consider regarding the ordination of women. The first is that there are no dogmatic or biblical reasons against it. The second is that there are psychological and sociological factors to be considered. The solution to the problem depends on the sociological conditions of the time and place. It is entirely a matter of cultural circumstances.'" (Ibid., p. 32.)

Vance Packard in his 1968 book The Sexual Wilderness cited a study of types of jobs held by women by the year 1964, when 3.1 million of the 7 1/2 million working women held jobs classified as professional and technical-- as high a proportion as among working men. Sixty-two percent were teachers

and school workers; all other categories had from 6% down to 2%--nurses; secretaries and typists; social, welfare and recreational workers; biological technicians, and clerical workers. A study of faculty women in 98 colleges, by sociologist Jessie Bernard, showed that while "about 19 percent of the total teaching staff was female," "when the analysis was confined to full professors, the female contingent dropped to 10 percent. . . ." Packard also stated, "One reason there are so few women doctors in the U.S.A. unquestionably is that males dominating the profession have mostly taken a dim view of female doctors, and often have created obstacles or sought to keep them out of important functions." (Pp. 107-109.)

In the Review and Herald for March 8, 1973, page 14 contained an article by Elisabeth Larsson, M.D. under the heading "Speaking Out," titled "We Need More Women Physicians." She told how the U.S. lags behind the Soviet Union in percentage of women physicians by 75 percent there versus 7.4 percent here, compared with 30 percent in England, 26 in France and 16.8 in Sweden. Of Loma Linda graduates from 1914-1917, 8 percent were women--but the present undergraduate percentage of women studying medicine at Loma Linda has risen only to 11 percent. She quoted Dr. Catharine Macfarlane, professor emeritus and vice-president of the Board of Woman's Medical College: "College vocational counselors are the single most potent force steering women away from medicine. They exaggerate the difficulties, inspire false fears of professional handicaps, advise incorrectly that men are given preference, and indicate that the odds are not worth fighting." It was similar in SDA schools, she stated, where some teachers and counselors reason with girls: "If you decide to study medicine, you will become masculine, the men will not date or marry you, and you will be an old maid." Then she quoted Mrs. White on the need for more women physicians in our church. --But this vocation was not included in the brief list of possible roles for ordained women in

in the church under V. C, page 7, though many medical missionary men and other male SDA physicians are ordained.

Packard wrote: "The president of the Christian Science Church, a woman, observed in 1965 that women tend to be more religiously inclined than men. In that church, female practitioners of spiritual healing have outnumbered male practitioners. But among the main-line Protestant denominations only a few hundred women have attained the full status of senior pastors, and most of them are confined to the United Church of Christ, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and the Methodist Church. Women traditionally have been barred from being priests or rabbis.

"At a gathering of parish ministers in 1965 one of the things deplored was the diminishing number of ministers. During a low point in all the gloomy discussion, one voice was raised to suggest that more be done to develop women ministers. (Women attending this conference were holding a separate session devoted to 'women's work.')

The response to the suggestion was absolute silence. Finally the presiding bishop said, 'Well, I don't know how it is here, but in our part of the country we don't go much for women preachers.' His quip was greeted with a general snickering.

"One of the areas where women have made the least progress of all in challenging male dominance is in leadership roles. In any organization that is not all-female the chances are slight that there will be women in the leadership. . . ." (P.110.)

Alice Rossi and her husband are both sociologists, who together moved from teaching posts at the University of Chicago to Johns Hopkins University. Packard referred to her as "the ardent U.S. feminist" and said that she "in advancing proposals for sex equality and similarity suggests that the principal areas of dissimilarity between the sexes can readily be removed by cultivation

of the characteristics of the opposite sex. Tenderness and expressiveness should be cultivated in boys; and achievement need, workmanship, and constructive aggression should be cultivated in girls. She adds, 'By sex equality I mean a socially androgynous conception of the role of men and women in which they are equal and similar in such spheres as intellectual, artistic, political, and occupational interests and participation, complementary only in those spheres dictated by physiological differences between the sexes.'" (Packard, p. 337.)

Need we remind ourselves that long ago Ellen G. White said something very similar?--"Since both men and women have a part in home-making, boys as well as girls should gain a knowledge of household duties. To make a bed and put a room in order, to wash dishes, to prepare a meal, to wash and repair his own clothing, is a training that need not make any boy less manly; it will make him happier and more useful. And if girls, in turn, could learn to harness and drive a horse, and to use the saw and the hammer, as well as the rake and the hoe [perhaps today she would say, drive a car and run the lawnmower], they would be better fitted to meet the emergencies of life." (Education, pp. 216,217.)

