

A CRITICAL SURVEY OF THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESENT  
BAN ON THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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STATEMENT:

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## **A critical survey of the history and development of the present ban on the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic Church**

The Roman Catholic Church maintains that women cannot be ordained to the ministerial priesthood because of its unbroken tradition that only men can be priests, based on the example of Jesus, who chose only men to be 'Apostles'. Vatican documents published during the late twentieth century use the writings of several mediaeval theologians and canonists to support this ruling. The topic is of present-day importance for understanding the origins of the exclusion of women from the priesthood given the current shortage of priests in the Catholic Church.

This thesis looks first at the present ruling in the Vatican documents, and then considers the mediaeval writings, canon law and theology, from scholars such as Gratian, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, looking especially at their *Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. Subsequent chapters analyse in more detail the arguments from scripture and biology, drawing together strands of thought in the Middle Ages on these subjects, including judgements about women's intellectual and emotional capacity, and the contemporary anthropological and Christological understanding of the Incarnation. Language and translation are also significant but often neglected factors in the discussion, which the thesis studies by highlighting the recovery of Greek writings in medicine and philosophy, along with choice of terminology and use of metaphor, in the mediaeval period and in modern Church documents. By this approach, a critical survey is made of the most salient aspects of the debate.

This thesis seeks to dissect systematically the origins of the prohibition, based on attitudes towards women which, while not always intentionally misogynistic, were nonetheless rooted in a world view that, the thesis argues, is no longer relevant today.

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## Abbreviations

CCEL	Christian Classics Ethereal Library
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
PG	Patrologia Graecae
PL	Patrologia Latinae
RSV	Revised Standard Version of the Bible

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## 1. Introduction

In this thesis, I intend to consider the origins of the reasons why the Roman Catholic Church today excludes women from ordained ministry. The current position of the modern Roman Catholic Church is based mainly on arguments drawn from tradition and, hence, I will take a historical approach to the subject. The Church documents issued on this topic in the second half of the twentieth century, especially since the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s,<sup>1</sup> make specific reference to the writings of the scholastic doctors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and beyond. Much of Church doctrine today is founded on the fundamental work of teachers such as St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas and this is the case with the Church's teaching on the Sacrament of Orders.

Women featured strongly in the Gospels, and in the writings of the first century AD, as characters in the stories of the people who began to found Christian communities around the eastern Mediterranean region. They played a significant role, alongside the men, as leaders of communities, teachers and prophets, and as witnesses to the major events in the life of Jesus. As time went by, for a number of reasons, women were gradually excluded from positions of authority, from ministry of all kinds. This situation gradually became formalised, until, by the ninth and tenth centuries, legislation explicitly forbade women from receiving the Sacrament of Orders and, thus, from formal teaching or holding positions of authority. Theological arguments were extended to explain why women could not be ordained and reservation of the ministerial priesthood to men was by this time taken for granted as a part of revealed Christian doctrine from the earliest times. The leading scholastic doctors, in particular the Franciscans Bonaventure, Richard of Middleton and John Duns Scotus, teaching in Paris and Oxford, covered the main arguments in their *Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, the compendium of Church teaching used as the basis for university curricula in theology, and I will show how their work was pivotal in providing a theological basis for the legal exclusion of women from orders that is still maintained today in the Roman Catholic Church. Similarly, the teaching of Thomas Aquinas was and remains crucial to the unwavering position of the Church on this issue.

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<sup>1</sup> These include: the document *Inter Insigniores*, issued by the CDF in 1976; the new *Code of Canon Law*, issued in 1983; the encyclical of John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 1988; the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* from John Paul II in 1994; along with many other notes and inclusions in other documents on the same subject, these published in *From 'Inter Insigniores' to 'Ordinatio Sacerdotalis'*, CDF (Washington: US Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1996). All official Church documents are available on the website of the Holy See, at <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014. See Chapter 2 on current church documents.



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Thus, the value of taking a historical perspective on the issue of women's ordination in the Catholic Church is relevant to the modern debate because the Church itself resorts to tradition to underpin its stance, while clearly asserting that it does not subscribe to the misogynist attitudes expressed in some mediaeval writing on this issue.<sup>2</sup> The Church also uses Scripture to support its position, specifically the presence of men only among the 'Twelve', chosen by Jesus to be the leaders of his followers during his ministry, and the understanding that, at the Last Supper (Mt 26:26–28), he instituted the priesthood, by instructing the Twelve to 'do this in memory of me', as he broke and shared the bread and passed around the cup of wine. It is the constant tradition of the Catholic Church that women have never received the Sacrament of Holy Orders, ordination to the ministerial priesthood, and therefore the present discipline on exclusion of women from ordination cannot be overruled. Rather than simply describing these two strands of the argument, from Scripture and from tradition, I am interested in tracing the origins of such ideas up to the mediaeval period, where scholastic opinion particularly was that women were rendered by nature and by their creation unsuitable for receiving orders. I will consider why the tradition that ordination was reserved for men was continued and propagated and why the particular interpretation of Scripture asserting that Jesus did not include women among his appointed leaders should have prevailed, despite the extensive evidence that there were many women included among his followers in his lifetime and others who featured in the early church communities in the first years of Christianity.

### 1.a *Misogyny and Prejudice – Then and Now*

To modern eyes, many views and comments expressed in the literature of earlier centuries, especially from Christian writers from the centuries after Christ and up to and beyond the Middle Ages in Europe, sometimes appear shockingly misogynistic.<sup>3</sup> To mention just a couple of examples from centuries of writing: Tertullian (c. 160–225) reminds women that they are the daughters of Eve and therefore carry her guilt forever:

The judgement of God upon this sex lives on in this age, therefore, necessarily the guilt should live on also. You are the gateway of the devil, you are the one who unseals the curse of that tree ... you are the one who persuaded him whom the devil was not capable of corrupting: you easily destroyed the image of God, Adam.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, 1976, in *From Inter Insigniores to Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Many examples of such writing are presented by Alcuin Blamires, in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), an anthology of mediaeval texts, to which I am indebted.

<sup>4</sup> Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum*, Bk. 1, §1; C.W. Marx (tr.) in Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 51.

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St. John Chrysostom (347?–407) says: ‘The woman taught the man once and made him guilty of disobedience, and ruined everything.’<sup>5</sup> The guilt of Eve as recounted in Genesis 3 was generally considered one of the chief pieces of evidence of woman’s inferiority and corruption. For centuries, it appears constantly as a trope in homilies, commentaries and in popular literature. The interpretation of the Biblical text, coupled with social and cultural norms, shaped the attitudes and the context in which such views were expressed. The scholastic writers were not necessarily guilty of a conscious prejudice against women in general, they were simply working out of their own contemporary knowledge and culture to explain the situation as it stood and the reasons for the assumption of women’s disqualification from the Sacrament of Orders. I will examine the effect of the exegetical method used and the influence of the legal and social setting from which the assumptions and attitudes of the theological writers grew.

It is important to remember that, for the mediaeval scholastic writers of twelfth and thirteenth centuries, suitability for ordination in itself was not a major issue. There were far more pressing matters for philosophy and theology to consider, such as the Eucharist, the Trinity, the nature of being, Biblical truth, the papacy, marriage and inheritance law, sin and forgiveness: all these issues that were exercising the Schools and the Church.<sup>6</sup> Not to mention political power and authority between the secular and the spiritual forces in Europe, and the divisions within the Church itself in the East and West. The position of women and others (children, slaves, etc.), who had no voice in society, was of minor interest. In the light of this, it was inconceivable that women could be considered for positions of authority over men, or as teachers, guides, or to provide pastoral care. This is not in any way to deny the reality of the prejudice against and oppression of women during this period of history, but it was no greater or more unpleasant than the situation that has persisted in large parts of the world, throughout recorded history, and certainly up to the present day. There are many historical and cultural factors that form intellectual and emotional attitudes towards issues around gender-based discrimination in the context of women’s role in the Church, including the matter of ordination to the priesthood. It is important to understand that any such structure generally recognised as unjust, or even

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<sup>5</sup> John Chrysostom, Homily 9 on 1 Timothy 2:11–15, available at Christian Classics Ethereal Library <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf113.v.iii.x.html>, last consulted August 2014.

<sup>6</sup> see R.W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, Vol. 1: Foundations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 145–152.

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sinful, is part of the same pattern of separation of the sexes that has prevailed throughout history.

### *1.b Organisation of the Thesis*

I will consider the subject of the prohibition on the ordination of women under the headings identified below. I intend to address each of these aspects of the disputed question and explore how a number of scholastic authors in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries dealt with the various issues and all came to the same conclusion that women were unsuitable for ordination. I will endeavour to examine each of the accounts they provide, using the text as the medium to investigate the different arguments used in detail, depending on how the individual theologians exploited their material. They all have areas in common, but they vary in the weight they gave to their sources or the various traditions they used. There are also separate sections on law, Scripture, biology and language, important factors in setting the context for the discussion.

#### *1.b.i Terminology and Language*

I will examine in some detail the way in which the language used to discuss issues relating to women has significantly influenced thought and affected attitudes. Some of the ideas expressed, over and over again, in debating these topics during the mediaeval period would today be considered almost amusing:

- women are unsuitable for priesthood ‘because of the weakness of their intellect and the mutability of their emotions’,
- ‘teaching in public is not proper for a woman because of the weakness of her intellect and the instability of her emotions, of which defects women suffer more than men by a notable common law’.
- ‘Women are not perfect members of the church, only men are’.
- ‘Woman was the effective cause of damnation since she was the origin of transgression’, and so on.

The sources of such statements and the ways they continued to influence the Church at that time and onwards will be investigated for their content, but the kinds of language used, and particularly the terminology, are of great importance, colouring the arguments and affecting attitudes, both emotionally and intellectually. I will explore this area and look at

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some of the specific vocabulary used in writing about this subject. The study of language itself played a key role in the intellectual life of the Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup> The gradual rediscovery of the works of Aristotle, from the ninth century onwards, through translation from Greek to Arabic and then later on Arabic into Latin, encouraged the spread of new ideas in which the Latin language with its logical, structured approach was seen as the optimum way of expressing complex thought in a clear, organised way. Latin expanded its vocabulary enormously during the mediaeval period, many neologisms being created to cope with the demands placed on the language by philosophical and scientific exploration.<sup>8</sup> I will examine how translation as a tool, from Greek and Middle-Eastern languages to Latin and, subsequently, to the vernacular European languages, impacted in various ways on the arguments about women's ordination. I will also consider how etymological theories affected the subject, as well as how the choice of vocabulary and the translation of particular terms from one language to another influenced attitudes and assumptions.

### 1.b.ii Canon Law

Important in the mediaeval debate about the position of women in society and, specifically, their suitability for receiving ordination or exercising authority in the Church are the references, sometimes oblique, made to it within the collections of canons, the laws of the Church. These were formulated throughout the first millennium in the Christian world, East and West, gradually becoming codified from the ninth century onwards, until the appearance of the collection made by Gratian (mid-twelfth century), the *Decretum* or *Concordia Discordantium Canonum*.<sup>9</sup> Again, the historical perspective shows the continuity through the centuries of the prohibition on women's ordination in law, from Gratian to the present Code of Canon Law. At the present time, the position in canon law, which states that 'only a baptized male can validly receive the sacrament of orders', is that

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<sup>7</sup> Michael A. Covington, 'Scientia Sermocinalis: Grammar in Mediaeval Classifications of the Sciences', in N. McLelland and A. Linn (eds.), *Flores Grammaticae: Essays in Memory of Vivien Law* (Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 2005), pp. 49–54. Covington explains how theories of grammar influenced the structure of the organisation of the sciences throughout the mediaeval period up to Ockham (and provides some useful diagrams of the evolution of the organisation of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* in universities).

<sup>8</sup> The background to this area is covered by B.B. Price, *Medieval Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 136ff.; Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 361ff. The significance of the translation of Greek texts and their journey around the Mediterranean are described by Dmitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arab Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), pp. 1–8. The rediscovery of the works of Aristotle and others is also covered by David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (London: Longman, 1962), pp 186ff.

<sup>9</sup> Gratian, *Decretum Magistri Gratiani*. Emil Friedberg (ed.), in *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1879; reprint Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959). Available at [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd\\_6029936\\_001/index.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd_6029936_001/index.html) last accessed August 2014.

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a woman cannot validly be ordained, based on Scripture and on the unbroken tradition of the Church. Until the late twentieth century, this was not generally questioned but, during the 1970s, a number of scholars and at least two Vatican-appointed commissions<sup>10</sup> did come to the conclusion that of itself, Scripture did not provide a conclusive answer to the question of whether women could be ordained. As for tradition, Fr. Eric Doyle, O.F.M., a member of the Assisi Commission, said in his report: ‘It appears to us to be more accurate to say: To ordain women would be contrary to the practice of the church. This is no verbal quibble but an important distinction because the word tradition carries a sense of far greater weight and authority than the word practice.’<sup>11</sup>

### 1.b.iii Biology and Anthropology

A culture in which one group is seen as flawed, less than complete or deviating from the norm cannot help but take for granted the automatic degradation of that group, its subordinate status, fewer rights and, as a result, exclusion from positions of power, particularly moral power.<sup>12</sup>

The power of words, their emotive authority, means that it is only necessary to make passing reference to women’s bodily functions, for example, to evoke a whole panorama of images about defilement and corruption. This is not an attitude now confined to history, but one which is globally prevalent, not just in cultures that have ancient roots, such as early Judaism (Lev 15:19), or Islam<sup>13</sup> but in contemporary societies, including Western

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<sup>10</sup> The Assisi Commission and the Apostolic Biblical Commission.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. P. Staples (ed.), *Assisi Commission Report 1975* (Utrecht: Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, 1975), p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Significant amounts of research in this area can be found in contemporary scholarship. See, for instance: S. Plous, ‘The Psychology of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination: An Overview’, in S. Plous (ed.), *Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), pp. 3–48: ‘Prejudice is an outgrowth of normal human functioning, and all people are susceptible to one extent or another.’ This article is part of the Prejudice in any Language: The Prejudice Translation Project, see <http://www.understandingprejudice.org/>, last accessed August 2014, carried out by the American Psychology Association, and provides a very useful summary of the drivers and function of prejudice of many kinds in human societies, both historically and today; Gill Valentine and Ian Macdonald, ‘Understanding Prejudice: Attitudes Towards Minorities’, study carried out for Stonewall Citizenship 21 Project (London: Stonewall, 2004), available at [http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/Understanding\\_Prejudice.pdf](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/Understanding_Prejudice.pdf), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>13</sup> The Qu’ran only has one verse (Q.2.222) referring to menstruation: ‘They will also question thee as to the courses of women. Say, “They are a pollution (hurt). Separate yourself therefore from women and approach them not, until they be cleansed”.’ There are many later additions and interpretations in Islamic teaching on the defiling effects of menstruation and post-partum bleeding. See a discussion on this by Shuruq Naguib, ‘Horizons and Limitations of Muslim Feminist Hermeneutics: Reflections on the Menstruation Verse’, in Pamela Sue Anderson (ed.), *New Topics in Feminist Philosophy of Religion: Contestations and Transcendence Incarnate*, Feminist Philosophy Collection (London: Springer, 2010), pp. 33–50.

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Europe and the United States, as evidenced by sociological research.<sup>14</sup> Such widespread prejudice has influenced attempts to argue for consideration of the female as meriting equal treatment by the Church and access to the Sacrament of Orders, as well as the other sacraments. This prejudice is all the more powerful in that it is almost unmentionable and yet underlies many of the arguments against women's ordination. Its effects remained in force right through the twentieth century in canon law – in the ban on women's presence in the sanctuary and the regulation forbidding their touching of sacred objects, vessels, vestments and altar cloths.<sup>15</sup> I will give some attention to this subject, as it sometimes seems unrecognised as an implicit reason for forbidding women access to sacred orders.

I will also look at how the mediaeval scholars often cited women's assumed intellectual weakness, physical incapacity, emotional behaviour and even her greater sexual drive as arguments against their suitability for orders. At a period when few women were educated, where wives were literally their husbands' property in law, and where high numbers died young from complications associated with childbirth, it was not surprising that they were assumed to be 'the weaker sex' in every way. But even today, these 'female' characteristics are sometimes explained by reference to women's biology and particularly the menstrual cycle. It is sometimes still a perception by women themselves as well as men that women underperform at work while menstruating.<sup>16</sup>

An important argument rooted in biology, which I explore in some detail, is the fact of Christ's maleness. Woman, the female, cannot represent the man, Christ. The famous

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<sup>14</sup> Leslie-Jean Thornton, "'Time of the Month" on Twitter: Taboo, Stereotype and Bonding in a No-Holds-Barred Public Arena', online publication: Springer Science+Business Media LLC 2011, available at [http://www.academia.edu/942752/Time\\_of\\_the\\_Month\\_on\\_Twitter\\_Taboo\\_Stereotype\\_and\\_Bonding\\_in\\_a\\_No-Holds-Barred\\_Public\\_Arena](http://www.academia.edu/942752/Time_of_the_Month_on_Twitter_Taboo_Stereotype_and_Bonding_in_a_No-Holds-Barred_Public_Arena), last accessed August 2014; Molly Casteloe, 'The Last Taboo: Menstruation and Body Literacy', *Psychology Today*, August 2010.

<sup>15</sup> In a review of Karen Houppert's *The Curse: Confronting the Unmentionable Last Taboo* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux 2000), Katha Pollitt points out that in two best-sellers where menstruation is a central topic (*Carrie*, by Stephen King and Judy Blume's teen book, *Are You There, God? It's me, Margaret*), 'the discussion of menstruation is connected to the theme of Judeo-Christianity, the historical source in the West of the view that menstruation is unclean, a badge of inferiority and a curse – although in Genesis God curses Eve with pain in childbirth, not the menses': Katha Pollitt, *London Review of Books*, 30 August 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Norma O'Flynn, M.R.C.G.P., Ph.D., 'Menstrual Symptoms: The Importance of Social Factors in Women's experiences', *British Journal of General Practice*, Vol. 56, No. 533, 2006, pp. 950–957: 'Many women treated for menstrual concerns do not have a discernible pathology. The validity of their concerns has been questioned. It has been documented that women are willing to undergo extensive medical or surgical treatment despite lack of pathology. Women's accounts indicate the presence of strong social pressures to keep menstruation concealed. The most important part of menstruation that is concealed relates to menstrual blood. The onset of new symptoms or changes in symptoms and circumstances challenge women's existing strategies of menstrual management. Such changes often result in stress and can influence health-related behaviour.'

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statement by Aquinas that ‘woman is a defective male [*mas occasionatus*]<sup>17</sup> was part of a discussion in his *Summa Theologiae* on the reason for the creation of two sexes. The biological understanding of the way in which an embryo developed in the womb was based on the work of Aristotle,<sup>18</sup> who taught that, at conception, the child is male, but various factors can interfere to produce a female, thus nature always intends to produce males. Woman was perceived as being biologically a mistake in the particular case, but one that in general God intended, in order that the species should be propagated.<sup>19</sup> Although the Scriptures say that woman was created as a helpmate, a companion, for man, Aquinas said that this could not be to help him in his work because a man would always be better helped by another man, so it could only have been for the production of children.<sup>20</sup> The *in persona Christi* issue, whether a woman could stand in the place of Christ at the altar, was another factor in the question of suitability for orders. It is still one of the primary arguments used by the Church to prohibit women from receiving ordination. Alongside this, there was also dispute as to whether woman was truly created in *imago Dei*, or simply as man’s subordinate. Using these arguments, by virtue of her sex alone, woman was unfit to represent Christ as priest and, in the order of creation, it was man who was created in the image of God and woman who was inferior and therefore deficient.

Following on from this, the image of Christ as Bridegroom, used often by the mediaeval scholastics, also seems to carry great weight in the current Church documents on this subject. Despite being a metaphor, used for God in the Old Testament, and in parables and references in the Gospels and the letters of St. Paul, there is a sense in which the symbolic nature of the figure of Christ as the spouse of the Church has become seen as an insurmountable barrier, its sexual content an essential component of the representative

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae (ST)*, Part 1a, q. 92, a. 1, *Corpus Thomisticum* (Fundación Tomás de Aquino: Universidad de Navarra, 2006), available at <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/>, last accessed August 2014, and from digital edition in French at Bibliothèque de l’édition du Cerf, 1984 <http://docteurangelique.free.fr/index.html>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, Arthur Platt (tr.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), Bk II, §.3: ‘Now semen is a secretion and is moved with the same movement as that in virtue of which the body increases (this increase being due to subdivision of the nutriment in its last stage). When it has entered the uterus it puts into form the corresponding secretion of the female and moves it with the same movement wherewith it is moved itself. For the female’s contribution also is a secretion, and has all the arts in it potentially though none of them actually; it has in it potentially even those parts which differentiate the female from the male, for just as the young of mutilated parents are sometimes born mutilated and sometimes not, so also the young born of a female are sometimes female and sometimes male instead. For the female is, as it were, a mutilated male.’: available at <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/generation/contents.html>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1, p. 393.

<sup>20</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 1, q. 92, a. 1: ‘cum ad quodlibet aliud opus convenientius iuvari possit vir per alium virum quam per mulierem’.

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character of a male priesthood. This point is discussed in some detail in Chapter 7, on language, along with other implications of the idea of a ‘dead metaphor’, freezing what was a helpful, explanatory image into a fact of life and thus inhibiting understanding and clarity in debate.

The extensive literature on gender difference (in all fields of study), the historical development of the understanding of behavioural psychology, prejudice between the sexes (both ways) and the gradual emergence of the equality movement in twentieth-century Western society first of all provide copious examples of the way that sexual politics have affected and continue to affect the relative positions of men and women in daily life. The powerful influence of Freudian psychology in the twentieth century preserved some of the stereotypical views that had pervaded for centuries,<sup>21</sup> maintaining the hierarchical relationship between the sexes and reinforcing the reaction against efforts by women to break free of gender-based roles to secure educational and employment opportunities in the professions, where equal pay and treatment is still not always available.<sup>22</sup> In recent years, however, the availability of contraception, the relaxation of divorce laws and the changed landscape around marriage and family life have eliminated many of the concerns about inheritance, property and paternity that previously dominated male/female relationships<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Commenting on Freud’s account of the way little girls ‘naturally’ compare themselves unfavourably to boys (in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (W.W. Norton: London, 1940), ch. XXIII), Anne Baring and Jules Cashford say: ‘This unique definition of a feminine attitude as the end results of efforts to compensate for a physical “defect” is even presented as an observed fact, an “observation” that does not merely assume the superiority of male genitals, but assumes as well a hierarchical model of relationship between the sexes.’: Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 514–546.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Peston, ‘Time to Force Women into Boardrooms?’, 5 March 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-17257124>, last accessed August 2014: ‘The European Commission ... wants to see a mandatory increase in female representation on boards ... 30% of big companies directors to be women by 2015 and 40% by 2020. For most European countries, including the UK, [these] targets would require anything from a doubling to a trebling in the number of women on boards. Now for years it seemed obvious to me that the operation of the market would correct this failure to select and promote the best people. The allocation of human capital would become gender blind, simply because companies that favour Y chromosomes in the executive suite and boardroom would over time recognise that they were doing themselves harm – they would notice that their most effective competitors were those fishing in a talent pool of the whole world, not just half of it ... [but] recent research shows that only 5.7% of the executive, board-level directors of FTSE 150 companies are women and that 21% do not have a woman on the board.’

<sup>23</sup> Citing many studies, Jay Peters, Todd K. Shackelford and David M. Buss, ‘Understanding Domestic Violence against Women: Using Evolutionary Psychology to Extend the Feminist Functional Analysis’, *Violence and Victims*, Vol. 17, No. 2, April 2002, say: ‘because ovulation in women is concealed and fertilization occurs internally, men have recurrently faced the adaptive problem of uncertainty of paternity in offspring. Men who failed to solve this problem risked investing resources in children to whom they were genetically unrelated. In addition, cuckolded men incur opportunity costs by forgoing other mating opportunities, and the reputational damage a man incurs by being cuckolded can jeopardize his future mating opportunities.’ Also see Barbara Smuts, ‘Male Aggression against Women: An Evolutionary Perspective’, in David M. Buss and Neil M. Malamuth (eds.), *Sex, Power, Conflict: Evolutionary and Feminist Perspectives*



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and affected both the civil and the religious regulatory frameworks governing marriage. The international recognition in the twentieth century of basic human rights, including the rights of women and children, is a profound change, a significant new direction in human development, the consequences of which are only beginning to be explored.<sup>24</sup>

### 1.b.iv Scripture

Another argument against the ordination of women used by the scholastics was based on the account of creation and fall in the Book of Genesis, interpreted by many writers of the period, as well as in popular culture,<sup>25</sup> as ascribing greater culpability to Eve rather than Adam for the sin of disobedience. Although Eve's greater guilt is no longer used as part of the justification for excluding women from orders, it is still the case that the order of creation, man first then woman, is considered to indicate the mind of God in establishing a proper hierarchy in nature, as expressed by Paul (Eph 5:23): 'For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.' Despite the development in scientific understanding of human origins, from the nineteenth century onwards, the story of the paradise garden and original innocence remains a powerful myth, long after the literal account of two original parents, who individually and together were responsible for the entry of sin into the world, has been discarded. The Catholic Church is still endeavouring to find ways of reconciling the various strands of scientific knowledge and continuing discovery into the origins of the cosmos, human evolution and its implications for biology and psychology, with faith and doctrine on creation *ex nihilo*, Incarnation and Redemption, and sin in our origins.<sup>26</sup> In the Middle

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(New York: OUP, 1996), pp. 231–268, for a further exploration of the evolutionary biology of aggressive behaviour in men.

<sup>24</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by the United Nations Organisation in 1981, observes in its prefatory remarks that 'in situations of poverty women have the least access to food, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other needs' and that 'a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women'. Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Eric Jager, *The Tempter's Voice: Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 191. In his interesting study of the literature of this period, Jager explores both religious writing and vernacular works on the subject of Adam and Eve in Eden and, after noting the moral and instructional literature written by men and aimed at a female audience, he asserts that 'these writings dwell on Eve's actions and experience' turning her meeting with the Serpent into 'cautionary tales [asserting] a large degree of control over women's bodies, mental life, and conversation'.

<sup>26</sup> Despite speaking generally of 'sin in our origins', the Catholic Catechism speaks repeatedly of Adam and Eve, of 'our first parents', of 'man's first sin': *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Articles 374–400 (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994).

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Ages it was one of the major premises for explaining the divine origin of male superiority and primacy over women.

The mediaeval scholars used the New Testament and the person of Jesus Christ similarly to underpin their arguments against ordaining women and it is here, in particular, that the Church maintains the same position. The presence of women in the New Testament is noted by the scholastics, particularly the characters of Mary of Nazareth and Mary Magdalen, as the reformed sinner, but these two women were not included by Jesus among the Twelve and therefore not ‘ordained’. The documents issued by the Magisterium of the Church in the latter part of the twentieth century emphasise the fact that since Jesus’ chief followers, and those to whom he entrusted the Church, were all men, this must have been the divine Will and therefore cannot be gainsaid. The Pauline letters are also a source of support, particularly 1 Corinthians 14:34 (‘women must keep silent in the churches’), and 1 Timothy 2:12 (‘I do not permit women to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent.’). The argument used by the Church today is that since, in so many ways, Jesus broke with convention where women were concerned, freely associating with them and including them among his followers, speaking to them alone, touching them even when unclean (the woman with the flow of blood (Luke 8:43)), he could if he had so wished also have included them within the closest circle of people known as the ‘Apostles’, but he did not. The teaching authority of the Church has therefore always maintained that this exclusion was deliberate, decided on by Jesus after a night spent in prayer to his Father (Luke 6:12), thus establishing a permanent rule to be accepted for all time by the Church.

#### 1.b.v Scholastic Theology

Among the scholars who considered the subject of ordination and ministry were the leading Franciscan and Dominican masters, St. Bonaventure (1221–1274), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and Blessed John Duns Scotus (1266–c. 1308), who each devoted some attention to it. They were not simply concerned with women, but with suitability for receiving orders generally, looking at the age of the person concerned, their intellectual abilities, their physical condition, their state of life, as well as gender – the same factors that concern those selecting suitable candidates for priesthood today. These three teachers in particular addressed the main headings of the arguments, although the same points recur in the works of other writers before and after them, such as Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280), Richard of Middleton (1249–1302), Henry of Ghent (1217–1293) and Durandus à

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Saint-Pourçain (1270–1334). In this thesis, I shall therefore focus primarily on the writings of Bonaventure, Aquinas and Scotus, especially their *Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*,<sup>27</sup> Book IV on the sacraments. Between them, they covered most of the ground and demonstrated the greater intellectual rigour in addressing the issue. The purpose of looking at these arguments in detail, in the light of present thinking on the subject, is to discover the foundations for the current stance, to consider their validity and explore the origins of the arguments that were used in the Middle Ages, especially those considered as retaining their force today because they have a basis in Scripture, or in the firm and unchanged tradition of the Church.

Although there were differences among the authorities writing on these topics in the Middle Ages, the main, rational arguments were the same for all of them, with minor variations in language and emphasis over the two or three hundred years in question. They all looked at the hierarchy issue, namely that men naturally have precedence over women and are created superior, and they all looked at the incapacity of women as teachers, because of their natural weaknesses and because of the prohibition on women teaching in the assembly contained in the letters of Paul. There are other arguments, which may not have so much weight today, based on biology and natural phenomena, such as those relating to menstruation and childbirth, and the physical uncleanness of women, as well as those which give Eve greater responsibility for original sin than Adam in the creation accounts. Although these may now seem irrelevant, they were crucially important at the time and their traces can still be found – especially in respect of the uncleanness of women, which underpinned the prohibition on women’s involvement in liturgy generally in the Catholic Church – and their legacy is still felt, although not always articulated, in modern times.

The earliest references to the issue in Western scholastic theology specifically come in the commentaries by Bonaventure and Aquinas on Book IV of Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*. Peter Lombard lived during the first half of the twelfth century, though his dates are very uncertain (c. 1100–c. 1161). He left his native Italy to study in France and was heavily influenced by Hugh of St. Victor (c. 1096–11 February 1141) and Peter Abelard (1079–1142). He became a teacher at the school of Notre Dame in Paris, which would become the University of Paris by the turn of the century, and eventually was elected Bishop of Paris

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, Vols. I and II (Rome: Grottaferrata, 1981).

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in 1159. His compendium of theology, known as the *Book of the Sentences*, was written towards the end of his twenty-year teaching career and his purpose was to produce a rational and historical schema of Church teaching, assembling quotations from scripture and the Church Fathers to produce a complete account of Christian doctrine, organised into four books: on God and the Trinity; creation; Christology; and, in the fourth book, sacramental theology. His discussion of the Sacrament of Orders, in Book IV, question 24, focuses mainly on the role of the priest and on the seven sub-orders, deacon, reader, acolyte and so on. His only reference to suitability for orders is to the personal holiness and probity of the candidate, with no mention of the gender. He takes it for granted that only men are being considered and devotes a section to the subject of the crown and tonsure, the visible mark of a priest, and how the hair should be cut. Following Alexander of Hales (c. 1185–1245), the Parisian teachers began to use the *Sentences* as the basis for their theological teaching and students' commentaries on the *Sentences* were effectively the final examination on which they were judged for graduation from their theology courses.<sup>28</sup> The *Commentaries on the Sentences* develop the points raised and bring in concerns of their own, seeking to analyse the various topics in great detail and, hence, their writers are led to consider the necessary requirements for ordination, among which are physical and mental health, age, and, as we will see, gender, specifically whether the male sex is necessary for ordination. Bonaventure's commentary, like that of Aquinas, was published in the 1250s in Paris.<sup>29</sup> His arguments regarding the suitability of women for orders were based on Lombard's own writings and on Gratian's *Decretum*, itself one of Peter Lombard's sources. Bonaventure included in his analysis the texts from Gratian and others that seem to show that, at some stage in the Church's history, women were ordained at least as 'deaconesses', if not as *presbytera*. This point is very important and is becoming more so today.<sup>30</sup> Richard of Middleton and Duns Scotus also contributed to the arguments, each having a slightly different perspective on the question of women's suitability for orders, reflecting development in thought as the century progressed. This is the material that will form the core of this thesis.

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<sup>28</sup> For an introduction to Lombard's *Sentences*, see Philipp W. Rosemann, *The Story of a Great Medieval Book: Peter Lombard's Sentences*, Vol. 2 of *Rethinking the Middle Ages*, Paul Edward Dutton and John Shinnors (eds.) (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, Bk IV, d. 25, a. 2, r.1 (Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1889), p. 649.

<sup>30</sup> For further background and discussion about the diaconate for women in the early Church, see Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination* (Oxford: OUP, 2008); for the liturgies and rites of ordination for women deacons, see John Wijngaards, *Women Deacons in the Early Church* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2002); Phyllis Zagano, *Holy Saturday: An Argument for the Restoration of the Female Diaconate in the Catholic Church* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), was one of the first writers to examine this subject in detail with the re-opening of the discussion on the female diaconate.

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### 1.c Current Church Teaching

The Catholic Church sets out its current position in a number of documents of different kinds and with varying levels of authority, issued over the past fifty years, from the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) onwards. Chapter 2 of this thesis examines their arguments in detail. The central text is the document *Inter Insigniores* (1976), written by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) under the papacy of Paul VI, which explains in some detail the basic arguments against the ordination of women, as mentioned above, namely: firstly, that Christ did not ordain women, by his own deliberate choice, and therefore the Church has no authority to do so and never will have; and, secondly, that there is a fittingness in a male-only priesthood, reflecting the image of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church, a recurrent image in the mediaeval writers.

*Inter Insigniores* was written partly in response to the initiatives of other Christian denominations, especially the Anglican churches, to ordain or appoint women to ministries. In the Anglican Communion, Florence Li Tim-Oi was the first woman ordained, in a ceremony in Hong Kong in 1944, in circumstances relating to the wartime situation. She resigned after the end of the war, but the Far East was the location of the first official women's ordinations in 1971. The governance of the Church of England being based on the General Synod structure, comprising both clergy and laity, the situation is significantly different to that of the Catholic Church, being essentially a democratic process. So in 1975, the General Synod approved the motion: 'That this Synod considers that there are no fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood', though it rejected the next motion that women's ordination should be approved and permitted. The motion was resubmitted in 1978 and passed by bishops and laity, but rejected by the clergy, who voted 149 to 94 against it. In 1984 the General Synod voted for legislation 'to permit the ordination of women to the priesthood' to be prepared and in the meantime approved the ordination of women to the diaconate in 1985, with the first women deacons being ordained in 1987. The draft legislation for women's ordination was approved in 1988. A majority of diocesan synods (38 out of 44) voted in favour of the move and, in November 1992, the measure was passed with the necessary two-thirds majority by all three Houses. It subsequently received the approval of both Houses of Parliament in 1993 and the first women priests in the Church of England were ordained at

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Bristol Cathedral on 12 March 1994.<sup>31</sup> There is still no complete consensus on women's ordination, and particularly episcopal ordination, in the Church of England. The arguments on both sides are similar to those in the Catholic Church, despite the greater acceptance of women's ministry among Anglicans, since women have been ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Communion.

*Inter Insigniores* was followed by other documents, such as the papal encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988), along with clarifications and letters from both John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger, who became Benedict XVI (until 2013), reiterating and adding authority to the ruling, thought necessary as a response to the decision by the Anglican Communion and the Church of England to ordain women. In particular, the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (1994) from John Paul II was reinforced by two subsequent documents from the CDF requiring the faithful to give their assent to the teaching. The Pope and the CDF did not go as far as claiming papal infallibility for the rule, but nonetheless did assert that it constitutes an act of the 'ordinary papal magisterium' witnessing to the 'infallibility of a teaching of a doctrine already possessed by the Church'.<sup>32</sup> This means that it is part of the unbroken teaching and tradition of the Church and that the members of the Church have to assent to this teaching with respect, in heart and mind.<sup>33</sup> *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* also repeats the teaching on the exclusion of women from orders.

After a certain amount of excitement in academic circles, and among lay people looking for the signs of change, following the Anglican decision to ordain women during the 1980s and 1990s around the world, the Vatican documents put an end to speculation and effectively quashed debate. Especially for scholars at Catholic institutions, there was a sense that it would not benefit a person's career to pursue the subject. Nonetheless, independent writers continued to explore the topic, as we will see throughout this thesis, and many lay movements appeared, mainly in Europe and the United States, promoting the cause of women's ordination and undertaking some serious study to investigate the

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<sup>31</sup> All information taken from <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/women-bishops/the-women-priests-debate.aspx>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>32</sup> 'Commentary on the Reply of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the Doctrine contained in the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*', available at <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014 and in *From 'Inter Insigniores' to 'Ordinatio Sacerdotalis'*, pp. 199–203.

