

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN IN AUSTRALIA:
AN "ENDURING PROBLEM" IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

"If men could learn from history, what lessons it might teach us! But passion and party blind our eyes, and the light which experience gives is a lantern on the stern, which shines only on the waves behind us!" Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772-1834.

Although Australian Christians began to discuss the role of women in church and society during the nineteenth century, it was not until 1927 that Congregationalists ordained the first woman as a minister. Four decades later Methodists voted to ordain women as clergy, a step repeated by Presbyterians in 1974. Since then, some Baptist and Churches of Christ congregations have received women as ordained clergy. During 1986, Anglicans began ordaining women as deacons, that is, to the first of their three historic orders of ministry. In recent years, some attention has been given to this issue by most other communions. Hence it seems appropriate to examine the ordination of women within an historical perspective, and thus to inform the ongoing discussion with the experience of the past.

Such a task is not a straightforward one. Coleridge noted in 1831 that "passion and party blind our eyes" to the lessons of the past, and historical illumination "shines only on the waves behind us."¹ However, this paper contends the lantern of history might be employed usefully as a fog-light on the fore-end of the Christian ship in this country.

Female ordination is of some relevance to about three-quarters of the current Australian population, those who identify themselves as Christians.² Beyond that group, however, the question has a social significance for the entire population, and continues to command considerable space in the print and electronic media.³ There has been a tendency for each denomination to struggle with this issue afresh, working through the relevant questions in isolation from the experience of other communions.⁴ Hence it is hoped that this paper can underline the importance of learning from all those who identify with the mission of Jesus Christ.

At the outset it must be stated that neither religion nor women's issues can be addressed fruitfully in isolation from their context within the rest of a given culture. Our historians are clarifying why Christianity is still a disadvantaged immigrant in Australia. During its founding years, our "unnatural" society was characterized by the brokenness and coldness of an "extensive gaol."⁵ Even after a century, late in an era of optimism, the stance of the churches was a defensive one.⁶ On the eve of our bi-centenary, we are in a better position to document our "indecisive hoverings between the City of God and the City of Man," and to determine whether Australia is a "Christian nation in search of a religion or a heathen nation in flight from one."⁷ But we still wistfully admit the church is not yet an indigenous adult inhabitant of this continent.⁸

An understanding of this historical framework is crucial for interpreting the status and role of women in Australian society and within the churches. During the 1890s, first-wave feminism was a factor in gaining the vote for women. It took another seventy years for second-wave feminism to document why women in

this land of mateship still came "pretty close to top rating as the 'Doormats of the Western World'."⁹ Perhaps, then, it is not just a coincidence that where the stain of convictism was deepest, the first Australian denomination has experienced the most profound pain over the ordination of women.

Given the derived and dependent nature of Australian Christianity, it is worth noting that we have produced an extensive literature broadly relevant to the ordination of women.¹⁰ While it is fair to acknowledge our general deep indebtedness to overseas authors, genuine independence and maturity on the subject in hand are becoming evident increasingly.¹¹ At this point it may be useful to survey, briefly, seven components illustrative of the worldwide discussion of female ordination, all of which (and more) are canvassed at length by Australian authors. However, since footnote ten lists readily-available bibliographies, for reasons of space most footnotes in this section have been eliminated.

Firstly, great importance attaches to the interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis. There is broad agreement that male and female together form the image of God according to Genesis 1, but the order of creation in Genesis 2 and 3, and especially the effects of the fall in Genesis 3, are variously understood. Some see no special significance in the sequence of the divine acts of creation recounted in Genesis 2. Others affirm that as man was created first, he is pre-eminent; yet others declare that woman is the ultimate expression of God's creative purpose and activity. Some assert the Creator's statement that Adam would rule Eve is prescriptive, whereas others declare it is not a statement of the ideal, but a sad announcement of the consequences of sin.

Secondly, in terms of the order of the biblical sequence, but dominant in importance, is the life and ministry of Christ. Jesus is seen as dispensing with many cultural and religious practices of his day by accepting women as persons, ministering to them, accepting their ministry, and rebuking those objecting to his radical stance. The significance of the gospel records in this regard is expressed conveniently in The Australian Evangelical: "Twentieth century women are not the first to have encountered strong opposition from men seeking to preserve what they see as 'the truth.' Jesus, who said 'I am the truth,' must surely be our supreme example in these matters."¹² Over against this it is argued that since Jesus chose men only as apostles, women are excluded from the Christian ministry.

A third focus of attention, relating to the ordination of women, arises from Pauline statements interpreted as being pro and con. Most often, three passages are used to deny ordination.¹³ Another text yields an opposite conclusion when interpreted in terms of a Paul who "practised what he preached," not only stating "the equal status of man and woman as a Christian principle," but working alongside women and referring to them as "fellow workers, deacons, and possibly in one case as an apostle." This view acknowledges that "progressive as Paul was in his thinking and in his behaviour, he was sensitive to his culture and suggested certain restraints appropriate to particular settings."¹⁴ And it claims it employs sound exegetical principles to probe the actual meaning of the New Testament documents. While lexical, syntactical, contextual and historical data are used by both camps, they are more frequent amongst the supporters of female ordination.

A fourth aspect of this discussion focuses upon the history of Christian thought concerning male and female roles in the church. While this dimension is closely related to the exegesis of Genesis and the New Testament, it gives major attention to the Church Fathers, Roman Catholic, and Protestant thinkers. Within this process, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Wesley and many more are either blamed or honoured for positions currently advocated by Christians.¹⁵

Fifthly, this ongoing discussion places emphasis upon ecclesiological matters, particularly the governance of churches, their polity and liturgy. In Roman Catholicism this may mean addressing the authority of tradition and the papacy; in Anglicanism it may involve examining the nature of the church and its governance, the roles of its various clerical orders, and the authority of the archbishop or bishop over against that of the clergy and laity. Also, this discussion may involve matters of worship, including the advocacy of either traditionalist or non-sexist language, or the authority required for a person to celebrate communion. Again, the focus may be upon the practical issues which accompany the ordination of women, like equal pay and the mobility of clergy when transfer to other congregations or duties may be necessary.

A sixth area of discussion concerns a cluster of more strictly theological matters. The questions are many. Does the nature of God require male representation only, or are the functions of ministry best fulfilled by both male and female? Will the doctrine of revelation/inspiration, and the consequent authority of Scripture, be eroded if historical influences are admitted in the Bible? Is the mission of the church best fulfilled by men only, or do the talents of women contribute richly? Has God limited spiritual

gifts to males, or do females also give evidence that they bear the gifts of ministry? Does a mature pastoral theology imply one sex or both sexes should address the needs of people who are the object of ministry? What, after all, is the theological meaning of ordination?¹⁶

A seventh focus of attention addresses what H. Richard Niebuhr calls "the enduring problem," that is, the question of how Christians should relate to their society. Are they to be isolated from its struggles, immersed within its currents, or able in some way to negotiate their responses in terms of Scripture and Christian values?¹⁷ The two opposite answers, withdrawal from society and immersion within it, are variously practiced by individual Christians and denominations. But Niebuhr's suggestion seems accurate on this and other topics: the Christians of the middle, those who attempt a creative tension between "Christ and Culture," are in the majority. Further, it is evident that an increasing number of both the churchd and the unchurchd are accepting of the ordination of women as clergy. If this majority opinion is correct in terms of Scripture and Christian heritage, the dissenters need to present cogent arguments on other grounds. If the masses are incorrect, the dissenters need to protect their stance in a better way than they have in the past, otherwise their position will be eroded entirely. It is submitted that even a dim lantern-light (Coleridge's history!) is of some help in assessing the past relating to this complex matter. Hence we shall now observe some of the historical processes which account for the present stances which are observable within various Australian churches.¹⁸

THE UNITING CHURCH AND ITS CONSTITUENT DENOMINATIONS

The question of the ordination of women was settled affirmatively by Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians before they achieved organic union as The Uniting Church in Australia during 1977. Franklin notes in her introduction to The Force of the Feminine that, with reference to this matter, "the Uniting Church is in all respects the most advanced," when compared with the Anglican and Roman Catholic communions.¹⁹ In this section we shall add the equivalent of some historical footnotes to the volume Franklin edited, with special reference to the cogent chapter by Marie Tulip which documents the "highly successful" process, "what would now be called an affirmative action program," undertaken in the Uniting Church between 1977 and 1983.²⁰

The Congregationalists

According to a 1978 volume, Winifred Kiek (1884-1975) became "the first woman to be ordained to the Christian ministry in Australia."²¹ Mrs Kiek earned three degrees (B.A., M.A., B.D.), and engaged in various types of ministry between the years 1921 and 1949. Her ordination, called by her biographer "an historic event for Australia," occurred in 1927. During 1944-5 she was Acting Chairman of the Congregational Union of South Australia, and in 1948-9 she was vice-president of the same body. One of her chief desires was "to emphasize the fact that a woman may have a message from God, just as a man." Margaret Knauerhase, her biographer, acknowledges Winifred Kiek "was not the only ordained woman in the world," but was "drawn into fellowship with others in the Society for the Ministry of Women, and in their publications of 1929 and 1930 her name and activities appear." Further, as late as 1963, Mrs Kiek "was

invited to contribute to the Women's Pulpit, the organ of the American Association of Women Ministers, which had a membership of four hundred ordained women."²²