According to Alice Rossi's idea, which is advanced by others today also, our church would do well to encourage more boys to study nursing, more girls to study medicine, more boys to become elementary teachers, more girls to aspire to doctorates and full professorships in college teaching, and to the ordained ministry--in each case depending on the individual's talents and interests, regardless of the person's sex.

Packard cites Margaret Mead, the well-known anthropologist, as believing "that men, for example, will tend to have that razor-edge of extra gift that makes the difference in such fields as instrumental music, the physical sciences, and mathematics. And she feels that women have a special superiority in the human sciences that call for intuition"--still allowing for individual differences that may be opposite, however. The point is, there should be no barriers! And no restrictive, negative conditioning. (Pp. 342, 343.)

Margaret Mead was cited also in the July 1973 issue of the American Psychologist: ". . . Despite verbal excesses to the contrary, the actual treatment of women and children within our male-oriented culture provides

clear evidence that childbearing and rearing are consistently undervalued and held in generally low esteem. It is as though since men don't do it, it can't be very important! And this very denigration seems to be echoed, on other grounds, by supporters of a new feminism.

"Years ago Margaret Mead (1949) noted a fascinating cultural phenomenon: Regardless of the nature of the activity, whether weaving, doll-making, or what have you, when performed by men that activity is valued and honored; when it is 'woman's work' the very same pursuit is taken for granted or disdained. It seems to me highly probable that it is because childbearing is necessarily a female-only activity . . . and because child rearing, too, has been primarily performed by women that both are accorded so little respect. Even a serious critic of male-dominated societies like [Kate] Millett (1969) can recognize this point with respect to weaving or fishing, and still end up sharing, with the dominant males, the judgment that child rearing is not so terribly important. This, it seems to me, is powerful testimony to the tenaciousness of our masculine-oriented values." (P. 575.)

Vance Packard continues: "Another skill in which women seem clearly to excel is verbal fluency. . . . Leona Tyler, psychologist at the University of Oregon, states, 'From infancy to adulthood, females express themselves in words more readily and skillfully than males.'"--And if there is any profession in which more words will be spoken and written in the career span than in another profession, it surely is that of preaching and the ministry; yet women, who have the edge in verbal fluency, have been barred from it.

"Two other areas where women show vastly more competence than men are in nurture or care of others and social concern. This may annoy some women who view nurture as a stereotyped female role. . . ." Again, individual differences may reverse this between the sexes, and should be recognized. (Pp. 342-343.)

According to Packard, "Eleanor Maccoby, Stanford University psychologist, . . . suggests that qualities of assertiveness, independence, and striving, which appear to go with a capacity for good analytical thinking, are in conflict with the conventional image of appropriate female behavior. Thus, in many cases, the girls who do develop fine analytic minds pay a price in anxiety, which damages their capacity for creative thinking in too many cases. She asks, 'Could we not accept and encourage the active, dominant, independent qualities of the intellectual girl without labeling her as masculine, and encourage her in whatever aspects of femininity are compatible with an analytical quality of mind?'" (P. 350.)

Packard recognized that "some of the traditional extremes in sex-role expectations obviously are no longer functional. We do not need the authoritative husband and the dutiful wife. And there is a need for the males and females to divide the world's interesting work more fairly. There is also the need to be more fully aware of, and to recognize, the skills, traits, and potentialities that are possessed equally by fortunate human beings of both sexes." (P. 358.)

To apply these ideas to our topic of interest, I wished before coming to specific role suggestions to stress in a broad way our need to loosen up our restrictive role definitions and the narrow pictures of them that we press upon our young people in educating and counseling them. We need to have a much broader view of the possibilities for them vocationally, both in the world and in the church, and pay much more attention to their individual abilities and desires, never quenching these with outmoded sexual stereotypes. We need a church-wide education campaign to make us all more genuinely human!

Elsie Gibson in her 1970 book When the Minister Is a Woman gave data from 160 respondents to a simple questionnaire she had sent to some 280 ordained women, plus information by correspondence and interviews from other

ordained women bringing the total to about 270. She listed them as being located in 37 States and 3 Provinces of Canada, and made the observation that "where there is Free Church strength, as in old Congregational New England, there will be women ministers, since Free Churches have been ordaining them for many years. Women ministers also find acceptance in strongly rural areas that cannot support men with families and where, as a consequence, there are more empty pulpits. In addition, women are frequently found on multiple staffs in city churches." These ideas correspond to several items on the list suggested under V. C, namely, 5 and 6. (P. xvi.)