<sup>33</sup> This is set out clearly in the document from Vatican II, 'The Church in the Modern World', p. 25, published at <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014, and in Austin Flannery, O.P. (ed.), *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees and Declarations* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996), p. 34.

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possibilities. Notable among these has been the team running the womenpriests website, which has been a valuable resource for those studying the subject, making material available online and undertaking much original work. The Women's Ordination Conference in the United States, which began in the 1970s, organises gatherings, tours and talks all over the country to publicise the subject and keep it at the forefront of the debate. Other Catholic groups, including We Are Church, A Call to Action and Catholics for a Changing Church, continue to lobby for this cause among others. In the UK, a meeting was held at the Houses of Parliament in November 2011, at which Baroness Helena Kennedy Q.C., Dr. John Wijngaards and the 'Women Can Be Priests' team spoke on women's ordination in the Catholic Church, to re-ignite the debate and demonstrate that it had high-profile support within the Church.<sup>34</sup> Catholic Women's Ordination, another pressure group, is also looking at the subject of women deacons, and holding a one-day conference on this subject in November 2014.<sup>35</sup>

### 1.d Conclusion

In the mediaeval period, the subject of the suitability of women to receive the Sacrament of Orders was discussed by scholastic doctors as part of their commentaries on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and their analysis of canon law, as collected over previous years, principally in the *Decretum* of Gratian and in the rulings of various synods and councils of the Church.

The linguistic environment in which thinking developed on this subject coloured discussion of these issues, inevitably affecting the judgements of the canonists and theologians. Social attitudes and the legal position of women were seen as laws of nature or of God, and unchangeable, making it impossible for women in general to aspire to positions of authority, except within very limited spheres of activity, or where inheritance laws overrode the social norms. The general consensus of opinion at the time was that, as it is obvious that women could not be ordained, there must be reasons for this, either in the law of the Church, or in tradition, or in the Divine Will.

Many of the theologians who discussed this did so from the point of view of the canonical tradition. They simply tried to find reasons in law for the prohibition on ordaining women.

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<sup>34</sup> See <http://www.womenpriests.org/meeting1.asp>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>35</sup> See <http://www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk/news.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

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They looked for these reasons in both natural law and in the relationship between sacramental theology and nature, using scriptural texts, especially the writings of Paul, and in the symbolism of the priesthood in comparison with that of womanhood.<sup>36</sup> Others approached the question more broadly, seeing the origins of the prohibition in the decision of Christ himself, rather than assuming the inferiority of women automatically.

This thesis will consider these areas in detail and seek to establish the significance of their contribution in the light of the present climate of uncertainty about the future of the ordained priesthood and the role of women in the Church. The historical approach taken is dictated by the importance attributed within the Catholic Church to the writings and judgements of the mediaeval canonists and theologians and the use of some of the same arguments within the present rulings on the issue. In fact, the arguments from tradition and, to a lesser extent, from Scripture still form the only objections to the ordination of women by the Roman Catholic Church. The concern of this thesis is to evaluate how the commentators on Lombard's *Sentences* used these points, to try to untangle their sources and to cast light on some of the unquestioned assumptions within them.

Thomas Aquinas, on whom most of Church teaching was based in many important areas, used the Biblical sources and the writings of Aristotle to offer the following conclusion to the creation of woman, neatly summarising the arguments against the ordination of women:

When all things were first formed, it was more suitable for the woman to be made from man than (for the female to be from the male) in other animals.

First, in order thus to give the first man a certain dignity consisting in this, that as God is the principle of the whole universe, so the first man, in likeness to God, was the principle of the whole human race. Wherefore Paul says that 'God made the whole human race from one' (Acts 17:26).

Secondly, that man might love woman all the more, and cleave to her more closely, knowing her to be fashioned from himself ...

Thirdly, because, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. viii, 12), the human male and female are united, not only for generation, as with other animals, but also for the purpose of domestic life, in which each has his or her particular duty, and in which the man is the head of the woman. Wherefore it was suitable for the woman to be made out of man, as out of her principle.

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<sup>36</sup> G.H. Tavad, 'The Scholastic Doctrine', in Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler, *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 104.



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Fourthly, there is a sacramental reason for this. For by this is signified that the Church takes her origin from Christ. Wherefore the Apostle says (Eph. 5:32): ‘This is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church.’<sup>37</sup>

The intention of this thesis is therefore to investigate closely the foundations of the present prohibition on the ordination of women in the Catholic Church and to establish the origins of some of the reasons presented as being beyond discussion and debate at the present time. It is important to clarify the basis for such an important and controversial discussion, the effect of which is so profound on women themselves and on the Church in general. If the present discipline is said to be based on Scripture, on the actions of Jesus of Nazareth in history and, in particular for this study, on the arguments proposed by the scholastic theologians in the Middle Ages, as putting the debate into an academic context, then it is necessary to clarify the context and the reasoning used. It is also necessary to cast light on one or two areas that have not been brought together before, particularly: the language used, in terms of translation and access to texts; the male imagery said to be a paramount obstacle to a female priesthood; and the issue of the exclusion of women from the sanctuary, a little-mentioned and yet crucially important factor in the discussion.

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<sup>37</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part I, q. 92, a. 2, available from <http://www.sacredtexts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum102.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

## 2. Review of the current position

### 2.a *Introduction*

The topic of women's ordination, the subject of discussion and legislation from the patristic period through to the late Middle Ages, was considered by the Church to have been settled by the judgement of the scholastic theologians and the canonists. Subsequently, it was rarely discussed within the Catholic Church until the twentieth century. The principle of the continuity of tradition in the Church means that the Magisterium, its ruling authority, perceives itself as maintaining and preserving an unbroken practice and tradition in this as elsewhere, using some of the same arguments and citing the same authorities now as the mediaeval scholars did in their own writings. Canon law from its earliest forms explicitly reserved ordination for baptised men, which is still the case,<sup>1</sup> according to official teaching contained essentially within the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>2</sup> During the twentieth century, however, with the emancipation of women becoming a live political issue, and subsequently with the movement for gender equality in Western democracies, the challenge to the exclusion of women from priesthood in the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Churches became more vigorous. The St. Joan's International Alliance, a Catholic association calling for women's suffrage and an increased role for women in the Church was founded in London as early as 1911<sup>3</sup> and its members and others wrote and campaigned for equality for women inside and outside the Church throughout the twentieth century, as they still do along with several other groups today. As already noted in Chapter 1 (Introduction), the campaign in the Catholic Church for the ordination of women, having been encouraged by the success of its Anglican counterpart, was reenergised in the 1970s and 1980s, until the restatement of the ban by Pope John Paul II and the silencing of discussion effectively closed the subject, although it continues in academic circles. The greater sense of freedom with the advent of Pope Francis in 2013 has recently revived hope that it may be worthwhile re-opening the debate.

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<sup>1</sup> Canon 1024: 'Only a baptized male (*vir*) can validly receive sacred ordination.'

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), § 1577: "'Only a baptised man (*vir*) validly receives sacred ordination". The Lord Jesus chose men (*viri*) to form the college of the twelve apostles ... The Church recognises herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible.'

<sup>3</sup> Anne Marie Pelzer, 'St. Joan's International Alliance: A Short History 1911–1977' (Brussels 1977), published in *The Journal of St. Joan's International Alliance*, 1992, pp. 1–16 (translated from French by Françoise Awre), available at <http://stjoansinternationalalliance.org/history/in-depth-history/>, last accessed August 2014.

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### 2.b The Vatican's Position in the Late Twentieth Century

With the Second Vatican Council, held from 1962 to 1965, the debate became more open, especially after the Belgian Cardinal Suenens raised the issue of the male-only composition of the delegates, leading to the appointment of 16 women as observers to the Council by Pope Paul VI.<sup>4</sup> Papal documents, such as the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* in 1963, specifically referred to women's role in public life, within the field of equal rights and responsibilities for everyone in society.<sup>5</sup> The documents of the Council include many relevant passages on priesthood and the nature of sacraments, particularly baptism and the priesthood of all believers: 'The faithful indeed, by virtue of their royal priesthood, share in the offering of the Eucharist. They exercise that priesthood too by the reception of the sacraments, by prayer and thanksgiving, by the witness of a holy life, self-denial and active charity.'<sup>6</sup> It also dwelt on the roles of men, women and the laity in general.<sup>7</sup> There was a sense at that period that the focus had shifted and that it would only be a matter of time before it would be possible for women to be ordained. Later on, when the Anglican Communion began actively to consider the issue, Catholic voices were also raised and it was hoped that the two churches would work together towards a truthful and harmonious solution.<sup>8</sup>

For the Assisi Conference of 1975, an ecumenical gathering, formed of representatives from the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, took place to look at the issue of women's ordination. Fr. Eric Doyle, O.F.M., one of the delegates, wrote a paper on the position of the Catholic Church, in which he asserted, after due consideration of the various viewpoints, including that of the Anglican Communion, that the matter could

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<sup>4</sup> Carmel McEnroy, *Guests in their Own House: The Women of Vatican II* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996), p. 41. Suenens is reported as saying 'Women too should be invited as auditors: unless I am mistaken, they make up half the human race.'

<sup>5</sup> *Pacem in Terris*, § 1, available at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/John23/j23pacem.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, § 10, in A. Flannery, O.P., *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996), pp. 14–15.

<sup>7</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, especially § 10, and ch. IV; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, § 11; *Gaudium et Spes*, § 12. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*; all available from <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014, and in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Ruth A. Wallace, 'Bringing Women In: Marginality in the Churches,' *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 36, No. 4, Winter 1975, pp. 291–303, where Wallace argues from a positive perspective that there are strategies for moving forward in bringing women closer to ministry, but there is a danger of the impetus being lost; J. Kobler, 'Towards a History of Vatican II', *Chicago Studies*, No. 2, 1999, pp. 177–191; Kevin O'Shea, C.S.S.R., 'The Background, Seen from the Present Time', paper presented to the Clergy Assembly, Melbourne, 7 February 2000.

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legitimately be revisited by all the Christian families that did not currently permit ordination for women. He concluded by stating:

... there is a growing body of theological opinion which maintains that there is no serious doctrinal argument against the ordination of women and that God did not exclude women from the priesthood. Therefore, it must be recognised that the question about women priests is an open question both theologically and pastorally in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.b.i *Pontifical Biblical Commission Report (1976)*<sup>10</sup>

In the mid-1970s, the Pontifical Biblical Commission was asked to look at the evidence from Scripture about the place of women in the gospels and in the early church, to help in considering the role of women in the modern church, in particular whether Scripture would support or deny women ordination to the priestly role. In a careful and balanced study, the Commission, a body composed of ordained priests, mainly from religious congregations including several Jesuits, Dominicans and a Franciscan, reviewed the Old Testament evidence of the role of women, and the teachings of Jesus on women. It concluded unanimously that: 'It does not seem that the New Testament by itself alone will permit us to settle in a clear way and once and for all the problem of the possible accession of women to the presbyterate [role and function of priesthood]'.<sup>11</sup> In an essay reviewing the Declaration *Inter Insigniores*, which we consider next, and the Pontifical Biblical Commission's statement, John Donahue provided the voting figures for the Commission's conclusion. In addition to its initial judgement, a majority of the members (12:5) agreed that Scripture alone could not exclude the possibility of ordaining women and, with the same vote, that ordaining women in the future would not of itself transgress the plan in the mind of Christ for his church.<sup>12</sup> Combined with the unpublished views of the Assisi conference the previous year, this seemed to leave the debate open and, at this stage, a considerable number of scholars turned their attention to the historical and scriptural questions around women's ordination, encouraged by the work of the Anglican Communion and the belief that further study of the subject, perhaps especially around the issue of women deacons, could lead to changes in future. Given the judgments of the earlier documents, on the inconclusiveness of the scriptural evidence, the state of the

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<sup>9</sup> Eric Doyle, O.F.M., 'The Ordination of Women: The State of the Question in the Roman Catholic Church', Canterbury, paper submitted to the Working Group on the Ordination of Women, convened by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Consultation (ARCIC), published in Staples, Assisi Commission Report, 1975.

<sup>10</sup> 'Biblical Commission Report. Can Women be Priests?' *Origins*, Vol. VI, No. 6, July 1976, pp. 92-96.

<sup>11</sup> 'Biblical Commission Report. Can Women be Priests?'

<sup>12</sup> John Donahue, 'A Tale of Two Documents', in Leonard and Arlene Swidler (eds.), *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 25-34.

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debate at this point would seem to conclude that the Church's present position should be based on the unvarying tradition of reserving ordination to men. Nonetheless, the papal documents and those of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) continued to assert that it is Christ's choice of men only in the Twelve, and their choice of other men to join them, including Matthias, and the seven deacons whose appointment is described in Acts 6 that form the basis for the statement that women cannot be ordained. John Donahue's article, mentioned above, is helpful in this respect, as he showed how the nature of the two different Vatican offices issuing these reports and statements played a part in their respective conclusions on the subject. He described how the CDF document, *Inter Insigniores*, as we will see, used a selective exegesis to support contemporary Church teaching on the subject, while the Pontifical Biblical Commission took a more measured and academic approach to the biblical text, refusing to read into it what is not there on the page. The CDF concluded its examination by accepting the limits of the Biblical data, but adding to it the deposit of faith and the tradition of the Church, in coming to conclusions on matters outside the scope of scholarly exegesis.<sup>13</sup> Donahue himself recalled the Vatican II document on Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, which asserted that it is the job of Scripture scholars to 'look for the meaning which the sacred writers, in given situations and granted the circumstances of their time and culture, intended to express and did in fact express, through the medium of a contemporary literary form'.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.b.ii *Inter Insigniores* (1976)<sup>15</sup>

Subsequent to this, as the debate became more vocal, in 1976 Pope Paul VI issued the 'Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood', known as *Inter Insigniores*. As Leonard Swidler pointed out,<sup>16</sup> the Declaration provided only a partial response to the ecumenical dialogue on the subject of women's ordination, the flourishing of feminist discourse and the movements for greater equality in all fields of life particularly in Western societies. Within the church, the response by women to the call by the Vatican Council for 'full, active, conscious participation' by all the laity<sup>17</sup> in the life of the Church and its liturgy, had aroused the desire of many people to contribute their

<sup>13</sup> Donahue, 'A Tale of Two Documents', p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> *Dei Verbum*, § 12, in Flannery, *Vatican II*, p. 106.

<sup>15</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, Rome 1976, available at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6interi.htm>, last accessed August 2014; and in *From 'Inter Insigniores' to 'Ordinatio Sacerdotalis': Documents and Commentaries* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1996). This is a useful collection on this subject.

<sup>16</sup> Swidler and Swidler (eds.), *Women Priests*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* ch. II, § 1, available at <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014.

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gifts and talents to the service of the people of God, and this inevitably led to consideration of priestly vocation among women. The Declaration is a fairly brief statement, covering the role of women in the church, the various authorities invoked and concluding with its final word on the subject, asking for the full participation of women within the limited sphere to which they are called. It begins by citing the encyclical of John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, and the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, both of which refer to the increasing part played by women in public life, and which challenge discrimination in all its forms. It goes on to highlight outstanding holy women, canonised saints such as Clare of Assisi (1194–1253), Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) and Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), and praises the ‘apostolic commitment of women’ in the Church in modern times.<sup>18</sup> While accepting that there are many new areas of study that impact on this subject, in religion and science, it asserts the claims of the past over those of the present: ‘As we are dealing with a debate that classical theology scarcely touched on, the current argumentation runs the risk of neglecting essential elements.’<sup>19</sup>

The Declaration’s arguments against women’s ordination come under three main headings: the constant tradition of the Church expressed in the writings of the Patristic Fathers and the mediaeval scholars, the attitude of Jesus Christ and the apostolic practice of the early Church. These three aspects of the subject are consistently held to apply binding principles on the Church, without exception being possible for this particular issue, that of the prohibition on women’s ordination. These same arguments were invoked by the mediaeval writers in the texts I will be analysing in this thesis, along with other ideas that the Church no longer maintains. As regards tradition, excepting a few heretical sects in early times, such as Gnostic followers of Marcion, condemned by Irenaeus (c. 140–c. 203), and perhaps the Collyridan heresy, noted by Epiphanius (315–403),<sup>20</sup> the Declaration asserts that the Church has only ever ordained men, and in this respect has remained faithful to the will of Christ and the practice of the apostles. The ‘unbroken tradition’ of the Church is considered to be precisely that handed down by the Apostles, so is deemed to reflect the practice of the very earliest times. Although much in the Church and in the world has changed beyond all recognition in the past two thousand years, the assertion of the Church, as expressed in the Vatican II document *Dei Verbum*, is that the fullness of God’s revelation is in Christ and therefore ‘no new public revelation is to be expected before the

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<sup>18</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, Introduction.

<sup>20</sup> Comprehensively noted in a footnote to *Inter Insigniores*, *From ‘Inter Insigniores’ to ‘Ordinatio Sacerdotalis’*, p. 25, note 7.

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glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ'.<sup>21</sup> *Inter Insigniores* offers a selection of writings by the Church Fathers to demonstrate '[t]he Church's Constant Tradition'<sup>22</sup> as evidence for this. It is the only place in recent times where this is done in an official text, later documents simply repeating the same references or else the conclusions of *Inter Insigniores* itself, up to the last such statement, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, by John Paul II, which repeats the assertion that the Church has no authority to ordain women.<sup>23</sup> This document uses references from a number of the early Fathers, including Irenaeus, Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225) and Origen (c. 184–c. 254), to support its contention that the prohibition on ordination for women was well supported and for valid reasons during the early centuries of the Church.

The mediaeval scholastics, in their studies of Church teaching and practice, made the same point that it was Christ's will that only men were suitable for ordination, despite, as the Declaration concedes, using arguments in support of their claim which can no longer be considered justified and acceptable, such as the emotional and intellectual weakness of women, their incapacity as teachers, and so on,<sup>24</sup> explored in Chapter 4 of this thesis. According to the Declaration, after the mediaeval period, discussion ceased on this subject, and the teaching then continued to enjoy 'peaceful and universal acceptance'. As regards Jesus' own attitude and practice, his unorthodox approach to women as described by the various Gospel stories, the role of women in his life and as the first witnesses to the Resurrection and the supreme status of his mother are all cited.<sup>25</sup> The document repeats the arguments of the scholastics here: if, despite his universal attitude of welcome to everyone he met, male and female, and despite the exalted condition of Mary his mother, he did not include women among the Twelve, assumed to be those present at the Last Supper to whom the traditional teaching of the Church asserts he gave the Eucharistic instruction ('do this in memory of me'), then the Church cannot override this divine will by ordaining women, and thus giving them the 'apostolic charge'.<sup>26</sup> It refers in particular here to St. Bonaventure, Blessed John Duns Scotus and Richard of Middleton, in their commentaries

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<sup>21</sup> *Dei Verbum*, § 4 from <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014; and Flannery, *Vatican II*, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, 'Introduction'.

<sup>23</sup> *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, § 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, §§ 6,7.

<sup>25</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § 13.

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on Book IV, Distinction 25 of the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard,<sup>27</sup> which I examine in this thesis, in Chapter 4.

The document goes on to consider the practice of the apostles, mainly St. Paul, who followed Jesus in giving women and men an equal role in the early church communities, and commending women for their contribution and help to the apostles themselves, but without conferring ordination on them. It mentions the use of the term ‘my fellow workers’ being used for both men and women by Paul, but when speaking of men only, he would use the term ‘God’s fellow workers’, indicating that these are men intended for apostolic mission, by which it assumes is meant the ordained state.<sup>28</sup> It considers that we must distinguish between these variations of the term and identifies them as indicating a specific reservation to men of a particular role not available to women, even at this early stage in the Church’s life. In discussing the enduring force of the attitude taken by Jesus and the first apostles, the Declaration dismisses the view that the Church could decide to do something that Jesus chose not to do, despite his unconventional approach to women. Similarly, while no longer requiring women to cover their heads in church as Paul did (a matter of custom), we cannot break his rule that women should not ‘speak’ in the assemblies, as this was more than simply custom (although it was Jewish custom and practice that women should not speak in synagogue) but is part of God’s divine plan. This also is an argument used by the scholastics against the ordination of women and is discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Above all, however, the Declaration affirms the limits of the Church’s power over sacramental practice. Although the signs and rituals used to administer the sacraments can be and have been changed over the centuries, the essentials of the sacraments, including those fit to receive them, cannot be changed: ‘Priestly ministry is not just a pastoral service, it ensures the continuity of the functions entrusted by Christ to the Apostles and the continuity of the powers related to those functions.’<sup>29</sup> The fundamental motive for refusing change is fidelity to the will of Christ and to God’s plan for the Church. The priest must be a man, because the priest must be an effective sign of Christ who himself was a man. The priest is acting *in persona Christi*, a term used extensively by the Church Fathers and the scholastic Masters, particularly Bonaventure and Aquinas, whom the document

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Lombard, *The Book of the Sentences, Book 4*, Giulio Silano (tr.) (Rome: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § 17

<sup>29</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § 22.



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quotes.<sup>30</sup> The document asserts that the maleness of the priest as a sign of Christ is important as one ‘the faithful must be able to recognise with ease’.

The document goes on to address the concept of the image of the chosen people as the spouse of God and of Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as Bride, developing the nuptial metaphor at some length. This, too, is used widely by the mediaeval and early writers, not just in the theological texts that we will be studying, but throughout spiritual and liturgical works.<sup>31</sup> For the Declaration, this particular argument is incontrovertible: ‘That is why we can never ignore the fact that Christ is a man. And therefore ... his role (this is the original sense of the word *persona*) must be taken by a man.’<sup>32</sup> I will consider the meaning of the Greek term *persona*, as used here.<sup>33</sup> Although the priest also represents the Church, the female side of the nuptial image, he firstly represents Christ, the Head of this female Church, though only in the Pauline sense, as the husband is head of his wife (Eph 5:23; 1 Cor 11:3). Again the Declaration refers to the mediaeval theologians who, it asserts, stated that as well as being the *imago Dei* and acting *in persona Christi*, the priest also acts *in persona Ecclesiae*, despite the female imagery of the Church as bride, since he is acting in ‘the name of the whole Church and in order to represent her’.

*Inter Insigniores* concludes with a defence of its position against the claims of science. It perceives one of the counter-arguments as being that the developments in psychology, biology and physiology, as well as social and cultural changes during the twentieth century pose challenges to the continued refusal by the Church to allow women access to ordained ministry. In the final section, the Declaration answers this by saying that where faith is at issue, science is incompetent to deal with this and, although remaining part of the society in which it is located, the Church nevertheless has an existence above and beyond the material world and therefore cannot be bound in every respect by the rules and conventions of human society. Despite the teaching of Paul in the letter to the Galatians, ‘in Christ there is no longer male and female, slave and free’ (3:28), this does not apply to ministry –

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<sup>30</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae (ST)*, Part III, q. 83, a. 1, ad. 3: ‘in cuius persona et virtute verba pronunciat ad consecrandum’. We will look at this point in some detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* Ps. 74 § 4. at [http://www.augustinus.it/latino/esposizioni\\_salmi/index2.htm](http://www.augustinus.it/latino/esposizioni_salmi/index2.htm) last consulted August 2014; Sermon on the Feast of Pentecost, Sermon 267, § 4, *Sermons 230–272B on the Liturgical Seasons* (New York: New City Press, 1993) p. 271; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, Kilian Walsh OCSO (tr.) (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Fathers, 1980) especially sermons 7, 21 and 86.

<sup>32</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § 30.

<sup>33</sup> In Chapter 4.

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‘baptism does not confer any personal title to public ministry in the Church’.<sup>34</sup> This counters the assertion that baptism is the ‘gateway to the sacraments’ as stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>35</sup> and Canon Law,<sup>36</sup> as it separates the Sacrament of Orders from the other sacraments. Duns Scotus raised this point in his *Commentary on the Sentences*<sup>37</sup> and could find no entirely satisfactory solution to it, concluding that if women cannot be ordained, then it must be according to the will of Christ and part of the hidden mystery of faith. Conferring of ministry is not a human right, according to the Declaration, however, it is a call from God, but it must be authenticated by approval of the Church, so even those women who feel they have a vocation are mistaken as Christ does not choose and call women. Within the Church, all are equal, but ‘equality is in no way identity, for the Church is a differentiated body, in which each individual has his or her role’.<sup>38</sup> The document concluded by making the modest assertion that: ‘The Church, in fidelity to the example of the Lord, does not consider herself authorised to admit women to priestly ordination.’

### 2.b.iii *Commentary on Inter Insigniores* (1976)<sup>39</sup>

Simultaneously with the Declaration, a *Commentary* was produced, expanding and illustrating further some of the points made by *Inter Insigniores*. It opens with a summary of the experience of other churches on the ordination of women to ministry, highlighting the case of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, which was the first to ordain women to the ministerial priesthood in 1958. Despite beginning: ‘The question of the admission of women to the ministerial priesthood seems to have arisen in a general way about 1958’,<sup>40</sup> as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, the issue was addressed earlier by some Catholic women’s organisations and individuals, as well as by non-conformist churches. As the Church of Sweden was among the Reformed Churches who had rejected the apostolic continuity of order, its initiative was not considered significant in the Catholic Church, but as other faith communities began to consider and then act on the issue,

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<sup>34</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § 36.

<sup>35</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 1213: ‘Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments.’

<sup>36</sup> The *Code of Canon Law* (London: Collins, 1983), canon 849: ‘Baptism, the gateway to the sacraments and necessary for salvation’.

<sup>37</sup> *Duns Scoti Opera Omnia*, Vol. 24, *Reportata Parisiensis*, Luke Wadding (ed.) (Paris: Vivès, 1894), Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2, pp. 367–371.

<sup>38</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § 39.

<sup>39</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, in *From ‘Inter Insigniores’ to ‘Ordinatio Sacerdotalis’*, pp. 55–75

<sup>40</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 55.

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including parts of the Anglican Communion, the Roman Church, according to this *Commentary*, felt the need to respond to these decisions, especially as, following the organisation of International Women's Year in 1975, the debate became more vigorous. This is all the more important as 'on the one hand, arguments adduced in the past in favour of the traditional teaching are scarcely defensible today, and on the other hand the reasons given by those who demand the ordination of women must be evaluated'.<sup>41</sup>

The *Commentary* goes on to explain that the Church, in refusing ordination to women, is no longer invoking the traditional arguments around women's inferiority, although it does reiterate and apparently accept them in a qualified way, especially Thomas Aquinas's statement that woman is subject to man,<sup>42</sup> which it explains by saying that Thomas was merely referring to the Biblical data, from the first chapters (1–2) of Genesis and from the first letter to Timothy (2:12–14), rather than just expressing a philosophical concept (and certainly not making a misogynistic statement). The *Commentary* accuses twentieth-century writers on the subject of polemic and of judging the Fathers of the Church as misogynistic. Despite this, it does accept, as mentioned already, that many of their arguments are no longer acceptable and that today the Church has recourse only to the example of Jesus Christ and the unbroken tradition of reserving ordination to men, quoting the Scholastic doctors' references to Christ's institution and conferral of ordination on men only.<sup>43</sup>

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, the historical reality of the development of the sacramental nature and ritual around ordination is somewhat different from the picture given by these official documents of Jesus 'ordaining' the Twelve at the Last Supper. In terms of what the Church has itself allowed historically, 'what the Church does she can in fact do, since she has the assistance of the Holy Spirit',<sup>44</sup> there is now plenty of evidence to show that women were indeed ordained as deacons in the early Church and up to the Middle Ages, especially in the East, before the schism, thus undermining the argument from tradition.<sup>45</sup> The *Commentary* asked for this investigative work to be done,<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 57.

<sup>42</sup> Several references from Aquinas' writings, including *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bk IV, d. 19, q. 1, a. r. 1, available at <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/snp0000.html>, last consulted August 2014, and *ST*, Part IIa, IIae, q. 177, a. 2: 'quia mulier est in statu subiectionis'.

<sup>43</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 59.

<sup>44</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 61.

<sup>45</sup> For the evidence and examples of the liturgies and rituals used in ordaining women as deacons, see Phyllis Zagano, *Holy Saturday: An Argument for the Restoration of the Female Diaconate in the Catholic Church* (New York: Crossroad, 2000); Gary Macy, William T. Ditewig and Phyllis Zagano, *Women Deacons: Past,*

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acknowledging the presence of indications long recognised in the legal and theological texts that placed restrictions on the ordination of women deacons as evidence that this was in fact practised fairly widely, despite being explained as time- or locus-dependent, for the purposes of ministry to women only in particular communities for the sake of propriety.

The *Commentary* supports the challenge by *Inter Insigniores* to those who say that Christ's choice of the Twelve to continue his work is symbolic only of the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel,<sup>47</sup> dismissing its significance in the Gospel texts. Instead, the *Commentary* affirms the role of the Twelve to represent Christ himself for subsequent generations.<sup>48</sup> It goes on to reiterate the case of Mary the Mother of Jesus, not included among the apostles or given the status of 'priest', despite being the most exalted of human beings for her motherhood of the Son of God. The argument from the Fathers of the Church, repeated here, is that this special status of Mary did not need the further 'increase in dignity' which priesthood would confer. And yet *Inter Insigniores* says that 'the priesthood is not conferred for the honour or advantage of the recipient, but for the service of God and the Church'.<sup>49</sup>

At this point, the *Commentary* seems to apologise for the deficiencies of Scripture, in not being sufficiently clear in its ban on women's ordination:

It must be repeated that the texts of the New Testament, even on such important points as the sacraments, do not always give all the light that one would wish to find in them ... it is sometimes difficult to discover in Scripture entirely explicit indications of Christ's will.<sup>50</sup>

It was precisely this point that Eric Doyle was making in the previous year, as we have seen above.<sup>51</sup> Hence, the reliance on the perceived tradition and practice of the Church from earliest times. The *Commentary* points out that two of the proof texts from within Paul's writings extensively used by the Scholastics against the ordination of women are in fact questionable in their authenticity within the writings of Paul, particularly 1 Cor 14:34–35, forbidding women from speaking in the assembly. Having said this, it then asserts that whether or not they are in fact by Paul himself is irrelevant as they have been accepted

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*Present, Future* (Danvers MA: Paulist Press International, 2012); John Wijngaards, *Women Deacons in the Early Church* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> Matt 19:28: 'you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel'.

<sup>48</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 62.

<sup>49</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § 6.

<sup>50</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 65.

<sup>51</sup> Doyle, 'The Ordination of Women'.

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since the earliest times and used to support the prohibition on women's ordination.<sup>52</sup> (This kind of circular argument will be seen again and again. The simple fact that 'the Church has always done this' is sufficient, even though the evidence on which the ruling or action is based is faulty or insubstantial). The *Commentary* goes on to argue that further texts from Pauline writings use scriptural evidence mainly taken from Genesis to assert women's subjection to men, and later Papal documents, such as *Mulieres Dignitatem* and *Christifidelis Laici*, both discussed below, also use the first three chapters of Genesis extensively to support the particular view of the complementarity and natural roles of men and women in creation. These arguments are discussed in more detail later.<sup>53</sup> While saying that, socially speaking, the view that women are subordinate to men is no longer acceptable,<sup>54</sup> the *Commentary* asserts that Paul is not using the text in philosophical terms but as a historical affirmation of the nuptial symbolism of Christ and the Church, another reference to the bridegroom metaphor for Christ. It asserts here that, when Paul is speaking in the context of 'the symbolism of love', he is speaking only of man's superiority being given to the woman 'as a gift demanding sacrifice, in the image of Christ'.<sup>55</sup>

The argument that the Church has abandoned particular practices and rules (veiling of women in particular) and therefore could, if it wished, also permit women's ordination, is answered with the assertion that the Church's judgement is paramount: 'it is the Church herself that ... ensures discernment between what can change and what is immutable'.<sup>56</sup> Hence, she has decided once and for all that this particular sign, the sex of the presider at the Eucharist, the ministerial priest, is fixed and is part of the 'substance of the sacraments'. The ministerial priesthood is the sacrament of apostolic ministry, providing continuity through the centuries from Jesus' own ministry and his mandate to his disciples to preach the Gospel to all people. The Church sees this as indicating the duties of the priest to preach, teach and to offer sacrifice, as the priests of the Old Testament did. The new sacrifice is Jesus himself, who offered himself, in his life, death and Resurrection, as the one saving Victim who would take away sin from the world and open the way for humanity to be reconciled with God. The priest thus 're-presents' the sacrifice of Jesus in the celebration of the Mass, which brings the grace of the Eucharist, the thanksgiving

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<sup>52</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 66.

<sup>53</sup> Chapter 5 on Scripture.

<sup>54</sup> Although it states: 'It was especially the text of 1 Timothy that provided St Thomas with the proof that woman is in a state of submission or service, since (as the text explains) woman was created after man and was the person first responsible for original sin.': *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 66.

<sup>55</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 65

<sup>56</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 67.

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sacrifice, to the faithful who gather together. The figure of the priest, as we have noted, stands *in persona Christi* and, thus, traditionally, should be a man as Jesus was, as the document goes on to state.

Because the sacraments are memorials of events, they are viewed as historical realities as well as spiritual graces, and are linked to particular places and cultures. The argument seems to me to follow that, despite the universality of the Church in place and time, the locus of the Eucharist is first century Palestine, and it therefore must reflect the reality of that time and place in the representation of Christ's action at the Last Supper and in his Passion and death.<sup>57</sup> The *Commentary* refers to other ministerial functions that women are now permitted to perform including the administering of baptism, teaching the faith and jurisdiction. These exceptions are allowed for solely practical reasons in the case of baptism, in a situation of emergency; and teaching is permitted to women in general terms, though the *Commentary* still seems to distinguish between teaching in the form of catechesis, such as might be given to children in a parish or in school, and 'prophecy', a gift of the Spirit – often manifested by women in the first-century Christian communities – and the 'official and hierarchical function of teaching the revealed message, a function that presupposes the mission received from Christ by the Apostles [meaning the Twelve, presumably] and transmitted by them to their successors'. This is the teaching given to the faithful by the Magisterium, in the form of official documents, the Catechism and so on, as well as the teaching delivered by the priest in the homily during the celebration of the Eucharist. This task of preaching within the liturgy is reserved to the priest or ordained deacon present at Mass. As for jurisdiction in the Church, this has frequently been an area of dispute, where women in positions of authority such as abbesses have been perceived as exceeding their powers, appropriating to themselves what was proper to the local bishop, for instance. The *Commentary* quotes in this regard the famous case of the Abbesses of Las Huelgas in Spain, who continued to assert their own jurisdiction up to the nineteenth century despite being reprimanded by a number of bishops and popes, from Innocent III (reigned 1198–1216) onwards.<sup>58</sup> It does not mention any more recent examples of this problem, perhaps because since then the central jurisdiction of the Church has been much tighter. Nonetheless, there have been many individual examples of women's communities

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<sup>57</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 68

<sup>58</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 69.

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and individual women religious being disciplined over the centuries, even up to the present day.<sup>59</sup>

In *Inter Insigniores*, Pope Paul VI called on the Anglican Communion not to take the unilateral decision to ordain women, a plea which was disregarded.<sup>60</sup> The *Commentary* sets this aside and goes on to talk about the position of the Magisterium with regard to the status of the teaching, making it clear at this time that it did not constitute an infallible statement of doctrine, but rather related to the ‘fittingness’ of the male ministerial priesthood with reference to the mystery of Christ.<sup>61</sup> It also understands that, in modern times, ‘it is impossible to be content with making statements, with appealing to the intellectual docility of Christians: faith seeks understanding, and tries to distinguish the grounds for and the coherence of what is taught’.

The arguments from mediaeval scholars based on the inferiority of women are set aside by the Church today, as the *Commentary* has already noted, and thus it is the nature of the Sacrament of Order itself that is considered to determine the necessity for a male priesthood, in a three-stage explanation: the priest acts *in persona Christi*, in administering the sacraments; this means that he is a sign in accordance with the principles of sacramental theology; and so ‘because the priest is a sign of Christ the Saviour he must be a man and not a woman’.<sup>62</sup> Essentially, the *Commentary* repeats the view of Thomas Aquinas, who required the ‘natural resemblance’ between Christ as a man and the priest as a man to be maintained.<sup>63</sup> The *Commentary* goes on to say that this natural resemblance

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<sup>59</sup> For instance, St. Angela Merici, founder of the Ursuline Order in the sixteenth century, Venerable Mary Ward, founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the seventeenth century, and Mother (now Saint) Mary MacKillop, nineteenth-century Australian educator and founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, excommunicated by her bishop for ‘insubordination’ over educational matters in the schools she had founded. Although reinstated by the Vatican, she constantly came into conflict with local bishops who attempted to control her activities as her order opened schools across Australia. She was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010. The present disagreements between the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in the United States and the Vatican (comprehensively reported by the *National Catholic Reporter*, [ncronline.org](http://ncronline.org)) show that women religious are still a problem for the Church.