Other Congregational women were also ordained in Australia ere long. Mary Joan Hore (died 20 July 1955), ordained 28 May 1931, ministered from 1928-40 in New South Wales and from 1942-6 in Tasmania. Gwendoline Estelle Hewett, ordained 10 June 1943, ministered in six different South and Western Australian parishes prior to her retirement in 1962. Kate Hutley's name also belongs on this list. And, although not ordained, Lilian C. Wells was President of the Congregational Union of New South Wales from 1975-7, and the first moderator of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia from 1977-8. Further, of the first ten moderators in NSW, two have been women, since Freda Whitlam held this office 1985/6.²³

The Methodists

According to Joseph Ritson, "in nothing did John Wesley reveal more strikingly his ability to rise above prejudice than in his attitude toward the employment of women as preachers." Indeed Wesley "believed that pious women were perfectly free to preach Christ in public, and the Conference of 1787 expressed itself as having no objection to Sarah Mallett being 'a preacher in our connexion so long as she preaches the Methodist doctrine and attends to our discipline'." Ritson says that on another occasion Wesley recorded hearing "the sainted Fletcher preach an excellent sermon in the church in the morning, and Mrs Fletcher 'a more excellent sermon' in the school-room in the evening." Also, Wesley "sent a female preacher to revive the declining cause in Norwich."²⁴

Primitive Methodism followed this heritage, and thus "female ministry" became one of its "most picturesque features." Ritson speaks of "the immense value of gifted and devoted women in evangelistic work," and adds: "Many hundreds of women in this way became local preachers in the early years, and quite a number were employed as regular travelling preachers." He details the courage, "fortitude and physical endurance" of these women, despite "popular and ecclesiastical" prejudice due to "the disability of sex."²⁵

This English background was repeated in the same culture by the Bible Christian Connexion, one of "the many indirect results of the great Methodist Revival of Cornwall in 1814."²⁶ From William O'Bryan's visit to Hallaborough in 1816, a Bible Christian Society was formed, and "from it many persons, both men and women," went forth to preach. Women pioneered "evangelistic work" for the Bible Christians, and at their first Conference at Baddash, Launceston, in 1819, "the subject of a female ministry was largely discussed, and the employment of women as preachers unanimously approved." A sermon by William O'Bryan, printed in the Arminian Magazine for 1823, was "in vindication of women preaching." The author strengthened "the argumentative part of his discourse by apt quotations from Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary," and made "good use of what is undoubtedly the strongest argument in favour of women preaching, viz., that through God's blessing they have, in many cases, been made extraordinarily useful in the conversion of sinners."²⁷

Even though Wesleyan Methodists did not share the same enthusiasm for social issues as the Bible Christians and the Primitive Methodists,²⁸ organic union was consummated by the three Australian groups in 1902, at which time they

adopted as their name the Methodist Church of Australasia.²⁹ During the 1920s several Annual Conference meetings of the denomination accepted women as "Local Preachers." On 3 November 1927 the President-General felt free to state his opinion "that, until such usage is disallowed by the General Conference, it must be regarded as being in accordance with the laws which relate to Local Preachers."³⁰ The issue of women as candidates for the ministry was a more complex one, and, in the mind of the President-General, they could not be accepted without legislation being effected by the General Conference. Indeed, he said, the laws and regulations "appear to me to be based on the assumption that such candidates will be men."³¹ Hence the General Conference of 1929 appointed a 23-member committee "to gather information as to the practicability of admitting women to the Ministry of our Church." The said Committee was also "to consider the question in all its aspects and to forward its findings to the Annual Conferences," and it was thereafter to report to the General Conference of 1932.³²

The Tenth General Conference which began in Sydney on 19 May 1932 affirmed "the principle that an unmarried woman who believes herself called to the work of the ministry of our Church, should be allowed to offer under the conditions prescribed in the Book of Laws." However, due to "the practical difficulties occasioned by our itinerancy, and also in view of the vote registered in our Church Courts," a committee was asked "to indicate the types of ministry for which women are specially fitted, and the conditions under which they may be accepted, and trained, and that a report be made to the next Conference." The "Pastoral Address" of 1932 advised members throughout Australia that the Conference had given "much thought" to "the question of the admission of women to the ordained ministry." It was "not doubted" by the Conference "that women

possess the spiritual and mental qualifications for the work of the ministry," but it was observed that "there are practical difficulties in incorporating a female ministry into the established order of the Church, and especially into an order so intricate as the itinerant system of Methodism." Hence, the President-General and the Secretary-General reported, "the Conference has appointed a committee to enquire whether the practical difficulties can be surmounted, and, if so, in what way."³³

Australian Methodism surmounted the "practical difficulties" in two main ways during the next three decades. First, an Order of Deaconesses was proposed at the 1935 General Conference. These women, "except in the cases of special fitness," were to be "at least 20 years of age, and not more than 30." They were to engage in the study of Scripture, Homiletics, English, History, Psychology and other subjects for two years, and were thereafter to be under probation for a further two years. Then, those who "successfully passed all the tests shall be recommended for examination by the Annual Deaconesses' Convocation," and dedicated at the Annual Conference in "a specially-prepared Order of Service" by the President of the Conference. Until her retirement at 55 years of age, or after 25 years of service, a Deaconess was to be "under the same pastoral relationship to the Superintendent of the Circuit in which she is employed as is a colleague in the Circuit," and her Superintendent's annual report about her was to "include the questions usually asked at the Pastoral Sessions concerning each minister."³⁴

By accepting this part of the committee report, the 1935 General Conference affirmed "the general principle" that an unmarried female could feel herself "called to the ministry of our Church" and "should be allowed to offer under

the same conditions prescribed in the Book of Laws." But the Conference also agreed that women "could not be made subject to the itinerancy," nor could they be guaranteed "continuity of employment." Hence the Conference declared "that, for the present, our Church is unable to accept women candidates into its ministry."³⁵

The institution of an Order of Deaconesses, in the mind of the 1935 Conference, offered "a suitable opportunity for consecrated service" by females, but it took until 1945 to officially establish the Order.³⁶ The 1938 General Conference directed a committee "to submit a report and recommendation to the Annual Conference of 1939, with a view to the early establishment of such an order,"³⁷ and in 1941 young women were "encouraged to avail themselves of the facilities for training now offered in Victoria and South Australia."³⁸ But the 1945 General Conference revised the Constitution of the Order of Deaconesses, providing for pay "equal at least" to "the minimum stipend for single Probationers,"³⁹ and requiring retirement at 60 years of age. On 26 January 1948, it was reported that fifteen young women had entered training in four states, six were already on probation, and nine had achieved "Full Status" within the Order of Deaconesses.⁴⁰ By November 1950 the three phases of the Order included 47 women, with Western Australia sending its first candidate to Melbourne for training in 1951. The work of Deaconesses was "varied and has even wider possibilities," the 1951 General Conference was told. It included "the normal pastoral work in Circuits and City Missions." Although Deaconesses were "not committed to celibacy," engagement during a woman's training meant her training was discontinued, and she forfeited dedication to the Order. But a widow might be received back into the Order.⁴¹

As time went by the Constitution was further refined,⁴² and the number of Deaconesses grew: 1953 saw 70 Deaconesses in service, or in training in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide; by 1957, 74 women were involved. But there were resignations due to engagement and marriage, and the Order of Deaconesses was doomed to decline as moves to ordain women as ministers were successful.⁴³ But the General Conference delegates of 1954 were told that their Deaconesses had "rendered splendid service in the pastoral work of our Circuits and Missions, giving leadership in Youth and Sunday School work, and in the initial work in new housing areas."⁴⁴ They were also involved in "Chaplaincy in hospitals, sanatoria and women's prisons, in Young People's Departments, and special appointments in the Inland Mission."⁴⁵ Gradually the requirement that engagement meant resignation was softened, for it was observed that "out of their training and experience" married Deaconesses "continued to enrich the Church."⁴⁶

The issue of ordination versus dedication for Deaconesses surfaced again in 1960, and plans were laid for this matter to be "finally determined at the General Conference of 1963."⁴⁷ At the 1963 General Conference it was decided to "investigate the possibility of making it permissible for deaconesses to marry without the necessity of resignation and consider the provision of continuing work for married deaconesses." Also, it was recommended for the Annual Conference Deaconess Committee to "arrange a service where deaconesses already received in a service of dedication shall be ordained by the laying on of hands by the President and Secretary of Conference and the Warden of the Order." Further, the expanded Constitution provided that "a deaconess who has

been "admitted into full membership with the order shall be ordained by the imposition of hands according to the form provided in the Book of Offices authorized by the General Conference."⁴⁸

Following on in this vein, the 1966 Pastoral Letter addressed "To the Methodist People," and read from all the pulpits of the Church throughout Australasia, said (in part): "Conference decided that, as from Annual Conferences in 1968, women may offer as candidates for the ministry of our Church. This is a historic decision. How many will do so, only the future will reveal: but the opening of this door to women of our Church was supported by an overwhelming majority of representatives."⁴⁹ The 1966 General Conference also reviewed the history of this matter from 1927 to 1963, and published a summary of the steps taken. Further, a Commission on the Structure of the Ministry was appointed; among the subjects for its inquiry was "the practicability of the admission of women to the ordained ministry of the Church."⁵⁰ In 1963 the General conference had voted to ask the Deaconess Committee to "investigate the possibility of raising the standard of entrance to the same level as that of the ministry."⁵¹ Also, a detailed report from its Committee on the Ministry of the Church brought the whole subject of ministerial functions into sharp focus.⁵² Thus the way was prepared for an informed decision to be made by the General Conference of 1966.