Mrs. Gibson's tabulation of her respondents' roles ran from 81 as pastors, 40 as retired, 20 as ministers' wives, 18 as ministers of Christian Education (corresponding to No. 4 under V. C), 16 in denominational work, 16 as assistant pastors, and 15 as associate pastors, down to 10 as chaplains in institutions, 9 in other specialized ministries, 8 as college teachers (ordained women, remember), 6 as graduate students at the time they replied, and 5 as teachers in seminaries. The remaining ordained women were evangelists (4), in mission work (3), in counseling work (2), in private and public schools (1 and 3 respectively), editors and writers (4), ill and not working full-time (3), and temporarily unemployed (3). (Pp. xvii, xviii.)

These roles suggest similar lines of work for ordained women in our church, and they include all the suggestions made under V. C except one that is probably our specialty--health evangelists. In fact, we already have well-qualified women occupying nearly all, if not all, these roles somewhere in our church structure; but they are not ordained. Yet if they were men, with no more ability, they almost invariably would be ordained!

Elsie Gibson reinforces what I have said about paying more attention to individual abilities and desires: "The plea 'for an openness to the person's qualifications' comes from many respondents. Very few, even among those who

prefer supportive positions, want to see their sex stereotyped for them. This point is of special importance to single women, who are usually free to locate where they wish and do not have to consider other persons in the use of their time. This raises the question: if they are intellectually creative, why should they subordinate themselves to male leadership and always hold a secondary place?" (P. 73.) She continues by discussing what she calls the root problem --biblical interpretations of passages we are considering in other papers. Mrs. Gibson has extremely helpful chapters on "The Ministry of Single Women," "The Ministry of Married Women," and "The Ministry of Widows," with illuminating case histories and practical suggestions for working in local churches, as chaplains, as counselors, as teachers and deans of women, and in other specialized ministries.

In the chapter on "Ministry of Married Women" Mrs. Gibson discusses women pastors who work with, or in a separate church from, their minister husbands, ordained women whose husbands are laymen in many occupations, and the ordained married women who have children--averaging two each, but three had seven each! She says, "Children work out their own little philosophies about the work of parents. A Baptist minister's wife, mother of three, was called to be pastor of a church to which she was giving interim service about the same time her husband was asked to take a position in denominational fund raising which required a great deal of travel. Their children were in school. When the youngest was asked by his teacher about the parents' occupation, he had it all figured out: 'My father is a preacher of funds; my mother is a preacher of the Gospel.'" (P. 108.)

Many of the ordained widows had consecutive instead of concurrent careers; some obtained their theological education after being widowed. Mrs. Gibson reported: "Some widowed respondents have found their way into unusual forms of ministry. My questionnaire had asked, 'Are there specific phases of

ministry in which women can make a distinctive contribution or in which they are inadequate, or do you consider this a question of individual difference unrelated to sex?' Approximately 160 women to whom I first sent the questionnaire responded to this inquiry which had been marked 'optional.' Of the number, one-third considered qualification for ministry unrelated to sex and made no further comment. Several of those who replied more fully pointed out that women could not act as chaplains in a men's prison, though one observed that nurses serve male wards in hospitals: 'What is the difference?' In the variety of answers given, the underlying thought seemed to be that there is no more limitation in the spiritual care women can give to men than vice versa.

"Surprisingly, one woman, Mrs. Carol Hyde of Columbus, Ohio, is performing the 'impossible' task of working with male ex-convicts. . . . Mrs. Hyde was called as a counselor to Alvis House. Alvis House is a professional treatment center and temporary home for prisoners rejoining free society. The director, Maurice Breslin, an eleven-year veteran of halfway house experience, looks at it this way: 'Men who have been shut up in prison for years, with only men for companions, need to have an exposure to women in the way-station between prison and community.' In group therapy sessions there is value in having both male and female attitudes and viewpoints expressed. . . ." (Pp. 130, 131.) Mrs. Hyde is a Unitarian-Universalist.

Mrs. Gibson continued: "The Woman's Pulpit reports that Nora Calvert, a Presbyterian minister, formerly of New Zealand, is now chaplain at Beaumont School for Boys at Richmond, Virginia. Churchmen there felt, too, that a woman's viewpoint would be helpful in counseling youth between fifteen and eighteen years of age who had been in trouble with the law. She works with both individuals and groups, and is also responsible for religious education

in the school. It may in time become apparent to most people that gifts and personality are more important than sex in determining an appropriate field in which to work." (Pp. 131, 132.)