<sup>60</sup> Women were ordained as deacons and as priests in parts of the Anglican Communion from the 1940s. The first official ordinations in the Episcopal Church in the US took place in 1976, the same year as *Inter Insigniores*, and the Church of England ordained the first women priests in 1994. See the Introduction to this thesis (Chapter 1).

<sup>61</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 70

<sup>62</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 71

<sup>63</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Suppl., q. 39, a. 1: ‘for since a sacrament is a sign, not only the thing, but the signification of the thing, is required in all sacramental actions’, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/5039.htm#article1>, last accessed August 2014; in addressing the point in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas makes the same point, (Bk IV, d. 25 q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, ad. 4, available at <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/snp4024.html>, last accessed August 2014): ‘signa

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would not work if the Eucharist were celebrated ('the memorial of the Supper were to be carried out') by a woman, as it requires not only the words and gestures of Jesus Christ to be repeated, but also the action and, at that moment, 'Christ is present in the minister who consecrates the Eucharist.'<sup>64</sup> The *Commentary's* authors do not believe there is any purpose in countering challenges to this reasoning, except where this could encourage deeper reflection and understanding of traditional principles.<sup>65</sup> They simply assert that whereas the character of the sacrament gives the priest power to consecrate the Eucharist and give absolution to penitents (the core role of the priest in this context), it is in the laying on of hands and his taking the part of Christ (again using the metaphor of the actor invoked by the Greek word *persona*) that the 'meaningfulness' of the sacrament consists.

The *Commentary* then goes on to answer one particular objection that has often been made to the literal interpretation of *in persona Christi*, that if the maleness of Christ matters, does not his Jewishness also matter?<sup>66</sup> This question was asked in a more recent article by Simon Francis Gaine, O.P.,<sup>67</sup> exploring the significance of both gender and ethnic origin in the person of Jesus. Gaine's conclusion agrees with that of the *Commentary*, that while Christ's maleness is appropriate in terms of the metaphorical language conventionally used to describe Christ in his relationship to the Church and the Father (Bridegroom, Son), despite accepting that there is no suggestion that God is somehow male, his Jewishness is only relevant in terms of his role as representative of the human race to God, in other words, as the Jewish Messiah, the promised Saviour. Gaine is understandably cautious about his explanation, which does not satisfactorily counter the argument that the maleness and Jewishness of Jesus are both theologically important and essential to Jesus himself, so that if the one is necessary to priesthood (maleness) so should the other (Jewishness) be, and if one is not, then perhaps the other need not be. The Declaration itself says that Jesus' ethnicity is not such an intimate matter as his sex. It is essential in the economy of salvation that Christ is a man, because, among other things, he is the new Adam, the saviour who will restore the covenant broken by Adam and Eve. The Genesis account of creation is a keystone of the argument against women's ordination here and for the

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sacramentalia ex naturali similitudine repraesentent' (sacramental signs represent what they signify by a natural resemblance), as quoted in *Inter Insigniores*, 27.

<sup>64</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 72.

<sup>65</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 72.

<sup>66</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 73.

<sup>67</sup> Simon Francis Gaine, O.P., 'Ordination to the Priesthood: "That the one who acts in the person of Christ the Head must needs be male, but need not be a Jew"', *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 83, No. 975, May 2002, pp. 212–231. For a fuller exploration of this point, see also Benedict M. Ashley, O.P., *Justice in the Church: Gender and Participation* (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 1996).



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scholastics.<sup>68</sup> Christ is also the Bridegroom of his Church, as his sacrifice on the cross is the ‘definitive reality’ of the nuptial imagery of the covenant of God in the Old Testament,<sup>69</sup> as explained by *Inter Insigniores*. Thus, it is a matter of revealed truth that the gender of the Saviour should be a man, and therefore only another man can ‘represent’ him at the altar.

In its final section, the *Commentary* looks at the role of priesthood within the Church, categorically dismissing the remaining arguments around women’s leadership and ministry in the Church. Despite the presence of women in such roles in the early Church – the ‘primitive’ Church – these are limited in their scope and cannot be extended to the ordained, ministerial priesthood.<sup>70</sup> Modern developments in women’s equality and opportunity are irrelevant to the Church, as ‘the Church is not a society like the rest’. Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:28 that there is no distinction between ‘slave and free, male and female’, also does not apply to ordained ministry, as this is a vocation, a calling from God through the Church.<sup>71</sup> The document closes by asserting the importance of the search for love, rather than the rights of individuals, and of the necessary work still to be done to eliminate inequality and injustice, which make victims of women in all spheres of life.<sup>72</sup>

### 2.b.iv *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988)

The new revised Code of Canon Law was published in 1983, maintaining the legal position that the ministerial priesthood was reserved to men only, as already noted above. Following that, John Paul II issued two documents in 1988, the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (*MD*) and the Exhortation following the Synod of Bishops, *Christefidelis Laici*,<sup>73</sup> both of which reiterated clearly the standard teaching and arguments. The Apostolic Letter presents a particular vision of women, a very positive, spiritual image of their ‘dignity and vocation’, emphasising in particular throughout the example of Mary, Mother of God and holy women down the centuries who served the church and lived lives of exemplary sanctity, offering them as models for modern women.<sup>74</sup> The document based its presentation on the ontology of human beings as either male or female and the

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<sup>68</sup> Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

<sup>69</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 74.

<sup>70</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 75

<sup>71</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 75

<sup>72</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, p. 76.

<sup>73</sup> *Christefidelis Laici* (*CL*), 1988, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>74</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem* (*MD*), 1988, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) . last accessed August 2014

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complementarity of the sexes, using Genesis again as its starting text. It contained no mention of alternative models of understanding sexual gender and expression, asserting that ‘human beings should always and only exist as a woman or a man’,<sup>75</sup> and offered only the ideal model of the human family, father, mother and children as best expressing the intentions of God for the human race. It is Mary who gives women their special dignity, her actuality as woman, and as both Virgin and Mother offers women the choice between these two options of living their lives. Explaining the consequences of the first sin of human beings, the document sees the dominance of man over women in the married state as part of the fragmentation of the human condition caused by sin. The mutuality of marriage is capable of healing this brokenness, as ‘Only on the basis of this principle can both of them, and in particular the woman, “discover themselves” as a true “unity of the two” according to the dignity of the person.’<sup>76</sup> The document concentrates on the scriptural teaching about women, particularly the story of Mary of Nazareth and the Eve–Mary diptych, extensively used by the Fathers of the Church and also by the scholastic teachers, describing Mary as the new Eve, or the woman who restores through her life what Eve destroyed or damaged in hers.<sup>77</sup> It also focuses on women’s vocation as being either marriage, instituted by God in Genesis, or virginity, exemplified by Mary herself. The English translation is confusing, using the single term ‘man’ as usual as the equivalent of both Latin words *homo* and *vir*,<sup>78</sup> a problem that arises frequently in discussing this subject in languages other than Latin, as we will see in Chapter 7 of this thesis on language.<sup>79</sup>

*Mulieris Dignitatem* does not refer directly to the teaching of the scholastics on ordination, but uses the same images as they do of Christ as Bridegroom,<sup>80</sup> to emphasise the gendered

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<sup>75</sup> MD, § 1.

<sup>76</sup> MD, § 6.

<sup>77</sup> MD, § 11

<sup>78</sup> For instance, MD § 6: ‘Homo persona est, pariter vir et mulier: ambo namque ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei personalis creati sunt’ [Man is a person, man and woman equally, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God.]

<sup>79</sup> The translation problem is referred to a little later in the same section (§ 6), with reference to Gen 2:23. Woman is created from the body of the man in this version of the creation story and, therefore, says the Hebrew text, she is called ‘*issah*, as she was taken from the man ‘*is*. The Latin text obviously uses two different words, *vir* and *mulier*, with no etymological link, whereas the English words ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are linked (‘woman’ from Old English *wifman*). Hence, the English translation of the Latin text makes no sense: ‘In biblical language this name indicates her [woman’s] essential identity with regard to man ... something which unfortunately modern languages are unable to express’, although the Latin text quotes the Vulgate, which uses the word *virago* at this point for ‘*issah*/woman, an unfortunate choice perhaps, as meaning ‘female warrior, etc.’ in classical Latin, with overtones of ‘stoutness’.

<sup>80</sup> For instance, Bonaventure, *Itinerarum Mentis in Deum*, Classics of Western Spirituality Series, Ewart Cousins (tr.) (London: SPCK: 1978), ch. 4, para. 5: ‘our Saviour asserts that the whole Law and the prophets depend on these two commandments: love of God and of our neighbour. These two are signified in the one Spouse of the Church, Jesus Christ, who is at the same time our neighbour and God, brother and Lord, king and friend’.

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metaphorical language that *Inter Insigniores* also employs, which it ascribes to the words God uses of himself through the mouths of the prophets in the Old Testament, illustrating the necessity of the priest, acting *in persona Christi*, to be male. Again, it challenges the argument that Christ called only men as Apostles in accordance with the culture and social demands of his own time, where women were of inferior status and without a voice in society or law. Jesus Christ welcomed women as followers, but without conferring on them the special place that was reserved to his male Apostles, who ‘alone received the sacramental charge’ at the last Supper, in the institution of the Eucharist.<sup>81</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem* links this appointment of the Apostles to the nuptial mystery of the relationship of Christ and the Church, with the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and on the altar being equated with the ‘gift of self’ already described when referring to Adam and Eve and the creation of human beings as male and female, complementary in the ‘unity of two’ that is there from the beginning, intended by God.<sup>82</sup> The document goes on to say that this explanation of the ‘priestly service of the Apostles’, intended by Christ to express the relationship between man and woman, ‘confirms the teaching of the Declaration *Inter Insigniores*’, thus making it clear that is the very nature of the priesthood that makes it unsuitable for bestowal on women.

### 2.b.v *Christifideles Laici*

The other important document issued at the end of 1988, *Christifideles Laici*, makes the same points about the role of women in the Church, asserting the equal dignity of all human persons, condemning the abuse and ill-treatment of women, their position as ‘victims’ of discrimination, but saying that it is women themselves who have to be at the forefront of the fight against this kind of attitude and ‘that unjust and deleterious mentality which considers the human being as a thing, as an object to buy and sell, as an instrument for selfish interests or for pleasure only.’<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, it repeats, without reference to particular authority, the basic principle that women are ‘not called to the apostolate of the Twelve, and thereby to the ministerial priesthood’ and again refers back to Genesis, and the creation of human beings as ‘male and female’, with women having their ‘specific vocation’, which is different from that of men, and as always mainly focussed on the role

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<sup>81</sup> *MD*, § 26.

<sup>82</sup> *MD*, § 26.

<sup>83</sup> *CL*, § 49.

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of wife and mother and the caring professions.<sup>84</sup> While lamenting the absence of men in so many areas of Church life, the document repeats the statement of the Council Fathers at the Second Vatican Council that they ‘have recognized the special capacities of women, such as their attention to others and their gifts for nurture and compassion, most especially in their vocation as mothers’. It also reminds woman that she must recognise her own need to be ‘evangelised’ and ‘be able to distinguish what truly responds to her dignity as a person and to her vocation from all that, under the pretext of this “dignity” and in the name of “freedom” and “progress,” militates against true values,’<sup>85</sup> possibly an oblique reference to the ‘women’s liberation movement’.

### 2.b.vi *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*

During the latter part of the twentieth century, as various parts of the Anglican Communion around the world began ordaining women regularly, with the Church of England’s first woman priests in 1994 (two years after approving women’s ordination), the Catholic Church continued to hold the official position that it did not have the authority to ordain women. In response to the growing number of voices within the Church, from the laity and from priests, religious and theologians, speaking in favour of women priests, as described in the Introduction to this thesis, in May 1994 Pope John Paul II issued the brief Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, ‘Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone’.<sup>86</sup> It highlights the reverence the Church owes to women who ‘have shared in every age in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God’. This contribution is made by ‘holy martyrs, virgins and the mothers of families, who bravely bore witness to their faith, and passed on the Church’s faith and tradition by bringing up their children in the spirit of the Gospel’.

The document gives as an explanation for reasserting its position the need to remove any doubts and to ‘declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever [*facultatem nullatenus habere*] to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgement is to be definitely held by all the Church’s faithful’. It was reported at the time that John Paul II wanted the ban described as ‘irreformable’, but many bishops present refused to accept that. Finally, in October 1995, the then Cardinal Josef Ratzinger issued another statement as a ‘Reply to the “*Dubium*” raised concerning the doctrine contained in Apostolic Letter “*Ordinatio*

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<sup>84</sup> *CL*, § 51.

<sup>85</sup> *CL*, § 51.

<sup>86</sup> From <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014; and in *From ‘Inter Insigniores’ to ‘Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, p. 185

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*Sacerdotalis*”, which was effectively a pre-emptive statement about possible questions raised on the status of the assertion in the apostolic letter that the teaching it expresses is to be held definitively by all the faithful. The Reply says that, indeed, this teaching does require ‘definite assent’ as it ‘has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal magisterium’. This meant that although it is not an *ex cathedra* infallible teaching by the Pope himself, it is nonetheless a matter of doctrine, official Church teaching, and therefore all the baptised should accept it as an essential item of faith, to be held unquestioned. The intention was to end the debate and, to an extent it was effective, as after that the academic debate, certainly within Catholic institutions, began to dwindle and, even now, Catholic teachers and writers are reluctant to engage in the public debate and, where they do, sanctions are often applied. Finally, the CDF further explained, in its *Commentary* on John Paul II’s *Ad Tuendam Fidem*, that, although this issue was not a matter of divine revelation, and thus infallible dogma, nonetheless it is an infallible teaching by the Magisterium and it could in future be declared a doctrine ‘to be believed as divinely revealed’.<sup>87</sup>

### 2.c Responses to the Vatican Position within the Catholic World

It is clear from all these documents that they rely heavily on some of the arguments proposed by the scholastic theologians against the ordination of women. The documents explicitly mention St. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and St. Thomas Aquinas as we have seen, and one or two others of the scholastic teachers, as well as the early Church Fathers, to support their arguments. The will of Christ, the unbroken traditions of the Church and the representational quality of the sex of the priest are the primary reasons given why women cannot receive the sacrament of Orders. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, canon law until the late twentieth century also excluded women from the sanctuary and the later documents described here may have had a secondary intention of confirming the impossibility of women’s ordination in the light of the relaxation on the roles of women in the liturgy introduced by Vatican II and confirmed by the 1984 Code of Canon Law, allowing them to be readers, acolytes and special ministers of the Eucharist. There was also a definite intention to draw a firm line between the Catholic and Anglican positions, once it became clear that the latter was moving towards acceptance of women’s vocations to the priesthood.

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<sup>87</sup> All these documents available on the Vatican website, <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014.

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Initially therefore, in the 1970s, especially following the work done by the ecumenical commission in 1975, and then the report from the Pontifical Biblical Commission, there was a positive feeling that the subject was open for discussion and, for a few years, there was a flourishing of academic debate along with involvement by many ordinary laypeople in a number of movements within the Church that promoted the ordination of women, as well as that of married men. With the greater freedom heralded by Vatican II, which provoked lively discussion within the church about the role of lay people and of women in particular, serious study of the topics involved was undertaken, perhaps with the sense that it was groundwork for the ultimate decision to ordain women in the not-too-distant future. Around the world, provinces of the Anglican Communion began ordaining women in the early 1970s, and this was seen as encouraging by supporters in the Catholic Church, until the publication of *Inter Insigniores* reasserted the Catholic position. Nonetheless, the discussion remained vigorous for some time, but was brought to an end by *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, the response to the Church of England's ordination of women in 1994, and, after that, the subject was addressed directly less often in academic circles. It remained an issue, however, that many people returned to from time to time, and in a number of guises, and much solid work has been accomplished in recent years on the periphery, by independent scholars not answerable to the Church or to Catholic university faculties.

Some outstanding names, whose work I have used in this thesis, include Gary Macy, Bernard Cooke and Phyllis Zagano, in America, who have studied the history of women's ordination, especially as regards the diaconate in West and East in the first millennium AD. John Wijngaards and the team on the womenpriests website have continued to collect material and write on many subjects, including the female diaconate, making their work easily accessible to non-experts. Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek have also worked on the background to women's ordination in the early centuries, publishing books and articles on this in the last ten years or so.<sup>88</sup> Tina Beattie has also published significant work on the theology of women in the Church and spoken often, in print and in public, on this topic.<sup>89</sup> Gary Macy and Bernard Cooke republished the work of Ida Raming on canon law, still the best study on the specific subject of the legal objections to women's ordination in the Middle Ages. James Brundage's work on the law as it relates to gender is comprehensive and very helpful, as is the work done by Sr. Prudence Allen on the history of philosophy

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<sup>88</sup> Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Catholic Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2005).

<sup>89</sup> See Professor Beattie's websites: <https://sites.google.com/site/tinabeattie/>; <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/staff/Tina-Beattie/>, last accessed August 2014.

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with regard to sex and gender. All of these writers are referred to in this thesis and their relevant works are listed in the Bibliography.

Aside from the Vatican documents, there is relatively little written recently to object to the idea of women's ordination. Perhaps it is felt that the official Church line says all that is necessary. There are dozens of conservative websites and blogs that offer explanations based on the teachings of the early Fathers of the Church and on the present Vatican rulings as to why it is impossible for the Church to change its teaching on this subject. Benedict Ashley gives a coherent account of the issues in his book *Justice in the Church*,<sup>90</sup> from the point of view of someone opposed to the ordination of women. Sr. Sara Butler also offers a thorough study of orthodox Church teaching as well as answers to some of the objections to the ban on women's ordination.<sup>91</sup> In a lecture given in 2007, she summarises her thinking on the subject and, along with the official documents, shows that it is again the nuptial/sexual imagery that carries the most weight for her:

Can we not appreciate the 'fittingness' of asking only men – in fact, only some men – to take his role as Head and Bridegroom insofar as he 'faces' the Church, his Body and Bride, and offers her his ministry? The symbolism is, indeed, nuptial or spousal. It beautifully displays God's covenant love for his people and reminds us of Jesus' sacrificial love for the Church.<sup>92</sup>

Within the Catholic Church, organisations such as Catholic Women's Ordination, We Are Church, A Call to Action and Catholics for a Changing Church all have the ordination of women at the top of their various agendas. There is no sign of a change of mind within the Vatican, despite the perception that Pope Francis is more pastoral in his approach than his immediate predecessors on many issues. Nonetheless, there is a sense of greater freedom, that there is once more some purpose in pursuing the discussion. The most recent *Catholics in America* survey shows that a majority of US lay people (62%) support the ordination of women.<sup>93</sup> In recent years, there has been a fear that people holding leadership roles in the Church could be disciplined if they deviated from a strictly orthodox position on issues such as the ordination of women, celibacy for priests, and acceptance of the divorced and remarried, but there may once more be an opening of windows to let in the fresh air.

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<sup>90</sup> Benedict M. Ashley, O.P., *Justice in the Church* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996).

<sup>91</sup> Sr. Sara Butler, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2007).

<sup>92</sup> Sr. Sara Butler, 'Women's Ordination: Is it Still an Issue?', lecture at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, New York, 7 March 2007.

<sup>93</sup> William D'Antonio (2011), report available at <http://ncronline.org/news/survey-reveals-generation-shift-catholic-church>, last accessed August 2014. This survey is conducted every six years on a representative sample of US Catholic laypeople.

### 3. The Legal Position on the Prohibition on Women's Ordination – Gratian's Decretum

#### 3.a Introduction

One of the most important sources used by the scholastic theologians in their *Sentence* commentaries to reinforce their conclusion on women's exclusion from the sacrament of orders was the *Concordantia Discordantium Canonum*, the collection of discordant canons, used as the basis of Church law for centuries. Known generally as the *Decretum*, it was the work of Gratian, a teacher and probably a lawyer living and working in Italy during the early twelfth century. 'About Gratian, we can only know with any certainty that he composed the *Decretum* in Bologna in the 1130s and the 1140s, and that he was a teacher with theological knowledge and a lawyer's point of view.'<sup>1</sup> Later in life he lived as a monk, as witnessed by references to the Rule of St. Benedict in the *Decretum* and to the writings of Gregory the Great on Benedict's life.<sup>2</sup> He seems to have spent many years compiling his law book, from the 1120s to about 1140. The outstanding nature of Gratian's achievement was partly due to the fact that he stood alone, with no predecessor and almost no successor for many years. Not only did he provide a textbook for canon law, he secured the subject itself a place in the Schools for the first time.<sup>3</sup> Study of Gratian remains essential, as has been pointed out, because: 'Church law is an integral part of mediaeval culture; if we fail to take this into account we cannot properly appreciate the contribution of one of the essential components of Western civilisation.'<sup>4</sup>

Dante recognised Gratian's place in history, describing him in the following terms:

Quell'altro fiammeggiare esce del riso  
di Grazian che l'uno e l'altro foro  
aiutò sì che piace in paradiso<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Anders Winroth, 'Recent Research on the Making of Gratian's *Decretum*' (2001), *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law*, New Series, 26, (2004-2006)

<sup>2</sup> R.W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, Vol. 1: Foundations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 287.

<sup>3</sup> Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, p. 285: 'a whole subject which had not previously been recognised as having an academic content'.

<sup>4</sup> Stephan Kuttner, 'Graziano: l'uomo e l'opera', *Studia Gratiana*, Vol. 1 (Rome, 1953), published in *Gratian and the Schools of Law, 1140-1234* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1983), p. 288: 'il diritto della Chiesa è parte integrante della coltura medioevale; e senza renderci conto di ciò non saremmo in grado di valutare una delle componenti essenziali della civiltà occidentale'.

<sup>5</sup> Dante, *Paradiso*, x, ll, 104-106 [That other flame, the blaze of Gratian's smile, who gave such delight in heaven through his assistance to both courts].



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The *Decretum* consists of three main sections: the introduction, setting out general legal principles; a substantial main section consisting of mainly imaginary, but sometimes real, cases of all types and degrees of importance to demonstrate the complexity of disputes in the ecclesiastical law courts; and, finally, a section on sacraments, as well as a miscellany of other topics covering the minutiae of church and daily life. This final section essentially sets out what is needed for those ‘seeking full citizenship of the Church on earth, and therefore full rights in the Christian community ... the necessary requirements for a full, orthodox Christian life.’<sup>6</sup> The references to women in Gratian are scattered under a variety of headings, using scriptural references, the writings of Church Fathers, earlier collections of canons and traditional teachings as their sources. They cover woman’s created nature (her weakness of mind, state of subjection and subordinate status in the order of creation), her inferiority in law (invalidity as witness in ecclesiastical courts), the ban on women teaching in church, and the impropriety of women’s presence in the sanctuary.<sup>7</sup>

In later years, the collection of canons was extended from a variety of sources and edited, along with legal books from popes and other canonists, especially Raymond of Pennafort and Boniface VIII in the thirteenth century, up to 1500, when the lawyer Jean Chappuis brought the various collections together into the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, published under this title into modern times.<sup>8</sup>

#### 3.b *Gratian’s Sources*

##### 3.b.i *Scripture*

The *Decretum* uses Scripture as one of its sources for canons that confirm women’s subjection in law and in marriage. The main evidence quoted for this subordinate status is the story of creation from Genesis, perceived as the origin of the divine hierarchy of order and authority, invoked to establish the credentials of the legal strictures governing

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<sup>6</sup> Kuttner, ‘Graziano: l’uomo e l’opera’, p. 289.

<sup>7</sup> The published edition of the *Decretum Gratiani* is contained in the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, A. Friedberg (ed.) (Leipzig: 1879–1881/reprint Graz: 1959). There are many sources for Gratian on the internet, including a fully searchable Latin text of the *Decretum* at <http://geschichte.digitale-sammlungen.de/decretum-gratiani/online/angebot>, last accessed August 2014, and another very useful electronic text at [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd\\_6029936\\_001/index.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd_6029936_001/index.html), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>8</sup> For the background to the development of the legal collections at this period, see *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, Christopher Kleinhenz (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 178; and Rudolf Weigand, ‘The Development of the *Glossa Ordinaria* to Gratian’s *Decretum*’, in W. Hartmann and K. Pennington (eds.), *The History of Medieval Canon Law in the Classical Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 55–98.

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women's position and function in the family and in the Church.<sup>9</sup> As well as the scriptural text itself, Gratian made extensive use of commentaries on Scripture, particularly those by Jerome and Augustine, who devoted much attention to the consequences of the Fall, and of the part played in it by the woman, to reinforce their position on the subordinate nature of all women.

The subject of married women who wished to take a vow of continence, in the context of the hierarchy of authority, was addressed in Part II of the *Decretum*. A married woman could not take a vow without her husband's consent, for 'Women ought to be subject to their husbands. 'It is the order of nature among human beings that women obey man and sons obey their parents, because it is justice in these matters that the lesser obey the greater'.<sup>10</sup> Here Gratian was quoting Augustine, from his commentary on the Heptateuch, *Quaestiones in Genesis*, referring to a husband's authority over his wife.<sup>11</sup> The status of women was to be subject to man, specifically to her husband or father. Women have a weaker nature, their 'weakness of mind',<sup>12</sup> and are in a state of servitude because woman was not made in God's image, so she is subject to her husband, as part of the natural order.<sup>13</sup> This submission was a direct result of women's role bringing sin into the world, through the action of Eve. 'Because of original sin, they must show themselves submissive.'<sup>14</sup> So women were not made in the image of God, they were subject to authority, mainly through their husbands, but also through all male authority figures, and because of their part in the sin of Eve, they were punished by subjugation and physical and mental weakness.

Mentioning Ida Raming's study, Alcuin Blamires says: 'What Augustine calls the natural order simply amounts to the actual hierarchy operative at the time – thought of as a universal.'<sup>15</sup> Gratian underlined this hierarchical structure, ensuring the continuity of authority from the highest to the lowest, and noting that woman is not of equal status to

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 6, section 6.b.

<sup>10</sup> Ida Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women: God's Gift to a Renewed Church' in Bernard Cooke and Gary Macy (eds. and trs.), *A History of Women and Ordination*, Vol. II (Maryland and London: Scarecrow Press, 2004, 2nd edn.). 'Mulieres viris suis debent subesse. "Est ordo naturalis in hominibus, ut feminae serviant viris, et filii parentibus, quia in illis hec iusticia est, ut maiori serviat minor."': Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 33, q. 5, ch. XII.

<sup>11</sup> *Questions on the Heptateuch*, Bk I, §153, quoted on <http://www.womenpriests.org>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 32, q. 7, ch. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 33, q. 5, ch. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 33, q. 5, ch. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 84.

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man in the order of creation, ‘the image of God is in man [*homine*] in such a way that there be only one lord, the origin of all others, having the power of God as God’s vicar, for every king is in God’s image; and thus woman is not made in God’s image’.<sup>16</sup>

The *Decretum* added (ch. 18): ‘Adam was deceived by Eve, not Eve by Adam. It is fair that the one whom she called to sin should now assume her governance, lest she fall again through female weakness’, and in ch. 19:

Woman must veil her head, for she is not God’s image. But, to show that she is subject and because sin began through her, she must carry this sign: not to hold her head free in the church, but covered by a veil in respect for the bishop, and not to have the authority to speak, for the bishop stands for the person of Christ. On account of original sin, she must be seen as an inferior before the bishop, who is the vicar of the Lord, as before a judge.<sup>17</sup>

Chapter 19 repeated the point that woman was made from man (Gen 2:22), indicating her subjection. The temptation and Fall (Gen 3) was seen as indicative of woman’s weakness, both morally and intellectually, and as justification for her inferior position, part of the payment all daughters of Eve had to make for their mother’s sin. The use of Genesis in this context recurred frequently in the scholastic writings, drawing the same conclusions as to the relative status of men and women, women’s guilt for sin, the authority of husband over wife according to Paul as well as the requirement for women to be veiled. Continuing the theme, Gratian refers to Paul in ch.15 saying:

Since the male is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the male, a woman who does not obey her husband, that is, her head, is guilty of the same crime as a male who does not obey Christ, his head. It is blasphemous against the word of God to despise the first point and make nothing of it, and to insult the gospel of Christ, as when a Christian woman, who is, by divine law, subject, wants to dominate her husband in spite of the law and fidelity of nature, while even pagan women, in keeping with the universal law of nature, obey their husbands.<sup>18</sup>

The subjection of woman to her husband was modified by Gratian’s understanding of the state of marriage, as being an equal relationship, with the conjugal rights on each side

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<sup>16</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 33, q. 5, c.13

<sup>17</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 33, q. 5, c.19, “Mulier debet uelare caput, quia non est imago Dei. Sed ut ostendatur subiecta, et quia preuaricatio per illam inchoata est, hoc signum debet habere, in ecclesia propter reuerentiam episcopalem non habeat caput liberam, sed uelamine tectum, non habet potestatem loquendi quia episcopus personem habet Christi. Quasi ergo ante iudicem Christum, ita ante episcopum sit, quia iucarius Domini est, propter peccatum originale debet subiecta uideri.”

<sup>18</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 33, q. 5, c.15, “Cum caput mulieris uir sit, caput autem uiri Christus, quecumque uxor non subicitur uiro, hoc est capiti suo, eiusdem criminis rea est, cuius et uir, si non subiciatur capiti suo. Verbum autem Domini blasphematur, uel cum contempnitur Dei prima sententia, et pro nichilo ducitur, uel cum Christi infamatur euangelium, dum contra legem fidemque naturae ea, que Christiana est, et ex lege Dei subiecta, uiro inperare desiderat, cum gentiles etiam feminae uiris suis seruiant communi lege naturae.”

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being the same.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the hierarchical authority of the man still applied, because of woman's essential subordination to the man, her 'state of servitude', which meant she was subject to her husband in everything. The only equality related to the sexual relationship of the couple, where both had a duty to abstain from conjugal relations only with the agreement of the other and, even then, as already noted, if the wife made the vow of abstinence without the husband's agreement, he could forbid her to fulfil it, and the same right applied to the wife.<sup>20</sup>

All these scriptural reasons for women's inferiority in the law led to the inevitable conclusion that they were unsuitable for all kinds of roles within the Church. They could not hold any office of authority, teaching or ministry. They could not be ordained as priest or deacon, and they could not even raise a complaint against a priest in court.

#### 3.b.ii Church Fathers

In *The Veiling of Virgins*, Tertullian (150–225AD?) stated that women were forbidden to preach, baptise, or claim any sacerdotal office.<sup>21</sup> St. Augustine (354–430) frequently showed from scriptural references that it was 'natural' for man to rule over woman:

Nor can it be doubted, that it is more consonant with the order of nature that men should bear rule over women, than women over men. It is with this principle in view that the apostle says, 'The head of the woman is the man' and 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands.' So also the Apostle Peter writes: 'Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.'<sup>22</sup>

Gratian used this instruction from Augustine to explain how women in law must be subordinate to their husbands, quoting again from scripture commentary by Augustine, this time *Quaestiones in Numeros*:

In everything else [other than conjugal relations where the couple have equal rights over each other] the husband is the head of his wife and the wife is the body of her husband [vir est caput mulieris, et

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<sup>19</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 23, q. 5, ch. 11: 'quia in debito coniugii eque mulier habet potestatem viri, sicut et vir mulieris'.

<sup>20</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 23, q. 5, ch. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginitate Velandi*, ch. 9: 'Non permittitur mulieri in ecclesia loqui, sed nec docere nec tinguere nec offerre nec ullius virilis muneris, nedum sacerdotalis officii sortem sibi vindicarent', available at [http://www.tertullian.org/latin/de\\_virginibus\\_velandis.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/latin/de_virginibus_velandis.htm), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Bk 1, ch. 10, available at [http://www.augustinus.it/latino/nozze\\_concupiscenza/index2.htm](http://www.augustinus.it/latino/nozze_concupiscenza/index2.htm) [last accessed January 2015] 'Nec dubitari potest naturali ordine viros potius feminis quam viris feminas principari. Quod servans Apostolus ait: *Caput mulieris vir*; et: *Mulieres, subditae estote viris vestris*; et apostolus Petrus: *Quomodo Sara*, inquit, *obsequabatur Abrahae, dominum illum vocans.*' Translation from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aug-marr.asp>, last accessed August 2014;

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mulier corpus viri] so that a wife may make a vow of abstinence if her husband allows her to, but which she may not fulfil if her husband forbids her to.<sup>23</sup>

The cyclical reasoning, men rule over women, therefore women are naturally inferior and must submit ('est ordo naturalibus in hominibus, ut feminae servirant viris')<sup>24</sup>, is encountered frequently in the writings of the Church Fathers and in these decretals.<sup>25</sup> There are also instructions forbidding women to teach or baptise, quoting from a Council of Carthage (397), with a lengthy text, although in fact the quotation comes not from a conciliar decree but from a collection of canons known as the *Statuta Ecclesia Antiqua*,<sup>26</sup> a Southern French compilation of laws probably dating from the end of the fifth century, which became part of the pseudo-Isidorian collection that we will look at below. The *Statuta* was a collection of canons taken from some Greek councils, as well as from the Decretals of certain popes. The Council of Carthage mentioned above never in fact took place and the collection may have originated in the writings of Gennadius of Marseille,<sup>27</sup> a late fifth-century priest and historian.

Also used as a source by Gratian was a fourth-century scriptural commentator known as Ambrosiaster (that is pseudo-Ambrose). This was the name given in the sixteenth century to the author of a commentary on the letters of Paul, which was widely attributed to the fourth-century Bishop Ambrose of Milan.<sup>28</sup> The work of this pseudo-Ambrose was highly valued and appreciated by many other writers, including Augustine and Pelagius, and was very influential because of its supposed authorship by Ambrose, especially on the development of canon law.

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<sup>23</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 33, q. 5, ch. 11: 'Quia uero in ceteris uir est caput mulieris, et mulier corpus uiri, ita uota abstinenciae uiro permittente mulier potest promittere, ut tamen eodem prohibente repromissa non ualeat implere, et hoc, ut diximus, propter condicionem seruitutis, qua uiro in omnibus debet subesse..' from <http://www.muenchener-digitalisierungszentrum.de/>, full searchable text of Gratian's *Decretum*, last consulted January 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 33, q. 5, ch. 12.

<sup>25</sup> See Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women', pp. 31–33.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Munier, *Les Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960). He compares the text of the *Statuta* with the contemporary writings of Gennadius and demonstrates that the credal content and the sources of the collection are consistent with three of Gennadius' known works: 'De la comparaison pertinente avec les écrits de Gennade, il résulte que celui-ci ne peut être que leur rédacteur anonyme.' Gennadius was probably Greek, but belonged to the monastery of Saint Victor in Marseille, in the second half of the fifth century. He made this collection between 476 and 485.

<sup>27</sup> Dismas Bonner, O.F.M., 'Church Law and the Prohibition to Ordain Women', in Carroll Stuhlmüller (ed.), *Women and Priesthood: Future Directions* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1978), pp. 76–78.

<sup>28</sup> Erasmus expresses his doubts in his edition of Ambrose's collected works, printed in 1527. He considers it unlikely some parts of the commentaries on Paul were written by Ambrose himself, calling them 'patchworks' by an 'unskilled' hand. See Jan Krans, 'Who Coined the Name Ambrosiaster?' in Jan Krans, L.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, Peter-Ben Smit, Arie W. Zwiep (eds.), *Paul, John and Apocalyptic Eschatology*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

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Writing on 1 Timothy 3:11, Ambrosiaster quoted the case of a heretical sect known as the Cataphrygians (people from Phrygia), or Montanists, who permitted the ministry of women:

Therefore he [Paul] also wants women who are manifestly inferior, to be without fault, in order that the Church of God be pure. But the Cataphrygians ... contend with vain presumption that, because the apostle, after addressing deacons, speaks to women, they too can be ordained as deacons, although they know that the apostles chose seven male deacons. For was there at the time no single woman fit to be found, since under the eleven apostles we read that there were holy women? ... And though he orders the woman to keep silent in church, they on the contrary try to vindicate the authority of her ministry.<sup>29</sup>

Montanus was a second-century convert to Christianity from Asia Minor, who claimed to be a prophet. He attracted many followers including men and women. The movement was initially accepted by the Church and had some notable converts, including Tertullian, and was sometimes supported by bishops of Rome and other figures, such as Irenaeus and Jerome, because of their asceticism and discipline. However, the claims by the three leaders, Montanus himself and his two women disciples Prisca and Maximilla, to prophecy and visionary ecstasies caused concern and, increasingly, from the end of the second century, the movement was treated as heretical. It persisted in parts of the Mediterranean world for a time but finally seems to have disappeared by the beginning of the eighth century. Because of its popularity, however, the memory of the movement continued, especially because of its presence in the writings of its opponents. Bishop Eusebius (263–339) wrote: ‘For some persons, like venomous reptiles, crawled over Asia and Phrygia, boasting that Montanus was the Paraclete, and that the women that followed him, Priscilla and Maximilla, were prophetesses of Montanus.’<sup>30</sup> The scholastic writers sometimes used their example of unorthodox practice as evidence *pro* in their commentaries on the *Sentences*,<sup>31</sup> before their conclusions *contra*.