Therefore, the 1966 General Conference climaxed almost forty years of progress on the issue of female ordination within the Methodist Church of Australasia. It is clear that a sequence of steps needed to be taken over many years in order for the Methodists to feel they were ready to ordain women. First, they agreed "no matter of principle is involved in regard to the admission of women

to the ordained ministry of the Church." Secondly, they worked through "the practicability of the admission of women to the ordained ministry of the Church." Thirdly, they openly recognized that the law of their Church required to be amended so that women could be received into the ordained ministry. Fourthly, they agreed "the same conditions should apply to the admission of women into the ordained ministry in regard to candidature, training, ordination and appointments," as obtained for men. And fifthly, they declared that females had a specific responsibility in that, "as with men, women should offer as candidates for the ministry if they believe themselves to be called to the ministry."⁵³

Yet the Methodists were realistic enough to record their opinion that when women offered themselves for ministry, "certain matters will arise." The facilities in training colleges would require modification, as they presumed students were men only. Women had different personality traits from men; hence they thought team ministries may provide a desirable balance. There would be social prejudice inside the Church as well as outside of it; but they noted this applied "to all professions and the Church must help overcome such prejudices rather than encourage them." Marriages might be placed under "acute tension;" indeed, if the husband were an unbeliever or non-member there could be "grave difficulties." But in regard to such issues, they said, "the Church cannot legislate ahead;" it "would have to be guided in situations as they arose." The bearing and nurture of children may necessitate "domestic assistance" for a female minister, or perhaps she may require ten years "without pastoral charge" before resuming ministry. But over against all such difficulties and limitations, they believed they must set the advantages which could accrue to the work of the ministry through the special gifts and graces

with which women are endowed by God. They believed their Church might be enriched greatly through the special ministries which undoubtedly would develop. Hence they concluded: "An examination of the practicability of the admission of women to the ordained ministry of the Church reveals no difficulties which cannot be overcome as we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit." Thus they proceeded to draft the enabling laws and create the machinery necessary so that in two years, that is, during 1968, women would be admitted to the ordained ministry.⁵⁴

The Presbyterians

Deaconesses have served the Presbyterian Church in Australia throughout the present century, with their work often becoming that of "parish assistants" since the 1950s. Further, women have been eligible for election by the congregation to the office of elder since 1967, the same year in which the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Australia appointed Rev. Alan Smart to study the matter of female ordination. His detailed report, presented to the Assembly in 1970, was entitled "The Ordination of Women to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments," and stated at the outset: "In this third and final report on this topic to the General Assembly, it is the intention of this writer, with the approval of the Committee {Service of the Laity in the Church and Community}, to argue that women should be eligible for ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments."⁵⁵ Overtures were also received by the same General Assembly from both Victoria and New South Wales, appealing strongly for women to be ordained. Smart's report was commended to the states and presbyteries for detailed consideration, and in 1974 the General Assembly declared that "women shall be eligible for admission to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Presbyterian Church of Australia on the same terms

and conditions as are applicable to men."⁵⁶ During this process, the General Assembly of 1973 noted that "the decision in recent years that has made it possible to elect women to eldership has highlighted the desirability and need to invite and appoint women to the whole range of Church activities and committees," adding that "the Church greatly needs the woman's point of view."⁵⁷

So, by 1973 the Congregationalists had "a fair proportion" of ordained women, the Presbyterians "had 8 women and over 530 men, and the Methodist Conference had 33 women and 520 men."⁵⁸ Fourteen years later the Presbyterians who chose not to join the Uniting Church in 1977 (some 45,000 throughout Australia) have about five ordained women, while the Uniting Church in Australia has over 100 ordained women serving its congregations.⁵⁹

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Anglican Church of Australia is the oldest and currently the second-largest denomination in this country. Although the nineteenth century witnessed much discussion amongst Anglicans concerning women and their ministry, this phase of the debate "never contemplated ordination of females." The concept of deaconesses, transplanted from the Rhine to England in 1836, was explored vigorously by Australian Anglicans before they agreed in 1885 to "set apart" deaconesses. By 1899 the church had in Sydney "a quietly flourishing institution" for the training of deaconesses, and in 1922 it extended their role to include some liturgical functions. Thereafter, the order of deaconesses remained "an attractive avenue for female ministry to many conservative evangelical churchmen."⁶⁰ But the continued movement toward the

ordination of women into the three historic orders of clergy in the Anglican Church (deacon, priest, bishop) reached a high point when the General Synod of 1977 endorsed the conclusion of its Commission on Doctrine that "there are no fundamental theological objections to the admission of women to the diaconate in this church."⁶¹

Already by that time there was pressure to ordain women as priests. Hence, in his Presidential Address to the Diocesan Synod in 1976, the Archbishop of Sydney called for "a fresh study of the meaning and value of ordination" by "a small, truly competent group of persons" given the task of preparing "a sound and reliable statement on the theology of ordination." The report made by this group, first published in the Southern Cross during 1979, aided Anglicans in their discussion of the diaconate, the nature of the priesthood, and the ordination of women. Perhaps the key question in the ongoing discussion, especially for the large Diocese of Sydney, has not been whether women should be ordained, but whether they should be given "the cure [Latin, care] and charge of a congregation." This was recognized as "a more rigorous question" for Anglicans than for those churches in which a minister may be understood as "one of a college of presbyters in a congregation." The church felt unclear what the ramifications might be, "outside the well-recognized social structure of marriage," of the "headship principle" enunciated by Saint Paul in Ephesians 5. Hence it observed that until the "potential for positive ministry by women" was "fully explored," the body of Christ was "maimed in one of its hands."⁶²

As could be expected, earnest discussion continued, especially within the Diocese of Sydney. By 1984 the Synod Committee recorded "three views concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood," but found "a

considerable degree of acceptance" was given to a draft resolution "mindful of the God-given distinction between men and women," which honoured "the principles of revelation as contained in the New Testament" and sought the application of those principles "fittingly in the culture of our own day, without doing violence to the conscience of any."⁶³ The 1984 report and its appendix were then printed and distributed to all parishes, and ministers were encouraged to draw this document to the attention of all interested persons for discussion within their parishes. Half of the twelve-page brochure was devoted to ten "ARGUMENTS FOR ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO THE PRIESTHOOD" and nine "ARGUMENTS AGAINST ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO THE PRIESTHOOD."⁶⁴ It was proposed to ask the next General Synod to allow women and men to be ordained to the Presbyterate in dioceses where the full assent of the Synod of the Diocese was given, and provided that such women priests were "not licensed in any Diocese to the sole cure of souls without the Synod of that Diocese having first signified its assent." Significantly, both the General Synod and the Sydney Synod of 1985 approved the ordination of women as deacons.⁶⁵

But a motion to ordain women as priests was lost by two votes, and the convictions of Donald W.B. Robinson, who had been appointed Archbishop of Sydney during 1982, led to a delay in implementing the decisions of the General Synod and the Sydney Synod regarding the ordination of women as deacons.⁶⁶ Archbishop Robinson declared the decision of the General Synod was not operative in his diocese, and sought a ruling from the seven-member Appellate Tribunal concerning the legality of ordaining women as deacons within the Anglican Church in Australia.⁶⁷ While the vote of the Tribunal was six-to-one in favour of the legality of female ordination, the Archbishop of Sydney continued to withstand the decisions of the General Synod and his own synod.