(I might mention parenthetically that in sixteen years as the only lady faculty member of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, I have had many opportunities to counsel and advise men students who came to me by choice with their problems. Dr. Charles Wittschiebe has told me many times that I make a contribution in my teaching and counseling that would not be made if I were not there. I also am a widow.)

Mrs. Gibson made a couple of comments that are especially relevant to our church setting, in her chapter on "Ministry of Married Women": "The question may be raised as to the attitude of churches toward the pastor's wife who follows a ministry of her own. There is probably wide difference of opinion among parishioners. One young woman says that the first church her husband served created difficulty by objecting to her being pastor of another congregation. They felt she should be giving the benefits of her education to their own church school. In the past, many churches have realized their hope of receiving two ministers for the price of one, but times are changing. The possibility of two persons giving the major portion of their time on one salary is diminishing. A woman cannot usually give even half of her time to a church and adequately care for her own family without help. Children in the parsonage home must be educated and the cost of education is climbing faster than most ministerial salaries. While not expecting their wives to work, husbands, nevertheless, may appreciate their willingness to do so. . . . It is difficult to see the basis on which a congregation could object if it is paying only one minister's salary. . . ." (P. 96.)

In the context of a qualified, seminary-trained wife of a businessman, whose children were already in their teens, who was refused ordination by her

association (=conference) "because it did not want to ordain a person to part-time service," but non-serving wives of ministers in that same association were ordained as a 'courtesy,' Mrs. Gibson remarked: "The situation of the layman's wife seems more ambiguous. It should be kept in mind that clergy opinion still dominates most association meetings." (P. 98.)

Mrs. Gibson attributes to M. Madeline Southard, founder of the American Association of Women Ministers, the suggestion that "had women not been the first witnesses [to Christ's resurrection], we should probably never have known that they were witnesses at all, because when both sexes were present, according to the custom of the day, women were usually not mentioned. For example, when Paul summarizes resurrection appearances (I Corinthians 15:5-9), he omits those made to women." Mrs. Gibson continues on the next page, ". . . there were women witnesses of the resurrection, which was a prime requirement of apostleship at the beginning. It is worth remembering, too, that no Gentiles were among the original twelve--Jesus had even stated at times that his mission was to the Jews, yet Gentiles were not ruled out of leadership in the church. . . .

"Two points may help to explain the curtailment of women's work. First, the influence of the culture, always subordinating women to men, was so pervasive that the church itself was almost inevitably affected. Christian teaching and living can only be maintained by constant re-orientation to the deeds and words of Jesus, along with an ever-recurring renewal and reformation. When Christians forget the Spirit to whom they belong, the church tends simply to reflect the dominant culture, and the age-old battle of the sexes erupts again. Women are seen as inferior beings who threaten the integrity of men, and eliminating them from ecclesiastical circles is easier than the costly search for understanding and cooperation in the work of God. Because men are physically stronger, the recognition of woman's equality depends upon male

sensitivity to moral and spiritual values.

"It is to the credit of men, however, both in and out of the church, that they have so often been able to recognize feminine goodness when they saw it, and to help in their search for spiritual growth. In the early centuries, virgins and widows had special opportunities for service as well as women who worked with their husbands. . . .

"Hilda, an Anglo-Saxon abbess, shows the place that could be held by women in the seventh century. A person of commanding appearance, wearing the flowing white robes and dark headdress of Christians in Bible times, for more than twenty years she was administrator, teacher and spiritual guide of the double monastery at Whitby, where men and women worked and prayed together. Hilda had been brought up by Queen Ethelberga, whose father founded the See of Canterbury and whose mother established the first place of Christian worship there. Bishop Aidan of Iona asked Hilda's help, and in response she opened her first monastery. Her educational work included the training of the poet Caedmon and five English bishops (one of whom baptized Bede). While abbess, she presided over an important synod at Whitby in which the Roman dating of Easter was accepted with far-reaching effects. She died in 680 while urging her people to preserve harmony in the church." (Pp. 6, 7, 12, 13.)

Margaret Sittler Ermarth in her 1970 book Adam's Fractured Rib (subtitle, "Observations on Women in the Church"), says: ". . . The 'mother form' of the official (institutionalized) ministry of women seems to have been the order of ecclesiastical widows. In the third century the diaconal ministry of women was institutionalized and defined, at least in the Eastern part of the church. There the diaconal office slowly absorbed and eclipsed the ministry and honor of the widow. . . .