In his commentaries on Paul’s letters, Ambrosiaster enthusiastically took up the apostle’s teachings in 1 Corinthians, and in the first letter to Timothy, to demonstrate the inferiority

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<sup>29</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul*, Vol. 81, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, (University of Salzburg, 1969).

<sup>30</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, Bk V, ch. XIV, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Philip Schaff (ed.) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890), available online from Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.x.xv.html>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium in IV Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi, 1251–1253* (Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1889), d. XXV, a. II, q. 1; Richard Fishacre, *Commentary*, Bk IV, d. 24, quoted by John Hilary Martin, O.P., ‘The Ordination of Women and the Theologians in the Middle Ages’, *Escritos del Vedat*, Vol. 16, 1986, pp. 115–177.

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of women, and these ideas were repeated and expanded by later writers, including Gratian. Ambrosiaster used 1 Cor 7:10–11, ‘A woman may not leave her husband. If she has left him she may not remarry’, to assert that a woman who has chosen to leave cannot remarry, even if the husband had been unfaithful, or abandoned the Christian faith. However, a man could remarry under similar circumstances, because ‘a man is not restricted by the law as the woman is; for the husband is the head of his wife’.<sup>32</sup> Gratian took this up, and expanded on it, with a discussion of the etymology of the words *vir*, *virtus*, *mulier* and *mollicies*, to demonstrate the weak-mindedness of the woman.<sup>33</sup> By extension, Gratian believed the term *mulier* could be used for either sex to signify lack of chastity and the sin of adultery, an ‘appropriate designation ... in the case of both sexes because of their wicked depravity ... each of whom is called a woman by reason of the corruption of lust’.<sup>34</sup>

Subsequently, synod after synod<sup>35</sup> gradually imposed local rules banning women from being ordained deacon, from touching sacred objects or receiving communion in the hand. For instance, the Synod of Rouen in 650 AD forbade priests to allow women to hold the chalice, or help to distribute communion, indicating that such practices were well-known.<sup>36</sup> As asserted later by Duns Scotus, among others, the argument given was often that, to quote Scotus himself, ‘in former times, people were less sinful than they are now, and therefore needed fewer restrictions, but in these degenerate days, such licence cannot be allowed’.<sup>37</sup> Gratian made the same point, when asserting that women could not be

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/brosiast.asp>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>33</sup> ‘But if someone were to object that in that case, no more is allowed to a husband than to a wife if the husband is unfaithful, he must know that Ambrose does not call him “man” [Latin *vir*] on account of his male sex, but by the strength [Latin *virtus*] of the soul; and he should realise that ‘woman’ [Latin *mulier*] is not called so because of the sex of her body but because of the weakness [Latin *mollicies*] of her mind.’: Gratian, *Decretum*, causa 32, q. 7, ch. 18. This was a very popular etymology, much quoted. The subject is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 on language.

<sup>34</sup> Raming, ‘The Priestly Office of Women’, pp. 26–27: ‘Thus ... *mulier* (or *femina*) ... implies a serious stain and inferiority, while *vir* indicates ... a human being in ideal form and is thus likewise an ethically qualified term.’

<sup>35</sup> Notably, the Synod of Laodicea (363 AD), canon XI, canon XLIV; Synod of Saragossa (380 AD).

<sup>36</sup> H. Th. Bruns (ed.), *Canones Apostolorum et Conciliorum Saeculorum*, John Wijngaards (tr.) (Berlin: 1839/reprint Turin: Bottega d’Erasmus, 1959), Vol. 2, pp. 268–269: ‘It has been reported to us that priests after saying Mass while they themselves consume the Divine Mysteries, hand over the chalice of the Lord to women who have made offerings for their Masses, or to some lay persons who cannot discern the Body of the Lord ... we enjoin on all priests that no one in future presumes to act in this manner.’

<sup>37</sup> *Duns Scoti Opera Omnia*, Vol. 24, *Reportata Parisiensia*, Luke Wadding (ed.) (Paris: Vivès, 1894), pp. 367–371, Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2: ‘...quia modo homines sunt citius doli capaces quam tunc errant, et ideo non est modo ita limitatum sicut prius..’

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ordained, ‘in the Old Law many things were permitted which today are abolished, through the perfection of grace’.<sup>38</sup>

Another very influential source for Gratian’s work was found in the collections of pseudo-Apostolic Constitutions, incorporating the earlier *Didache* and the *Didascalia*. These writings were popularly attributed to the Apostles, although never formally accepted as such by the church. Dating from the fourth century, they comprise a rather loose collection of legal precepts and catechetical instructions, intended mainly as a manual for priests. Although they claimed to be the writings of the Apostles and the work of St. Clement of Rome, in fact, they were probably compiled by an unknown clerical writer from the Antioch region. The fact they were apostolic in nature but not in origin was sufficient to give them the status of apostolic traditional writings.<sup>39</sup> Despite these claims never being admitted by the Catholic Church, the collection was extremely well-respected and used as supporting material for much of Church law, up to and beyond Gratian’s time.<sup>40</sup> These sources are extremely important in the *Decretum* and, through that, in the work of the scholastic theologians. These documents specifically excluded women from all forms of ministry, again citing the example of Jesus ‘who sent only us Twelve to instruct the people and the heathen, but he never sent women although women were not lacking’.<sup>41</sup>

#### 3.b.iii Other Writings

The use of documents later found to be falsely attributed to early authorities, either innocently or deliberately, was widespread in the Middle Ages. This is a not unusual method of providing support for the arguments of one party or another, then or now.<sup>42</sup> The False Decretals were a collection of documents, partly spurious, treating of canon law, composed between 847 and 852 probably in France by a man who called himself Isidore Mercator (hence the term pseudo-Isidorian Decretals).<sup>43</sup> The influence of the False

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<sup>38</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 15, q. 3: ‘In veteri lege, multa permittebantur, que hodie perfectione gratiae abolita sunt. Cum enim mulieribus permitteretur populum iudicare, hodie pro peccato, quod mulier induxit, ab Apostolo eis indicitur uerecundari, uiro subditas esse, in signum subiectionis uelatum caput habere.’

<sup>39</sup> Bonner, ‘Church Law and the Prohibition to Ordain Women’, pp. 76–77.

<sup>40</sup> Raming, ‘The Priestly Office of Women’, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> *Apostolic Constitutions*, Bk 3, ch. 6, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/07153.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of the practice of producing forgeries or fictitious evidence, see Anne Duggan, ‘The Making of a Myth: Giraldus Cambrensis *Laudabiliter*, and Henry II’s Lordship of Ireland’, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2007, pp. 107–169.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05773a.htm> last accessed, August 2014: ‘Nowadays every one agrees that these so-called papal letters are forgeries. These documents, to the number of about one hundred,



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Decretals was profound in the early Middle Ages and beyond. By their incorporation and quotation in Gratian's *Decretum*, they were treated as authoritative in textbooks of canon law throughout the period under consideration. Some scholars have considered that, as they were not intended to create new canons, but to add authority to existing law, the aim of their authors was at least sincere in intent.<sup>44</sup> These documents did have a fairly significant effect on some developments in law, particularly when, as in the case of women's position within the church, the ideas they promoted were in line with popular thinking and were supported by learned opinion.<sup>45</sup> Such material is often discounted by modern scholars of the history of women's exclusion from orders<sup>46</sup> and should not be used as the basis for present discussions on the subject but, in terms of the Middle Ages, its misattribution is irrelevant, since 'the rights, institutes and structures they were vindicating were already in existence, even inherent in the structures of the Church'.<sup>47</sup> For mediaeval readers, the apparent weight of historical documents from the earliest times of the Church gave the collection 'unshakeable force and *gravitas*'.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, with regard to matters relating to women, many of the alterations made to these texts were done so in a way that was extremely prejudicial to females, arising from a low regard for them.<sup>49</sup>

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appeared suddenly in the ninth century and are nowhere mentioned before that time ... they were made up of passages and quotations of which we know the sources; and we are thus in a position to prove that the Pseudo-Isidore makes use of documents written long after the times of the popes to whom he attributes them. ... Then again there are endless anachronisms. The Middle Ages were deceived by this huge forgery, but during the Renaissance [Cardinals] John of Torquemada (1468) and Nicholas of Cusa (1464), declared the earlier documents to be forgeries ... Nevertheless the official edition of the "Corpus Juris", in 1580, upheld the genuineness of the false decretals, many fragments of which are to be found in the "Decretum" of Gratian.'

<sup>44</sup> See Anders Winroth's review of new editions of parts of the pseudo-Isidoriana by Karl-Georg Schon, *Die Capitula Angilramni: Eine prozessrechtliche Fälschung Pseudoisidors*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Studien und Texte, Vol. 39 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006): 'The forger aimed at making the church more independent of secular powers, by emphasizing the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and by creating a system of legal procedure that made it more difficult to depose or otherwise punish clerics. In the process and unintentionally, Pseudo-Isidore enhanced the authority of the pope, something that the reformers of the High Middle Ages used to support their goals (not knowing that their sources were forged).': A. Winroth, *The Medieval Review*, June 2007.

<sup>45</sup> E. Seckel, 'Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals and other Forgeries', in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1953), available at Christian Classics Ethereal Library <http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/encyc/encyc09/htm/iv.v.lxxiv.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women', p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> Bonner, 'Church Law and the Prohibition to Ordain Women', p. 77.

<sup>48</sup> Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, p. 247: 'Indeed from any point of view, its picture of the stability and elaboration of papal authority in the government of Christian society during the first seven centuries of its existence, and the very imposing bulk of texts would – forgery apart – offer as solid a foundation for the government of Christendom as could be desired.'

<sup>49</sup> Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women', p. 77.

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#### 3.c *Roman Law*

The juridical source of the exclusion of women from the Sacrament of Orders and so many other areas of church life, particularly in Western Europe, which remained under Latin influence for the first one thousand years of Christianity and beyond, was Roman law. The emperor Justinian compiled his 'Digest' of Roman law during the sixth century, which enabled this legal framework to survive and continue to be familiar in Western Europe.<sup>50</sup> Parts of this work are referred to in collections of canons and in the deliberations of Church councils during subsequent centuries.<sup>51</sup> The arguments constantly invoked by Church Fathers from the second century onward appealed to the *status quo* to support their contention that women could not represent Christ, or even be made in the likeness of God, because women are subject to and therefore cannot be like God. There was no concept of injustice here and no idea that there was any conflict with the intentions of Jesus towards women. The assumption was that both Roman and church law somehow represented the natural state of things, reflecting God-given, natural law. Roman law influenced the law codes of most Western countries for centuries after the Roman Empire ceased to exist. Its attraction was its simplicity and clarity, and its practicality. It answered questions and resolved problems, developed as it was by the world's greatest administrators. But it also enshrined the assumptions and prejudices of its writers. So, in Roman law, and later in mediaeval Europe, women could not own property but were themselves the property of men, either of their fathers, or of their husbands, the *paterfamilias*.<sup>52</sup> James Brundage summarises the position of women under these legislative systems, during the Roman empire and up to the sixth century, in terms of their dominance by their male relatives. The man could dispose of the woman as he wished. A father could give his daughter in marriage to anyone, a husband could treat his wife as he chose, and she had no recourse to law at all. 'Legislators and jurists assumed that women were at the service of men, ministered to male pleasure, and accepted male gratification as their primary goal. Roman lawmakers ... treated women as in some measure less fully human than adult males.'<sup>53</sup> Subsequently, these provisions of law were modified, at least in the upper classes, as the

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<sup>50</sup> *The Digest of Justinian*, T. Mommsen, P. Krüger and A. Watson, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

<sup>51</sup> Michael H. Hoeflich and Jasonne M. Grabher, 'The Establishment of Normative Legal Texts', in Hartmann and Pennington, *The History of Medieval Canon Law*, pp. 1–21.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women: Towards a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 198.

<sup>53</sup> James Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 28.

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increasing prevalence of primogeniture allowed women some freedom to hold their own property, whether a dowry or inheritance.<sup>54</sup> In civil society, however, the legacy of the Roman period meant that mediaeval women continued to have few rights or standing in legal terms. A woman could not give evidence in court, or enter a court case without having a man to represent her, nor could she stand as guardian for another person, even her own children.

Hoeflich and Grabher describe how the rediscovery of Roman law was at the centre of the development of the knowledge base for the professionalisation of law, in both academic and practical contexts.<sup>55</sup> This revival began in Bologna with the first schools of law, starting with that reputedly founded at the beginning of the twelfth century by a scholar called Irnerius, of whom little is known. He and his pupils organised Justinian's texts to form the basis of their legal syllabus. Canon law itself arose out of the work of church councils, which met to rule on matters relating to doctrine and liturgy and, when necessary, to mediate in disputes within the community. As society became more litigious and complex, issues relating to marriage, property, ecclesiastical appointments and so on required a more structured legal framework that would meet the needs of daily life. It was evident that the principles of Roman law met this need, offering procedural solutions as well as the potential for future developments as case law built up. 'Roman law promised something new in helping to give law a systematic existence in an increasingly complicated society.'<sup>56</sup>

Later recensions of the *Decretum* used Roman law extensively, but Anders Winroth has sought to show that Gratian himself probably did not have as thorough a grasp of it as formerly believed and that the insertions were made by subsequent compilers to provide a more comprehensive framework for canonical legislation.<sup>57</sup> In this environment, where the established order was so far embedded into social assumptions that it could be considered as predetermined by nature and by God, Gratian quoted Jerome as saying that it is unnatural for a woman to try to dominate her husband, as this is 'against the law and

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<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of this subject, see Jo Ann MacNamara, 'Women and Power through the Family Revisited', her reassessment of earlier work in collaboration with Suzanne Wemple, published in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, Mary Carpenter Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (eds.) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 17–30.

<sup>55</sup> Another very useful account of the revival of Roman law is James Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, and Courts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to the Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (Liguori, Missouri: Triumph Books, 1991, 3rd edn.), p. 300.

<sup>57</sup> Anders Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 147–148.

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fidelity of nature'. This is because 'wives are subject to their husbands by nature'.<sup>58</sup> Women are subordinate because they are the inferior sex and inferior because they are subordinate to the superior sex, the circular argument again. Since nature was created by God, whatever is according to the law of nature (*comuni legae naturae*) must be God's will.

#### 3.d Use of Gratian and Canon Law by the Mediaeval Canonists and Scholastics

The scholastic theologians of the Middle Ages mined Gratian for his few references to women's ordination, although they were selective and interpreted these sources to suit their own needs. The canons in the *Decretum* relating to women come under two main headings: those on marriage; and those on women's role in the church and the liturgy, these mainly being prohibitions. In the first section, Part 1, d. 23, of the *Decretum* discusses several issues relating to liturgical practice. All of these were included by the leading scholastic theologians in their commentaries on the *Sentences* and their objections to women's ordination. Chapter 25 of this section forbade women, even religious sisters, to touch or carry sacred vessels and vestments or to act as thurifers at the altar, supported by d. 1, chs. 41 and 42, which reserved the handling of these objects to men only, evoking again the polluting effects of menstruation.

In the mid-twelfth century, Paucapalea, a pupil of Gratian, includes this point in his commentary on the *Decretum*, again using the description of the effects of menstruation taken from Isidore, after Pliny: 'For only a woman is an animal that menstruates. Through touching her blood fruits will fail to get ripe. Mustard degenerates, grass dries up and trees lose their fruit before time. Iron gets rusted and the air becomes dark. When dogs eat it, they acquire rabies.'<sup>59</sup> Gratian had used a precedent from Pope Gregory<sup>60</sup> to decide that a menstruating woman could visit the church, but Paucapalea used the judgement of a later pope, Theodore (c. 602–690) to propose the alternative view. Ida Raming points out that Paucapalea manages to reconcile the two arguments by the not unusual technique of

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<sup>58</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 33, q. II, ch. 15.

<sup>59</sup> Paucapalea, *Die Summa des Paucapalea über das Decretum Gratiani*. Johann Friedrich von Schulte (ed.) (Giessen: Emil Roth, 1890), d. 5, princ. §2.v., quoted by Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women', pp. 78–79.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 6 on biology, 6.c.i.

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selective use of his sources. He says that the woman may enter the church to pray, but not for any other reason, and that she must not enter ‘boldly’, but with humility.<sup>61</sup>

Rufinus, another twelfth-century canonist, takes up the same argument, going with Theodore on banning menstruating women from entering the church:

This permission to the woman has now been abolished because of the contrary practice of the Church and mostly because of what we read in the penitentiary of Theodorus, that if a woman has presumed to enter a church before a predefined time, she has to do penance by fasting on bread and water for as many days as she would have needed to stay away from Church.<sup>62</sup>

Even sexual relations during menstruation were considered sinful and dangerous, potentially producing deformed children, and priests were instructed to question their people in the confessional about intercourse during menstruation.<sup>63</sup>

Distinction 2, ch. 29, *De Consecratione*, forbade women to take communion to the sick and again, in d. 23, there is the prohibition against women teaching, in ch. 29: ‘No woman, however learned and holy, may presume to teach men in an assembly. No layman may dare to teach in the presence of clerics, except at their request.’ This prohibition is repeated in d. 4, ch. 20. Finally, there is d. 32, ch. 19, which forbade the ordination of *presbytera* in the Church. Other canons cover subjects of relevance, such as the tonsure, veiling of women and the responsibility of women for sin.<sup>64</sup>

The *Decretum* specifically notes, though without explaining its reasons, that ‘women cannot be promoted to the priesthood or even the diaconate’, the context being their disqualification as plaintiffs in a case against a priest. This prohibition was supported by reference to Pope Fabian and explained by the fact that no one who was not of equivalent status could give testimony in court against a priest.<sup>65</sup> The twelfth-century canonist, Bishop Huguccio,<sup>66</sup> commenting on Gratian, explained that, even if a woman were ordained, her

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<sup>61</sup> Raming, ‘The Priestly Office of Women’, p. 79.

<sup>62</sup> Rufinus, *Summa Decretorum*. Heinrich Singer (ed.) (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoningh, 1902. Reprint Aalen: Scientia, 1963) on d. 5, ch. 2., quoted by Raming, ‘The Priestly Office of Women’, p. 83.

<sup>63</sup> Abbot Regino of Prüm and Burchard of Worms, in the tenth century. See Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women, Sexuality and the Catholic Church*, Peter Heinegg (tr.) (Garden City: Doubleday, 1991), p. 14.

<sup>64</sup> This analysis is taken from Raming, ‘The Priestly Office of Women’, pp. 5–6.

<sup>65</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*. Part II, q. III.

<sup>66</sup> Bishop of Ferrara (d. 1210), canonist and lawyer. Identified with Huguccio of Pisa, grammarian, though this is unproven. A thorough biographical study is provided by Wolfgang P. Mueller, *Huguccio: The Life, Works, and Thought of a Twelfth-Century Jurist*, Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Canon Law, Vol. 3 (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 1995). Huguccio’s *Summa Decretorum* is still in the

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sex means that, *de facto*, the sacrament would have no effect in her: ‘she does not actually receive ordination and is forbidden to exercise the office to which she was ordained’.<sup>67</sup> For Huguccio, it was woman’s status of subjection, rather than her weakness of intellect, that was the deciding factor. She was formed from the side of the man, second in creation, and is therefore meant to be subordinate, third in the hierarchy in the created order – God/Christ, then man, then woman.<sup>68</sup>

Gratian discussed the fact that, although women were allowed to be judges in Old Testament times, this was no longer the case in his own time. If a woman were allowed to be a judge, she could not then be excluded from being a plaintiff in a case, as there is nothing in scripture to forbid it. Nonetheless, this is no longer possible, in the present times, he said, using the argument mentioned before as, although these things were allowed in Old Testament times, they are now abolished, ‘through the perfection of grace ... because of sin, which woman brought into the world, women are admonished by the Apostle to be careful to practise a modest restraint, to be subject to men and to veil themselves as a sign of subjugation.’<sup>69</sup>

Gratian refers to the practice of women being ‘consecrated’ as deacons, but not before the age of forty, when they could be considered as past child-bearing age, perhaps also associated with the blood taboo.<sup>70</sup> Thomas Aquinas, noting these references to deaconesses and *presbyterae* (female priests), agreed that the Decretals allowed for their consecration, at an advanced age, but disagreed with the translation of the terms used to describe the various functions and did not accept that these positions could in any way be compared to those of the ordained male:

Some, however, have asserted that the male sex is necessary for the lawfulness and not for the validity of the sacrament, because even in the Decretals (cap. *Mulieres* dist. 32; cap. *Diaconissam*, 27, qu. i) mention is made of deaconesses and priestesses. But deaconess there denotes a woman

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process of being edited, the first volume available being: Huguccio Pisanus, *Summa Decretorum – Distinctiones I–XX*, Oldřich Přerovský (ed.) (Vatican City: Vatican Apostolic Library, 2006).

<sup>67</sup> Huguccio, *Summa Decretorum*, causa 27, q. 1, ch. 23, from <http://www.womenpriests.org>, last accessed August 2014.. Source of these quotations and references to Huguccio is Raming, ‘The Priestly Office of Women’, pp. 89–92.

<sup>68</sup> Huguccio, *Summa*, causa 33, q. 5, ch. 13.

<sup>69</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*. Part II, q. III.

<sup>70</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 27, q. I, ch. 23: ‘Diaconissam non debere ante annos quadraginta ordinari statuimus.’

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who shares in some act of a deacon, namely who reads the homilies in the Church; and priestess [*presbytera*] means a widow, for the word *presbyter* means elder.<sup>71</sup>

The question of language is one that will be looked at in detail later on,<sup>72</sup> but it should be said here that interpretation of the terms involved in all these issues is a key factor not just in trying to discover what they ‘mean’, but also in forming that meaning in the first place. Some of the terms concerned, such as ‘ordination’, ‘priest’, ‘sacrament’ and so on were only just being given specific meanings at this period and gradually came to acquire narrower definitions than they ever had before. Bonaventure, while quoting Gratian’s reference to the ordination of deaconesses at the age of forty, also asserted that the term *presbytera* must refer to older women, but he linked *presbytera* to deaconesses as if the terms were interchangeable. His explanation of the status of female deacons in the past, that they were simply appointed with a blessing for particular functions, still continues to be used today, although there is increasing evidence of true ordination.<sup>73</sup>

For the prohibition on women baptising, Gratian quoted as his source for this restriction the Fourth Council of Carthage. As already noted, however, the source was in fact the *Statuta Ecclesia Antiqua* (see section 3.b.ii above). The text quoted by Gratian condemns this practice as reprehensible, ‘it is dangerous, yes even forbidden and godless’, and links it to the subordination of women. Allowing women to baptise or teach relegates man to a lower status, which ‘militates against divine justice’, interfering with the ‘arrangement of the Creator by degrading man from the pre-eminence granted him’.<sup>74</sup> The argument is pursued by drawing conclusions from Scripture: ‘if women are permitted to baptise, then Christ would surely have been baptised by his mother’. The conclusion again returns to the order of nature, ‘he as creator of nature and founder of its order knew the gradations of nature and what is proper’. The *Decretum* elsewhere specifically forbade a woman from instructing men in the assembly, even if ‘she is educated and saintly’. The same ban applied to laymen, although they could be given permission to teach by the clergy if

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<sup>71</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Suppl. q. 39, a. 1. “Quidam autem dixerunt quod sexus virilis est de necessitate praecepti, sed non de necessitate sacramenti, quia etiam in Decretis fit mentio de *diaconissa* et *presbytera*. – Sed diaconissa dicitur quae in aliquot actu diaconi participat, sicut quae legit homiliam in ecclesia. Presbytera autem dicitur vidua, quia *presbytera* idem est quod *senior*.”

<sup>72</sup> Chapter 7 on language.

<sup>73</sup> Much work has been done on this subject in recent years, notably by Phyllis Zagano, John Wijngaards, Gary Macy and others. See, for instance, Phyllis Zagano, *Holy Saturday* (Michigan: Crossroad Publishing, 2000); John Wijngaards, *Women Deacons in the Early Church* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002); Gary Macy, William Ditewig and Phyllis Zagano, *Women Deacons, Past, Present and Future* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2011).

<sup>74</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part II, causa 32, ch. 19.

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appropriate. The text states that woman is subject to man, made from a rib of his body, and, since women were already forbidden to preach, they could not become priests. ‘The heathens do this, but it is not Christ’s way.’<sup>75</sup> If women could baptise, then surely Christ’s own mother would have baptised him. This argument, using Mary’s supreme position among women as a reason why, since she is not counted among the Apostles, no woman should be allowed such a status in the Church, is one that was frequently encountered at this period, and will be explored later.<sup>76</sup> The quotation goes on to say that the Lord knew what was right and proper in nature, as he is its creator, and it would be ‘unnatural’ to ordain women.<sup>77</sup> Gratian used the same arguments in discussing the bans applied to women on distributing communion, on teaching in church and on baptising. Each case was explained in the strongest terms, calling it ‘irresponsible and repulsive’, for example, for a priest to entrust the distribution of communion to the sick to women or to laymen.<sup>78</sup>

#### 3.e *Conclusion*

Gratian, in particular, and the law of the Church, generally, are of vital importance in studying the basis for the prohibition of ordination to women in mediaeval theology. Of itself, canon law at this period expressed an anthropology that saw woman as necessarily inferior to man, hence her secondary position in the Church was a natural consequence of her secondary position in the created order.<sup>79</sup> This was the material with which the mediaeval theologians worked. It will be seen that the legal basis for the prohibition carried much weight in the assessment of the issue, particularly in the work of Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus, all of whom referred frequently to Gratian’s *Decretals*, although their conclusions varied somewhat.<sup>80</sup> Reading these three scholastic theologians, and other figures, both major and minor, the weight of the canonical tradition in their approach is clear. Based on this, they attempted to perceive reasons behind the legislation prohibiting women from receiving the sacrament of orders that relate to natural law, the link between sacramental theology and nature in some of the scriptural texts, especially those they ascribed to Paul, and the symbolism of the male and female with

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<sup>75</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part I, d. 32, ch. 19.

<sup>76</sup> See Chapter 5 on Scripture.

<sup>77</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part I, d. 32, ch. 19.

<sup>78</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, Part III, d. 2. ch. 29.

<sup>79</sup> George Tavard, ‘The Scholastic Doctrine’, in Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler (eds.), *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

<sup>80</sup> See separate sections on these theologians in Chapter 4.



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regard to their God-given functions.<sup>81</sup> As we shall see in Chapter 4, Aquinas considered the question absolutely answered in the negative, Bonaventure was more cautious, and Duns Scotus was the only one to assert woman's natural equivalence with man in terms of their predestination to grace and glory. He believed women to be weaker than men intellectually and morally but, nonetheless, he accepted the status of Mary Magdalene as an apostle and admitted that the legislation could be essentially unjust.

Eventually, the rules confirming the lower status of women came to be enshrined in Gratian's *Decretum*. Women were explicitly excluded from receiving orders of any kind, whether to the priesthood or the diaconate. No longer did baptism open 'the doors to the sacred'<sup>82</sup> for women. The *Decretum* became incorporated into the canon law of the Catholic Church very early in its existence, quoted in papal and episcopal decisions as early as the mid-twelfth century. It was widely accepted in Europe and there are many manuscript versions extant from France, Italy and Germany, some 160 known from the twelfth century alone.<sup>83</sup> Its provisions remained in force until the 1917 *Codex Iuris Canonici* was promulgated. Nonetheless, this latter Code, and its replacement in 1983, maintain the authority of the 'old law', by saying that, while the earlier Codes and penal laws are abrogated by the new Code, 'they are to be assessed in the light also of canonical tradition'.<sup>84</sup> This in fact means that Gratian's text could still be considered of relevance in modern legal cases.<sup>85</sup> In terms of the subject of this thesis, the legislation, 'Only a baptised man can validly receive sacred ordination',<sup>86</sup> and the attitudes that the ancient canons encapsulated continue to inform the practice of the Catholic Church and therefore the analysis of their historical setting is of use in understanding how the ban on women's ordination can be maintained up to the present time.

Despite Jesus's attitude of inclusion of both women and men in his ministry, which continued to some extent in apostolic times, the prevailing and traditional forms of social divisions gradually reasserted themselves and women were legally and effectively

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<sup>81</sup> Tavad, 'The Scholastic Doctrine', pp. 104–105.

<sup>82</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*.

<sup>83</sup> Peter Landau, 'Gratian and the *Decretum Gratiani*', in Hartmann and Pennington, *The History of Medieval Canon Law in the Classical Period*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>84</sup> 'aestimandi sunt ratione etiam canonicae traditionis habita', canon 6, §2, *Codex Iuris Canonici*, London 1983.

<sup>85</sup> Landau, 'Gratian and the *Decretum Gratiani*', p. 53.

<sup>86</sup> 'Sacram ordinationem valide recipit solus vir baptizatus', canon 1024, 1983 Code.

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excluded from leadership and ministry in the Christian Church.<sup>87</sup> As women's status in law and society was perceived as naturally inferior, it is not surprising that this coloured attitudes to women in the Christian Church and their capacity for any form of leadership or ministry. 'The inferior status of women was so much taken for granted that it determined the way Latin-speaking theologians and Church leaders would look on matters relating to women.'<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Liberation theology movements have identified how the oppression of women, characteristic of patriarchal societies, gradually returned as the Church became an institution rather than a movement. See, for instance, Jacques Dupuis, S.J., *Who Do You Say I Am?* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), p. 28: 'Feminist reformist theology ... seeks to restore the equality in partnership and mutuality between the sexes that characterised the social order of the Jesus movement.'

<sup>88</sup> J. Wijngaards, *The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church* (London: Longman & Todd, 2001), pp. 51–53.

#### 4. The Activity of Scholastic Theologians

##### 4.a *Paris as the Centre of Learning in the Thirteenth Century*

The famous scholastic theologians, such as Bonaventure (1217–1274), Aquinas (1224/5–1274) and John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308), whom this thesis will examine, were essentially men formed by the first universities of Europe, trained in the subjects and with the pedagogical methods and procedures that were considered essential for a proper education at the time. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there were a number of schools in cathedral cities in Europe – Chartres, Paris, Montpellier and Bologna – each having their own centres of learning, following different traditions and specialising in particular subjects. These flourished in turn, but those of Paris and Bologna particularly began to coalesce during the latter part of the eleventh century and the first half of the twelfth, becoming recognisable as universities, centres of education offering a range of subjects across the whole of the contemporary syllabus, including variously the arts and humanities, theology and law, and also medicine and other scientific subjects. The University of Oxford also evolved during the same period, having a number of teaching faculties by the late twelfth century and initially specialising in arts, civil and canon law and theology.<sup>1</sup>

The first mention of Paris as a university comes in the annals of Matthew Paris (1200–1259), an abbot of St Albans, where he mentions his own teacher having been a student there, graduating in around 1170.<sup>2</sup> As the need for a more structured, comprehensive education system grew in Western Europe, the city of Paris in particular was able to respond, partly because it already enjoyed a reputation as a capital, but also simply because its position gave it room to expand, providing space not only for teaching but also to accommodate the increasing numbers of students. The school at Laon, presided over by Anselm (d. 1117) and his brother Ralph, was held in great regard because of their method of scriptural criticism, based on close textual analysis, but there was a desire for greater choice in teaching methods and the need for masters with a broader range of skills,

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<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the origins and growth of universities in Europe, see B.B. Price, *Medieval Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1992); R.W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, Vol. 1: Foundations* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1995); Alan Cobban, *The Mediaeval Universities: Their Development and Organization* (London: Methuen, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> Henry Thomas Riley (ed.), *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S Albani*, Vol. I, p. 217 (London: Longman, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1867), available at American Libraries Internet Archive, <http://archive.org/details/gestaabbatummon00rilegoog>, last accessed August 2014.

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including logic and systematic theology, not met in the smaller schools. Paris was expanding as a commercial centre, providing the necessary resources for the students – places to live, food and drink, and entertainment, especially once the royal household took up permanent residence on the river. This led to the redevelopment of the Left Bank, which within a century became the largest student district in Europe at the time.<sup>3</sup> It attracted notable scholars, including William of Champeaux and Abelard, at the beginning of the twelfth century, and on through the Austrian Otto of Freising, John of Salisbury and William of Tyre in the mid-century. As Richard Southern says in his account of the development of the *studium generale* of Paris,

What we find in the area of Paris by 1150 is quite unlike anything in western Europe in any previous century ... there was no other city ... at this date anywhere else in Europe, where anything like a similar conglomeration of international masters and students could be found [with] such facilities or such an array of masters in the subjects of central importance for the corporate life of Christendom.<sup>4</sup>

These subjects included canon law and theology and, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, the reputation of the university schools of Paris, boosted by the quality of their teaching and geographical location, had spread throughout Europe. Paris received its first charter in 1200 and continued to develop and expand its curriculum throughout the century, educating many of the leading scholars of thirteenth-century theology who then went on to join its masters, including those whose writings I am considering here: Bonaventure, Aquinas and Duns Scotus.

##### 4.a.i Peter Lombard and the *Book of the Sentences*

Among the students who arrived in Paris in the mid-twelfth century, Peter Lombard (1095/1100–1160) was to be one of the most influential of all because of his master work, the *Sententiae in Quatuor Libris Distinctae* (*The Sentences in Four Separate Books*).<sup>5</sup> These four books cover the four main headings of Christian theology: God and the Trinity; creation including the Fall; Christology; and, finally, the Sacraments and eschatology, which includes the Sacrament of Orders.<sup>6</sup> Lombard developed a schema for addressing each of his topics. The subject is summarised in a heading and the text divided into

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<sup>3</sup> Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, pp. 199–202.

<sup>4</sup> Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, pp. 230–231.

<sup>5</sup> Available Latin texts include *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, 2 Vols. (Grottaferrata, Rome: Collegi S. Bonaventurae, 1981) and at the website of the Bibliotheca Augustana, [http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost12/PetrusLombardus/pet\\_s000.html](http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost12/PetrusLombardus/pet_s000.html), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>6</sup> For background to Lombard and his sacramental theology, see Thomas M. Finn, ‘The Sacramental World in the Sentences of Peter Lombard’, *Theological Studies*, Vol., 69, 2008, pp. 557–582.

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chapters and sub-headings, clearly marked in red (rubrics) in the manuscripts, with sources identified accurately, a much more scholarly and pedagogically useful text than had been available until then. It stands as a point of transition between earlier types of theology texts, such as the manual *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei* by Hugh of St Victor (1097/1101–1141), one of Lombard's contemporaries and teachers, and the newly developing scholastic theology movement, particularly vigorous in Paris. Peter Lombard began teaching at the school of Notre Dame in the early 1140s and remained there until he was appointed Bishop of Paris in 1159, a position he held only for a year until his death in 1160. The Book of the Sentences was first released by Lombard in the academic year 1156–1157, after he had used it as a manual for his theology lectures. A second, glossed edition appeared in the following year. Subsequent users of the *Sentences* glossed, summarised and commented upon the text endlessly and the additions and modifications themselves become incorporated into subsequent editions or published as works in their own right. The earliest glosses developed into longer commentaries, the first of these usually credited to Stephen Langton (1150/1155–1228), later archbishop of Canterbury, who taught in Paris for around twenty years at the turn of the twelfth century. He lectured on the *Sentences* and made his own notes in his copy of the text, which were later published, showing that he wished to expand on the thoughts of the Master, and on occasion disagreed with his interpretation of a particular source.