He disregarded the finding of the Appellate Tribunal of which he is member, and remained unmoved by the stance of the the Primate of Australia, and that of the majority of Anglicans.⁶⁸ He also evoked strident criticism, as an evangelical, for his idealogical partnership on this issue with Anglo-Catholics and the controversial Bishop of London.⁶⁹ In particular, the Movement for the Ordination of Women led the assault upon his position on wide-ranging grounds, and pointed out English, North American, New Zealand and other decisions which contrast with his stance.⁷⁰ By May 1987 Anglican magazines and the public press had hailed the ordination of thirty deacons in other dioceses. However, the August 1987 General Synod, called especially to decide the issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood, caused a postponement of this matter for perhaps two years. The required majorities in the House of Laity and the House of Bishops voted in favour, but the vote fell four short of the required 65 per cent in the House of Clergy.⁷¹

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The response from Rome in 1976, indicating the church could not see its way clear to authorize the ordination of women, has in no way closed the discussion of this issue within the Australian Roman Catholic Church.⁷² Indeed, the debate continues on several levels. Firstly, here as elsewhere, Catholic biblical scholars, theologians and historians are continuing to refine the exegetical and traditional bases of this element of their church's teaching, frequently in favour of ordaining women.⁷³ Secondly, there is reason to believe the Catholic Church may follow a process in this matter similar to that taken on other issues.⁷⁴ Thirdly, the pastoral theology of the church is being explored and extended to accomodate an expanded role for the ministry of

women.⁷⁵ Fourthly, the Catholic Church in Australia has instituted a plan to raise the consciousness of women in this country, and, viewed in historical terms, this is bound to increase the pressure to admit women to all levels of the church's ministry.⁷⁶ Fifthly, however, there is current evidence that conservative forces and the hierarcical structure of the church can contain and cancel developments which seriously threaten the church's doctrine and practice.⁷⁷ Hence it is unclear at this time how the attitudes within its Australian constituency will be regulated by the Australian hierarchy, and that in Rome, within the near future.

OTHER CATHOLIC CHURCHES

Following the disruption of the Second World War, many immigrants have come to Australia who now practice their various religions more or less in the same way as they did within their countries of origin. While some two percent of the Australian population "identify with religions other than Christianity" (Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, and others),⁷⁸ about three percent identify with one of about eighteen Eastern Orthodox bodies currently represented in Australia (Greek, Romanian, Russian, Coptic, and others).⁷⁹ Although it is important to consider the status and role of women within Eastern Orthodoxy, the limits of space permit only three brief observations at this point. First, ecclesiastical control of these fledgling churches in Australia is exercised usually by patriarchs still resident in, or at least trained within, Middle Eastern or Slavic countries. Second, it is very difficult for the leaders and parents of these churches to maintain the allegiance and practice of the young people raised in Australia. Third, the

process of assimilation into Australian society may be expected to follow patterns which are evident in countries which have received large numbers of immigrants during a longer period, such as the United States.

OTHER SMALL DENOMINATIONS

A number of small, chiefly evangelical denominations have encountered the issue of females in ministry and formulated varying responses. The Churches of Christ, the Baptists, the Seventh-day Adventists, and the Salvation Army will be considered briefly at this point.

The Churches of Christ in some parts of Australia identify with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, whereas the Churches of Christ in other areas feel a greater affinity with the independent Christian Churches in North America.⁸⁰ A similar variety exists within the Australian congregations respecting the ordination of women as elders and ministers. The Churches of Christ (New South Wales) Theological College commenced in 1942, admitted the first woman student in 1945, and continues to enrol both men and women as students.⁸¹ The twelve graduates of 1986 included a married couple who were called to engage in a team ministry in South Australia.⁸² Prior to his untimely death in 1980, Principal Rex Ellis of the New South Wales Theological College wrote a paper on the ministry of women, and the Federal Conference of May 1984 requested further papers be prepared on this subject. In response, two pastors, two women, and two theological college principals prepared 46 pages of typescript for study by local congregations. The biblical texts discussed and the philosophical arguments used were broadly similar to those current within other Scripture-focused communions. In recent years a

considerable number of women have been ordained as elders; indeed, at least one congregation has an equal number of men and women as elders.⁸³ Some South Australian and Victorian congregations have called and ordained women as their pastors, and it appears a small number of New South Wales congregations may take this step soon. The main Churches of Christ magazine, The Australian Christian, carries frequent articles, news and letters concerning women in eldership and ministry which, taken together, indicate a variety of opinions still exist on these subjects. Some individuals believe "the ordination of women is a symptom of a society exhibiting moral decay," or declare that male dominance is essential as a shield against a "humanistic society." Others imply the Churches of Christ are taking longer than necessary to achieve the "correct juxtaposition" of males and females.⁸⁴ However, there is an acute awareness within the denomination of the exegetical grounds which have led other Christians to proceed with the ordination of women,⁸⁵ and with over fifteen women ordained as ministers in Australia thus far, it appears the tendency is toward a more general acceptance of this practice.⁸⁶

Baptist heritage includes the recognition of women as preachers since the seventeenth century, and the ordination of women in most countries of the world.⁸⁷ Although a number of years ago the Assembly of the Baptist Union of New South Wales resolved not to ordain women as ministers, more recently the Baptist Unions in Victoria and South Australia have approved female ordination in principle, and ordained four women.⁸⁸ However, while Baptists hesitate to generalize, due to the congregational structure of their denomination, some of them admit the ordination of women remains a vexing issue on which there is little harmony. Baptists have been accustomed to seeing men ordained for pastoral ministry and women commissioned for overseas mission service, or to

holding dedication services for women who will serve local congregations in particular aspects of ministry. According to Rev. Dr. J. R. Robinson, Queensland has no provision for the ordination of women, though the matter is under discussion. The subject has not been considered in Tasmania, since there has never been an application from women in that state.

Seventh-day Adventists arose in the years 1831-1844, adopted their name in 1860, and their General Conference structure in 1863. Women featured as preachers in their Millerite phase. Thereafter, in 1881, following a thorough discussion of the issue, their General Conference recorded a "substantially unanimous" vote "that females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry."⁸⁹ However, this decision was not implemented. Within Australia from 1891-1900, one of the Adventist founders, Ellen Gould White (1827 to 1915), exercised a highly-visible ministry, preaching often to audiences of up to 2,000 persons.⁹⁰ Also, Mrs White encouraged the ministry of women, counselled they should receive equal pay for equal work, and declared that women "willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be set apart for this work by prayer and the laying on of hands."⁹¹ This opinion led Adventists to ordain deaconesses in Australia during the 1890s and beyond.⁹² But several factors, including the death of Ellen White and the economic effects of the Great Depression caused a curtailment of the ministry of Adventist women until the 1970s.⁹³ During 1973 a symposium on the role of women was held in Ohio, and the independent Adventist journal, Spectrum, published pro and con articles of a serious nature through the 1970s and 1980s.⁹⁴ While some women were ordained as elders in North America, Keith S. Parmenter, President of the South Pacific Division from 1977 to 1983, states it

was agreed North America should "experiment first." Thus the matter of females in eldership and ministry was little discussed in Australia, and Parmenter advised the South Pacific Biblical Research Committee on 9 November 1983 that this issue was "on the back burner" at Adventist world headquarters.⁹⁵ Since then the main Adventist journals with worldwide circulation, Adventist Review and Ministry, have given significant space to the various aspects of the matter, and articles and letters have appeared in the Record which serves the South Pacific region. Further, a representative committee in Australia began to explore the subject at some depth during 1985, and the world headquarters Biblical Research Institute continues serious enquiry in preparation for a definitive vote to be taken at the next General Conference session, to be held in Indianapolis during 1990.⁹⁶

The Salvation Army, from its origins about 1865, valued the stimulating example of Catherine Booth's ministry, and still remembers her as an exceptional woman, highly intelligent, a gifted speaker, and the author of The Female Ministry. Since 1880, when the Salvation Army came to Australia, women and men have had in theory, equal opportunity in its ministry. Currently many women are in charge of corps in Australia, and thus they function as the equivalent of parish ministers in other communions. Until 1986, Eva Burrows was responsible for the Army's activities in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, before becoming the second female to be appointed General of the Salvation Army at its world headquarters. The worldwide structure of the Army also includes female commissioners, one of whom is the principal of the International College for Officers in London. Major Douglas Clarke, a youth department secretary for the Army's Eastern Territory in Australia (New South Wales, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory),

completed during 1985 a research project entitled "Female Ministry in the Salvation Army." While Clarke's study examines the "nascent" periods in both England and Australia from 1850-1900, pages 124-208 explore the 1980s in Australia. He believes one outcome of Catherine Booth's struggle is seen in "an array of women ministering and proclaiming the gospel throughout more than eighty countries in the world."⁹⁷

The stances of other religious groups on this issue must not be overlooked. The Jehovah's Witnesses adopt a radical position on cultural issues, manifesting a high degree of independence in their relationship with society. Further, little theological enquiry or writing takes place in Australia; rather, the movement's literature carries the concepts current in the United States. Hence space will not be taken here to detail the considerable involvement of women in Witness ministry, or the male control of this ministry.⁹⁸ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, although controlled by a patriarchal structure, is experiencing intense discussion concerning the role of women in some areas of the world, but evidently not yet in this country. The Australian wing of the church is younger, and may be expected to follow the lead of North America for at least some time to come.⁹⁹ Further, the Pentecostal Churches in Australia are hard to classify within the space available here, due to their independence and variety. While parts of the growing charismatic movement are male-dominated, a tendency toward equality for men and women in ministry is evident in some groups.¹⁰⁰ At present, one of the first 80 women ordained as Jewish rabbis in the United States serves a congregation in Melbourne.¹⁰¹

"WHAT LESSONS IT MIGHT TEACH US!"