"The widow and the deaconess were sometimes 'instituted,' sometimes 'ordained' for their ministry. . . .

"The monastic movement--a strong ascetic reaction within the Christian community to a popular and more secularized church--further isolated women both from danger and from their accustomed services. In the fourth century, the virgins of the church began to outshine the widows and in the process absorbed their ancient diaconal functions as well as their honor. The deaconess of the Eastern church survived longer than her Western sister, the widow, but eventually she also was absorbed by the monastic movement, becoming simply the head (abbess) of the women's monastic communities, with all the duties and privileges of a deaconess, including teaching and liturgical rights short of presiding over the celebration of the sacraments. . . .

"It seems astounding and unfortunate that the Reformation did not provide any substitute for the services and leadership women had exercised as nuns, prioresses, and abbesses. Yet many of these women would have been eminently qualified for valuable service to the church and the world, . . . The lack of organizational imagination on the part of the Lutheran Reformation is partly to blame. . . ." (Pp. 20-22.)

The fourth booklet in the World Council of Churches Studies is on The Deaconess and was published in 1966. The history of this office is sketched from New Testament times down, including the modern revival of it in a number of churches. A few helpful thoughts can be gleaned briefly from it:

"The question whether women can be admitted and ordained to particular ecclesiastical offices (as priests or to the office of word and sacrament) is a special problem which has to be solved variously in the different churches. The renewal of the diaconate of women must not be bound up with it. The particular character of the diaconate must be maintained; the office may neither be understood as a substitute for other offices nor as a receptacle for all the functions which the Church wishes to give to women." (P. 15.)

These questions are formulated:

"a) If the three orders of bishop, presbyter, and deacon are recognized as essential for the Church, is it not also natural that the order of deaconess should be revived in the life of the Church? And if the early Church consecrated deaconesses and counted them within the ministerium of the Church, even though the social position of women was much narrower, why should it not happen today when the position of women has so radically changed? The weight often given to the necessity of the three offices is out of relation to the limited interest shown in the diaconate of women. Some churches seem to have hesitations in dealing with any office for women which did not exist in the early Church. The question is particularly acute in these churches where the diaconate of men is being renewed in its original form in accordance with the example of the early Church.

"b) Do not most churches show a loss of variety in comparison with the situation we find in the early Church? In the early Church, at least in some places, the offices of deaconess and widow existed side by side. This variety has not been developed in most churches, but has vanished.

"c) Where the office of deaconess exists at all, it is in most cases not sufficiently recognized as such by the Church. Many women work as deaconesses without the real support of the Church. Is there not a demand for many churches to include the office of deaconess more securely within the ministerium?

"d) Is not active service to one's neighbour usually so over-emphasized that liturgical tasks are scarcely considered? The deaconesses performed limited liturgical functions in the early Church (aid at baptism, distribution of the sacrament to the sick, etc.). In the renewal of the office in Protestant circles, deaconesses were brought in as assistants at worship services (Oberlin). In many churches, such as the Methodist or Baptist, the deaconesses participate in the worship service. On the basis of these examples, should deaconesses not

be granted a particular share in the conduct of worship service (service of the word in particular groups, distribution of the cup, distribution of the sacrament to the sick, etc.)?" (P. 17.)

"We might mention in this connection [assignments of deaconesses not "limited to the immediate environment of the local church"] that the only woman who bears the name of 'deaconess' in Scripture, Phoebe, acted as a messenger from one congregation to another." (P. 20.) She carried Paul's valuable letter to the church at Rome. The word describing her is correctly translated in the RSV as "deaconess"; it is the only occurrence of the Greek word that the KJV translates as "servant"--otherwise always "deacon," but its use as a feminine Greek form, being unique here in Rom. 16:1, and the office of deaconess having vanished from church structure, the KJV translators were led astray by their male-dominated culture and society.

Incidentally, Acts 6 records the ordination of another class of church workers besides those who "devote [themselves] to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Our church does the same thing in ordaining treasurers, physicians, and other non-pastoral workers; our mistake is in expecting them also, without aptitude or training, to preach! And a second lack is our failing to ordain women, as well, with both kinds of ordination.

In Joan Morris's book The Lady was a Bishop, she gives the "Hidden History of Women with Clerical Ordination and the Jurisdiction of Bishops," as her subtitle states. A review by Walter D. Wagoner succinctly summarizes what this 1973 book demonstrates: "From the earliest Christian communities until as late as 1874, there were hundreds of ordained abbesses with quasi-episcopal jurisdiction, with the right to hear confessions, preach, read the Gospel in public, and to administer vast ecclesiastical and religious estates. They presided over religious ceremonies of both men and women and were invested with

the cope, miter, stole, pectoral cross, ring, gloves and crosier. What is now officially forsworn by Rome was for centuries a common practice." (Review in Christian Century, May 23, 1973, p. 609.)