The *Sentences* were first used in Paris by Alexander of Hales (c. 1185–1245), a Franciscan who taught at the university for over twenty years from 1220 to his death in 1245, as the basis for the teaching of theology to candidates for bachelors' degrees. This followed the decision at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 to approve explicitly the theology of Peter Lombard as orthodox,<sup>7</sup> despite criticisms of his teaching some fifty years before by Pope Alexander III.<sup>8</sup> A similar decision to use Lombard's *Sentences* in this way was taken at Oxford, not without disagreement, and from then on the work was required material for a series of lectures to be given by each bachelor in preparation for his final examination as a teacher within the body of masters.

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<sup>7</sup> Fourth Lateran Council, canon 2, from H. J. Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1937).

<sup>8</sup> For an account of the adoption of Lombard's *Sentences* as the textbook for Alexander's courses, see Philipp W. Rosemann, *The Story of a Great Medieval Book: Peter Lombard's Sentences*, Vol. II of *Rethinking the Middle Ages*, Paul E. Dutton and John Shinnors (eds.) (Ontario: Broadview, 2007), pp. 53–62. For more on orthodoxy in the twelfth and nineteenth centuries, specifically relating to Lombard, see C. Monagle, *Orthodoxy and Controversy in Twelfth-Century Religious Discourse: Peter Lombard's 'Sentences' and the Development of Theology* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2012).

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It is not until Bonaventure's commentary that the issue of women in relation to the Sacrament of Orders is mentioned with respect to the *Sentences*. Lombard himself does not address the issue of women at all. Bonaventure produced his influential commentary in 1244, when he was twenty-seven, and lectured on the *Sentences* in the early 1250s. He included a discussion on women's suitability for orders in considering the relevant section in Lombard's work, which addresses the subject of 'Ecclesiastical Orders'.<sup>9</sup> As with other commentators, Bonaventure's intention was to consider each subject from all angles, to cast new light on the material provided by Lombard and to include other aspects that the Master did not address. In this chapter, we will examine three of the most important commentators in turn – Bonaventure, Aquinas and Duns Scotus – and explore their arguments.

Lombard had nothing explicit to say about women in connection with ordination but he did mention one requirement for the cleric that would automatically exclude women, the need to be tonsured.<sup>10</sup> The commentators bring this point into their discussion as support for the argument that women cannot be ordained. While men had to be tonsured, women had to cover their heads and be veiled in public, as instructed by Paul (1 Cor 11:14–15).

As regards suitability of the person to receive the Sacrament of Orders, Lombard discussed at length in his Distinction XXIV the various requirements for each grade of orders (door-keeper, lector, acolyte and so on) but in general, under the heading of 'The Quality of those Received into the Clergy', he quoted letters from 'pseudo-Clement' and from 'pseudo-Isidore', explaining the characteristics of the individual proper to reception of the sacrament: they must be 'worthy' (*digne*) and they should have, according to Lombard, the 'seven-fold grace' of the Holy Spirit, teaching by example as well as by word. They must not live a 'sordid' life. These seven graces or gifts of the Spirit are traditionally those of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.<sup>11</sup> The commentators all gave some attention to these requirements, demonstrating that women were incapable of many of the personal qualities needed, particularly those of wisdom and understanding and the ability to teach and counsel others. They were also often unworthy in a variety of ways, partly because of 'uncleanness' in a ritual sense and also because their natures tended towards the flighty and materialistic, rendering them incapable of true

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<sup>9</sup> Lombard, *The Sentences, Book 4: On the Doctrine of Signs*, Giulio Silano (tr.), Mediaeval Sources in Translation Series, Vol. 48 (Rome: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), pp. 138–156.

<sup>10</sup> Lombard, *Sentences*, Bk 4, d. XXIV, q. 4, p. 139.

<sup>11</sup> Lombard, *Sentences*, Bk 4, p. 139.

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virtue (itself a male quality). The cleric must also be a ‘ruler’, says Lombard<sup>12</sup>, and the commentators will highlight the impossibility of women having the authority to rule, as they are by the law of God and by nature, subordinate and subject to male authority in the hierarchy of creation.

All those who ‘approach the altar’, that is those who have a function in the liturgy that involves the Eucharistic species, the vessels and cloths used in the offering of bread and wine, are bound by the ‘law of continence’, to abstain from sexual intercourse.<sup>13</sup> This includes the orders of sub-deacon and deacon as well as the ordained priest. The tradition of celibacy relates not simply to the reservation of the priest’s life and energy to the service of the faithful and of God but also to the need to preserve his ‘purity’. Lombard quotes a passage from Isaiah 52: 11: ‘Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.’<sup>14</sup> The Jewish priests were bound to abstain from conjugal relations for a period before they undertook their Temple duties for the same reason, that intercourse contaminated them. There are many sources in early Church canons, sermons and writings commending abstinence from physical relations in married couples, including married clergy, in order to preserve purity, avoid distractions and scandal.<sup>15</sup>

These were the only points in Lombard’s section on the Sacrament of Orders that could affect the question of the suitability of women for orders, even obliquely. His Distinction XXV covered the problem of those guilty of simony and the effectiveness of their bestowal of the sacraments. The commentators addressed the issue in their Commentaries under the heading of Distinction XXV and sought to expand the discussion, as they did throughout their writings on the *Sentences*, to ensure that all avenues were explored at each stage and determine the theological and doctrinal thoroughness of their work. Much of their analysis of the position of women was to come from earlier writers, the Church Fathers, medical textbooks and in particular from the work of Aristotle, newly discovered in Western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

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<sup>12</sup> Lombard, *Sentences*, Bk 4, p. 139.

<sup>13</sup> Canon 277, §1.

<sup>14</sup> Lombard, *Sentences*, Bk 4, p. 144.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Sermon LXXIV (on the Lord’s Ascension, II), Pope Leo the Great, available at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf212.ii.v.xxxviii.html>, last accessed September 2014; canons 4 and 15, Council of Carthage (345–419), ‘On Bishops and Lower Orders who Should Abstain from their Wives’, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3816.htm>, last accessed September 2014.

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##### 4.a.ii Translation and the Spread of Learning from Greece

Although Latin is considered as being the *lingua franca* of Europe at this time, which indeed it was, nonetheless, it was used mainly within the Church and the law and the educated layman (less frequently, laywoman) would still welcome translations of the most popular writers into the vernacular. So translation was vital for access to the early authorities considered important for a proper education in the Middle Ages. The lost sources of Latin and especially Greek culture had to be gradually reconstructed and discoveries trickled in by various routes to add to the corpus over the centuries. Chapter 7 of this thesis discusses the importance of translation in terms of its effect on attitudes to women in the Church, in the mediaeval period and beyond.

The products of this gradual process of making classical texts available to Western scholarship would be profoundly influential on European culture and education for centuries to come.<sup>16</sup> There were some translations of Plato into Latin available in the Middle Ages but much of the knowledge of Platonic philosophy was mediated to Europe through the writings of Plotinus (204–270) and his followers. Similarly, most of the Aristotelian corpus, although much more widely known by the thirteenth century, initially came into Western Europe through the work of the Arabic scholars in Spain, filtered through Islamic interpretations of Greek philosophy, and would be further commentated on and analysed by scholars eager to incorporate its riches into the teaching of the schools.<sup>17</sup> Again this process is explained further in Chapter 7.

Throughout this thesis, particular points relating to translation issues are highlighted, indicating the delicate nature of the choice of terminology and how it can affect argument and thought in sometimes quite profound ways.

##### 4.b *Key Authors and Commentators on the Sentences Referred to in Modern Documents*

As already seen in Chapter 2, the documents that have been produced by the Catholic Church on the subject of the sacrament of orders, and women's (un)suitability to receive it rely fairly heavily on the judgements given by the scholastic writers on the matter. We now

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<sup>16</sup> Dmitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Price, *Medieval Thought*, p.82.



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need to look in a little more detail at the accounts in the commentaries by Bonaventure, Aquinas and Duns Scotus on the relevant section in Lombard's *Sentences* and identify their main arguments in order to see how their views were developed, the sources they drew on and also, perhaps, why they continued to influence the church's teaching for centuries into the present day. We can then move on to a closer analysis of the particular features that underpin the rejection of the possibility of ordaining women to the priesthood within the Roman Catholic Church today.

There were four main headings used by the commentators to broaden the scope of the discussion and under which they considered the suitability of women to be ordained. These are:

1. the requirement for women to let their hair grow and to be veiled;
2. for the person receiving orders to be created in the image of God;
3. for the ordained to have the capacity to receive spiritual power; and
4. for the ordained person to be capable of advancement to the episcopate.

##### 4.b.i Bonaventure

Bonaventure was an outstanding figure of the thirteenth century, both in the Franciscan order, and in the Church as a whole. As a scholar, he developed a system of speculative thought that remained deeply spiritual, incorporating the vision of the neo-Platonists with the psychology and insight of Richard of St Victor and Bernard. The scriptures remained central to his spirituality and teaching and his personal holiness pervades every word of his writings. 'In a certain sense, Bonaventure achieved for spirituality what Thomas did for theology and Dante for medieval culture as a whole'.<sup>18</sup> He was much influenced by the teaching of Alexander of Hales, and later Eudes Rigaud and Richard of Middleton.

His *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* was produced by 1250 and he lectured on this subject for two years, after receiving his degree as Bachelor of Scripture. He received his Master's degree in 1253 or 1254 and then took over as head of the Franciscan school in Paris, until becoming Minister General of the Franciscans in 1257. He wrote extensively on a wide variety of subjects throughout his life and much of his writing remains extant.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., *Bonaventure*, Classics of Western Spirituality (London: SPCK, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Brady, *Bonaventure*, pp. 3–16.

The key themes in Bonaventure's thought were the Trinity, the centrality of Christ in the cosmos and in history, and the vital importance of scripture, all of which have a part to play in his conclusions on the issue of women's suitability for the sacrament of orders. Bonaventure was also one of the major proponents of the concept of divine illumination, the need for the intellect to be fired by God, in order to gain full and complete understanding:

Certain knowledge requires steadfast unchangeability. Since that can be found only in the divine mind, and since we have access to the divine mind only through illumination, certain knowledge requires illumination.<sup>20</sup>

Divine illumination is the fruit of a patient waiting on God, openness and receptivity to what God offers. The concept originated with Augustine, who proposed a gradual illumination of the soul throughout life, from God, so that it can grasp truth as the mind grows in learning.<sup>21</sup> It is rooted in knowledge of God and of the Incarnate Word, obtained through the words of Scripture. It is this synthesis of Scripture, love of knowledge and spirituality that is characteristic of Bonaventure, evident in his writings.<sup>22</sup> Both the principle of divine illumination and the person of Christ in creation are important factors in Bonaventure's judgment of women's capacity for reception of the sacrament of orders.

#### 4.b.i.1 Bonaventure on the *Sentences*

Bonaventure's opinion on this matter comes in the short section of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, discussing 'those who can take up orders'.<sup>23</sup> The question asked according to Peter Lombard's schema is:

First it is asked, insofar as Orders can be received by anyone, whether the male sex is required, or whether the female [sex] may assume them.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Pasnau, 'Divine Illumination', in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/illumination>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Brady, *Bonaventure*, pp. 3–16.

<sup>22</sup> See also, S. Mulholland, O.F.M., 'Bonaventure: The Last Greek Father of the Church', *Franciscan*, January 2006.

<sup>23</sup> 'De iis qui possunt suscipere ordines', Bonaventure, *Commentarium in IV Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi, 1251–1253* (Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1889), p. 649.

<sup>24</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 649. 'Primo quaeritur, utrum ad hoc, quod ab aliquo possit ordo recipi, requiratur sexus virilis, an femina possit suscipere.' (The two different verbs used for 'receive' here: *recipio* and *suscipio*, vary slightly in meaning. *Recipio*, 'I receive as a duty', *suscipio*, 'I accept voluntarily' [used when adopting a child, to pick it up from the ground].)

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In his first point, Bonaventure considers the capability and aptitude according to nature (*naturalem possibilitatem vel aptitudinem*) that are required for orders. Women do not have this, says Bonaventure, because they do not have the ‘aptitude’ for the tonsure and crown. The capacity to receive the tonsure, the shaving of the head on ordination, was considered a requirement by Peter Lombard, as mentioned above. The practice was based on Paul, who considered long hair degrading to a man, but on a woman it is her glory (1 Cor 11: 14–15). This is what nature teaches us, according to the conventions of Paul’s time and Jewish practice. Paul devotes less attention to this than to the idea of veiling for a woman. We will examine this point in more detail in Chapter 6, on ‘Biology’.

##### 4.b.i.2 Image of God

Bonaventure’s second argument is much more important and is still one of the primary foundations for the Church’s belief that it has no authority to ordain women to the ministerial priesthood. He says:

Likewise, no one who does not bear the image of God has the capacity to take up orders, because in this sacrament man [*homo*] in a certain way is made God, or divine, during the time that he is made a participant in divine power; but man [*vir*] by reason of sex is *image of God*, just as it says in the eleventh of the first to the Corinthians [1 Cor 11]. Therefore there is no way in which woman can be ordained.<sup>25</sup>

This concept of the image of God, *imago Dei*, is deep-rooted in the history of the sacrament of orders. There is a distinction to be drawn between *in persona Christi*, meaning the role of the priest as standing in for Christ, or acting in the person of Christ when presiding at the Eucharist, and *in imago Dei*, meaning the person who is ordained having an ontological reality as a characteristic of his created nature, taking its masculinity as representative in some way of God because of the assumptions made about perfection, superiority and hierarchy of order being exemplified in the male of the human species. The words ‘image’ and ‘person’ are often conflated and treated as interchangeable, although there are differences between them and, certainly, there is a distinct difference between *in persona Christi* and *in imago Dei*, both in terms of intrinsic meaning and in the locus of the applicability of the adverbial clause as descriptive of the created individual, the human being. This area will be discussed in greater detail in the section on Scripture (Chapter 5a),

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<sup>25</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 649: ‘Item, nullus est possibilis ad ordines suscipiendos, nisi qui Dei gerit imaginem, quia in hoc Sacramento homo quodam modo fit Deus sive divinus, dum potestatis divinae fit particeps; sed vir ratione sexus est *imago Dei* sicut dicitur primae ad Corinthios undecimo: ergo nullo modo mulier potest ordinari.’

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as most of the basis for the arguments lies within the mediaeval interpretation of the creation stories in Genesis.

For Bonaventure, the priest, the ordained minister, represented Christ in a very specific way. He set out the legal and factual reasons for refusing orders to women. But when he came to his own views, the *imago Dei* argument can be seen to take precedence, if only by virtue of the fact that it receives greater attention. Bonaventure next shifted the coverage of its meaning from ‘image of God’, to ‘image of Christ’. It becomes a New Testament rather than an Old Testament argument. This is very important because there are no grounds, as Thomas Aquinas argued, to deny the fact that Eve is made in the image of God in the same way as Adam.

The *imago Dei* argument of itself, as Bonaventure showed in the *sed contra* section of his analysis, does not hold water as ‘there is no distinction of sex in the soul, so the woman is as much the image of God as is the man’.<sup>26</sup> This is why he shifts it to the *in persona Christi* argument, as most of the scholastics also do, and this then brings in the more complex issues around the meaning and function of the word *persona*, as mentioned already. The concept of Christ as Mediator is a core one in Bonaventure’s theology. We will look at this in more detail shortly. It arises at this point in order to affirm his understanding that as a woman cannot ‘signify’ Christ, because of her sex, only men can therefore take up orders.

For in this Sacrament the person who is ordained signifies Christ the mediator; and since the mediator was only of the male sex, thus he may be signified by the male sex ...<sup>27</sup>

The word ‘signification’ had a particular meaning in this period. It involved the use of concepts, notions held by all human beings having had similar experiences, and thus having the same understanding of particular concepts, which they hold as it were instinctively, without the need for making choices. The key semantic notion here is ‘signification’, rather than meaning, though often this distinction is obscured in translation of *significatio* as ‘meaning’. A signifying term functions as a sign, representing something other than itself. A typical spoken term, such as ‘cat’ or ‘table’, performs this role in two ways. It signifies the concept with which it must be correlated if it is to function as a

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<sup>26</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, d. XXV, a. II, q. I, p. 649: ‘ad animum non est distinctio sexus, immo ita imago Dei est mulier, ut vir’.

<sup>27</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, d. XXV, a. II, q. I, p. 650: ‘In hoc enim Sacramento persona, quae ordinatur, significat Christum mediatorem; et quoniam mediator solum in virili sexu fuit et per virilum sexum potest significari...’.

signifier in the first place and it also signifies or makes known something outside and separate from the mind.<sup>28</sup> So the signification of Christ in the priesthood by the ordained person has to be suitable in terms of its representational qualities or capacity, including that of sex, in order to function appropriately as a sign in the action of the Eucharist. Thus, a woman cannot perform this role as she does not have the capacity to represent Christ in this way. The male gender of Jesus of Nazareth subsists in the person of Christ. The Incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth is one person but with two natures. The gender is inseparable from this, as the above extract from Bonaventure's commentary goes on to say: 'Therefore the capability of receiving Orders is suitable only to men, who alone can naturally represent [Him] and by the reception of the character indeed bear his sign.'<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.b.i.3 Christ as Mediator and *in Persona Christi*

In Bonaventure's theology, Christ in his role as Mediator is the Word, occupying the median place in the Trinity. The Word contains all that the Father can express about himself. It is thus the exemplar of all that exists since all that exists is the expression of the Creator. Being the median point of the Trinity, between the Father and the Spirit, so too the Word is the median point between the Divine and its creation. The Word Incarnate, in Jesus of Nazareth, is also therefore the median point between the human and the divine.<sup>30</sup> The Incarnation unites in itself the necessary and contingent, the finite and the infinite. Thus, in the Incarnation, everything that is is mediated through Christ, including divine life, redemption and union with God. For Bonaventure, however, God is always a Trinitarian divinity, he never discusses *de una natura Dei*. Christ is the centre-point of the Trinity, the pivot around which everything of the divine turns. Ilia Delio, writing on Bonaventure's theology and the centrality of Christ in his metaphysics expresses his position as follows:

Christ the center is a center that is everywhere; it is not simply the individual existent, Jesus of Nazareth, but Jesus the incarnate one who is now the Christ and hence the center of creation, the center by which immanent and economic Trinity coincide as the single extension of God in love to all others in history.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ashworth, E. Jennifer, 'Medieval Theories of Analogy', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/analogy-medieval/>>, last accessed August 2014. See also by the same author, 'Aquinas, Scotus and Others on Naming, Knowing, and the Origin of Language', in *Logic and Language in the Middle Ages: A Volume in Honour of Sten Ebbesen*, Jakob Leth Fink, Heine Hansen, Ana María Mora-Marquez (eds.) (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill Nv, 2013) pp. 257–272.

<sup>29</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, d. XXV, a. II, q. I, p. 650.

<sup>30</sup> Bonaventure, *Tree of Life*, para. 46, in Ewert Cousins (tr.), *Bonaventure* (London: SPCK, 1978), p. 170.

<sup>31</sup> Ilia Delio, 'Theology, Metaphysics, and the Centrality of Christ', *Theological Studies*, June 2007.

The human person, through the exercise of the mind's powers (memory, intellect and will), mirrors the Trinity. In the Journey of the Soul into God, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, Bonaventure poetically builds and expresses his conceptualisation of the Trinity, by piling up three-fold images of creation, the human person and of the tri-une God.

When the soul considers its Triune Principle through the trinity of its powers, by which it is an image of God, it is aided by the lights of the sciences which perfect and inform it, and represent the most blessed Trinity in a threefold way [natural, rational, moral].<sup>32</sup>

The hypostasis, the God in man property of Jesus as Incarnate Word, involves his substantial nature: it is not a semblance of a human being, concealing a deity, but is his real nature. As we will see later, Scotus takes this further, moving on to discuss *haecceitas*, the 'individuation' of the being, and sees this as irrespective of any commonality in terms of species or genus, but to reside in the univocity of being, where gender would be part of the form, part of the common nature and separate from the 'Jesus-ness' or 'Christ-ness' of the Word made man. Individuals are therefore differentiated by their positive inherency, what makes a person or a created entity this one and not that one. Nonetheless, these characteristics, genus, species, gender, physical features, talents and so on, are part of what makes up individuality and are implicit in it. *Haecceitas* only inheres as a property in the substance, of itself, its individuality.

The image of Christ as Mediator is most clearly described by St. Bonaventure in the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, as mentioned above, his extended reflection on the way of the soul into God, forming a profound meditation on and exposition of his Trinitarian theology and his concept of the wheel or circle of emanation and return, given its most complete expression in the Incarnate Word. In Chapter IV of the *Itinerarium* Bonaventure says:

Therefore, no matter how enlightened one may be by the light of natural and acquired knowledge, he cannot enter into himself to delight within himself in the Lord unless Christ be his mediator, who says: 'I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved; and he will go in and out and will find pastures' ... Therefore, if we wish to enter again into the enjoyment of Truth as into paradise, we must enter through faith in, hope in and love of Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and men ...<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, Ewert Cousins (tr.) (London, SPCK, 1978), p. 84. 'Ad hanc speculationem quam habet anima de suo principio trino et uno per trinitatem suarum potentiarum, per quas est imago Dei, iuvatur per lumina scientiarum, quae ipsam perficiunt et informant et Trinitatem beatissimam tripliciter repraesentant. Nam omnis philosophia aut est naturalis, aut rationalis, aut moralis.' (Latin text available from <http://www.franciscanos.net/document/itinerl.htm> (last consulted January 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*, p. 88: 'Ideo, quantumcumque sit illuminatus quis lumine naturae et scientiae acquisitae, non potest intrare in se, ut in se ipso delectetur in Domino, nisi mediante Christo, qui dicit: *Ego*

Bonaventure saw Christ's role as Mediator as crucial to the understanding of the function of the priest in the liturgy. Because of this, the person who performs this task, signifying the salvific work of Christ's Passion and death, must conform as closely as possible to the historical reality of who Christ was and this would include his gender. So, having moved from *imago Dei*, in the sense of the created human being taken from Genesis, to *in persona Christi*, Bonaventure has transferred the argument from one of created reality to one of representation. He uses not Genesis but Paul to support his understanding of man being the image of God and this is a hierarchical not an ontological understanding. Paul's argument relates to the way in which the Christian community should pray. The men must not cover their heads when they pray because they are the image and reflection of God, while women must cover, as they are the reflection of man. In this case, the significance is that of status, position in the hierarchy of creation.

Christ, the Word incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, is the path to holiness and into the Trinity. For Bonaventure this means that the significance of the priest's role in the sacrament requires that the *persona* of the ordained individual must be as similar as possible to the *persona* of Christ and, thus, as well as being an adult, human being, he must also be male. The reasons for God's free choice of the male sex as being most suitable for the entrance of the Word into human history are set out earlier in Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Sentences*, in Book III, on whether it would have been fitting for God to assume the gender of a woman.<sup>34</sup> Bonaventure does not use the term *in persona Christi* at this point, he stays with the idea of the image of God, *imago Dei*, taken from the Latin text of Genesis (Gen 1:27): 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.' In some writers, the distinction between these two is clear but, in others, including Bonaventure, there seems to be an assumption that the image of God is equivalent to the person of Christ and therefore, in both cases, the male is necessarily the only possible recipient of the Sacrament of Orders.

This remains the view of the Church. According to the papal document, *Inter Insigniores*, 'actions which demand the character of ordination, and in which Christ himself, the author

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*sum ostium. Per me si quis introierit, salvabitur et ingredietur et egredietur et pascua inveniet ... Necessesse est igitur, si reintrare volumus ad fruitionem Veritatis tanquam ad paradisum, quod ingrediamur per fidem, spem et caritatem mediatoris Dei et hominum Iesu Christi ...?'. Latin text from <http://www.franciscanos.net/document/itinerl.htm>, last accessed August 2014.*

<sup>34</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, Bk III, d. XII, a. III, p. 265, *Opera Omnia*, Vol. III, (typographia Ioan. Baptistae Albritii Hier. F., 1753), free e-book available from Google Books.

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of the Covenant, the Bridegroom and Head of the Church is represented ... his role (this is the original sense of the word *persona*) must be taken by a man'.<sup>35</sup> This interpretation is picked up by some recent authors, as extending the understanding of the *in persona Christi* concept beyond its scope as conceived by the scholastics, particularly Thomas Aquinas<sup>36</sup> (as we will examine more thoroughly below).

The word *persona* in this context translates the Greek word *prosopon*. It originally meant 'face' and, hence, 'expression', gradually coming to mean 'individual', with the emphasis on external appearance. The Latin translation, *persona*, meant a mask, hence the meaning of a role in the sense of an actor playing a part in a drama.<sup>37</sup> In other words, it hides the reality beneath and, as women could not perform in the drama, men had to play female roles. Masks were used for this, hiding the faces of the actors from the audience, to enable an actor to play more than one role and also remove the problem of the incongruity of a boy playing a woman's part.<sup>38</sup> So, in fact, the term here applies to men acting as women, rather than women acting as men. The word *persona*, or more precisely *prosopon*, is more commonly found in theological writers referring to the persons of the Trinity. It is Tertullian, the first user of the term *trinitas* to refer to the Godhead, who attempts to identify the individual persons of the Three-in-One and begins the development of Trinitarian theology in the early Church.<sup>39</sup> For Tertullian, certainly, exploring the ideas of Hippolytus and Irenaeus, the divine essence, the concrete reality of the being of God, is indicated by the term substance, *substantia*, while *persona* expresses the otherness, the 'independent subsistence' of the Three: 'as employed by Tertullian it connoted the concrete presentation of an individual as such ... the idea of self-consciousness nowadays associated with "person" and "personal" was not at all prominent'.<sup>40</sup> For Bonaventure, the

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<sup>35</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, Declaration of 15 October 1976, from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, §5, available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19761015\\_inter-insigniores\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19761015_inter-insigniores_en.html), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Dennis Michael Ferrara, 'Representation or Self-effacement? The Axiom *in Persona Christi* in St. Thomas and the Magisterium', *Theological Studies*, Vol. 55, 1994, pp. 195–224. Ferrara argues that *Inter Insigniores* moves the definition of the priest's role as standing *in* the person of Christ at the altar to that of standing *as* the person of Christ within the Church.

<sup>37</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A&C Black, 1977), p. 115

<sup>38</sup> See David Nichols, 'The Gaze of the Other: Mask and Recognition in the Greek Drama', in *The Visual in Performance Practice*, Adele Anderson, Filipa Malva and Chris Berchild (eds.), (Witney, Oxon: Interdisciplinary Press, 2010) (with thanks to Dr. Gabrielle Malcolm).

<sup>39</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 114.

<sup>40</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 115.



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*persona* is central to his Trinitarian theology in which Christ is the *persona media*, the centre of the dynamic of the Trinity between Father and Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

The extended meaning to the term given by *Inter Insigniores* may be seen as innovative in that ‘the consecrating priest is viewed as representing Christ as Head of the Church (*in persona Christi* as *in persona Christi capitis*), so that the priestly act of consecrating the Eucharist emerges as an act of hierarchical power’.<sup>42</sup> The modern texts, it seems, have moved a long way from the interpretation made by the mediaeval theologians regarding the significance and importance of the gendered male as priest and the unsuitability of women, among others, to receive the sacrament of orders.

Although much of the present teaching of the church is indeed based on preconceptions regarding the ‘common-sense’, ‘naturalistic’ understanding of the status and position of the male, and the debate about these problems is extremely relevant in today’s world, where issues of equality, non-discrimination and justice for all take centre stage, for the mediaeval writers, there was little or no discussion of topics based on such ideas which were not part of the landscape of thought at that time.<sup>43</sup> Bonaventure’s conclusion is that it would not have been fitting for Christ to be born as a woman as the female is not of such dignity (*dignitatis*) as the male since, first, the man was created before the woman and, thus, is first in order and secondly, the man has the responsibility of acting, while the woman’s task is to ‘endure’ (*pati*), making the man therefore more active in virtue. Man has authority over woman by divine appointment; he is the head of the body, once more quoting Paul in 1 Cor 11:3:

Therefore since in the Word assuming human nature there is a distinguished dignity in beginning and a virtue in acting and a dominion in presiding; hence it is that it is more seemly, that the Uncreated Word assumed the male rather than the female sex, since those [perfections] of the assumed nature should have communicated these three in a more excellent way. And thus the reasons belonging to this side must be granted.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ewart Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978). Chapter V: ‘Christ stands at the midpoint reconciling in himself polar opposites. As eternal Word, he is the midpoint of the Trinity, the dynamic *medium* of the divine expressionism and the exemplarism of creation. As incarnate Word, he is the ontological midpoint between God and man - not, of course, a third being midway between God and man in a type of Arian subordinationism, but the point where the divine and the human are united and yet retain their identity.’

<sup>42</sup> Ferrara, ‘Representation or Self-effacement?’, pp. 195–224.

<sup>43</sup> For further reading on these subjects, see Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Continuum, 2001); Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>44</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, Bk III, d. XII, a. III q.i, p. 266, ‘Conclusion’: ‘Quoniam ergo in Verbo assumente naturam humanam est praecipua *dignitas in principiando* et *virtus in agendo* et *dominium in praesidendo*; hinc est, quod magis decuit, sexum virilem quam muliebrem assumi a Verbo increato, quia illi

In this Bonaventure is following the Augustinian tradition where the hierarchy of nature is considered proper and God-given: ‘it is justice in these matters that the lesser obey the greater’.<sup>45</sup> The text of 1 Cor 11:3 was used extensively by the Church Fathers to support the argument that the man is the head of the woman and Christ is the head of the man. The writer known as Ambrosiaster even alters it, in order to emphasise woman’s subordination, using again the image of head-covering: ‘A man ought not to cover his head because it is the image and glory of God; but a woman covers her head because she is not the glory and image of God.’<sup>46</sup> Ambrosiaster’s commentary is also used in the *glossa ordinaria* by Bernard of Parma on the *Decretals* of Gregory IX,<sup>47</sup> based on the letters by the Popes Innocent III and Honorius III, restricting the powers of abbesses in Spain and Germany respectively (to be considered later). The *glossa* refers to Gratian’s *Decretum*, which also uses the pseudo-Ambrose saying ‘women ... have no authority [*auctoritas*], but must be under the rule of the man.’<sup>48</sup>

Bonaventure’s argument from the *imago Dei* thus uses the seamliness of the male as priest because of Christ’s maleness, and his primacy, and also because it is natural for the male to be the ‘head’ and to hold a position of power and authority. It is these arguments that are rejected in many quarters today<sup>49</sup> but which, at the time of writing, would have been perfectly acceptable in the setting of their society for Bonaventure and his contemporaries. Alcuin Blamires points out that although from an assessment of contemporary writing, both spiritual and secular, misogyny seems to have been endemic throughout the mediaeval period, despite the counterbalancing development of the mystical tradition in women’s writings, and the elevation of the Virgin Mary to near-divine status, nonetheless, some of the writers of literature disseminated at the time do appear to be participating in a

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naturae assumtae debuerunt haec tria communicari excellenter. — Et ideo concedendae sunt rationes ad hanc partem.’

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum Libri Septem*, ch. IV, ‘Quaestiones in Numeros’, *PL* 34.717-48, quoted in Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 84.

<sup>46</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti: Quaestiones ex Utroque Mixtim*, *PL*, 35.2301-92, quoted in Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 85.

<sup>47</sup> Bernard of Parma, *Glossa in Decretalis*, Book I §38, ch. 10, A. Nardi (ed.) (Lyons: Huegeton et Barbier, 1671); and see S. Kuttner, ‘Notes on the *Glossa Ordinaria* of Bernard of Parma’, *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 11 (1981)

<sup>48</sup> Gratian, *Decretum Magistri Gratiani*, causa 33, q. 5, ch. 17, Emil Friedberg (ed.), in *Corpus Juris Canonici*, Vol. I, col. 1255 (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1879; reprint Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959), available at [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd\\_6029936\\_001/index.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd_6029936_001/index.html), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Schlusser Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics*, p. 149: ‘Such a concentration of christology on the masculine gender of Jesus or on the theological maleness of incarnation can only be relativized, I submit, when its hegemonic gender frame is critically investigated as to its systemic cultural-linguistic presuppositions and sociopolitical implications.’

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genre of conceit, using it as ‘a suitable arena in which to show off their literary paces’.<sup>50</sup> Hence, as stressed already in this study, it is important to keep these arguments in perspective and remember that the male-as-norm principle was part of the mental framework of any discussion of the relative merits and roles of men and women in the Middle Ages and could not have been set aside to have what would now be considered a balanced debate on the subject. These attitudes, bolstered by others, such as the biological misconceptions, the language issues and so on, are inherent in the cultural milieu in which the theologians and commentators are writing and are the foundations from which they start. The same attitudes can be tracked throughout literature and art and are still present in contemporary society, though somewhat less explicitly articulated.<sup>51</sup>

##### 4.b.i.4 Authority in Natural Law

The third heading in Bonaventure’s set of arguments is that of authority, proceeding from the point already covered that man is naturally advanced in the hierarchy over woman by virtue of his likeness to the incarnate Son of God by his sex and according to natural law. This notion is expressed as being one of spiritual power. He says:

Likewise, in orders spiritual power is given to the one ordained; but woman is not capable of such power, as it says in the second chapter of the first letter to Timothy: ‘I do not permit a woman to teach in the Church or to rule over man’: therefore nor [is she capable] of orders.<sup>52</sup>

In his own response to the point, Bonaventure quotes Gratian discussing the ordination of women as deacons<sup>53</sup> but seems to be suggesting that the term for ‘deaconesses’ in fact is *presbytera*, referring to older women and widows, who were given a blessing before being allowed to read the homily in the absence of a male deacon or priest.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> An excellent account of the misogynistic attitudes prevalent in Western culture at the turn of the twentieth century is given by Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture* (Oxford: OUP 1986). He identifies the way in which Darwinianism and ideological dualisms contributed to the battle of the sexes and also to the development of eugenics as a philosophy in the early twentieth century. Also see Wioleta Polinska, ‘Dangerous Bodies: Women’s Nakedness and Theology’, *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring, 2000, pp. 45–62.

<sup>52</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, d. XXV, a. II, q. I, p. 649: ‘Item, in ordine spiritualis potestas datur ordinato; sed talis potestatis non est mulier susceptibilis, sicut dicitur primae ad Timotheum secundo: *Mulierum in Ecclesia docere non permitto neque dominari in virem: ergo nec ordinis.*’

<sup>53</sup> See Chapter 3 on Gratian and canon law.

<sup>54</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 650: ‘presbyterae vocantur viduae et seniores et matronae; et ex hoc colligitur, quod diaconissae dicebantur quae communicabant cum diaconibus in legendo homiliam, quibus fiebat aliqua benedictio.’

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The concept of authority, *auctoritas*, was not generally one associated with women in the Middle Ages.<sup>55</sup> In his letters to Heloise, Peter Abelard reviewed the role played by women in Scripture, from Miriam singing in the book of Exodus, while Moses did not, to the Samaritan woman in John being the first to take the preaching of Christ to the Gentiles.<sup>56</sup> Abelard emphasised the priority of female achievement in this way because he believed ‘the case for women had to be built on claims for their *foundational* importance. Women had to be seen to have initiated, to have got there first in order to attain *auctoritas*’.<sup>57</sup> For Abelard, the most outstanding example of women’s claim to priority and status over and above men is the fact, as he perceives it, that a woman consecrated Christ.<sup>58</sup> Although a man anointed Christ’s dead body, it was a woman who anointed him when he was alive. Thus it was a woman who actually named him, ‘the Christ’, the anointed one.<sup>59</sup> But Abelard’s position was not taken up by later scholastic theologians and it was generally assumed in the mid-thirteenth century that the male–female hierarchy was enshrined in natural law. Bonaventure examines the role of Deborah, as a judge of Israel,<sup>60</sup> used to support the possibility of women holding authority, and concludes by saying that her authority was in the temporal and not the spiritual sphere (*potestas temporalis, non spiritualis*). The temporal versus spiritual authority argument was often used to explain that it would be inappropriate for women to have power over men in any sphere other than the earthly. It was the obligation to preach and to proclaim the Gospel that made it impossible to consider women as suitable for orders. Thomas of Strasbourg, a follower of Aquinas, responded to the argument that Deborah’s example would allow women to be judges by saying that her power was temporal only.<sup>61</sup> Gratian takes another line, one that would also be used by the Scholastic writers, following the canonists. He sees the ‘New Covenant’ as replacing or abolishing the old, through the ‘perfection of grace’. So women were permitted to judge the people under the ‘Old Covenant’, because of sin brought into

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<sup>55</sup> Although Gary Macy offers some evidence to show that this may not be a correct assumption, in ‘Heloise, Abelard and the Ordination of Abbesses’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 57, January 2006, p. 22, fn.