What lessons might we gain from this history, if we lay aside "passion and party"?

Firstly, the ordination of women is an issue illuminated by an understanding of the cluster of forces which created the Protestant Reformation. Worthy of mention in this regard are several factors: a determination to make Scripture the sole rule of faith and practice (it is a biblical concern); a willingness to discard tradition (much of church history is against it); and the affirmation of the priesthood of all believers (strong hierarchical control and forceful laity/clergy distinctions are the contrary options). Hence the acceptance of female ministry has been a frequent mark of Baptist radicalism, Wesley-inspired revivalism, and Salvation Army pragmatism. Further, a number of sectarian movements illustrate aptly one result of discontinuity from established ecclesiastical controls--the acceptance of women as spiritual leaders.¹⁰²

Secondly, the ordination of women is an issue that cannot be understood in isolation from the spirit of the age. In his seminal volume, Jesus Through the Centuries, Jaroslav Pelikan argues that "it has been characteristic of each age of history to depict Jesus in accordance with its own character." Pelikan finds his seventeenth "image" of Jesus in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when "the first-century Prophet who had preached the justice of God as it was directed against all oppressors of humanity became Jesus the Liberator." From the seventeenth century onward, both sides of the debate over slavery appealed to the biblical text in "the most persistent test case for the

complicated dilemma of the relevance of Jesus the Liberator to the social order." Since the resolution of that issue, Pelikan notes, other related matters have assumed importance for Christians, including justice for those "denied opportunity and fulfillment," and the necessity for power to be moderated by love.¹⁰³ Within this context, the radical stance of Jesus has become a paradigm for those who are committed to male/female equality in ministry.

Thirdly, the experiences of several denominations in Australia illustrate the viability of enabling particular congregations to assess their readiness for female ministry. Beginning in 1927, conscious of precedents established in the United States, Congregationalist female clergy demonstrated in several states of the Commonwealth their ability to carry on a sustained parish ministry, and to move to new locations. More recently, as Churches of Christ congregations in different states have ordained women, they have been aware in so doing that other parishes were not yet ready for this step. Further, the concepts of team-ministry and co-ministry have proved to be effective in various communions. During a time of transition, some congregations learn to relate to a woman as an associate minister, and thus are prepared to receive female clergy as parish leaders.

Fourthly, it is evident that the recognition of women in para-ministerial roles does not solve the problem of a denomination for more than a short time. Anglicans appointed deaconesses, expanded their role, and finally ordained some women as deacons--that is, into the first of their three historic orders of ministry. These well-intentioned steps have not, in the long run, freed the Church to pursue its mission in peace and harmony. The essential question

remains on the Anglican's agenda: what grounds exist for excluding women as priests and bishops? Methodists turned from the real question for three decades, establishing an Order of Deaconesses, first "set apart" but finally ordained to their role. But again they were brought face-to-face with the issue of ordaining women as clergy. Presbyterians, by ordaining elders, effectively paved the way for the ordination of women to "the ministry of the Word and Sacraments." Hence a pressing question arises for the Roman Catholic Church, in view of its "Women in the Australian Church" project. To raise the consciousness of women in this country will, inevitably, augment the voices of those calling for the ordination of women.

Further, it is vital to note that the decision to ordain women does not immediately change the character of a church by inducting large numbers of women into its clergy. The Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians, The Uniting Church, Baptists, and Churches of Christ all illustrate this point. Several factors tend to preserve the status quo. First, women move slowly into any new vocational opportunity. Second, it takes time to train candidates for ministry. Third, only a few of the women which a denomination has in para-ministerial roles are likely to have both the desire and the qualifications to transfer into full-time ministerial responsibilities. Hence churches planning to ordain women can be confident of having time to make, in a coherent manner, the numerous adjustments that are required.

Sixthly, it is crucial for the leaders of a church to employ every gift and grace of Christian leadership with reference to the ordination of women, whichever way a particular communion decides to go on this matter. The questions are emotional ones. There are biblical, historical, ecclesiological,

theological, constitutional, sociological, and pragmatic issues to be solved. To identify only one or a few of these components is to sunder relationships in part of the body of Christ. Definitive pronouncements that disregard the convictions of others, political manipulations, and undue exercise of ecclesiastical authority are bound to create tension and division. While there is no way to prevent creative change, or to facilitate it, without some pain, the history of this issue abounds with examples of both inadequate and effective leadership. We can well learn from history that statesmanlike behaviour is crucial in dealing with such a potentially-divisive matter.¹⁰⁴

A seventh "wave" of the sea behind us indicates that although the movement toward ordaining women has made fitful and slow progress, the wind of change is almost always in the one direction.¹⁰⁵ One informed observer suggested earlier this year that the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Anglican communion was as certain as death and taxes, the only matter open for question being when this would occur. Probably this prophetic statement is applicable to Australian Christianity in general, given the directions of the past century.

Numerous other dimensions of this subject could be explored fruitfully. Some fundamentalists argue, for instance, that Christians should give all their energies to spiritual matters. Some evangelicals suggest Christians should be neither the first to adopt new patterns or the last within their society to lay off old ones, with regard to social issues. It is clear that during the 1960s, some Australian Christians were on the growing edge of the movement calling for equality of males and females. Two decades later, most Christians in this country are moving toward that principle, but many of them are doing so at a

slower pace than the rest of society. Hence we need to observe the changed social context of the 1980s, influenced as it has been by "affirmative action" and anti-discrimination legislation.¹⁰⁶

It is evident that the churches of this continent still have some foggy weather ahead of them as the matter of female ordination continues to be a crucial matter for discussion. But this fact only accentuates the idea that it is time for the lantern of history to be placed where it will do more than shine only on the waves behind us. Christianity is an historical religion, but its eyes are ever focused on the future. Deep within its psyche is the vision of a new earth, an Eden restored, a redemptive plan consummated. Part of its present mission is to believe that future into being, to realize its eschatology while awaiting the ultimate fulfilment of its hope. Toward this end, the restoration of relationships is so central that a small part of it, the issue of the ordination of women to the Christian ministry, will not go away. Should we really decide to consult history on this issue, "what lessons it might teach us!" And, until we do so adequately, "the body of Christ is maimed in one of its hands."¹⁰⁷

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 3rd edition, (Oxford University Press, 1978).
- 2 Alan W. Black and Peter E. Glasner (eds.), Practice and Belief: Studies in the Sociology of Australian Religion (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), pp.15-24; Robert Humphreys and Rowland Ward, Religious Bodies in Australia (Melbourne, 1986), p. xi.
- 3 Dowdy and Lupton found "from research carried out over several years in New South Wales and Queensland" that "many women and some men are exasperated, and others amused, at still-existing prohibitions on the ordination of women as clergy." See Practice and Belief, Chapter 5. Note such feature articles as "Will Australian Anglicans Rebel?" The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 March 1987; "Quiet Rage of a Church Rebel," Weekend Australian, 25-26 April 1986; "Women of the Cloth," The Newcastle Herald, 9 May 1987; Veronica Matheson, "Why Kate Prowd is Determined to be a Priest," The Australian Women's Weekly, May 1987, pp. 20-1; "The Altared State of Women," The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 August 1987; "Good Grace Rules in the Holy Wars," The Weekend Australian, 29-30 August 1987.
- 4 Note, however, the Council of Churches has long fostered the interchange of ideas. See, for instance, its Commission on the Status of Women, Enquiry Into The Status of Women in the Church (New South Wales State Council, May-July 1974); Barbara Thiering (ed.), Deliver Us From Eve: Essays on Australian Women and Religion (Sydney: Australian Council of Churches Commission on Status of Women, 1977).
- 5 The quoted words, from the first volume of Manning Clark's monumental A History of Australia are well illustrated by Allan M. Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches (Sydney University Press, 1980).
- 6 Walter Phillips, Defending "A Christian Country" (Brisbane University Press, 1981).
- 7 Ronald Conway, The Great Australian Stupor: An Interpretation of the Australian Way of Life (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1985), pp. 161-181; Hans Mol, Religion in Australia: A Sociological Investigation (Melbourne: Nelson, 1971).
- 8 However, note the way change is occurring. See Peter Jensen, "An Agenda for Australian Evangelical Theology", The Reformed Theological Review 52 (January-April 1983): 1-9; Eric Osborn, "Variety in Australian Theology," Australian Biblical Review 34 (October 1986): 59-64. Cf. K. S. Inglis, "Religious Behaviour," in A. F. Davies and S. Encel, Australian Society (Melbourne: I. W. Cheshire, 1965), pp. 43-75.
- 9 Miriam Dixon, The Real Matilda: Woman and Identity in Australia 1788 to the Present, rev. ed. (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1976, 1983). Cf. many of the sources cited in Margaret Bettison and Anne Summers, Her Story: Australian Women in Print 1788-1975 (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1980), but note some authors disagree vigorously with Dixon's analyses.