Joan Morris in the conclusion to her last chapter states: "The right of abbesses to rule was not questioned until the time of the Renaissance, when there was a return to a Greco-Roman culture in which women had had a lower status than in Christian times. . . .

"The post-Trentine theologians sought to establish the inability of abbesses to hold spiritual jurisdiction on the basis of their inability to be ordained to the order of the priesthood; but they violated historical facts by denying that women were ordained as clerical members in the Canoness Institutes to say the Divine Office, the part of the Church Service that did not entail touching the blessed Eucharist. The ordination of an archdeaconess and of a Sacerdos Maxima did allow women to have spiritual jurisdiction. In the case of Las Huelgas this right was maintained until 1874." (P. 157.)

In her Final Conclusion Joan Morris summarizes: "It has been established that there has been an authentic tradition of women's service to the Church that has become hidden. The Church has shown itself versatile in adapting itself to various forms of government--oligarchic, monarchic, and democratic. There is no reason why women should not hold a type of responsibility today similar to that of the quasi-episcopal status of abbesses in the past. The desirability of small dioceses has been generally approved. The inclusion of women within the episcopal hierarchy again would make the multiplication of dioceses easier. . . ." (Pp. 157, 158.)

While the Reformation mistakenly did not provide a similar outlet for women's abilities in Protestantism, nor has our church yet done so, progress is being made in that it has become aware and is studying the question.

Georgia Harkness in Women in Church and Society, having cited Elsie

Gibson's survey of roles women ministers fill in her fifth chapter, mentions other forms of ministry toward the end of her book. She says: "The field is so extensive in its ramifications that it would require an entire book to do them justice. In these largely noncontroversial fields the only major theological issue is the one we have repeatedly emphasized, the subordination of women. This leads to lower pay in spite of legal specifications for equal pay for equal types of work, and to very limited opportunities for leadership positions and promotions in comparison with those of men.

". . . Far exceeding in numbers and probably in total influence for the past century and a half is the field of foreign missions. From this field stem the first organizations of denominational women's groups, which have recruited and supported thousands of women who have gone as missionaries to virtually every corner of the non-Christian world. . . .

"A service in the home field formerly equated with the work of the foreign missionary, though less extensive in outreach, is that of the deaconess. This has fallen off considerably on the American scene and is largely replaced by various forms of social work. . . .

"A form of Christian service for women unique to America is that of the director of Christian education. Counselors urge this, if anything in the church, in preference to the ministry, and many seminaries have special courses and award degrees in preparation for it. . . . the trend now among women in the seminaries is toward securing the B.D. degree or its equivalent [now the M.Div.] rather than the degree in religious education. . . . When the financial situation of the church declines, she is usually the first member of the staff to be relinquished, and even in good times a man is often preferred." (Pp. 221, 222.) In the SDA church it would be equivalent to the youth pastor/often on the staff of our largest churches--an ordained man, be it noted.

Prof. Harkness continues: "A field for the services of women is also open on the staffs of the various denominational and ecumenical organizations

for women." (P. 223.) We have women on such staffs on the General Conference level--but they are not ordained, though their male colleagues at the same level usually are.

Georgia Harkness says: "There are numerous other fields in which some women are to be found. There are the religious Orders, Roman Catholic and in a few cases Protestant, where women find service and security but also restrictions against which protests have arisen. The women thus enrolled appear to be diminishing in numbers. There are a few women teaching in theological seminaries, and more in colleges, though here too their numbers are shrinking. Both men and women find placement difficult in the present oversupply of doctorates, and men are usually given the preference in women's colleges as well as in others. There are women journalists, women as chaplains in institutions, women in various forms of social work and parish work formerly done by deaconesses, and many women as church office secretaries who assist the pastor to keep the church alive and active.

"Taken as an inclusive group, women constitute an impressive part of the labor force of churches in channels other than the parish ministry. Then why bother about their exclusion from the latter? Both a matter of principle and a practical situation are involved. There is no great likelihood that as the ministry is opened to women, there will be a great rush to enter it. Yet as long as sex discrimination is found in the official regulations of a denomination, a basic tenet of the Christian gospel will be violated. And as long as the social as well as official barriers remain, it will still be true that 'the church is the last stronghold of male dominance.'" Then she lists voluntary organizations that offer women in various situations "a vast field of both service and self-education," though ordination is not involved. (Pp. 223, 224.)