<sup>56</sup> A. Blamires, *The Case for Women in Mediaeval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 202.

<sup>57</sup> Blamires. *The Case for Women in Mediaeval Culture*, p. 204.

<sup>58</sup> Blamires. *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 201. Blamires points out that although ‘authority’ does carry the meaning of ‘having power to rule’, it is important to remember that Abelard is also responding to Heloise’s request for the ‘foundation’ of female monasticism, in other words, authority comes from the origin and source of the institution.

<sup>59</sup> Blamires. *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 206.

<sup>60</sup> Examined in greater depth in Chapter 5 on Scripture.

<sup>61</sup> John Hilary Martin, ‘The Ordination of Women and the Theologians in the Middle Ages,’ *Escritos del Vedat*, Vol. 36, 1986, p. 133. Also available in B. Cooke and G. Macy (eds.), *A History of Women and Ordination*, Vol. 1 (New York: Scarecrow, 2002), p. 91.

the world by women, but now in the New Covenant, Paul instructs women to be modest, submit to men and to wear the veil as a sign of that submission.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4.b.i.5 Scripture and Authority

Bonaventure's next point, following on from the case of Deborah, relates to the New Testament and the women in the early church who held positions of authority.

Likewise, in the New Testament, we see abbesses, to whom communities are entrusted to be ruled; therefore it is seen that the power of absolving and binding must be entrusted to them. Hence it is seen for a similar reason that priestly orders could be conferred on them.<sup>63</sup>

By abbesses, not a New Testament term, Bonaventure means the women in the early church, followers of Paul in many cases, such as Lydia and Phoebe (Acts 16:14–15, Rom 16:1), leaders of communities, along with many others named and praised by Paul. There is now plenty of undisputed evidence of the sacramental ordination of women as deacons in the Church from at least the fifth century onwards, until the practice was discontinued in the West by the tenth century.<sup>64</sup> The Eastern church retained the female diaconate for longer but in the West their functions continued to be performed by leaders of female communities.<sup>65</sup> Gary Macy mentions Abelard's view that the abbess of his time is the deaconess of the Gospels. He uses the term *diaconissa* to refer to the abbess throughout the rule he wrote for Heloise's convent. Macy cites a letter by Atto, bishop of Vercelli in the tenth century, as authority for this equivalence.<sup>66</sup> Abelard uses the term 'deaconess' to refer to the abbess because of the difference in meaning between the two words, the former indicating service, the latter authority. He also says that the person with authority within the community must be careful not to live in a more privileged way than her sisters.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Quoted by I. Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women', in Cooke and Macy (eds.), *A History of Women*, Vol. 2, p. 25.

<sup>63</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 649, 'Item, in novo testamento videmus abbatissas, quibus committuntur collegia regenda: ergo videtur, quod eis committi debeat potestas absolvendi et ligandi: ergo pari ratione videtur, quod conferri posset eis ordo sacerdotalis.'

<sup>64</sup> See, among others, Phyllis Zagano, *Holy Saturday: An Argument for the Restoration of the Female Diaconate in the Catholic Church* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000); John Wijngaards, *Women Deacons in the Early Church* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> Jean Daniélou, S.J., 'Le ministère des femmes dans l'Eglise ancienne', *La Maison-Dieu*, Vol. 61, pp. 70–97: 'ce sont les moniales qui hériteront des principales prérogatives des diaconesses et des veuves'.

<sup>66</sup> G. Macy, 'Heloise, Abelard and the Ordination of Abbesses', January 2006. In an earlier article, 'The Ordination of Women in the Early Middle Ages', *Theological Studies*, Vol. 61, 2000, pp. 492–493, Macy says that, despite quoting this equivalence, Atto disagrees with it because the two words have such different roots.

<sup>67</sup> *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, C.K. Scott Moncrieff (tr.) (New York: Knopf, 1926), cited by Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Eerdmans Press, 1985), p. 279.

Referring to the abbesses of his own time, in female monasteries, Bonaventure says that they do not act of their own authority but as representing an abbot, solely for the sake of propriety. Again, it is the signification (*significationem*) of the office that belongs properly to a man and the woman only exercises it in special circumstances, where a man could not in decency do it.<sup>68</sup> This may be a reference to the disputed authority of abbesses at this period, when there was disquiet over the extent of their power within their own convents and monasteries, particularly where this was exercised over men. The issue would remain open for centuries, as witnessed by the cases of women such as Colette of Corbie and Teresa of Avila.<sup>69</sup>

In the *Commentaries on the Sentences*, the theologians consider the matter as settled in law, as Bonaventure does. Richard Fishacre, the first Oxford theologian to consider the ordination of women, simply repeats the canonists' assertions<sup>70</sup> and refers specifically to the restrictions on the powers of abbesses imposed by the popes: 'Therefore abbesses are not able to preach or to bless, or to excommunicate, or to absolve, or to give penances, or to judge, or to exercise the office of any order.'<sup>71</sup> Bonaventure's own conclusion to the issue of the authority of abbesses is that they are a substitute for a bishop, rather than having the status of prelate by their own merit. The purpose of the arrangement is simply that of propriety because of 'periculum cohabitandi cum viris', the danger of cohabitation.<sup>72</sup> According to Bonaventure, the office pertaining to any order (*ordo*) has a signification that is not proper to women, even though a woman might be able to rule in a temporal sense. It is the spiritual dominion (*dominio*), which is reserved for the male, as enshrined in canon law.

Bonaventure's argument against women's capacity for authority is based on the Pauline prohibition on women speaking and teaching in public, as this role is essential to the priest,

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<sup>68</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 650: 'abbatissis ... non habent locum praelationis ordinariae, sed quasi loco abbatis sunt substitutae propter periculum cohabitandi cum viris; unde non possunt ordinarie absolvere nec ligare'.

<sup>69</sup> As late as the fifteenth century, St. Colette of Corbie, the reformer of the Franciscan order, was seen to have the power to appoint and dismiss the male chaplains to her convents. She dismissed a friar who had been the subject of complaints by the nuns because he had become too old to fulfil his duties. It is pointed out that this power to appoint and dismiss nowadays is held by the ordinary of the diocese. See Elisabeth Lopez, *Culture et sainteté – Colette de Corbie* (Saint-Etienne: Université de Saint-Etienne, 1994), p. 168.

<sup>70</sup> G. Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p. 109.

<sup>71</sup> 'Unde non potest predicare, nec possunt abbatisse benedicere, nec excommunicare, nec absolvere, nec penitentias dare, nec iudicare, nec officium aliquorum ordinum exercere.' Richard Fishacre, in *Sententias Commentaria*, Vol. IV, d. 24; Balliol Ms. 57 (University of Oxford, Balliol College); Oriol Ms 43 (University of Oxford, Oriol College), quotation from <http://www.womenpriests.org/Latin/fishacre.asp>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>72</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 650.

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as well as the woman's incapacity to hold a position of authority over a man, as this would be inappropriate and against the natural order. Whereas a woman can hold temporal authority, she cannot hold spiritual authority over a community and particularly over a man, and even the most powerful woman, such as the abbess of a female monastery, must defer to the male priest in spiritual affairs. Women who chose the religious life, whether as nuns or as members of semi-religious communities, popular in Europe during the Middle Ages, were seen as requiring the ministry and the governance of men in order to oversee and sometimes curb their spiritual 'excesses'. Michel Lauwer, in a study of the *vitae* of such holy women, describes how their sanctity was often seen as dependent on their devotion to the Eucharist, mediated through male clerics:

C'est ainsi que tous les hagiographes insistent sur ... leur désir de communier et de se confesser fréquemment, sur leur assiduité aux sermons des prêtres. Or, dans la pratique, [ces besoins] constituaient autant d'occasions pour les ecclésiastiques d'exercer un contrôle sur des semi-religieuses qui pouvaient, en raison de leur statut, leur échapper.<sup>73</sup>

The denial of authority on a wider scale to the abbess leads naturally to Bonaventure's fourth argument. This concerns not just the state of soul of the candidate for orders, but also their capacity for promotion in the hierarchy, again based on gender. He says:

Likewise, some orders are preparatory to the episcopate, if indeed someone is directed towards them. But the bishop is the bridegroom of the Church; therefore as the woman cannot be advanced to the episcopate, but only the man, in yet another way she is not the bridegroom of the Church; thus promotion to the above orders is only for men.<sup>74</sup>

So, as only the male bishop can stand for the bridegroom, women cannot be ordained. The counter argument Bonaventure first offers takes a lateral step, to consider the states of perfection that are greater than the episcopate, namely religious life and martyrdom. Both of these states are open to women and many women have taken them, hence it should be possible for women also to aspire to a less exalted state, that of the episcopate. The conclusion drawn is that, despite the better claims of martyrdom and the consecrated life, these still only relate to the interior life. Both of these states are the fruit of sanctifying

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<sup>73</sup> Michel Lauwers, 'L'institution et le genre. À propos de l'accès des femmes au sacré dans l'Occident médiéval', *Clio. Histoire, femmes et sociétés*, Vol. 2, 1995, available at <http://clio.revues.org/497>, last accessed August 2014. (Thus, all hagiographers emphasise '... their desire to take communion and confess often, on their attentiveness to the preaching of the priests. In practice, [such needs] in fact form opportunities for churchmen to exercise control over these semi-religious women, whose status might otherwise enable them to escape.')

<sup>74</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 649: 'ordines alii praeparant ad episcopatum, si quis bene in illis conversetur; sed episcopus sponsus est Ecclesiae; ergo cum mulier non possit ad episcopatum provehi, sed tantum vir, alioquin sponsus non esset Ecclesiae; ergo ad ordines antecedentes promoveri est tantum virorum'.

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grace in the soul, given by God. The episcopate is different from these in that it is a perfection of state, though Bonaventure is rather vague in this area. This kind of perfection is freely given (*gratis datum*), though he does not specify here how this is different from God's free gift of sanctifying grace. The perfection of state is given to one sex but may not be given to the other. The reason for this is that such a state regards not just the internal realm (soul), but the external also (the body) and therefore it involves the individual's sex. The perfection of orders is like this (although no other examples are given, they may include kingship, parenthood, etc.) and involves a concentration of power, says Bonaventure, which for many reasons (again unspecified), means that it is not in the least degree suitable for women.<sup>75</sup>

Nowadays, the concept of ministry has been broadened in the church to include a number of ministries that can be performed by non-ordained people, including women, such as the extraordinary ministry of distributing Holy Communion, accompanying sick-visiting, or the ministry of reading the lesson, serving on the altar, catechetical ministries and so on. In a sense these are designed to revive the pattern of ministry in the early church, where the whole community was involved in a ministry to each other and to wider society and appointed its own leaders and servants as required. In the mediaeval period, however, ministry had become firmly attached to the person of the ordained priest. Even the subordinate ministries of acolyte, reader, deacon and so on were seen very much as stepping stones on the path to priesthood, rather than independent functions within the church, and were part of the hierarchical model.<sup>76</sup>

##### 4.b.i.6 Christ as Bridegroom

The concept of bridegroom, the main characteristic of the bishop's role in this argument for Bonaventure, had been an important image in Christian thought for many centuries. By the mediaeval period, it had become enshrined as a standard symbol for Christ's relationship with the church. It originates in the Gospels, with the wedding imagery reported as used by Jesus in many parables to represent the coming of the Messiah to the

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<sup>75</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, pp. 650–651: 'Ad illud quod obiicitur de perfectione religionis et martyrii; dicendum, quod est perfectio, quae respicit gratiam gratum facientem, et huius aequae bene est susceptibilis mulier, ut vir; et est perfectio status, qui concernit aliquid gratis datum, et haec potest competere uni sexui, quamvis non competat alii; quia haec non tantum respicit quod est interius, sed etiam quod est exterius. Talis est perfectio ordinis, in qua est collatio potestatis, quam ostendit multiplex ratio mulieribus minime convenire.'

<sup>76</sup> Lombard, *Sentences*, Bk 4, d. XXIV, ch. 3, para. 2: 'And in the sacrament ... there are seven ecclesiastical degrees, namely of door-keeper, lector, exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, priest'.



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waiting peoples, the ‘wedding guests’, eagerly anticipating the celebration to come when the bridegroom arrives at the feast. It also reflects the Hebrew imagery of the family, of the bride arriving to greet the king, the wedding being one of the biggest celebrations in Jewish tradition, central to the ideas of family life, tribal cohesion and continuity of the family line. The importance of this image of the bishop as bridegroom remains, as the Church uses it now as one of the few remaining arguments against the ordination of women to the priesthood. Where Bonaventure perhaps understood this image as a metaphor, although a profoundly significant one,<sup>77</sup> the Church has transformed it into allegory and treats it as ‘real’.<sup>78</sup> This attitude is evident in *Inter Insigniores*, which discusses the saving act of Christ as that of a bridegroom, who redeems the Church with his blood. This is described as being revelatory and a ‘historical reality’, leading to the necessary consequence that only a man can take the part of Christ (in celebrating the Eucharist).<sup>79</sup> The imagery is discussed in greater detail in the Chapter 7 (on language).

##### 4.b.i.7 Conclusion on Bonaventure

Bonaventure’s arguments can be summarised as follows:

1. The female is incapable of receiving orders because she has to wear her hair long, and go veiled and therefore cannot receive the tonsure.
2. The priest must be the *imago Dei* and therefore, by reason of sex, only the male can represent God.
3. Women cannot hold spiritual power because the Apostle Paul forbids this (in 1 Tim 2).
4. The Sacrament of Orders is preparation for the episcopate and, as the bishop is the bridegroom of the Church, a woman cannot hold this necessarily male role.

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<sup>77</sup> Martin, ‘The Ordination of Women’, p. 61: ‘when [mediaeval theologians] refer back to the Genesis story they are talking about symbols and their significance in tracing God’s plan for salvation, they are not talking directly about men and women ... Bonaventure’s language should be read in that spirit.’

<sup>78</sup> John Wijngaards, *The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2001), p. 117: ‘Rome ... sees the “great mystery” [in Ephesians] in another light. It seems to think that the “mystery” reveals something about sex and gender, about God being somehow male and humankind female, about the created difference between men and women ... The bridegroom passage in Ephesians describes reality rather than speaking only in metaphors.’

<sup>79</sup> *Commentary on Inter Insigniores*, in *From “Inter Insigniores” to “Ordinatio Sacerdotalis”*: Documents and Commentaries, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1996), p. 74

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He offers as counterarguments the fact that women, such as Deborah, have held judicial power, that abbesses of female monasteries do hold ruling authority, that the sacrament of orders applies to the soul, where there is no distinction of sex, and that, as religious life and martyrdom, both of which are available to women, are respectively the highest state and the crowning glory of the Christian, women should be able to receive the Sacrament of Orders.

His conclusions are, however, that ‘common opinion’ as expressed by the *Decretals* of Gratian, shows that there are serious objections to women approaching the altar and he quotes verbatim the powerful language of Gratian, using expressions such as ‘the censure and blame’ of the ‘wise’ against the practice of women touching sacred vessels and the demand that this ‘plague’ be wiped out. This objection to women coming into contact with sacred objects is ubiquitous in mediaeval legal and theological texts but is nowhere elaborated. It will be considered in greater detail in Chapter 6 on biology as it is one of the most persistent features of the objection to women’s ordination.

Although there are references in Gratian to women having been ordained as deacons and the word *presbytera*, which could be translated as ‘woman priest’, is used in the *Decretals*, Bonaventure concludes that this is misleading. He believes it refers to widows and older women who cooperate with the deacon in reading the homily and that they received ‘some kind of blessing’, since he has no knowledge of the actual ordination rites of women deacons used in the Eastern Church prior to his own lifetime.<sup>80</sup> He concludes by saying that the ‘wise’ state that women should not be ordained and are incapable of receiving orders, ‘de iure et de facto’. He then finishes by stating his reasons for drawing these conclusions. The Sacrament of Orders is not suitable for women, as described previously, because the priest fills the role of Christ as Mediator and this requires the male sex, to represent the human person of Christ. Working through his counterarguments, he answers each of them in the light of his own investigations.

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<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Roger Gryson, *Le ministère des femmes dans l’Eglise ancienne* (Gembloux: Editions Duculot S.A., 1972); Zagano, *Holy Saturday*; Wijngaards, *Women Deacons*; Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992), pp. 272–273: ‘The possibility of ordaining women as deacons is quite another matter. There was such an ordination in the early days of the Church ... The question whether their ordination is sacramental could not be asked before the reflections on sacramental theology in the high Scholastics. In the Byzantine liturgy, it has all the characteristics of a major ordination.’ The website <http://www.womenpriests.org> has a copious bibliography on this subject, up to 2005 at least. [http://www.womenpriests.org/deacons/deac\\_ord.asp](http://www.womenpriests.org/deacons/deac_ord.asp), last accessed August 2014. The Orthodox website <http://www.anastasis.org.uk>, last accessed August 2014, has texts of the rites for ordination of women deacons.

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As regards Deborah, although she held power, this was only temporal and not spiritual power. Women can have temporal dominion over men but spiritual dominion implies that the dominator bears the type of the head of Christ (*gerit typum capitis Christi*) and, as woman cannot be the head of man, following Paul again, she cannot be ordained. Abbesses hold authority within their own houses but they do not act as an ordinary, only as a substitute for the abbot, for the sake of propriety because of the risks inherent in cohabitation of men and women. So abbesses have no power to absolve or bind, as priests do, and so the sacerdotal office or any sacred order having the power of the ordinary does not belong to women. Orders apply to the soul, that is true, says Bonaventure, but the soul is in this case inseparable from the flesh. The sacrament has a signification in the visible sign, in the bodily representation, and so the priest has to be male in order satisfactorily to represent Christ.

Finally, as regards the perfection of soul implied by orders, this does come with the outpouring of sanctifying grace, which women as well as men can receive. However, there is also a perfection of state, which is a freely given gift, and may belong to one sex but not the other. This perfection of state relates to both the interior and the exterior of the person, so once again the physical (male) body is involved. This Sacrament of Orders contains a concentration of power, which, as we have already seen, is unsuitable for women to exercise.

Bonaventure's arguments generally focus on the importance of the physical nature of the human person receiving the sacrament, on the essential masculine/male characteristic of the priest. In terms of his attitudes, he is restrained and moderate in his language, compared to other commentators. He is careful in his use of particular terms (*presbytera, imago, persona*) but chooses his own interpretation of these to suit his arguments. He considers the male nature of the human person of Christ and Paul or the Pauline writers' arguments against women's authority to be insuperable obstacles to women's reception of orders. The physical appearance and its external attributes of masculinity are vital for the proper exercise of authority and for the action of the priest at the altar. Male sex is implicit in the metaphorical description of the bishop as bridegroom. As will be seen, with some variations, he reflects standard contemporary attitudes within the scholastic world. With respect to the matter of women's physical nature, her biology and especially the contamination caused by contact with women, he mentions this only briefly, with no

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clarification, simply assuming that all these factors make the ordination of women impossible, and quoting Gratian on the subject.<sup>81</sup>

##### 4.b.ii *Thomas Aquinas*<sup>82</sup>

Thomas Aquinas was probably born in 1225, the son of minor nobility from Naples. His father was Landulf and his mother Theodora of Norman descent. At five years old, he went to school at the monastery of Monte Cassino, where his uncle Sinibald was abbot, and then went to Naples for further study. He was reputedly a precocious child at his learning and devout from an early age. Rather than the Benedictines, he chose the Dominican order for his vocation but his family objected and did what they could, to the extent of kidnapping him, to try to dissuade him. He had his way eventually and the order sent Thomas to Cologne to study under Albertus Magnus, Albert the Great, probably in 1244, because he then went with Albert to Paris in 1245, where he studied for three years, before returning to Cologne with Albert in 1248. Albert was hugely influential on Thomas's development and training in Aristotelianism.

By 1252, Thomas was in Paris again to take his Master's degree, despite being embroiled in the disputes involving the friars, but he finally took up a teaching position in 1257. He was also given positions of responsibility in the order and went to Rome in 1261, though he was to return to Paris at the end of the decade. His health began to deteriorate but he continued to work and travel on behalf of the order and on instructions from the Pope, attending councils and establishing teaching institutions. He died in the Cistercian abbey of Fossanova in 1274 on his way to the Council of Lyons.

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<sup>81</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 650: 'It ought to be said that common opinion holds this, that women should not be admitted to sacred orders. For it is expressly stated with clarity in the twenty-third [in the Decree of Gratian]: 'It has been conveyed to the Apostolic See that women consecrated to God or nuns in possession of sacred garments or sacred vessels have approached you and carried incense around the altar, all of which actions are full of censure and blame [*vituperatione et reprehensione plena esse*], as there can be no doubt for any who are wise. Therefore on the authority of this holy See, lest this plague be spread abroad more widely, we order that it be wiped out most speedily throughout all the provinces.' Gratian's reference is *Decretum Gratiani*, d. 23, ch. 25, Friedberg, *Corpus Juris Canonici*, Vol. 1, col. 85.

<sup>82</sup> Sources for biographical details of Thomas Aquinas are many and varied. See Simon Tugwell, O.P., *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1988); Timothy McDermott, *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Oxford: OUP, 1993); Denys Turner, *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

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Aquinas' major contribution to learning in the Middle Ages was his *Summa Theologica*, a consistent exposition of Christian teaching, incorporating the philosophy of Aristotle and also of the leading Arab scholars and translators of Aristotle of the period.

##### 4.b.ii.1 *Commentary on the Sentences*

As with all students of theology, however, Aquinas naturally produced his own *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* and, there, first mentions the suitability of women for orders. His analysis is shorter than that of other scholars but he will go into the subject in more detail in the *Summa Theologica* later in life. We will look at both these works.

In his *Scriptum super Sententiis*, Book 4, distinction 24,<sup>83</sup> Thomas combines the discussion on the suitability of women to receive the sacrament of orders with that of minors. As with other mediaeval schoolmen, such as Bonaventure, William of Rothwell (1250–?),<sup>84</sup> Henry of Ghent, Richard of Middleton<sup>85</sup> or Scotus,<sup>86</sup> one of the pillars of his argument is the text from the letter to Timothy (1 Tim 2:12): 'I do not allow a woman to teach in the Church nor to use authority over the man.'

Thomas's arguments cover the same ground as other writers but he seems to emphasise particularly the power structures and hierarchical nature of the church and society. He also looks at the nature of sacrament as sign, in the Augustinian sense,<sup>87</sup> as we will see below, indicating something happening invisibly in the soul that is signalled by an external ritual and set of symbols. The sacramental process is ineffective, however, if the recipient is essentially unsuitable, the proper conditions not being in place.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> The source for the Latin text of the *Scriptum super Sententiis* of Aquinas is the website [www.corpusthomicum.org](http://www.corpusthomicum.org), from the Fundación Tomás de Aquino, University of Navarre, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Martin, 'The Ordination of Women', pp. 83–84.

<sup>85</sup> Richard of Middleton, *Commentary on the Sentences*, d. 25, a. 4, n. 1, Bocatelli (ed.) (Venice: 1499) quoted on <http://www.womenpriests.org>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>86</sup> *Duns Scoti Opera Omnia, Vol. 24: Reportata Parisiensia*, Luke Wadding (ed.) (Paris: Vivès 1894), Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2, pp. 367–371.

<sup>87</sup> See R. A. Markus, 'St. Augustine on Signs' *Phronesis*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1957, pp. 60–83; Paul F. Palmer, 'The Theology of the Res and Sacramentum,' *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America*, 1959.

<sup>88</sup> Augustine, 'Treatise 26 on Gospel of John', §11, at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1701026.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

4.b.ii.2 Women as Prophets

Addressing the opening arguments, suggesting the possibility that women could be ordained, Aquinas considers the role of prophet compared to that of priest:

For the function of prophet is greater than the function of priest, since the prophet is an intermediary between God and the priest, just as the priest is an intermediary between God and the people. The function of prophet has sometimes been given to women, as is noted in 2 Kings [Huldah]. Hence, the function of priest may also be suitable for them.<sup>89</sup>

Prophecy was a well-known phenomenon in the Middle Ages. Belief in its reality – and the acceptance of the role of prophet, based on a Biblical understanding of the gift of prophecy, recognising its value to society – was fairly general.<sup>90</sup> Bonaventure gives a portrait of Francis as a prophet in the *Legenda Maior*.<sup>91</sup> In particular, the character of the female prophet, or mystic, was to a certain extent a folk figure, regarded with perhaps some superstitious awe as having been given particular gifts by heaven that set her apart.<sup>92</sup> Depending on her standing, the female prophet could be seen as in some way raised in the hierarchy, respected by men of authority, able to challenge kings and bishops,<sup>93</sup> just as the women prophets of Old Testament times did – Huldah already mentioned, Miriam the sister of Moses, Deborah.<sup>94</sup> In the early Church, attested frequently in Acts and in the letters of Paul, women often had the gift of prophecy and spoke out to challenge the members of their local church, warning of the imminence of the Second Coming, and voicing ever-present fears of persecution and martyrdom.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> ‘Quia officium prophetiae est majus quam sacerdotis officium: quia propheta est medius inter Deum et sacerdotem, sicut sacerdos inter Deum et populum. Sed prophetiae officium aliquando mulieribus est concessum, ut patet 4 Reg. Ergo et sacerdotii officium eis competere potest.’: *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, Bk. 4, d. 25, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1, arg. 1. The prophetess Huldah is mentioned in 2 Kings 22:14, and 2 Chronicles 34, where she is consulted as to the contents of the Book of the Law found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah.

<sup>90</sup> See Marjorie Reeves, *The Prophetic Sense of History in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 1999) for an overview of the subject;

<sup>91</sup> See Regis Armstrong et al. (eds.), *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Vol. 2 (New York: New City Press, 2000), pp. 525ff.

<sup>92</sup> B.M. Kienzle and P.J. Walker (eds.), *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley: UCP, 1998).

<sup>93</sup> Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc* (Berkeley: UCP, 1981), explains Joan’s prophecy in terms of the realities of the present world, rather than future predictions; Diane Watt, *Secretaries of God: Women Prophets in Late Mediaeval and Early Modern England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001) examines women prophets from Margery Kempe onwards. See also Herbert Schneider, S.J., ‘Women in Early Christianity and the Institutionalization of Charisma’, *East Asian Pastoral Review*, Vol. 44, 2007, p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> ‘Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the Lord ...”’: Exodus 15:20–21. Deborah is described as a prophetess in Judges 4:4, but, as we will see below, she was also a ruler of Israel.

<sup>95</sup> Lk 2:36; Acts 16:16–18, 21:9; 1 Cor 11:5.

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As with prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, a feature of prophecy in the Middle Ages was preparation for the end, rather than the timing of the Apocalypse or the Day of the Lord. It was a call to action, a call to repentance, for being awake and ready whenever the Second Coming should occur. Although there was a constant theme in popular literature, and in political and social conscience, of the ‘signs of the times’, warning of the imminent end of the world (plagues, famines, comets and so on),<sup>96</sup> the mystics, the spiritual preachers and writers were concerned with the state of people’s souls, calling for penance and a return to conscientious practice of the faith, on the part of laity and clergy alike. Groups such as the Order of Apostles promoted apostolic poverty, a return to the values of the early church. Founded by Gerard Segarelli in Parma in the mid-thirteenth century, the Order of the Apostles believed this recovery of the origins to be the true way to achieve holiness. At the outset, the movement was supported by the Church but its increasing popularity became threatening and eventually Segarelli was tried and burnt as a heretic.<sup>97</sup> Preachers such as Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135–1202) were acclaimed as prophets and attracted widespread support.<sup>98</sup>

During the centuries of the Middle Ages, women were notable for their use of prophetic gifts of this kind and a number of individual women are still remembered now (Catherine of Siena, Joan of Arc, Hildegard, Julian of Norwich and so on).<sup>99</sup> There were many more, renowned at the time for their voices and sometimes writings. They might be characterised by strange behaviour, such as Rose of Viterbo (c. 1233–1251), who was a street preacher, with a significant following in the mid-thirteenth century in her own area of central Italy. After receiving visions of Christ crucified, she took to the streets predicting the death of the Emperor Frederic II, enemy of the Pope and supporter of the Ghibelline cause, and speaking out against heretics. She and her family were exiled as a result of this. Her preaching and prophecy was therefore not simply a spiritual event but had significant

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<sup>96</sup> see Andrew Gow, ‘(En)gendering Evil: Sinful Conceptions of the Antichrist in the Middle Ages and the Reformation’, *Journal of Millennial Studies*, Special Edition, Summer 1999, available at <http://www.bu.edu/mille/publications/summer99/gow2.PDF>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>97</sup> For an account of the Order of Apostles, see Jerry B. Pierce, *Poverty, Heresy, and the Apocalypse: The Order of Apostles and Social Change in Medieval Italy 1260–1307* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).

<sup>98</sup> Bernard McGinn, ‘The Abbot and the Doctors: Scholastic Reactions to the Radical Eschatology of Joachim of Fiore’, *Church History*, Vol. 40, No. 1, March 1971, pp. 30–47, American Society of Church History: ‘The ability to work out the types or concords between the various ages was the gift of understanding by which Joachim claimed to know the future. For him prophecy was not needed; the secret was there in the *sacra pagina* for the man that God had enlightened.’

<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth Ruth Oddard (ed.), *Medieval Women Mystics: Selected Spiritual Writings* (New York: New City Press, 2007); Frances Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992).

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political implications, engaging in the public space with public issues.<sup>100</sup> Often women's ability to teach and preach was seen as miraculous, because of their perceived lack of education and the assumed deficiencies of their mind. Rose was acclaimed in this way, as were other women such as Umiltà of Faenza (1226–1310), a Benedictine nun, whose biographer recounts:

It was a thing marvellous in all respects to see [her], who had never learned letters, not only reading at table ... but even discoursing and speaking in the Latin language, as if she had studied much in it ...<sup>101</sup>

In the previous century, the Benedictine nun, Hildegard (1098–1179), despite being largely self-taught, became a notable writer, teacher and musician. She experienced visions all her life, making them public in her forties when she experienced a revelation that seemed to give her an infused knowledge of the Scriptures and a divine instruction to speak and write what she was told. She spent the rest of her long life obeying this instruction, despite clashes on occasion with the hierarchical authorities, but received support from the Pope and the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa. She saw herself as a channel for divine revelations and was validated as true prophet,<sup>102</sup> being consulted by numerous men who asked her for prayers, guidance and instruction.<sup>103</sup> Rosemary Ruether describes how Hildegard equated her own God-given role as similar to that of the Hebrew women prophets, raised up by God in a time of decline and loss of the sense of the divine, never claiming her gift was her own, but always seeing herself as the humblest clay vessel, weak and inadequate but empowered to speak out. 'Hildegard is aware that the power of prophecy is due in part to the fact that a woman, the weaker vessel, is chosen to confound the strong.'<sup>104</sup>

Aquinas was writing a hundred years later, in a different society and with a very different voice. By this time, women's roles were even more restricted and, except for local, popular preachers such as Rose, there would be no acceptance of a formal, public role for a woman preacher. Although women's religious writings are preserved in much greater volume by

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<sup>100</sup> Darleen Pryds, 'Proclaiming Sanctity: Rose of Viterbo', in Kienzle and Walker, *Women Preachers and Prophets*.

<sup>101</sup> Carolyn Muessig, 'Prophecy and Song', in Kienzle and Walker, *Women Preachers and Prophets*.

<sup>102</sup> Sabina Flanagan describes how Hildegard's 'chief concern was with reform of the clergy, since they were the ones on whom the leadership of the church and the teaching of the people depended. Indeed, she justified her prophetic role by claiming that in such disjointed times, when the world was hastening toward its end, the expected leaders and teachers had failed in their task. This was the reason that she, though a "*paupercula forma*" (poor weak woman), had been chosen to express God's will.': in James Hardin and Will Hasty (eds.), *Dictionary of Literary Bibliography*, Vol. 148: German Writers and Works of the early Middle Ages, 800–1170 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 59–73.

<sup>103</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption* (London: SCM Press, 1998), pp. 81ff.

<sup>104</sup> Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 313.



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this time, partly because of increased literacy within women's religious orders, these writings are mainly spiritual and personal in content. As women were barred from entry to universities, access to scholarly education was closed to them. Aquinas does, however, seem to place the prophet between God and the priest in the hierarchy, a significant and exalted position, indicating the necessary function of prophecy, of an interpreter to the priest of the will of God. If a woman can perform this function, she stands above the priest in the sight of God. In later writings, Aquinas would say that, while women's prophetic gifts are real, and that women may indeed have higher qualities of soul than some men, since they are barred from teaching in public, they must exercise their gifts in private. They must impart their prophetic messages to male superiors, who may then validate them and be responsible for publishing them.<sup>105</sup>

The identification of Christ as priest, prophet and king was made early on in the Church, based on the witness of the evangelists and the Hebrew Scriptures. The Messiah would be a priest, prophet and king, according to the prophets themselves, and would be anointed as such (Is 61:1, for example, 'The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed', the text that Jesus reads out in Lk 4: 16–21). The prophet's role is to announce the coming of the kingdom, to call the people to repentance, and this is how female prophets perform, often bringing the news that the men do not want to hear, or have failed to proclaim themselves. The woman then replaces the men, to shame them as well as to fulfil the role they should have performed, just as Deborah was appointed as a judge when the men failed in their task.<sup>106</sup> Deborah is a difficult case and Aquinas is quick to point out further on that Deborah's power was temporal, not priestly, just as women of his time may exercise temporal power.<sup>107</sup>

Similarly, in the arguments pro the ordination of women, Aquinas explains that perfection and superiority are bestowed on individuals, men and women who attain a status, whether temporal or spiritual, that sets them apart. This may be a position of authority, as for

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<sup>105</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae (ST)*, Part 2-2a, q. 177, a. 2, ad. 3: 'gratiam divinitus acceptam diversimode aliqui administrant, secundum diversitatem conditionis ipsorum. Unde mulieres, si gratiam sapientiae aut scientiae habeant, possunt eam administrare secundum privatam doctrinam, non autem secundum publicam'. [The recipients of a divinely conferred grace administer it in different ways according to their various conditions. So women, if they have the grace of wisdom or of knowledge, can administer it by teaching in private but not in public]. He points out also that women were the first witnesses of the resurrection but had to report what they had seen to the apostles who then proclaimed it publicly. See Ruether, p.96.

<sup>106</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1., arg. 2: 'ut patet de Debora quae judicavit Israel'.

<sup>107</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2, ad. 2: 'Debora autem praefuit in temporalibus, non in sacerdotalibus, sicut et nunc mulieres possunt temporaliter dominari.'

abbesses, or the crown of martyrdom, or simply religious life.<sup>108</sup> All these are unrelated to sex; they are directly graced by God to the soul and, as such, give the individual a particular role and a special, more exalted position in human terms. But he then goes on to explain why, nonetheless, women cannot receive orders in the contra part of his argument.

#### 4.b.ii.3 Sacrament and Sign

Aquinas was intent on preserving the male/female distinction, despite these clear examples of the irrelevance of sex when considering holiness. His argument is based on the traditional requirements for reception of the sacrament. It is not simply the sacrament itself, but also what is appropriate for the sacrament that has to be present. The sacrament being a sign (*signum*), therefore not just the reality but also the significance of the reality must be present (*requiritur non solum res, sed significationem rei*). This refers to the traditional, three-fold definition of the sacrament as a whole, *sacramentum tantum* or sacramental sign, the *sacramentum et res* or sacramental reality and the *res tantum* or the reality that the sacrament points to as developed by Aquinas based on Augustine's theory of sign.<sup>109</sup> As he explains later with reference to the Eucharist, in the sacrament, 'the external, visible sign does not illustrate ... the spiritual reality of the sacrament, but rather signifies – and effects – it in accordance with the meaning of the words which constitute the form of the sacrament'.<sup>110</sup>

As regards the sacrament of orders he says:

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<sup>108</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, Bk. 4, d. 25, q. 2, ad. 2: 'sicut ordo ad quamdam perfectionem pertinet, ita et praelationis officium, et martyrium, et religionis status. Sed praelatio committitur mulieribus in novo testamento, ut patet de abbatissis, et in veteri, ut patet de Debora quae iudicavit Israel, iudicium 4: competit etiam eis martyrium, et religionis status'.