- 10 See the sources cited in the following: Kevin Giles, Created Woman: A Fresh Study of the Biblical Teaching (Acorn Press: Canberra, 1985), pp. 71-75; Margaret Ann Franklin and Ruth Sturmey Jones (eds.), Opening the Cage: Stories of Church and Gender (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), pp. 151-156; David Wetherell (ed.) Women Priests in Australia? The Anglican Crisis (Melbourne: Spectrum Publications, 1987), pp. 19-20, 33-34, 59, 69, 79-81, 102-3, 118-119.
- 11 Note the quality of such publications as that by Margaret Ann Franklin (ed.), The Force of the Feminine: Women, Men and the Church (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986).
- 12 Sheila Pritchard, "The Ministry of Women: Some Guiding Principles", The Australian Evangelical, September/October 1986, pp. 19-21.
- 13 1 Cor. 11:3-15; 14:34; 1 Tim 2:11-14. Further, note the use of Ephesians 5 by Anglicans, in particular the Diocese of Sydney. Contrast the views of Alan Padgett, "The Pauline Rationale for Submission", The Evangelical Quarterly 59 (January 1987): 39-52.
- 14 Cf. Gal. 3:28 and Sheila Pritchard's words, as quoted, with such studies as that by G. H. R. Horsley, "Sophia: A Second Phoebe," an inaugural lecture at Macquarie University for the Society for Early Christianity, 8 May 1987 (publication forthcoming).
- 15 See reviews of the relevant literature in Australian Biblical Review, Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review, The Reformed Theological Review, and the national newsletter of the Movement for the Ordination of Women. Observe the volumes written and edited by Rosemary Radford Ruether, often quoted in Australia, and the careful research by Robert C. Doyle, "Women's Ministry, Social Flexibility and the 16th Century," The Reformed Theological Review 46 (January-April 1987): 1-9.
- 16 See Franklin (ed.), The Force of the Feminine, for the best Australian expression of these questions. On the matter of ordinations, observe The General Synod Commission on Doctrine, The Ministry of Women: A Report (Sydney: General Synod Office, 1977); Standing Committee, Diocese of Sydney, Ordination: Its Meaning, Value and Theology (Sydney: The Anglican Information Office, 1981); A reprint of a Synod-committee report on The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood (Sydney: Diocesan Secretary, 19 November, 1984). Cf. David F. Wright, "Ordination," Themelios 10 (April 1985): 5-10; David Engwicht, "The Case Against the Ordination of Women," On Being, March 1986.
- 17 H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper and Row, 1951).

- 18 I wish to thank many people for drawing my attention to sources relevant to this paper, including the following: Dr. Miriam Dixon, the University of New England; Rev. E.G. Clancy, Uniting Church Archives; Theodora Hobbs and Mr. W. (Bill) Porter-Young of the Presbyterian Church; Judy Nelson-Clegg, Women's Desk, Australian Council of Churches; Marie Tulip, author of Woman in a Man's Church and other works; Rev. Dr. J.R. Robinson, General Superintendent, Baptist Union of New South Wales; Rev. Dr. K.R. Manley, The Baptist College of Victoria; Mr. Dennis Nutt, Churches of Christ (N.S.W.) Theological College. To list these people of goodwill does not imply the assistance of many others was insignificant.
- 19 Franklin (ed.), The Force of the Feminine, p. x.
- 20 Franklin (ed.), The Force of the Feminine, pp. 120-40.
- 21 Margaret Knauerhase, Winifred: The Story of Winifred Kiek, the First Woman to be Ordained to the Christian Ministry in Australia, 1884-1975 (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1978). Cf. The Congregationalist, the paper "published under the auspices of the Congregational Union of New South Wales," for the thinking of the church about woman's ministry, at the time, especially 10 January 1927, pp. 6 and 8; 10 April 1927, p. 10; 10 May 1927, p. 10; 10 June 1927, p. 2. It was the congregation in Adelaide which was "anxious to call [Rev. Kiek] to the permanent ministry."
- 22 North American Congregationalists had 100 ordained ministers in 1927, according to Rosemary Radford Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (eds.), Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in Jewish and Christian Traditions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), pp. 315-6.
- 23 G. Lindsay Lockley, "A Biographical Card Index of Congregational Ministers in Australia, 1798-1977," Uniting Church Archives, North Parramatta; "Moderators and General Secretaries," The Uniting Church in Australia: New South Wales Synod Year Book 1987, 19:01. The NSW Synod held its tenth annual meeting 11-17 October 1986.
- 24 Joseph Ritson, The Romance of Primitive Methodism (London: Edwin Dalton, 1909), p. 133. For a fuller account and sources, see Nancy Hardesty and others, Chapter 8 in Ruether and McLaughlin (eds), Women of Spirit, pp. 226-254; cf. Maldwyn Edwards, My Dear Sister: The Story of John Wesley and the Women in His Life (Manchester: Eleanor M. Edwards, c.1980); Barbara Caine, Review of Studies in Women and Religion, Vols. 10 and 11, The Journal of Religious History 14 (June 1987): 331-333. In a letter dated 19 June 1987, Dr. G.S. Dicker notes a study exists by Paul W. Chilcote, "John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism" (Ph.D thesis, Duke University), but this is not yet available to me.
- 25 Ritson, The Romance of Primitive Methodism, pp. 134-48.
- 26 F.W. Bourne, The Bible Christians: Their Origin and History, 1815-1900 (London: Bible Christian Book Room, 1905), p. v.
- 27 Bourne, The Bible Christians, pp. 35, 54-55, 79, 147-8.

- 28 Eric G. Clancy, "The Primitive Methodist Church in New South Wales, 1845-1902" (M.A. thesis, Macquarie University, 1985), pp.159-90.
- 29 E.G. Clancy, "The Struggle for Methodist Union in New South Wales," Journal and Proceedings of the Australasian Methodist Historical Society, No. 95 (September 1975): 1360-78.
- 30 "Minutes of the Ninth General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia, Begun in the Wesley Church, Perth, on Monday, 20th May, 1929," p. 97. Abbreviated hereinafter to GC Minutes.
- 31 GC Minutes, 1929, p. 94.
- 32 GC Minutes, 1929, p. 136.
- 33 GC Minutes, 1932, pp. 132, 137.
- 34 GC Minutes, 1935, pp. 256-259.
- 35 GC Minutes, 1935, pp. 256-7, 155.
- 36 GC Minutes, 1948, p. 246. The Methodists in Australia did not seem to be aware that the deaconess movement in North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries "failed to attract enough women of talent or to employ the full talents of women," according to Ruether and McLaughlin (eds.), Women of Spirit, pp. 310-2.
- 37 GC Minutes, 1938, p. 177.
- 38 GC Minutes, 1941, pp. 161-3. By 1945 the Leigh College Deaconesses' Training Centre was doubling as a venue for "additional training" of the Methodist Nursing Service. Two women that year pioneered this work, which included "Ministry of the Word," "Intensive Pastoral Work," and "The Ministry of Healing." The Methodist, 7 April 1945, p. 1.
- 39 GC Minutes, 1945, pp. 104-6. "The General Conference of our Church in this country is, as every Methodist knows, the Parliament of Australasian Methodism." "General Conference Notes," The Methodist, 2 June 1945, p. 3. Observe the letters from "Uncle James" in The Methodist to a young woman engaged to a minister-to-be prior to the 1945 General Conference, which indicate a cleric's wistful desire for a minister's wife to be given a greater part in her husband's ordination service.
- 40 GC Minutes, 1948, pp. 246, 101-2.
- 41 GC Minutes, 1951, pp. 124, 266.
- 42 GC Minutes, 1954, p. 151; 1960, pp. 114-5.
- 43 GC Minutes, 1954, p. 267; 1960, p. 241.
- 44 GC Minutes, 1954, p. 267.
- 45 GC Minutes, 1957, p. 269.