Elsie Gibson reported: "My survey also drew responses from several women

whose summer work in churches alerted them to the need for pastors in poverty-stricken areas of the South. They became acquainted with small, struggling churches that could not afford a man with a family, or where ministers' wives were reluctant to bring up children. Such churches were often intermittently served by men with little or no education, and whose spiritual understanding was open to question. A trained woman could find plenty to do."

(P. 43.) A personal friend of mine who has lived in southern Indiana told me of many places there and in Kentucky where the same situation exists in our own denomination.

Mrs. Gibson says: "In our reaction against Catholic monasticism we have so glorified marriage as the one possibility of fulfillment for a woman that single persons are often made to feel they have missed the meaning of life. Several unmarried women (not ministers) have, in fact, told me, 'The church is the place of my deepest loneliness.' Is this degree of emphasis on marriage as the only fulfillment either helpful or sound? Roman Catholics seem to have made their mistake in the opposite direction by glorifying celibacy. Even among the Orthodox, the priest who has chosen to marry has removed himself from the possibility of becoming a bishop. Have we not all made a person's state in life the prime consideration, instead of leaving men and women free to put ministry first, leaving their state in life as a subordinate personal option?" (P. 64.)

She also points out, "While single women can offer time and mobility, married women often have a more ready access to certain forms of ministry through their husbands. In interviews, several single women mentioned that marriage adds to a woman's status and makes contacts with men easier." (P. 67.)

"Militancy on the part of a woman minister places men on the defensive," according to Mrs. Gibson. "Their reaction may be a combination of semiguilt over an unfair situation they feel personally powerless to remedy and irrita-

tion with the woman for making a fuss about what cannot be helped. The issue is similar to that of civil rights; there is an additional difficulty in that relationships between men and women are even more complicated and delicate than those between races. Waging a feminist war and serving a local parish do not mix well. Tilda Norberg, a young respondent, writes, 'I feel that what is called for is not women's rights as such, but a whole reordering of male-female relationships, so that we act out of a commitment to the development of real personhood in both men and women, rather than out of traditional role models.' This approach calls for the re-education of adults so that the atmosphere of home life, and eventually of social life, can be changed. But is this too slow a process?

"Quite a few will say it is, for females do face crippling discrimination when they attempt to dedicate their gifts to God through the church. . . . If . . . a man believes he has received a real call to ministry, how can he face God in prayer and deny a woman the privilege of responding to the same invitation? I believe that the great majority of Christian men will defend women in their desire to serve God, once they grasp the spiritual import of what is being asked. Countless men have already come to the defense of women, urging them toward ordination.

"A far deeper question, however, is pertinent here. If ordination is the action of the church in response to God's call to individuals, it can scarcely be treated as a right by either sex, can it? But even if it were a right, is not our proper concern within the church the rights of others rather than insistence upon our own? . . . A woman's chief responsibility, then, would be to try to make clear to men within the church what she feels her call to be. Can she not, then, trust men to do their best to help her?"--One would hope the answer would be yes, but our history leads us to be a little doubtful. (Pp. 71, 72.)

Mrs. Gibson continues: ". . . Just as the directives given to slaves and masters in the New Testament, when obeyed, created a climate in which slavery was no longer tenable, so instructions to husbands and wives, when followed faithfully, create a home life in which the question of relative authority ceases to be significant. The same principle applies to the church. Where Christian love exists, the talents and training of both sexes can be given full scope without male 'authority' becoming a touchy issue." (P. 72.)

The WCC published report in 1971 stated, in the chapter by Dr. Tine Govaart-Halkes concerning developments in the Roman Catholic Church: ". . . we proposed that everywhere where women could be involved, they ought to be, e.g. in pastoral work, in teaching, in preaching, in the more critical and prophetic way of being engaged in politics, and so on; and that further examination be undertaken to promote the full ministry of women, provided of course they feel called, and have very good qualifications and training." (Pp. 38, 39.)

An American Presbyterian ordained woman asked: "Since when did God give men a monopoly over His Church?"

Pastorship in our church, when opened to trained women, should not be set up in a restrictive way, though they may well begin in small and rural churches and as assistants in large churches. Any restrictions will tend to "jell" and perpetuate themselves indefinitely.