<sup>109</sup> Hugh of St. Victor and Lombard gradually responded to the problem of the sign and effective symbolism of the Eucharist species and their solution was finally accepted by Innocent III (c. 1160–1216). See P. Palmer, S.J, 'The Theology of the *Res et Sacramentum*, with Particular Emphasis on the Sacrament of Penance,' in *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (Yonkers NY: 1959). Roland Barthes' account of the Saussurian definition of 'sign' as being both '*signifier and signified*' highlights the importance of the fact that the sign is a unifying concept, where the two *relata* cannot be essentially separated from each other: 'this is a paramount proposition, which one must always bear in mind, for there is a tendency to interpret *sign* as signifier, whereas this is a two-sided Janus-like entity': R. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 39. Barthes' famous 'Tout signe inclut ou implique trois relations' – with the first being the interior relationship of the signifier to what it signifies, and then the two external relations of the sign with the set of signs on which it can call, and the actual relationship between the sign and the other signs within the utterance to which it belongs – can also apply to the sacramental sign, placing the water/bread/oil of the sacrament in relation with the action of grace it brings about and the context, the soul, where this action takes place.

<sup>110</sup> Ferrara, 'Representation or Self-Effacement?', p. 211.

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... since the sacrament is a sign, as regards that which the sacrament effects, it is not simply the reality that is required, but also the significance of the reality, as for instance in extreme unction, the person receiving it must be sick, so that their need for treatment can be signified. Since the female sex cannot signify elevation of degree, since woman is in a state of subjection, she cannot therefore receive the sacrament of order.<sup>111</sup>

Once again, it is the inferior status of woman, assumed to be part of the natural state, which presupposes her unsuitability for orders. As society's and the church's acceptance of woman's subordination was taken for granted, the requirement for the sign of superiority in ordination could only be found in the male sex.

The mediaeval understanding of 'sign' is based on Latin rhetoric and Stoic philosophy of language, as interpreted by Augustine (354–430), and via Aristotelian semantics taken from the writings of Boethius. The sign is the underlying or predetermined content of a unit of meaning (a sentence), that has the function of revealing an abstract truth to the mind of the hearer or reader. This tri-partite concept of sign – a *means* of conveying *something* to a *mind* – essentially defines sign as part of the communication process, a fundamental part of the linguistic sign, and signs are all about language in mediaeval philosophy. Initially, Augustine restricted the meaning of sign to being either admonitory – pointing the way to something – or else commemorative – recalling something to the mind.<sup>112</sup> Later, however, he was able to extend this, describing a sign as a sense-perception that can convey meaning to the intellect (*De Doctrina Christiana*, II, 1).<sup>113</sup> Augustine's classification of two kinds of sign, natural and given, is well-known, but he pushes this further in his later definition of speech as being 'signa data', where the mental concept is the primary locus of the 'word' (*verbum*) and the spoken word is the sign of the word (*signum verbi*).

Boethius (c. 480–524/525), using Aristotle, also had an important role in the mediaeval development of the idea of signs and signification. In this case, the Greek idea of imposition, the assigning of names to things, covered in Chapter 7 on language, is influential in the understanding of what language is. Perhaps as a translator, Boethius

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<sup>111</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, Bk. 4, d. 25, q. 2 a. 1 qc. 1 co. 'quia cum sacramentum sit signum, in his quae in sacramento aguntur, requiritur non solum res, sed significatio rei; sicut dictum est, quid in extrema unctione exigitur quod sit infirmus, ut significetur curatione indigens. Cum ergo in sexu femineo non possit significari aliqua eminentia gradus, quia mulier statum subjectionis habet; ideo non potest ordinis sacramentum suscipere.'

<sup>112</sup> Meier-Oeser, Stephan, 'Medieval Semiotics', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2011 edn., Edward N. Zalta (ed.), at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/semiotics-medieval/>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>113</sup> Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, from *Sancti Augustini Opera*, W.M. Green (ed.) (1963), cited in Meier-Oeser, 'Medieval Semiotics'.

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provides a closer analysis of what constitutes language and linguistic meaning, with his four-fold structure offering an ‘ordo orandi’, order of speaking, where things precede their concepts, which are assigned spoken words as referents, followed by the written text, so signs refer to things by means of concepts and the written word is the system for recording this ‘semiotic triangle’<sup>114</sup>. The concept of ‘verbum mentis’, mental word, which begins in Boethius’ transmission of Aristotelian thought, is further developed by Anselm (1033–1109) in the *Monologion*. He sees mental words as being common to all human beings, with language being only the means whereby different groups give expression to the same words in their proper sense. Subsequently, Abelard would distinguish signs that simply signify (*signa significantia*) from those that carry meaning with the intention of the giver (*signa significativa*).<sup>115</sup>

The complex and changing landscape of the understanding and interpretation of signs in philosophy and the study of logic throughout the hundreds of years of development indicates more than anything how important language was considered to be as a tool and also as a vector for meaning at a deeper level,<sup>116</sup> in theology and in this area in the understanding of sacrament. It was vitally important to get it right, to establish precise definitions for the terms and ideas taken from scripture and especially from the patristic writings, in a genuine search for truth, based, nonetheless, on an assumption of faith in the existence of God, the divinity of Christ and the eternal nature of the Church. Few, indeed, were the scholastic doctors who began their investigation from first principles and the assumption of women’s inferiority was a very minor issue that merited little attention, and less questioning. Hence the basic premise that the weight of male authority automatically indicated superiority and the dominant position, of which the Sacrament of Orders was more an assertion of the existing state of nature rather than a calling and a gift bestowed by God. Hierarchy is not a matter of dominance or lordship for its own sake, but part of the natural order and inescapable. This is the place from which any study of the period begins, not from a retrojected perspective of twentieth and twenty-first century anthropology.

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<sup>114</sup> Meier-Oeser, ‘Medieval Semiotics’.

<sup>115</sup> For an account of the understanding of the ‘verbum mentis’ and the functions of memory and language in the early mediaeval period, see Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), especially Part III, The Beginnings of the Scholastic Understanding of Memory, pp. 229ff.

<sup>116</sup> Helpful papers from a seminar on mediaeval semiotics are found in Umberto Eco (ed.), *On the Medieval Theory of Signs* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1983), especially Eco’s essay on ‘Denotation’.

The sign of ordination involves power, authority and the representation of the male Christ. It is impossible for a woman to receive the sacrament because of her natural state of subjection, usually underpinned by Paul's instruction that women should not be allowed to teach in public, in the first letter to Timothy,<sup>117</sup> also quoted by Thomas. So even if a woman were to undergo the ritual of the sacrament, as already mentioned, it would be ineffective in her soul because there is no 'eminence of degree' (*eminentia gradus*) in the woman.<sup>118</sup> Unlike some other scholastics, Thomas does not add to his argument the fact that Christ appears to have chosen only men as apostles, relying on the intrinsic argument of women's natural inferiority to explain their unsuitability for orders.<sup>119</sup>

Nonetheless, even Aquinas himself argued later (*Summa Theologica*, 3) that the *in persona Christi* aspect of priesthood, specifically in respect of the confection of the Eucharist, involves the self-effacement of the priest himself, giving way, at the point of consecration, to Christ's own effective action at the altar, as these words are spoken: 'This is my body'. Dennis Ferrara argues for an unconventional interpretation of the apophatic nature of Aquinas' exploration of the term *in persona Christi*.<sup>120</sup> Ferrara denies the 'representationalism' of Aquinas' understanding, seeing it more in terms of 'the extent to which they point not to the priest's likeness to Christ, but to his *otherness from Christ*.'<sup>121</sup> He points out how Thomas defines the priestly power as being 'instrumental and ministerial' in nature. The instrumentality theorem specifies that there is no actual representation of Christ, hence, for instance, anyone may baptise in an emergency, even a woman.<sup>122</sup> Separating the power of the sacrament to bestow grace from the personal qualities of the minister was an important development in the Church's sacramental theology, so that the state of soul of the minister does not affect the efficacy of the sacrament on the recipient.<sup>123</sup> The priest is precisely that, 'only a minister, and his power is only objective', as Ferrara says.

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<sup>117</sup> 'A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent.' (1 Tim 11–12). The words 'in church' were added later by the scholastics to emphasise the point, but they appear in 1 Cor 14, where Paul says 'it is shameful for women to speak in the church'.

<sup>118</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, Bk IV, d. 25, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1.

<sup>119</sup> Dennis Michael Ferrara, 'Note: The Ordination of Women, Tradition and Meaning', *Theological Studies*, Vol. 55, 1994, p. 714.

<sup>120</sup> Ferrara, 'Representation or Self-Effacement?', p. 197.

<sup>121</sup> Ferrara, 'Representation or Self-Effacement?', p. 198.

<sup>122</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 3, q. 67, a. 4c.

<sup>123</sup> Ferrara, 'Representation or Self-Effacement?', p. 209: 'The whole aim of this separation is to affirm that Christ – Christ alone and not his minister – is the effective cause of grace in the sacraments. The unambiguous affirmation of this truth demands the rejection of the priest's personal qualities as pertinent to the sanctifying power of the sacrament.'

Hence, of all the sacraments, the Eucharist is the one in which the person of the priest effectively disappears, as we have noted, with the priest giving an historical account of the action and words of Christ at the Last Supper, rather than using his own voice. Throughout the Eucharistic prayers, the priest is speaking in the first person plural, using the present tense, in the person of the Church, the gathering of the people. Thomas goes into this at some length in the *Summa Theologica*.<sup>124</sup> At the words of consecration, however, this switches to the third person singular, as the narrative form takes over, and the words of Christ, spoken then in the first person singular and in the past tense, are part of the historical, reported narrative of events, so ‘in the precise act of uttering the words of Christ, the priest points away from himself and indicates Christ, the principle agent’.<sup>125</sup> Hence, Thomas appears to be showing how the priest, at this crucial point, does not in fact represent Christ, but rather – as Duns Scotus will later show – is speaking *in persona Ecclesiae*. Scotus considered the presider as representing Christ only as he consecrates the bread and wine, but he then represents the Church when he offers the body and blood of Christ afterwards.<sup>126</sup> The words of the priest here are used to indicate an anamnesis, recollecting the words of Christ at the Last Supper. As Scotus points out, the phrase ‘This is my body’ would not on its own cause the effect [of the Body of Christ being present on the altar under the form of bread], without the words leading up to them, the historical account, ‘... he broke the bread ... gave thanks, and said ...’.<sup>127</sup> Ferrara shows that this explanation has the virtue of giving better expression to Thomas’s thought than he did himself.<sup>128</sup> It is the words together with the sign ‘which constitute the form of the sacrament’. Still with reference to Aquinas, Ferrara shows how it is the words that matter precisely because they are the words of Christ (*ipsissima verba Christi*) and at that moment the priest is acting in obedience to the command of Christ, spoken in history. So, at that point, it is Christ ‘who is operative at this supreme moment in the Church’s life’.<sup>129</sup> This makes the Eucharist different from other sacraments as well in that, at this point, the priest

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<sup>124</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 3, q. 7.

<sup>125</sup> Ferrara, ‘Representation or Self-Effacement?’.

<sup>126</sup> Edward J. Kilmartin, ‘The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology’, *Theological Studies*, September 1994.

<sup>127</sup> Scotus, *Duns Scoti Opera Omnia Vol. 24: Reportata Parisiensia*, Luke Wadding (ed.) (Paris: Vivés, 1894), Bk 4, d. 8, q. 2, cited by Ferrara, ‘Representation or Self-Effacement?’ p. 209.

<sup>128</sup> Ferrara, ‘Representation or Self-Effacement?’ p. 209, ‘Scotus’s correcting precision on the form of the Eucharist enables us to grasp the meaning of the expression *in persona Christi* in a straightforward, natural and unrestrained manner – ever the sign of developed as opposed to still undifferentiated theory.’

<sup>129</sup> Ferrara, ‘Representation or Self-Effacement?’ p. 211.

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‘disappears’ and is subordinated to Christ. This is how Ferrara reads Thomas’s understanding of the instrumentality of the Eucharist:

... in the formal constitution of the sign, the priest’s role is not representational but apophatic: in the quotation of Christ’s words of institution by way of anamnesis, the ‘I’ of the priest steps aside in order to let the ‘I’ of Christ appear, the *persona* of the priestly narrator *gives way visibly* to the *persona* of Christ.<sup>130</sup>

Ferrara goes on to argue from this, convincingly, that the apophatic interpretation of *in persona Christi* is not only entirely in line with the Gospel identification of the function of apostle with the proclamation of the word, where a whole variety of individuals, men and women were nominated ‘apostle’ by Jesus during his ministry and by the first Christians after the Resurrection, but also forces us ‘to view the apostle, and hence the priest, not as Christ’s representation, but as his representative’, like John the Baptist, making way for one greater and pointing away from himself to Christ, acting as a path or stepping stone to Christ.<sup>131</sup> Hence, the gender of the individual priest would be immaterial in this case since the priestly function is not reducible to a merely visual or even physiological symbolism. This is not part of our argument here, but is indicative of the way that a closer examination of the mediaeval texts and their sources can lead in directions other than those traditionally assumed.

#### 4.b.ii.4 Deaconess

Some have said that the male sex is needed by virtue of a precept, but not by virtue of the sacrament: since the canons themselves mention the deaconess and the priestess. But the word deaconess is used of a woman who takes part in the action of the [male] deacon, such as she who reads the homily in the Church; while the term priestess refers to a widow, as the term priest [*presbyter*] also means an old person [*senior*].<sup>132</sup>

Aquinas notes that it has been said that the male sex is required according to the ‘precept’ (*praecepti*), but not from the need of the sacrament itself, because the canons themselves, as collected by Gratian, make mention of deaconesses (*diaconissa*) and female presbyters

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<sup>130</sup> Ferrara, ‘Representation or Self-Effacement?’. p. 213.

<sup>131</sup> Ferrara, ‘Representation or Self-Effacement?’. pp. 215–216.

<sup>132</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, Bk. IV, d. 25, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1: ‘Quidam autem dixerunt, quod sexus virilis est de necessitate praecepti, sed non de necessitate sacramenti: quia etiam in decretis fit mentio de diaconissa et presbytera. Sed diaconissa dicitur quae in aliquot actu diaconi participat, sicut quae legit homiliam in Ecclesia; presbytera autem dicitur vidua, quia presbyter idem est quod senior.’

(*presbytera*). The reference in Gratian's *Decretals* is to the age at which a woman may be ordained a deaconess.<sup>133</sup>

The term 'deaconess' itself, *diaconissa*, Aquinas says, is a woman who takes part in the action of the (male) deacon, such as a woman who may read the homily in the Church. This function was reserved for female communities, for the sake of decency, where a woman, the abbess, perhaps, might read a homily written by a priest, at a non-Eucharistic liturgy. It would also have included a woman who attended female catechumens during baptism. The Latin term *presbytera* means an elder, simply an older woman, and therefore can be considered synonymous with *vidua*, widow. However, women in the early Church who were given the position of leaders and elders in the communities were often married, serving along with their husbands, but their age is rarely if ever mentioned. Older women who were widowed and childless are specifically described in the writings of the early Church as being recipients of the care and charity of the community (1 Tim 4:3–10).<sup>134</sup> They are not, *per se*, also ministers or leaders in the churches. There was in some communities, however, an office of widows, women who after the death of their first husband, as the letter to Timothy specifies, chose not to remarry and devoted themselves to prayer and good works. These women had particular value in the Church as they could 'pray without ceasing'. They might have a special place in the assembly and in the early Church constituted an order within the clergy.<sup>135</sup> The women described as 'deaconesses' in the same section as male deacons, whether female deacons as such or simply wives of deacons is not clear, are to be of reputable character, just as the men are, 'temperate, faithful' (1 Tim 3:11).<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, causa 27, ch. 23, q. 1, in Friedberg, *Corpus Juris Canonici*, Vol. 1, col. 1055: 'No woman shall be consecrated as deaconess before she is 40 years old, and then only after careful examination.'

<sup>134</sup> 'Give proper care to those widows who are really in need.' As Roger Gryson says, 'elles n'apparaissent pas comme investies d'une fonction proprement dite ; elles ne font, semble-t-il, que laisser libre cours à l'élan d'une foi et d'une charité spontanées.' : Gryson, *Le ministère des femmes*, p. 33.

<sup>135</sup> Karen Jo Torjesen, 'The Early Christian *Orans*', in Kienzle and Walker, *Women Preachers and Prophets*, p. 48.

<sup>136</sup> 'Likewise, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.' Although in some translations this passage is considered as referring to the 'wives of deacons', there is no possessive form and therefore *gunaikas* is better translated as referring to women candidates for the function of 'deacon'. See R.E. Brown, A. Fitzmyer, R.E. Murphy (eds.), *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Vol. II (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), p. 354, where the further point is made that the addition of the term 'likewise' indicates a separate reference to women in addition to men exercising ecclesiastical functions.



The canon also goes on to reject completely the possibility of women being ordained in the same way as men<sup>137</sup> and this legal basis for the prohibition underpins the speculative arguments within the *Sentence* commentaries throughout the period. It seems as though, despite the carefully organised discussion of the subject, for the sake of thoroughness and the exhaustive treatment of all aspects of the sacrament, there is still no risk-taking here, no possibility that the idea of ordination for women could ever be accepted.

#### 4.b.ii.5 The Nature of the Female

Aquinas' discussion of the subject in his *Sentence Commentary* is relatively brief, mostly using the standard set of topics, as indicated here, to analyse the suitability of women for orders. In the *Summa Theologica*, he repeats the same text in his section on sacraments as in the *Sentence Commentary* but also goes into more detail elsewhere on the nature of the female in general, as regards both the sacraments and her general character, both biological and specifically human.<sup>138</sup>

In particular, Thomas stresses woman's inferiority to man, in terms of her intellectual capacity, and man being more like the image of God than woman in terms of perfection. He begins with the necessity of woman's creation, despite saying that, as is often quoted, 'woman is a defective male'. This only refers to the contemporary understanding of the way in which the sex of the foetus is determined, by a natural deviation from the norm (the male), caused by fluctuations in the humours, or even by the *ventis Australibus*, the moist southerly winds.<sup>139</sup> Woman is necessary for generation, for the production of offspring, although Thomas accepts the biological understanding of his time that the female womb is only a receptacle for the child, generated entirely by the male, planted in the woman like a seed in the earth. A more detailed study of the mediaeval view of generation and biological differences between men and women is given elsewhere in this thesis.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Gratian, *Decretum Gratiani*, Vol. 1, Part 2, causa XV, q. 3, Freidberg, *Corpus Juri Canonici*, cols. 750–751: 'May a woman lay an accusation against a priest? It seems not because as Pope Fabian says, neither complaint nor testimony may be raised against the priests of the Lord by those who do not have, and cannot have, the same status with them ... Women cannot, however, be promoted to the priesthood or even the diaconate and for this reason they may not raise a complaint or give testimony against priests in court.'

<sup>138</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part I, q. 92.

<sup>139</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part I, q. 92, a. 1, ad. 1.

<sup>140</sup> Chapter 6 on biology

It is clear from Aquinas' discussion of the generation of women,<sup>141</sup> that his attitude preserves the common understanding of male-as-norm, where the assumption is that man is the summit of creation and woman is an important ancillary to man's achievement of his purpose in God's plan, essentially for the propagation of the species, the stewardship of creation and the greater glory of God. Woman's role is as an incubator for the offspring and as the nurturer in the domestic sphere, subordinate to her master and husband.<sup>142</sup> In this he is reflecting the Aristotelian view of women's role, and the incapacity of women for 'headship'.<sup>143</sup>

#### 4.b.ii.6 Language in Aquinas

Despite the accusation sometimes levelled at Aquinas of being the source of much of the later defamation of woman, he does not, for instance, when discussing the generation of women, explicitly state that woman is less intelligent than man. There is a frequent mis-translation from Latin, caused by the common confusion of translating *homo* and *vir* as 'man' in English. While the two words can be conflated, there must be sound justification for not making the distinction in the text, especially if the two are used within one section or even one sentence, indicating the intention on the writer's part to make a difference in meaning. While considering woman as being created as the 'helpmate' to man for the purposes of generation and not for other works, since 'man can be helped better by other men than by women',<sup>144</sup> Aquinas then goes on to discuss the difference between human beings and animals, carefully making the distinction in Latin within the one sentence between 'man' and 'human being' (*vir/homo*) and he states that 'Homo autem adhuc ordinatur ad nobilioris operis vitae, quod est intelligere.'<sup>145</sup> This is sometimes translated as 'Man is ordered ...', when in fact it may be 'Human beings are ordered ...'. Further on, in discussing the hierarchy of the human family and the natural order of things, including the superior governing the subject for their own benefit and good, 'ad eorum utilitatem et bonum', Aquinas sees this as being a constitutive factor in the rational part of human nature, human superiority being bestowed by a God-given order and structure, enabling

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<sup>141</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part I, q. 92.

<sup>142</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part I, q. 92 'sed in adiutorium generationis'

<sup>143</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Male Clericalism and the Dread of Women' in *Women and Orders*, Robert J. Heyer (ed.) (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1974), pp. 1–13: '...[according to Aquinas] women (and serfs) could not be ordained because they lack the "eminence" required to incarnate leadership. Lacking full rationality, they cannot represent the divine Logos (Christ). For the same reason their natures are incapable of receiving the "sign" of ordination.'

<sup>144</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, q. 92, a. 1, co.

<sup>145</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, q. 92, a. 2, ad. 3.

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humanity to fulfil its potential – more to do with humanity’s responsibility towards creation than man’s subjection of woman. ‘Et sic ex tali subiectione naturaliter femina subiecta est viro, quia naturaliter in homine magis abundat discretio rationis.’<sup>146</sup>

It is worth revisiting the often-discussed phrase Thomas uses in the *Summa Theologiae*, Part 1a, question 92, referring to woman as ‘mas occasionatus’. This phrase has been translated in various ways, but is often rendered as ‘defective male’. Other translations, specifically the Blackfriars version quoted by Allen,<sup>147</sup> use the French word *manqué* in the English text, with its implication of ‘unfinished’, ‘incomplete’. The term had been translated by Michael Scot (1175–1232), from the Greek *peperomenon*, as *occasionatem*, meaning ‘occasioned’ or ‘anomalous’. The alternative translation, by William of Moerbeke, not used by Thomas, was *orbatus*, which has the meaning of deprived, lacking (hence the *manqué*) and, later on, much more derogatory terms were used, ‘deformed’, ‘malformed’ and so on. The subject has been covered thoroughly by Michael Nolan who points out the multiple layers of translation that intervene between Aristotle and Aquinas, which have introduced possible misunderstandings into the interpretations of the text over the centuries. Nonetheless, he agrees with Aquinas in using *occasionatus*, asserting that it is the process of generation that is being described, not its result (the child), and no judgement is being made as to the value of the female herself, or the part she plays in conception.<sup>148</sup> Prudence Allen agrees that, in Aristotle and Aquinas, there is no value judgement expressed about the relative worth or status of women and men in terms of their biology but, nonetheless, she shows that, again, the translation of a sentence can demonstrate a different picture and the choice of the final term may be best made by a consideration of the author’s general attitude towards the subject in question. It remains true to say that Aquinas believed woman’s natural state to be inferior to and subordinate to that of man.<sup>149</sup> The natural subordination of woman is balanced with Aquinas’ theology of grace through baptism. He rejected the idea that there will be no women after the Resurrection: that all would be made perfect as men. In the *Summa contra Gentiles*,<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, q. 91, a.1, ad. 2, can be translated therefore as: ‘Hence, a woman is naturally subject to a man in this kind of subjection, since in human beings there is greater rational discernment.’ The distinction between *vir* and *homo* in this sentence is often not made. Either way it is somewhat confusing. See, for example, the translation by Edmund Hill, O.P. (Cambridge: CUP, 1963).

<sup>147</sup> Cambridge: CUP, republished 2007 onwards.

<sup>148</sup> Michael Nolan, ‘The Defective Male: What Aquinas Really Said’, *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 75, No. 880, March 1994, pp.156–166.

<sup>149</sup> Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1, p. 134.

<sup>150</sup> Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Bk IV, ch. 88, para. 3, Charles J. O’Neil (tr.) (New York: Hanover House, 1957), available at <http://www.dhspriory.org>, last accessed August 2014: ‘Non enim est infirmitas per recessum a natura, sed a natura intenta. Et ipsa etiam naturae distinctio in hominibus perfectionem naturae

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Thomas explained that the feminine sex, being part of the perfection of nature, will be present after the Resurrection. Women's frailty is part of the intention of nature, not a deficiency of nature, expressive of the perfection of divine wisdom.

##### 4.b.ii.7 Conclusion on Thomas Aquinas

It is important to give due recognition to Thomas's real efforts to combine his understanding and acceptance of Aristotelian metaphysics with his Christian viewpoint of the essential goodness and perfection of God's creation. Thomas was never extreme in his views, unlike some of his contemporaries. Given this, it is unfortunate that he was sometimes misinterpreted in later centuries, his authority in particular being used to justify certain attitudes towards women that are not borne out by a closer study of his writing and knowledge of its roots and motivations. This can nuance the tone of later scholars, enhancing the ever-present male-as-norm attitude with a weight of opinion that is somewhat exaggerated.

Thomas's own influences, from the Greek philosophers through to his own teacher, Albert, were many and varied. His powerful intellect achieved the synthesis that so many were striving for, of the philosophy of Aristotle, translated during preceding centuries and up to his own lifetime, and absorbed into the university curriculum, with Christian doctrine.

The overwhelming dominance of Thomism and of the reputation of Thomas that prevailed from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century tends to obscure the fact that, for the centuries following his death, it was 'only a unit, and at times a small unit, in the European pattern of thought'.<sup>151</sup> It was not until Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in 1879, calling for the revival of the study of Thomas Aquinas, that his influence began to be felt much more widely, until it became all-pervasive within Catholic theology and doctrine for the next hundred years.

In terms of its effect on the matter of the suitability of women for ordination, it is Aquinas' adoption of Augustinian and Greek attitudes towards the nature of women, the hierarchical model of the ecclesial structure and, in particular, the 'defective' female form that have

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demonstrabit et divinam sapientiam, omnia cum quodam ordine disponentem'. Again, the words *in hominibus* here refers to human beings, not men. The 'distinction of nature' is the differentiation of sex.

<sup>151</sup> David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (London: Longman, 1962), p. 267.

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underpinned arguments against women's ordination, even if these have not been used overtly. His status being what it is, the assumption of female inferiority by such a teacher means that it is rarely questioned. It becomes the starting point for the discussion, rather than part of the debate itself. In some respects, however, as has been noted, this is somewhat unfair on Thomas who, while working in the context of the assumptions and understanding of his own time, also had a fair and relatively unprejudiced view of the equality of men and women within the marriage relationship and of the value of the female within the created order.

##### 4.b.iii *John Duns Scotus*

John Duns Scotus, the 'Scot', was born in the village of Duns on the Scottish–English border, from where his family adopted its name. He was probably born in late 1265 or early 1266 because he was ordained a priest twenty-five years later, at Saint Andrew's Priory in Northampton on 17 March 1291, as a Franciscan. The speculation about Scotus's early life is intense, but fairly fruitless, with little or no documented evidence about him until he graduated from Oxford and then began to teach in Paris. He seems to have begun to study in Oxford in October 1288 and finished June 1301. His *Commentary on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard appeared in 1298–1299, and by 1302 he was lecturing on the *Sentences* in Paris. During the Paris dispute between the Church and Philip IV of France in June 1303, Scotus was expelled from France with the other Franciscans from the university and he completed the course of lectures in 1304 after the friars returned to the city. Later that year, he was appointed Franciscan Regent Master in theology at Paris. Subsequently, he travelled to teach in Cologne late in 1307, where he died the following year.

Despite this paucity of information about his life, Scotus was soon recognised as one of the most original and powerful thinkers of his generation. His reputation has remained high ever since, both in theology and in philosophy, his primary field of study. Perhaps because of his early death, he never completed the process of editing his own writings and much of what he left behind remained in the form of lecture notes taken down by students, the *Reportatae* from both Oxford and Paris. His principle works are therefore the *Opus Oxoniense*, his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*; *Quaestiones Subtilissimae in Metaphysicam Aristotelis*; *Reportata Parisiensia*, which contains new notations on his commentary on the *Sentences*; *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, which contains twenty-one questions, and *De Primo Principio*, which contains a profound exposition of

his understanding of the nature of God. The two sets of commentaries on Lombard were combined by Luke Wadding in the seventeenth century and this version was then edited and published in Paris by Ludwig Vivès, becoming the most commonly used text of Scotus' *Commentary on the Sentences*. The extant modern edition is that from the Vatican,<sup>152</sup> a dozen volumes available so far.

4.b.iii.1 Scotus on the *Sentences*

Unlike most others dealing with this issue in their commentaries on the *Sentences*, Scotus combined the two prohibitions on the female sex and youthful age in dealing with suitability for orders. He covered the same headings for both, but used the exclusion of young males from orders perhaps to highlight the differences between male and female suitability. Having in the first part set out the reasons why youth or the female sex may not impede reception of orders, he went on to say why the prohibition should apply.<sup>153</sup> Thus, a boy beneath the age of discretion is unable to receive all grades of orders 'properly and decently' (*debite et honeste*) and he cannot receive Holy Orders licitly (*licite*) because the Church rules against it. A woman, however, cannot receive any orders for the first two reasons, but also *de facto*, not in any way at all, because her sex precludes her. The boy could receive orders, while still a juvenile, but then actualise the sacrament once he reaches his majority.<sup>154</sup> The word Scotus used here, *gradus*, is important, as we will see, in referring to what is appropriate for orders. Scotus also added that Christ, not the Church, instituted this final prohibition on women.<sup>155</sup>

Scotus's arguments specifically for and against the ordination of women are based on the same points as those of Bonaventure and Aquinas but his counterarguments are more nuanced. He used Galatians 3 and the arguments from the canons respectively to show that there are no distinctions in sex in Christian society and that women have been ordained as presbyters and deaconesses in the past (Galatians 3:28: 'In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female ...'); and the passage from Gratian's *Decretum* that sets the minimum age

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<sup>152</sup> *Opera Omnia*, Scotistic Commission (ed.) (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950–), 21 volumes prepared to date (2014).

<sup>153</sup> Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia*, Bk IV, d. 25, q. 2.

<sup>154</sup> 'quia aliquis potest suscipere gradus, vel characterem vel potestatem Ordinis, antequam exequatur actum illius Ordinis ...' [someone can receive the status or character or power of Orders, before he executes the act of that Order ...], Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia*, Bk IV, d. 25, q. 2.

<sup>155</sup> Philip Lyndon Reynolds, 'Scholastic Theology and Women's Ordination', *Heythrop Journal*, Vol. 36, 1995, pp. 249–285.

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for women to be ordained deacon, *diaconissa*, as forty<sup>156</sup>). Opposing that, Scotus said that the *Decretum* contains prohibitions against women handling sacred vessels (the ps.-Soter text) and the argument from tonsure used widely elsewhere, that the tonsure is necessary for ordination, but for woman her hair is her glory and therefore she cannot be tonsured.<sup>157</sup> When setting out the three reasons why women (and boys) cannot be ordained, he did not address the source of precepts (*praecepti*) for the prohibition of particular groups receiving orders. Instead, he asked where the prohibition itself comes from. This distinguishes his treatment from that of Bonaventure and Thomas, both of whom considered why women themselves are unsuitable to receive orders but did not ask where the idea came from in the first place. Scotus distinguished between reasons that come from the precepts of the Church (hence the inclusion of minors in the argument, as boys are banned from receiving orders only by virtue of their age and not their sex) and reasons that originate with Christ himself. His assumption was that the *de facto* ban on women's ordination must come from Christ, and not just from the Church, and therefore is an essential part of the institution of orders.<sup>158</sup>

##### 4.b.iii.2 Scotus on Justice

When it comes to his own response to the question of the argument from sex, Scotus began by reiterating the statement that, simply by virtue of being female, women are excluded from orders, 'sexus muliebris simpliciter', but he asserted that this is first from precept, the rule of the Church, *de facto*, that it has just never been done, that Christ did not institute women as priests, and also 'ex honestate', that it is not honourable or decent for women to minister in this sacrament. By this he seemed to be referring to the Pauline strictures used so often in these arguments, that women should be silent in the churches, that they should not presume to teach in public and so on.

Scotus had to find a reasonable argument to explain what he saw before him as established practice and therefore he produced his argument from justice, which appears to originate with him and is not found in earlier texts.<sup>159</sup> It was almost an afterthought, but he went on to develop the idea briefly and it was then taken up and used by later writers, as the idea of

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<sup>156</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, ch. 1, d. 27, q. 1.

<sup>157</sup> Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia*, Bk IV, d. 25, q. 2.

<sup>158</sup> Reynolds, 'Scholastic Theology', p. 265.

<sup>159</sup> J.H. Martin, 'The Injustice of Not Ordaining Women: A Problem for Mediaeval Theologians', *Theological Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 1987, pp. 303–316.

the sacrament of orders as being a personal gift to the priest took hold and its function as service for the community became less prominent.<sup>160</sup>

Scotus said:

Because I do not believe that by the institution of the Church or precept of the Apostles any person, let alone a whole sex in life, was deprived of any status useful for their salvation. If therefore neither the Apostles nor the Church could not rightly remove from any one person any status useful for their salvation, let alone the whole female sex, unless that were the intention of Christ their head; then it must be Christ who instituted the sacrament laid it down from the first.<sup>161</sup>

Scotus did not thereby consider that the Sacrament of Orders, like other sacraments, was ineffective in achieving the salvation of those who receive it. What he seems to be saying is that, despite the fact that the Sacrament of Orders does in fact assist towards salvation in individuals, the unsuitability of woman, for the reasons he went on to discuss, is an overriding obstacle and that Christ did not ordain women because of this, the obstacles to her suitability being so great. Therefore, for a female, even the benefits of this sacrament, great as they are for the recipient and those to whom she would minister, are not enough to overcome her natural deficiencies. Scotus was the first to see that there is an apparent injustice in refusing orders to women. For him, as a product of his own time, the arguments against women's suitability were entirely acceptable and consistent, even though later generations may gradually have eliminated them. Nonetheless, he had to fall back on an assumption that it was Christ himself who must have decided not to ordain women. In other words, it is God's will, and therefore unarguable, that women should not be accepted as ministers. His distinguished predecessors, Bonaventure and Aquinas, did not in fact use the historical argument in their consideration of this point, considering it sufficient to show that women are naturally inadequate for ordination and that the Church had always forbidden it. Scotus was not himself satisfied with this because he could not see the justification for it and he therefore ultimately had to appeal to the will of Christ as the final arbiter.

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<sup>160</sup> Martin, 'The Injustice': 'here is a tendency to see holy orders as a grace (a gift) which can be directed toward one's personal salvation ... Perhaps this was logically inevitable when the minister was no longer seen as a symbolic figure whose service was essentially a public, sacramental representation ... The fact that orders is given to someone to serve the Church is never denied, of course, but its ecclesial purpose came to be further overshadowed. When ordination becomes a grace which is personal, it also becomes something which can be desired for quite private reasons.' page 311.

<sup>161</sup> Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia*, Bk IV, d. 25, q. 2: 'Quia non credo quod ex instituto Ecclesiae, vel praecepto Apostolorum fuit ablatus aliquis gradus utilis ad salutem ab aliqua persona, et multo magis a toto sexu in vita. Si ergo Apostoli vel Ecclesia non possent juste auferre ab aliqua persona aliquem gradum utilem suae saluti, nisi ubi Christus, qui est caput eorum, instituit auferri, multo magis nec a toto sexu muliebri; ergo Christus tantum praecepit hoc primo, qui hoc sacramentum instituit.'



Still, having made this point, he continued by showing that the prohibition is also consistent with the natural state of things. The assumption in his argument is that it must be just, even though this is hidden from us, because it was so determined by Christ and therefore must be good.<sup>162</sup> Scotus appeared to believe that, of itself, ordination could contribute to salvation for the recipient or those with whom he or she comes into contact. He did not explain why this might be so but it is possible that it relates to the changing view of the sacrament, as being effective for the recipient, in the same way as the sacraments of baptism or confirmation are, rather than only functioning as a means of marking out an individual for service to others.