- 46 GC Minutes, 1957, p. 269.
- 47 GC Minutes, 1960, p. 115; 1963, p. 115.
- 48 GC Minutes, 1963, pp. 109-10; 316. Alfred Raymond George, "Ordination in Methodism," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, 176 (April 1951): 156-69.
- 49 GC Minutes, 1966, p. iii. See Committee on Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, Eve Where Art Thou: Women's Role in the Church, Australian Council of Churches, 1967, p. 8. Cf. p.9: "The ordination of women seems to belong to that part of tradition which the Church is free to change under the Spirit's guidance as we become more understanding of the relationship between the sexes and the place of women in the universal priesthood of God's people." See also Department on Faith and Order and Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, Concerning the Ordination of Women (Geneva: World Council; of Churches, 1964), which explores the biblical, theological and ecclesiological issues involved in the ordination of women.
- 50 GC Minutes, 1966, pp. 162-3; see 1957, p. 146.
- 51 GC Minutes, 1963, p. 110
- 52 GC Minutes, 1963, pp. 249-265; cf. pp. 36-64.
- 53 GC Minutes, 1966, pp. 162-4.
- 54 GC Minutes, 1966, p. 163-4. Note the results of this decision, as reported in "The Methodist Church of Australasia (Victoria and Tasmania Conference), Minutes of the Sixty-eighth Annual Conference begun in Wesley Church, Melbourne, Tuesday, 14th October, 1969," pp. 3, 5, 6. A female minister was already "in full connexion" with the Conference; another was a student in Theological College; yet another was "now received for training in the Theological Hall." At the same conference, Deaconess Dorothy Clark, "one of the first Deaconess candidates ... ordained in South Australia in 1946," retired after 32 years of service to the Church, p. 73. Cf. Minutes, Queensland Annual Conference, Brisbane, opened 13th October 1969, pp. 8-9; Minutes, Western Australia Annual Conference, 17th October 1969, pp. 12, 28.
- 55 "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Thirty-first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Held in Melbourne, September, 1967," p. 193-4. Hereinafter abbreviated to Assembly Minutes. The 1967 Assembly heard a report from J.C. Foyster, "Training of Women Workers," which stated in part: "After studying various relevant documents from the Church of Scotland, Presbyterian Church of England, Anglican and Methodist Churches, the Convener is convinced that no church has yet found all the answers re the ordination and place of women in the Church. More research and experimental changes are needed." See pp. 193-4. This Assembly also discussed "Eldership and the Admission of Women to that Office," pp. 182-191, and appointed a "Committee on the Training of Women Workers," p. 72.

- 56 Assembly Minutes, 1974, p 39.
- 57 Assembly Minutes, 1973, p. 102. The role of Deaconesses in the Presbyterian Church could be explored fruitfully, also. See Jean Yule, "Deaconess Training Has New Objectives Now," Australian Presbyterian Life, 1 September 1973, p. 31. Note how Jean Yule's "Women in the Church" page kept the denomination aware of such matters as women's ordination, e.g., 9 June 1973, p. 31; 2 March 1974, p. 31.
- 58 Franklin (ed.), The Force of the Feminine, pp. 127-129.
- 59 Year Book and Church Directory of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1985, p. 34.
- 60 Margaret Rodgers, "Attitudes to the Ministry of Women in the Diocese of Sydney: An Historical Study," The Reformed Theological Review, 39, (September-December 1980): 73-82; cf. Anne Sells, "Women's Status in the Church of England, 1920-1975," Lilith, No. 1 (Winter 1984): 31-42.
- 61 The General Synod Commission on Doctrine, The Ministry of Women: A Report (Sydney: General Synod Office, 1977); Standing Committee, Diocese of Sydney, Ordination: Its Meaning, Value and Theology (Sydney: The Anglican Information Office, 1981), pp. 14-5.
- 62 Ordination, Foreword, and pp. 17-24.
- 63 A reprint of a Synod-committee report on The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood (Sydney: Diocesan Secretary, 19 November, 1984), pp. 3-4.
- 64 A reprint of a Synod-committee report, pp. 7-12.
- 65 Cf. Franklin (ed.), The Force of the Feminine, pp. 68-80; Colleen O'Reilly Stewart, "Women's Ordination: Suddenly the Future Looks Promising," National Outlook, October 1985, pp. 19-21.
- 66 For Robinson's recent thinking see his article, "Ordination of Women," Southern Cross, April 1987, p. 6. Contrast the views of the Movement for the Ordination of Women, Sydney Newsletter, April 1987, pp. 1-2.
- 67 Church Scene, 22 November 1985; 14 and 21 March 1986; The Australian Church Record, 2 December 1985.
- 68 By May 1987, twelve dioceses in Australia had adopted the canon of the General Synod authorizing the bishop of a diocese to ordain women as deacons if the synod of the diocese agreed; eight were yet to consider the canon; four had declined it. The Newcastle Herald, 11 May 1987; See, April 1987. Of the capital city dioceses, all were then in favour except Sydney and Brisbane, and the Brisbane Synod voted in favour of the Canon in June 1987. Note also Keith Mason Q.C., "A Summary of the Appellate Tribunal's Decision on the Ordination of Women as Deacons," a 16-page summary of the 123-page decision handed down on 4 March 1987.
- 69 The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 March 1987; cf. "Primate's Statement on Women in the Episcopate," Anglican Information (England), June 1986, pp. 4-6.

- 70 The Movement for the Ordination of Women began a newsletter in 1983 which is now published quarterly by the national organization, in addition to those newsletters produced by its branches. The newsletters include articles, news, and book reviews.
- 71 "Historic First--Woman Ordained Deacon," Anglican Encounter, March 1986; "Archbishop Ordains the first women deacons in Australia," The Age, 10 and 14 February 1986. Since then, banner headlines have carried similar reports as women have been ordained in many centres. Note the extensive publicity in The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian during the last week of August 1987.
- 72 Franklin (ed.), The Force of the Feminine, pp. 49-54.
- 73 For example, see Franklin (ed.), The Force of the Feminine, pp. 50-1, 54 concerning Karl Rahner, and the views of the Pontifical Biblical Commission.
- 74 David Knight and Pauline Turner, "The Conjugal Catholic Priests," The Sydney Morning Herald, 28 April 1987; "Women priests no impediment to unity--ARCIC told," Church Scene, 11 July 1986, p. 5; "Rome and Canterbury Exchange Letters," Church Record, 28 July 1986. Cf. the following and other reports by Vatican Correspondent Peter Hebblethwaite: "Women's Ordination and Traditional Theology: A Catholic dissents," National Outlook, November 1985, pp. 21-3; "Women priests: Exchange of letters 'edgy step forward'," The Catholic Leader, 27 July 1986, p.16; "Between Rome and Canterbury; the ground shifts on women's ordination," National Outlook, August 1986, pp. 22-3.
- 75 Many Roman Catholics are in accord with the pastoral theology underlying Franklin (ed.), The Force of the Feminine, pp. 164-74. Cf. Joan Barnes, "Male or female: Does it matter?" The Catholic Weekly, 20 November 1985.
- 76 See "Women and the Australian Church (W.A.T.A.C.) Update One," October 1985, and cf. Rosemary Williams, "Religious Women in the Advocate in 1893 and 1983," Journal of the Institute of Catholic Education, Vol. 6 (Nov. 1985): 1-16; "Collegiality, women's role among topics for synod," The Catholic Weekly, 20 November 1985; Barbara Mead, "Women in Church search for reality," The Catholic Leader, December 1985, page 6; Pauline Smith, "Women and the Church ... 'time for an earnest review'," The Catholic Leader, February 1986; Barbara Mead, "Women converge--by jet and raft," The Catholic Leader, 3 August 1986, p. 16; Magella Franzmann, "Woman's role in the Church 'not symbolic'," The Catholic Leader, 16 March 1986. By April 1987 a WATAC survey revealed that on the question of ordination 19% were strongly in favour, 25% agreed, 25% were uncertain, while 22% disagreed strongly.
- 77 Note the extensive publicity given to the withdrawal of the charter, by the Australian Catholic bishops, of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace. The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 and 8 May 1987.
- 78 Humphreys and Ward, Religious Bodies in Australia, pp. iii, 179-298.