Rev. Phyllis Guthardt, a Methodist, wrote the chapter "Reflections on the Ministry, with Special Reference to the Problems and Opportunities of the Ordained Woman" in the 1971 WCC publication. She stated concerning roles: ". . . It is relatively easy for an ordained woman to fit into a hospital pattern. So many women hold responsible posts there that a woman trained in another field is readily assimilated. A woman chaplain seems acceptable to most patients. . . . Home pastoral visiting and involvement with families is almost second nature to a woman, and she has easy, natural access to the

kitchen and the more personal side of family relationships. . . . men will come to a woman minister without embarrassment on a wide range of problems--personal, financial, sexual. . . . She should try not to think and speak primarily as a woman. . . . Probably many of the problems of the ordained woman are related to the stereotypes society holds, (a) of a woman, and (b) of a minister, so that suspicion attaches to the one or the other who is out of an accepted role. . . . The unthinkingly superior attitude of married women to a single woman can also make her defensive. . . . Undoubtedly the greatest frustration to an ordained woman, as to others, is the unquestioned assumption by so many men of inherent male superiority in all things! Rare still is the man who firmly and utterly believes Paul's dictum in Gal. 3:27-28--and even Paul lapsed from his splendid insight. . . . I greatly enjoy teaching the faith to children and adults, and helping them make sense of it in their own lives. I take pleasure also in seeing women gain enthusiasm for their own capacities and increase their self-confidence--not for feminist reasons, but for human and Christian ones. Related to this is gratification in seeing the principle of women in the ministry gradually become accepted--again not for personal motives, but because of a fundamental belief in the rightness of it. . . . It is essential that some be ordained to demonstrate the oneness and impartiality of the Body of Christ, and of the ministry within it." (Pp. 54-58.)

Georgia Harkness said: "I am not saying that every woman should be ordained, any more than that every man should be. I contend simply that sex alone should not be a barrier. . . . It is only the woman who is qualified by talent, by training, and by personal Christian vitality and dedication that is under consideration in the entire matter. . . ." (P. 206.) She concludes her book: ". . . What the future holds we cannot know. I am confident that the church will not go under in the tide of pessimism that engulfs our world. I am equally confident that the just demands of women for equality will not be

silenced. It is my earnest hope that both men and women, in both church and society, may advance in the service of God and of his world." (P. 227.)

Bibliography

- American Psychologist, July, 1973, p. 575, art. by Bernice E. Lott, "Who Wants the Children? Some Relationships among Attitudes toward Children, Parents, and the Liberation of Women." Bam, Brigalia, ed. What Is Ordination Coming To? Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971.
- Daly, Mary. The Church and the Second Sex. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- Doely, Sarah Bentley, ed. Women's Liberation and the Church. The New Demand for Freedom in the Life of the Christian Church. New York: Association Press, 1970.
- Ermarth, Margaret Sittler. Adam's Fractured Rib. Observations on Women in the Church. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.
- Gibson, Elsie. When the Minister Is a Woman. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.
- Govaart-Halkes, Tine. "Developments in the Roman Catholic Church Regarding the Question of the Ordination of Women," in What Is Ordination Coming To? ed. by Brigalia Bam. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971.
- Guthardt, Phyllis. "Reflections on the Ministry, with Special Reference to the Problems and Opportunities of the Ordained Woman," in What Is Ordination Coming To? ed. by Brigalia Bam. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971.
- Hardesty, Nancy. "Using Woman," in Christianity Today, August 11, 1972, p. 28.
- Harkness, Georgia. Unpopular Opinions: Twenty-One Essays. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1947. Republished in A Matter of Eternity. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973.
- _____. Women in Church and Society. A Historical and Theological Inquiry. New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972.

Larsson, Elisabeth, M.D. "We Need More Women Physicians," Review and Herald,
March 8, 1973, p. 14.

Merriem, Eve. After Nora Slammed the Door. Cleveland and New York: The World
Publishing Company, 1964.

Morris, Joan. The Lady Was a Bishop. The Hidden History of Women with Clerical
Ordination and the Jurisdiction of Bishops. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1973.

Packard, Vance. The Sexual Wilderness. The Contemporary Upheaval in Male-Female
Relationships. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1968.

Way, Peggy Ann. "An Authority of Possibility for Women in the Church," in
Women's Liberation and the Church, ed. by Sarah Bentley Doely. New York:
Association Press, 1970.

Wagoner, Walter D. "Ordained Women," review of three books, in Christian
Century, May 23, 1973, p. 609.

White, Ellen G. Education. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing
Association, 1903.

World Council of Churches. The Deaconess. Geneva: World Council of Churches,
1966.