- 79 Humphreys and Ward, Religious Bodies in Australia, pp. 1-14.
- 80 For an overview of the denomination, see Humphreys and Ward, Religious Bodies in Australia, pp. 86-90.
- 81 Churches of Christ (N.S.W.) Theological College Handbook 1987, p. 4. Until her death in a plane crash in New Guinea, Dianne Feeney was an important role model as a woman in ministry and theological education. See "Tragic Loss of Dianne Feeney," The Australian Christian, 14 December 1985, pp. 1, 18.
- 82 "Carlingford College Graduates Ministers," The Australian Christian, 7 March 1987, p. 18; cf. the issue for 21 March 1987, p. 4. It is expected three women will graduate in the November 1987 class.
- 83 The Australian Christian, 11 October 1986, p. 15; 8 November 1986, p. 9.
- 84 The Australian Christian, 13 July 1985, p. 8; 10 August 1985, p. 8; 24 August 1985, p. 8; 21 June 1986, p. 9; 16 August 1986, p. 14; 11 October 1986, p. 13; 8 November 1986, pp. 8, 15; 21 February 1987, pp. 8, 23; 21 March 1987, p. 24; 11 April 1987, p. 7; 2 May 1987, pp. 9, 19.
- 85 Note, for instance, the reprint in the articles by David M. Scholer, "Women in Ministry," The Covenant Companion, December 1983, January and February 1984.
- 86 Humphreys and Ward, Religious Bodies in Australia, p. 88. Gordon Stirling, "Women at Work," The Australian Christian, 7 March 1987, asks if women "can look after over half our membership so well, why do we always have males heading up the work of our State and Federal Conferences." Cf. the role of Helen Chapman, "set apart for a part-time ministry to ministers of the Vic.-Tas. churches," The Australian Christian, 11 April 1987, p. 19.
- 87 Ruether and McLaughlin (eds.), Women of Spirit, pp. 20, 309, 315-6, 321-2; John Briggs, "She-Preachers, Widows and Other Women: The Feminine Dimension in Baptist Life Since 1600," The Baptist Quarterly, July 1986, pp. 337-352. Briggs speaks from a British context, where a woman minister is for the first time President of the Baptist Union for the 1986-7 year. However, previously an unordained woman served as President of the Baptist Union.
- 88 K.R. Manley, "Ordination Among Australian Baptists," The Baptist Quarterly 28 (1979): 159-183; Baptist Union of New South Wales Year Book 1976-77, 1977, pp. 74-84; Baptist Union of Victoria, A Report on the Ordination of Women, 1977; cf. articles in The Australian Baptist from 1975 to at least Vol. 74, No. 21 (15 October 1986).
- 89 "General Conference Proceedings (Continued)," Review and Herald, 20 December 1881, p. 392.

- 90 Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: The Australian Years, 1891-1900 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1983), references in Index to "camp meetings"; N.P. Clapham (ed.), Seventh-day Adventists in the South Pacific, 1885-1985 (Warburton: Signs Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 112-25.
- 91 Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, 9 July 1895, pp. 433-4; Patrick, "Ellen Gould White and the Australian Woman," pp. 71-111. Ellen White believed that the Holy Spirit of God "prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God" (Testimonies, Vol. 6, p.322); that "there are women who should labour in the gospel ministry" (Evangelism, p. 472); that "young men and young women ... should be engaged in the ministry" (Testimonies, Vol. 8, pp. 229-30); that "self-sacrificing women can do in families a work that men cannot do" (Testimonies, Vol. 6, pp. 117-8). For a contextual/historical study of these statements, see the unpublished paper by William Fagal, "Ellen White and the Role of Women in the Church," Andrews University, c.1986.
- 92 Arthur N. Patrick, "Ordination of Deaconesses," Adventist Review, 16 January 1986, pp. 18-9. It should be observed that Ellen White was not formally ordained, and she remained critical of feminism as such.
- 93 Bertha Dasher, "Leadership Positions: A Declining Opportunity?" Spectrum, 15 (December 1984): 35-7; Patrick Allen, "The Depression and the Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," Adventist Heritage: A Journal of Adventist History, 11 (Fall 1986): 48-54.
- 94 See "Symposium on the Role of Women," some 200 pages of typescript from the Camp Mohaven, Ohio discussions during 1973, filed at the Ellen G. White/Seventh-day Adventist Research Centre, Avondale College.
- 95 Patrick, "Ellen Gould White and the Australian Woman," pp. iii-xi; Letter, K.S. Parmenter to A.N. Patrick, 8 June 1987. Parmenter states: "I am not opposed to ordination of women, but I am concerned about its potential to divide our church in many countries."
- 96 Cf. Adventist Review, 7 March 1985, pp. 5-12; 14 June 1987, pp. 17-19; Ministry, December 1984, pp. 20-2, 26; October 1986, pp. 4-7, 23; March 1987, pp. 14-7; South Pacific Record, 20 April 1985, pp. 13, 21; 27 June 1987, pp. 4-5. Among the papers presented to the nineteen-member committee in Wahroonga on 19-20 March 1985, see that by Arthur J. Ferch, "Three Pauline Passages on the Role of Women in the Life of the Church." Note also the following: the recent unpublished pro-ordination paper by Iris M. Yob, "The Churches and Feminism: An Exploration of Common Ground"; Bryan W. Ball, "The Ordination of Women: A Plea for Caution," Spectrum, 17 (December 1986): 39-54; Samuele Bacchiocchi, Women in the Church: A Biblical Study of the Role of Women (Berrien Springs, Mi.: Biblical Perspectives, 1987). Ball and Bacchiocchi's con positions are currently receiving spirited discussion.

- 97 See Ruether and McLaughlin (eds.), Women of Spirit, pp. 216, 233-4; Douglas George Clarke, "Female Ministry in the Salvation Army," a manuscript completed in 1985, reflected in Clarke's earlier article, "Female Ministry in the Salvation Army," The Expository Times 95 (October 1983 - September 1984): 232-235.
- 98 See Humphrey and Ward, Religious Bodies in Australia, pp. 122-5. Cf. Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, pp. 66.
- 99 The American Theological Library Index: Periodicals references the major articles in this debate. Cf. Humphreys and Ward, Religious Bodies in Australia, pp. 164-70. Michael Otterson, Director of Public Communications for Australia/Pacific, supplied me with photocopied materials and issued the following statement on 9 June 1987: "The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints takes a doctrinal position that any change in its present policy, of ordaining males only, must come by way of new revelation. The lay ministry in the Church does not include women as ordained ministers, and there is no internal pressure for this to change. Women do serve extensively in leadership, and as missionaries, and preach regularly from the pulpit. Women speakers are seen as frequently as men at most Church meetings including the main Sunday worship services. The Church's opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment in the US in recent years is not seen in the Church as a stand against equal rights for women, but a stand against a specific piece of legislation which it believed would damage the family and adversely affect women as well as men. Indeed, Mormons say they have an impressive record in women's rights, having introduced women's suffrage in Utah long before the other states of the US."
- 100 Humphrey and Ward, Religious Bodies in Australia, pp. 134-52.
- 101 Keith Dunstan, "Women Priests," Good Weekend, 29 June 1986, pp. 31-4; "Women of the Cloth," New Idea, 25 October 1986, pp. 23-4.
- 102 On the latter point, consult both text and bibliography in Ronald D. Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 1983).
- 103 Jaroslav Pelikan, Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1985), pp. 1-8, 206-219. Observe the way in which women's concerns were articulated by the group Christian Women Concerned, beginning in 1967, along with such issues as peace, poverty and racism. Dixon, The Real Matilda, pp. 221-257. During 1987 in Australia those who oppose the ordination of women are still being charged with using the same biblical exegesis which was used to support slavery. Thus far they have not provided a coherent answer to this charge.

- 104 Observe the positive approaches taken in the following: Leon Morris, John Gaden, Barbara Thiering, A Women's Place (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1976); "The Ordination of Women" and "Implications in the Ordination of Women Issue," materials produced by the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide's Board of Christian Education, August 1986; "Editorial: Men and Women in the Church," Themelios, 12 (April 1987): 73-79. It should be underlined that the ordination of women is no longer an evangelical-versus-liberal discussion, if it ever was such. Authors with a conservative view of the Scripture are increasingly opting for the "yes" position.
- 105 The Presbyterian's experience is one partial exception. From notes received from Helen M. Clements (author of an unpublished Ph.D thesis, "The Presbyterian Struggle: 1970-1977") it is clear that complex issues are involved. Note also the articles and correspondence during 1986 and 1987 in the Presbyterian magazines Span and Australian Presbyterian Life, especially the March and May issues of the latter.
- 106 Note that society in the 1980s is more frequently subjecting the church to serious questions and even ridicule for its attitudes on the ordination of women. These facts are illustrated by editorials and articles in the nation's leading newspapers during August 1987, for example "The Altared State of Women," The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 August 1987; Katharine West, "Church Must Not Waste Women's Talents," The Weekend Australian, 29-30 August 1987.
- 107 I wish at this point to give three brief warnings on this matter. First the total historical context needs to be kept in view when discussing such matters as the ordination of women. This fact is well illustrated in Donald E. Hansen, "The Churches and Society in New South Wales, 1919-1939 (Ph.D dissertation, Macquarie University, 1978), pp. 123-127. Second, while it is useful to compare the historical developments relating to the ordination of women in all denominations, care must be taken to maintain a sense of balance in view of the heritage and doctrine of each group. I am competent to address this issue only for Seventh-day Adventists [see Gary Land, Adventism in America: A History (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1986) pp. 213-215; Arthur N. Patrick, "Seventh-day Adventist History in the South Pacific: A Review of Sources," The Journal of Religious History, 14 (June 1987): 307-326], but there is every reason to suspect the same caution is in order when dealing with the experience of other communions. Third, the historical perspectives given in this paper are severely limited, in that several doctoral dissertations would be required to explore the topic in detail. However, it is hoped this short paper will be of some benefit to those who are interested in the ordination of women, and that competent persons will build on and extend this preliminary attempt.

Arthur Patrick, Registrar
Avondale College
Cooranbong 2265

15 September 1987