This change would become more explicit in the next hundred years or so across Europe. Prior to the mediaeval period, as Gary Macy explains, the various orders of ministry were treated separately and not as stages on a path to priesthood. Thus, the lower orders, lector, doorkeeper, acolyte and so on, were treated as individual offices and their holder may or may not progress to the higher roles. These in turn, deacon, priest and bishop, were considered as separate vocations, not necessarily linked.<sup>163</sup> Yves Congar points out that, in the early church, ordination was coupled with election; an individual would be selected by his (or her) community for ordination to a particular role. The Council of Chalcedon, Congar notes, even stated that ordination without appointment to ministry was *irritum*, a word Congar prefers to translate as ‘null and void’, or ‘non-existent’, to the point that it is not recognised by the Church.<sup>164</sup> As time went on, however, this situation changed and, increasingly, the sacrament of orders was given to the individual and the word ordination applied to the rite of the sacrament only. To some extent, this was because of its treatment by Lombard and the scholastic commentators, who discussed orders as a sacrament pertaining to the individual, rather than the church as a whole. This point was outlined by Edward Schillebeeckx, in his book on ministry, locating the change with the third and fourth Lateran Councils.<sup>165</sup> In his view, it was the greater influence of Roman law and the need for greater legislation in an increasingly complex society, including the church, that

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<sup>162</sup> J.H. Martin, ‘The Ordination of Women’, p. 80: ‘These arguments do not try to show why Christ had to act as he did – that would be to attempt to examine the absolute power of God which is beyond human analysis; they simply suggest why the Divine choice was not inappropriate.’

<sup>163</sup> Gary Macy, *The Hidden History*, p. 26.

<sup>164</sup> Y. Congar, ‘Note sur une valeur des termes “*Ordinare, Ordinatio*”’, *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, Vol. 58, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 1984, p. 14: ‘Nous pensons que la question n’est pas close. Il nous semble que l’expression signifie souvent “non reçu, non reconnu dans (par) l’Eglise”, et ainsi, “sans valeur”.’

<sup>165</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1981), p. 52.

imposed the requirement for definition of the sacraments and, thus, a more focused and restricted set of qualifications for ordination, with the exclusions that the commentators discuss, including that of sex. More attention is given to this point in Chapter 7 on language.

#### 4.b.iii.3 Nature and Authority

In the *Reportata Parisiensia*, Scotus expanded slightly on the points raised in the earlier Oxford commentary. He firmly stated that it is illogical to exclude women from one sacrament only, ‘it is thus clear *logically* that all can be equally administered to women just as to men’.<sup>166</sup> The fact that women are excluded must indicate another reason and, in his reply to the objection, Scotus uses the argument of consonance with nature – women are not permitted to hold a degree (*gradus*) of eminence because of their natural state of subjection.

Scotus mentions that the woman’s punishment for disobedience in Genesis (3:16) is to be ‘under the rule and power of the man’.<sup>167</sup> The subject of Eve’s role in the Fall and the various interpretations of the Genesis text will be discussed elsewhere in this thesis.<sup>168</sup> Scotus is using the Vulgate translation which follows a different text to the Masoretic and Septuagint texts.<sup>169</sup> These include the phrase ‘your desire/submission shall be to your husband’, depending on the translation, and omit the double imposition of the man’s power.

In fact, however, unlike others of the commentators, Scotus did not directly link Eve’s subordinate position to her disobedience but placed it before the Fall, saying that it is a state of nature, not the result of sin, ‘mulier vero respectu viri naturalem subjectionem habet’. His analysis is that, since Christ did not include women among those he ordained, the Twelve, therefore neither does the Church, and Scotus argued that this is because of woman’s incapacity, ‘non est material capax’, or unworthiness for the sacrament by nature, not because of her sinfulness. This argument is used frequently by other commentators, but

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<sup>166</sup> Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia*, Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2, : ‘patet inductive in omnibus per id, quia aequae possunt ministrari mulieribus sicut viris’.

<sup>167</sup> Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia*, Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2. ‘unde post peccatum subiecit eam Dominus dominio et potestati viri.’ The text in the Vulgate says: ‘sub viri potestate eris, et ipse dominabitur tui’.

<sup>168</sup> See Chapter 5 on scripture.

<sup>169</sup> Masoretic text available at <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0103.htm>, last accessed August 2014; Septuagint at <http://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/physis/septuagint-genesis/3.asp?pg=2>, last accessed August 2014, both in parallel texts.

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is more often linked with the sin of Eve. Scotus goes on to say that, even if a bishop authorised to ordain did in fact ordain a woman, the sacrament would be ineffective because God's authority has decided that only the male sex is suitable to receive the Sacrament of Orders.<sup>170</sup> During the early Middle Ages, women frequently did hold power in a religious context as abbesses and superiors of female communities, and even as heads of double monasteries, until this practice was banned by successive popes. It seems clear that appointment to such positions was often accompanied by an ordination rite equivalent to that of any other clergy, with blessing and laying on of hands by a bishop.<sup>171</sup> Widows of wealthy lords would often found or join women's monasteries and become abbesses, wielding both spiritual and secular power by virtue of birth and wealth as well as by ordination. Such women would often be both saintly and astute managers of large communities and estates, negotiating with other landowners and business contacts, as well as with the Church authorities, bishops and even the Pope.<sup>172</sup> There are also traditional stories of individual women being consecrated bishop, with scanty evidence from inscriptions on tombs or in hagiographical manuscripts, such as the Life of Brigid, in which the saint is consecrated as bishop by accident, so to speak, and by an act of God.<sup>173</sup> According to the canon law of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, even if a woman were to be ordained, the act would have been ineffective, as Scotus says. This is in response to the Aristotelian objection that, if cause and effect are of the same species, the same cause should produce the same effect in every member of that species, so, for instance, a human being will always produce another human being.<sup>174</sup> Therefore, in this respect, the act of ordination by a bishop could produce the same effect (priesthood) in a woman as well as a man, even if this is illicitly done. Scotus replies to this by saying that, although this applies in the natural world ('est vera de agente naturali'), in this case the bishop is the agent of God and God chooses to act, he is not constrained in any way. Therefore, as God has chosen (through Christ) not to ordain women, even if a bishop were then to go through the rite of ordination on a woman, it would have no effect ('nihil faceret'). It is God who is the main agent in this case (*principaliter*). God has imposed the condition of dependency on

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<sup>170</sup> Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensia*, Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2 'et non impeditus ex conditione sexus, cujus modi est masculus specie humanae tantum.'

<sup>171</sup> Macy, *The Hidden History*, p. 81.

<sup>172</sup> J. Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), p. 191.

<sup>173</sup> G. Macy, 'Women of the Middle Ages', in Richard Miller (ed.), *Women and the Shaping of Catholicism*. (Missouri: Liguori, 2009), pp. 59ff.

<sup>174</sup> Martin, 'The Ordination of Women', p. 82.

sex for imposition of the sacrament of orders and' therefore' 'conveniens, et non impeditus ex conditione sexus, cujusmodi est masculus specie humanae tantum'.<sup>175</sup>

#### 4.b.iii.4 Teaching and Preaching

After a discussion of the role of Mary Magdalene, which we will consider in Chapter 5 on Scripture, Scotus moves on to the familiar argument that women cannot be allowed to teach or lead men. Like his predecessors, he uses the teaching of Paul and the arguments from the precedent of Eve and the Genesis story to explain why women are inferior, intellectually and in terms of eminence, to men. Even Christ himself, despite the preference he shows for individual women, could not seek to change a divinely instituted law. Scotus also notes that, despite her unique pre-eminence, Christ did not ordain his holy mother. In his view, the prohibition on women's ordination starts from Christ and all other decrees or instructions are just added to his teaching: 'Therefore, whatever is added from the Decrees [of Church law] or precepts of Paul, for excluding women from receiving [Holy] Orders, are nothing else but supplements to Christ's teaching about this, or rather expressions of it ...'.<sup>176</sup>

The early Church Fathers were generally categorical in their denial of a teaching and preaching role to women, basing their arguments mainly on the Pauline writings, in 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12. In turn, the latter passage ascribes women's subordination to men as part of her punishment for the Fall (Gen 2–3). These three scripture texts are found repeatedly quoted throughout the centuries as justification for the exclusion of women, not just from priesthood, but from any position of authority in the Church over men.

Further interpretations include the instability of women's emotions, their unteachability, their tone of voice and the fact that they arouse lust in male onlookers. St John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) was noted for his censure of women, a frequent subject in his popular homilies. On the letter of Paul to Timothy, he sees women's silence as necessary, not simply because of their incapacity but also as a sign of their submission to men. Man's prior creation gives him precedence over woman and Eve's greater guilt means that man is her lord and master, using the same text from the third chapter of Genesis,

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<sup>175</sup> Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensa*, Bk 4, d. 24, q. 2.

<sup>176</sup> Scotus, *Reportata Parisiensa*, Bk 4, d. 24, q. 2: 'Unde quidquid additur ex Decretis, vel praeceptis Pauli, ad excludendum mulieres ab Ordinibus suscipiendis, non sunt nisi quaedam suppletiones, vel potius expressiones praecepti Christi de hoc.'

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The woman taught the man once and made him guilty of disobedience, and ruined everything. Therefore because she made bad use of her power over the man, or rather her equality with him, God made her subject to her husband. 'Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you'.<sup>177</sup>

Scotus notes that Paul's prohibition on women's teaching is consonant with natural law and points out that it is the weakness of women's intellect and their unstable emotions that make them unsuitable as teachers and preachers. The assumption seems to be that Christ himself excludes them from ordination because of their inferiority, despite Scotus' acknowledgement that all are equal in Christ, in respect of the life to come, 'salutem et vitam aeternam'. It is therefore a four-fold prohibition: women cannot be ordained because it is not appropriate for them to be ordained, because the church and the apostles forbid it and because Christ commanded it, and also because it is part of the order of nature – women were created subordinate to men.

The role of the priest is primarily that of teaching and preaching. Notice that for Scotus, there is no mention of the signification here of the *in persona Christi* type used by Bonaventure and Aquinas, where only the male is able to represent Christ at the Eucharist, and a woman, by virtue of her sex, is inappropriate in this role. He only mentions this once,<sup>178</sup> despite its centrality in many other scholars' views on this subject. For Scotus it was women's perceived intellectual deficiency and natural subjection that make it impossible for them to hold a position of pre-eminence over a man. It is Christ himself who decides what is necessary for receiving any particular sacrament, from the substances involved (water, oil, etc.) to the conditions applicable (sickness, conjugality, male or female sex) and these conditions and substances must be appropriate in nature (water washes away sin, for instance, and a man and a woman together celebrate matrimony). In addition, the fact that the Sacrament of Orders is primarily intended for teaching and preaching means that the person receiving it must be capable of fulfilling this role and woman are not so suited.<sup>179</sup> Once again, it is the mediaeval sense that women are by nature physically weaker and intellectually imperfect, compared to men, that is the basis for excluding them from the Sacrament of Orders.

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<sup>177</sup> From *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom on the Epistles of St Paul to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, J.H. Parker (ed.) (Oxford: 1843), Homily IX, quoted in Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 58.

<sup>178</sup> Scotus *Reportata Parisiensis*, Bk 4, d. 24, q. 2: 'mulier vero respecto viro naturalem subjectionem habet'.

<sup>179</sup> See P.L. Reynolds, 'Scholastic Theology'.

4.b.iii.5 Conclusion on Scotus

Scotus initially has recourse to the canons to demonstrate that women cannot be ordained, and then reflects on reasons why this may be so. His argument invoking justice seems to show his uneasiness at the exclusion of women, given his assumption that all the sacraments contribute to the salvation of those who receive them. His use of exemplary women (Mary Magdalene and Mary of Nazareth) as proving the exception and his assertion of women's intellectual incapacity as the primary argument against their suitability show his somewhat different attitude both to the theology of the sacrament and to its primary purpose. The Eucharistic institution is not a primary function of the ordained minister for Scotus the teacher.<sup>180</sup> Hence, it is the superiority of the male character and mind that is the prerequisite for orders, the sacrament of preaching and teaching. And in the end, for Scotus, there is only the will of God, and the choice of Christ, to exclude women from orders. He does not mention the Fall, nor repeat any of the objections referring to the symbolism of the male sex in representing Christ. He only briefly mentions the ban on women touching sacred vessels or the requirement for the tonsure. As a logician, he does not attempt to reconstruct arguments on this basis. It is only the natural order, instituted by God, which gives the man authority over the woman. Unlike many of his contemporaries, there is a sense of unease in Scotus, as if he can only submit to God's will in an issue that he himself finds unproven at the least, and in human terms, perhaps even unjust.

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<sup>180</sup> P.L. Reynolds, 'Scholastic Theology', n. 60: 'Resp. (9:784b): "*Omnis Ordo recipitur in ordine ad Sacerdotium, et doctrinam: Sacerdotibus autem competit principaliter docere.*" Where Bonaventure emphasises the representation of Christ and sacramental mediation, Scotus emphasises teaching.'

## 5. The Argument from Scripture

### 5.a *Introduction*

Argument from Scripture is used in much of the polemic on women's ordination.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, less is made of the actual Gospel material than of the Old Testament and the writings attributed to Paul, although the current official opinion within the Catholic Church on the unsuitability of women for ordination is that the choice made by Jesus of male disciples as leaders, as 'the Twelve', is the defining factor for maintaining the ban on women priests.<sup>2</sup> In the scholastic material itself, where reference is made to Christ himself in the commentaries on Book IV of the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, which this thesis is examining, it is usually only with the brief comment that 'Christ did not ordain women'. John Duns Scotus, for instance, as is mentioned here in the section devoted to his writings, after noting this fact, decided that all we can do is trust to the will of Christ who, if he did not ordain women, not even his most Holy Mother, must have had a good reason for it, and the argument ends there.

Nonetheless, the fact that Christ surrounded himself with women, that Mary Magdalene was the first witness to the Resurrection and believed even when the Apostles thought her mad, or that women stayed with Jesus to the end while the men fled, is perhaps why little reference is made to the Gospels. Suzanne Tunc identifies the inconsistencies and partialities in the use of the Biblical texts, where the second Genesis account, as we will see, is preferred over the first, or where Paul, despite proclaiming the equality of the sexes, also reinforced the hierarchy of 'Christ/man/woman' in parallel with 'God/Christ/man' (1 Cor 11).<sup>3</sup> Paul was explicit in his prohibitions on women's behaviour and the Old Testament abounds with salutary examples of the perfidy and unreliability of women so that, for the scholastic writers, these were much more reliable as sources of support from scripture when explaining why women have to be excluded from positions of responsibility and seniority in the church.

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<sup>1</sup> See Benedict M. Ashley, *Justice in the Church* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), who argues that the masculine imagery for God arises from the revelation of God's nature to the Hebrews, For the Anglican point of view, a good collection of essays is given by Michael Watts in *Through a Glass Darkly: A Crisis Considered* (Leominster: Gracewing Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, para. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Suzanne Tunc, *Des femmes aussi suivaient Jésus, Essai d'interprétation de quelques versets des évangiles*, (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1998), pp. 139ff.

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The scholastics took some pains to explain in detail why particular women may have been singled out for positions of authority, as, for instance, when they discussed the role of Deborah, one of the judges of Israel,<sup>4</sup> or the clearly exalted status accorded to Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalen. Deborah was appointed to shame the men,<sup>5</sup> who were proving to be weak and unresponsive to God's call to leadership. Mary of Nazareth was the necessary perfect vessel for the birth of the God-man and Mary Magdalene is an exception, in the words of Scotus: 'And if you argue about Magdalene, who was an Apostle and a preacher, and placed over all women sinners, I answer that she was a unique woman, and uniquely accepted by Christ, and such personal privilege follows a person, and is extinguished with that person.'<sup>6</sup>

In the first place, it was the Genesis account of the creation of human beings which proved very fruitful in terms of material for explaining and justifying women's exclusion from the Sacrament of Orders. In fact, at this period, the second account of the creation of man and woman was used exclusively. The first account in Chapter 1 of Genesis, sometimes known as the 'Priestly' version, where the two sexes were formed at the same time by God, with no details as to the method of creation, was generally ignored by the medieval teachers.<sup>7</sup>

It is worth looking at the two accounts in some detail, to consider the background to the use of the Genesis account in the argument about ordination for women in the Middle Ages and beyond.

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<sup>4</sup> 'And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.' (Judges 4:4–5)

<sup>5</sup> Henry of Ghent, *Summae Quaestionum Ordinarium Theologi*: 'Grace was granted to such women publicly to prophesy in the Old Testament as a reproach to males because they had become effeminate not unlike public rule over men was allowed to women', quoted in J.H. Martin, O.P., 'The Ordination of Women and the Theologians in the Middle Ages', *Escritos del Vedat*, Vol. 16, 1986, pp. 87–143, here pp. 87–90.

<sup>6</sup> *Duns Scoti Opera Omnia*, Vol. 24, *Reportata Parisiensia*, Luke Wadding (ed.) (Paris: Vivés 1894), Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2, pp. 367–371.

<sup>7</sup> I do not attempt to assert one particular version of the authorship of the Pentateuch over another, although it is often stated that the two stories of the creation of human beings in Genesis come from different traditions and have been redacted by different editors or groups of editors. For a recent analysis of the so-called documentary hypothesis, see Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*, Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).



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### 5.b Genesis 1:26–28

The first story comes in Chapter 1 of Genesis, verses 26–28, with a succinct account of the creation of human beings: ‘God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.’ These verses, telling of the creation of human beings, form the apex of the structure built up in the preceding text, day after day, a great climax to the work of creation with the appearance of this extraordinary creature, a duplex, communitarian entity to whom God gives ‘dominion’ or ‘stewardship’ of the rest of the created order. At this stage of creation, God has simply spoken the Word that brings into being each part of creation: the framework in the first three days; the population of living things, animals and plants in the second three days. God does nothing physical, he simply says the Word, and something happens each time. So language, words from the mouth of God, is the source of all that is good.

The creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God involves the sexual distinctiveness of male and female, creating a community, a pairing of mutual interdependence and love, which reflects and is like God.<sup>8</sup> Unlike other ancient near-Eastern mythologies, the God of the Hebrews is not sexually active: the divine creative force acts by power and word, not by means of copulation, as the fertility cults expressed it.<sup>9</sup> The distinction between the sexes is fundamental to the original intention of God in the creation of human beings.<sup>10</sup> ‘From the beginning, humankind exists as two creatures, not as one creature with double sex.’<sup>11</sup> At this point, the human beings do not have names, they are simply *ha’adam*, humans, male and female, not yet Adam and Eve. (It is important to remember that the term ‘*adam*’ used in the Hebrew Bible does not mean ‘man’. Like the Latin *homo*, it refers only to ‘human beings’. As Richard Davidson clearly explains: ‘The problem is a modern language translation issue, not an aspect of the Hebrew text.’<sup>12</sup>) The Genesis 1 account shows no hierarchical difference between male and female; they are paired equally as the culmination of the creative act, sharing the task of stewardship over

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<sup>8</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 60: ‘The idea of man, according to P [the priestly writer] finds its full meaning, not in the male alone, but in man and woman.’

<sup>9</sup> E.g., the Enuma Elish, the Egyptian stories, see J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *ANET (Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, 3rd edn.).

<sup>10</sup> Richard M. Davidson, ‘The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1–2’, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Spring 1988, pp. 5–21.

<sup>11</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (London: SCM, 1978), p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), p. 23.

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creation granted by God and in the work of procreation of their own species.<sup>13</sup> What is more, they are a unity: one does not exist without the other or, in this case, before the other. This leads to an understanding of the necessary relationship between the sexes. They make a whole, while also having separate identities, but they need each other. The sexual difference is intended by God for relationship between male and female.

Davidson sees the terms ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ in the Hebrew as being reinforcing terms one for the other, but also describing the ‘concrete and abstract’ aspects of the human being, the physical entity and the spiritual component of the person together forming the *imago Dei*.<sup>14</sup> Tribble, however, makes it clear that, while the physicality of male and female is necessary for human beings, its relevance to God is as a metaphor for the mystery of the communion within God, thus emphasising the transcendent otherness of the deity, ‘neither male nor female, nor a combination of the two’.<sup>15</sup> The role of metaphor in theological language is discussed elsewhere in this study,<sup>16</sup> but it is of particular relevance in these early myths because of the way in which particular agendas have tended to take a more literalist approach to the stories, despite the clear understanding, even in early times, that these are not historical texts;<sup>17</sup> the metaphor has also been adopted by polemicists keen to support a particular thesis.

And the refrain of the priestly account of creation sounds here again: after creating the human species, male and female, in his own image and likeness, and giving them the charge of creation and the blessing of fruitfulness, ‘God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good’ (Gen 1:31a). Hence the sexuality of the human beings, specifically identified here, along with its function of procreation, mentioned here though not in the second account, is part of God’s intention, part of the beauty of his creation and not, as some later writers would have it, the necessary evil for the propagation of the species and for no other purpose. There is no justification in Genesis for the idea that celibacy and virginity are ‘higher’ forms of living for men and women, in fact, the opposite is the case. Each human person is made for companionship and community, as a necessary

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<sup>13</sup> Davidson, ‘The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning’, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Davidson, ‘The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning’, pp. 8–9.

<sup>15</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 7 on language.

<sup>17</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi Ad Litteram*, for instance, and Origen, *Matthew*, Sermon 15.

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blessing from God, ‘part of God’s perfect design from the beginning and willed as a fundamental aspect of human existence’.<sup>18</sup>

Nor is there, in this account, any reason to consider the female of the species as somehow lower in any hierarchy to the male. Again, it is clear in Genesis 1 that the male and female are created simultaneously and that together they are ‘image and likeness of God’ and jointly perform the roles intended for them, stewards of creation and channels of God’s fruitful love for the cosmos, woman ultimately, of course, (Jn 1) to be the God-bearer, the mother of the Incarnate Word.

### 5.c *Genesis 2:4b–25*

The second account of the creation of human beings appears quite different from the first. While in the first account, the man is spoken into being merely by the Word of God, the second involves a physical process, requiring Yahweh to work, to get his hands dirty. In this version, God is as substantial as his creature, but there is no mention of a sexual act on the part of the divinity as myths from other ancient near-Eastern sources describe for the creation of humankind.<sup>19</sup> This is a narrative account, not a liturgy; it has a tension, a dramatic movement that carries the reader forward. The story begins with the scene being set, of the empty heaven and earth, ready to receive the gift of life, beginning with the flow of water. Once there is water, there can be clay and, thus, the human being is formed and receives the breath of life. He, the male, is then the witness to God’s work, the planting of the garden, the creation of the animal kingdom. Despite God’s promise to find a suitable partner for the man, none is found among the animals, so the next stage in the drama is the casting of the man into sleep and the forming of the woman from his rib, fulfilling the promise and bringing creation to a triumphant conclusion.

This second version of the story of Adam and Eve is one of the most enduring and widespread myths in Western (and even Eastern) literature and culture to the present day. It is an instantly recognisable metaphor for the origins of the human race, even among people without the Judaeo-Christian background, and remains so despite the solid understanding of evolution and development of the animal kingdom, including human beings, that has been gained in the past two centuries. The metaphor is even used in

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<sup>18</sup> Davidson, ‘The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning’, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*.

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popular science literature to identify the original genetic female parent, ‘mitochondrial Eve’.<sup>20</sup>

There were two main issues for scholarly consideration from this second creation story: the relative status of man and woman and their relative responsibility for the Fall. How does Genesis 2 see the relationship of the sexes, in terms of a hierarchy or, as the first version does, as equals in responsibility and within the community of love? And does the woman, later to be called Eve, have the greater guilt when it comes to the temptation and Fall, and is this guilt reflected in the nature and social status of women in general, thus making them unfit to have any authority or headship over men, in society and, specifically, in the church?

Throughout the nineteenth century, advances in knowledge of geology and evolution provided incontrovertible evidence that the traditional timescale of human history, based on Biblical accounts of creation, could no longer be sustained. The discoveries of archaeology, the gradual revelation of the complex movements of Middle-Eastern history in ancient times, also showed how the history of the Bible itself was not as straightforward as had been thought. The creation myths, however, retained and continue to retain their power, being used as a referent still in the Church’s teaching on human origins and on the origins of sin in the world:<sup>21</sup> ‘everybody knows the story and everybody has fixed ideas about it. Familiarity breeds stereotypes, mistakes and yes, contempt.’<sup>22</sup> The Catholic Church now chooses to treat the creation narratives in Genesis as figurative, but nonetheless insists that they provide an account of a primeval event in human history that can be called ‘the Fall’, for which the doctrine of atonement is needed.<sup>23</sup> It is common practice to retroject modern judgement on an ancient society and its literature and, equally, to use assumptions about such culturally remote values to determine norms and principles for an utterly different society and institutions thousands of years later.

Ronald Simkins has considered the construction of gender in Israelite society as reflected in the creation myth of Genesis 2–3, demonstrating how the garden narrative of Genesis 2

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<sup>20</sup> G. Newton and P. Bailey, ‘Meet the Ancestors: What Fossils and Genetics Tell Us about Human Evolution’, *Wellcome Science*, No. 4, November 2006, pp. 16–17: ‘Genetic studies tend to support the out of Africa model. The highest levels of genetic variation are found in Africa, and modern mitochondrial DNA has been tracked back to just one African woman who lived 10,000 generations ago – “mitochondrial Eve”.’

<sup>21</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), pp. 355ff.

<sup>22</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 72.

<sup>23</sup> See, on this, Patricia A. Williams, *Doing without Adam and Eve: Sociobiology and Original Sin* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

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is the work of an agricultural people, using a metaphor of growth and procreation in which the man is formed from the arable land, the woman is a product of his body, the couple mature (ripen) in knowledge and the consequences of that knowledge are faced.<sup>24</sup> He also notes how the shaping of clay is frequently used as a metaphor for gestation and pregnancy in other Mesopotamian creation myths.<sup>25</sup> The couple are described primarily in terms of their social roles as husband, wife and parents. Thus, it is their partnership within the community of marriage that defines them, rather than any hierarchical structure giving superior status to one over the other.

Phyllis Tribble summarises the five features of the story in Genesis 2 that have been used to support the idea that the man is superior to the woman: (i) man is created first, woman second, so man is first in importance; (ii) woman is man's helpmate to solace his loneliness; (iii) woman comes out of man, so is simply a subordinate part of his body; (iv) she is created from his rib, so is dependent on him for her existence; (v) and man gives her a name, indicating his power over her.

Woman's greater culpability for sin is also indicated by the severity and durability of her punishment: (i) man leaves his father's family to set up a new, male-governed unit with the woman; (ii) woman is the temptress and, thus, has the responsibility for sin in the world; giving in to sin indicates she is untrustworthy, gullible and simple-minded; (iii) she has the curse of menstruation, childbirth, all the pain of motherhood, worse than man's toil in producing food from the land, thus showing that God considers her guilt the greater; (iv) her 'desire' for her husband, her greater lustfulness, indicates her corrupt nature and is a way of keeping her submissive to her husband; (v) and God gives man the right to rule over her, in perpetuity, so she is never absolved from her sin.

Tribble shows clearly how the familiarity and assumptions around this story have led to misconceptions about its underlying, essential meaning:

According to traditional interpretations, the narrative in Genesis 2:7–3:24 ... is about 'Adam and Eve'. It proclaims male superiority and female inferiority as the will of God. It portrays woman as 'temptress' and troublemaker who is dependent upon and dominated by her husband. Over the centuries this misogynous reading has acquired a status of canonicity so that those who deplore and those who applaud the story both agree on its meaning.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ronald Simkins, 'Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *Genesis: A Feminist Companion to the Bible Second Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> Simkins, 'Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth', p. 41.

<sup>26</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp. 72–73.

These arguments have been conclusively disproved by the scholarship of the last century or so. Literary criticism has demonstrated that, as regards the precedence of man's creation, this section is an example of Hebrew rhetorical style known as *inclusio*, in which the two main points are placed as brackets either side of the unit, each being of equal importance.<sup>27</sup> For the second point, woman's creation being as a 'helper' of man, the translation used is inadequate to compass the meaning of the Hebrew word used here, 'ezer, a word frequently used in the Bible to refer to God himself, in relation to Israel, in many of the psalms (33, 70, 115 and so on) and in Exodus (18:4), Moses' son is named 'Eli-ezer', formed of 'my God + help'. So this word, especially coupled here with the phrase *k<sup>e</sup>negdo*, often mis-translated as 'fit for him', would be better rendered as 'his benefactor and counterpart'.<sup>28</sup> The woman provides man with the 'companion' he needs, an 'egalitarian partner', as Richard Davidson describes her.<sup>29</sup>

These linguistic difficulties were explained by Walter Benjamin, who used Genesis as a metaphor to explain the difficulties of translating human language. His definition of language separates into three different levels, exemplified in Genesis. At the outset, in creation the divine Word is simultaneous with the things it speaks, language and reality are one. After the creation of Adam, knowledge and language are one; the language of paradise is pure knowledge, through the giving of names. After the Fall, language becomes degraded, when the immediacy of knowledge is lost and abstract speech is born. Language loses its reality and meanings become confused, as words and things become misaligned, and Babel is reduced to rubble.<sup>30</sup>

In the account of creation in Genesis 2, the giving of language to man (Adam) and the creation of woman are more or less simultaneous acts of God. Adam names the animals but finds none fit to help him, so God then creates woman, whom Adam also names. So 'woman is by definition a derivation of man who, as the direct creation of God, remains

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<sup>27</sup> Davidson, 'The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning', p. 14, quoting James Mullenberg, Phyllis Tribble, et al. See Jerome T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001), p. 57: 'In inclusion, the repeated element is usually a word or phrase at or near the beginning and end of the unit ... a position at the extremes of a unit can be emphatic, thus the repeated element itself is often of special significance within the unit it surrounds.'

<sup>28</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 90.

<sup>29</sup> Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man' (1913), in M. Bullock and M. Jennings (eds.), *Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 62–74. See also Claudio de Oliveira, 'Defining and Relating Translation and Original in Walter Benjamin', *In Other Words: The Journal for Literary Translation*, No. 37, Summer 2011, p. 17.

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both chronologically antecedent and ontologically prior'.<sup>31</sup> This version became the focus of mediaeval commentary, and remains dominant in Western thought. From Paul to Gratian, there is an unbroken strand of commentary that ignores the first Genesis creation story, through the early history of the church and up to the Middle Ages, so that Gratian himself can say, with complete seriousness: 'God did not create in the beginning a man and a woman ... but first man, and then woman from him ... It is natural that women serve men ... because it is just that the inferior being serve the superior one.'<sup>32</sup>

However, the idea that woman being formed from man's side makes her subject or inferior to him was challenged even in the mediaeval period by those who pointed out that man's being formed from the dust of the ground does not make the dust his superior.<sup>33</sup> Strictly speaking, according to this argument, it is the woman who is superior to the man, being 'built' by God from his rib. The man slept throughout the process and, thus, had no part to play in it. Many writers, including Hugh of St. Victor and Peter Lombard,<sup>34</sup> also pointed out that the woman being built from his rib, from his side, shows that she is his equal, neither superior, if she had been made from his head, or inferior, made from his feet. Christine de Pizan (1364–c. 1430), in the *Cité des Dames*, said that Eve's creation from Adam's side indicates she 'stands beside him as a companion, not lying at his feet like a slave'.<sup>35</sup> Others, such as Bonaventure, commenting on this book of the *Sentences*,<sup>36</sup> pointed out that woman's being made of bone rather than soft flesh indicates her strength.<sup>37</sup>

The naming of woman by man was said to imply his authority over her. Although in many cultures, the naming process does signify authority of the protagonist over the subject, in this case, the man does not actually give the woman a name, she is simply *issa*, the

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<sup>31</sup> R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> Gratian, *Decretum Magistri Gratiani*, Bk II, causa 33, q. 5, ch. 13, Emil Friedberg (ed.), in *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, Vol. I, col. 1255 (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1879/reprint Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959). Available at [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd\\_6029936\\_001/index.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd_6029936_001/index.html), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 101: 'As *issa* [woman] is taken from *is* [man], so *ha-adam* [human being] is taken from *ha-dama* [earth]. Yet *ha-adam* is never portrayed as subordinate to the earth. On the contrary, the creature is given power over the earth so that what is taken from becomes superior to.'

<sup>34</sup> Lombard, *Sentences*, Bk II, d. XVII, ch. 2: 'Eve was not taken from the feet of Adam to be his slave, nor from his head to be his lord, but from his side to be his partner.'

<sup>35</sup> Christine de Pizan, *Cité des Dames*, Bk I, ch. 9, §2, Rosalind Brown-Grant (tr.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999). And, as Christine says, 'man has gained far more through Mary than he ever lost through Eve'.

<sup>36</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium in IV Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi, 1251–1253 AD* (Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1882–1902), Bk II, d. 18, a. 1, q. 1.

<sup>37</sup> See Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Mediaeval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 83.

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feminine counterpart of *is*, man.<sup>38</sup> This itself is the designation given by God and it is only after the Fall that the woman will receive her name, Eve.<sup>39</sup> There are, thus, no grounds for using the story of the creation of human beings in Genesis 2 as justification for the hierarchical superiority of man, a fact recognised by many early writers, but often unacknowledged by the later authorities, particularly in the Schools of the Middle Ages.

### 5.d Use of the Genesis Material in the Patristic Period

Paul's comments on Genesis (2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:13) had a significant influence on the Fathers of the Church. They developed Paul's idea of Eve as the culpable party in the Fall and, thus, Adam and, consequently, men in general were more rational, had the right to authority and were closer in likeness to God.<sup>40</sup>

The Greek Fathers of the Church held the view that the guilt for original sin was greater for Adam than Eve, or at least that woman's condemnation was no more deserved than the man's. This idea was based on the idea of balance in Fall and Redemption, the Fall came through one man and salvation through another and greater. Irenaeus (c. 120–200), for instance, said that, though Eve was instrumental in the Fall, Mary was the source of redemption, and he also held Adam more to blame than Eve, who held out for a long time against the wiles of the devil, but Adam capitulated immediately to the temptation, even though it was he to whom God directly gave the command to be obedient.<sup>41</sup> The idea of the

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<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 7 on language for an account of the use of *'ish* and *'isha* and their translation to English. See D. Burke, 'The Translation of the Hebrew Word *'ish* in Genesis: A Brief Historical Comparison' in Lynn Long (ed.), *Translation and Religion: Holy Untranslatable*, Topics in Translation Series 28, Susan Bassnett and Edwin Gentzler (series eds.) (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2005).

<sup>39</sup> Umberto Eco, *La ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1993): 'Qui Adamo dice (ed è la prima volta che viene citato un discorso): "Questa volta è osso delle mie ossa e carne della mia carne. Costei si chiamerà *virago* (così la Vulgata traduce *ishshah* femminile di *ish*, "uomo"). Se consideriamo che in Genesi 3,20, Adamo chiama su moglie Eva, che significa "vita", madre dei viventi, ci troveremmo di fronte a due denominazioni non del tutto arbitrario, ma a nomi "giusti"'. [Here Adam says (the first time he is heard speaking), 'This now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. This will be called *virago* (thus the Vulgate translates *ishshah*, feminine of *ish*, "man").' If we consider that in Gen. 3:20, Adam calls his wife Eve, meaning 'life', mother of the living, we are now faced with two denominations, not arbitrary in the slightest, but both of them the 'right' name.'], p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Eric Jager, *The Tempter's Voice, Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus, Bk 14: 'And if you say that it attacked her as being the weaker of the two, [I reply that], on the contrary, she was the stronger, since she appears to have been the helper of the man in the transgression of the commandment. For she did by herself alone resist the serpent, and it was after holding out for a while and making opposition that she ate of the tree, being circumvented by craft; whereas Adam, making no fight whatever, nor refusal, partook of the fruit handed to him by the woman, which is an indication of the utmost imbecility and effeminacy of mind. And the woman indeed, having been vanquished in the contest by a demon, is deserving of pardon; but Adam shall deserve none, for he was worsted by a woman—he who, in his own person, had received the command from God. But the



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woman's struggle with the tempter in the garden, with its counterpart in the image of the woman in Revelation (12), escaping from the dragon, was a popular and powerful image in the early church and later.

Clement of Alexandria (150–215) considered women just as capable as men of cultivating their image of God to render it closer to the divine likeness, through ascetical practice and prayer; he also saw the traditional pattern of family, with the male presiding and the woman in her domestic role as mother and housekeeper, as being the necessary locus for human development.<sup>42</sup> This idea of 'proper order', in Augustine's phrase, helped the idea of the hierarchy of Adam/Eve, man/woman to become an accepted part of the natural order, God's plan for the world.<sup>43</sup>

Origen (185–254), as a neo-Platonist in a Christian tradition, saw gender and body as mere ephemeral appearances of the fallen body, which would be eliminated by living a pure life and progressing in the spirit towards the state of pure intellect that comes with union with God. For Origen, however, the body was a boundary that is required for the soul, part of its unique individuality in creation. This demonstrates Origen's basic epistemology, understanding that God leads each soul into knowledge within the limits of its own capacity to comprehend and in the appropriate way. The body that contains the soul therefore reflects its unique nature.<sup>44</sup> Women as well as men are called to this ascent to knowledge. But Origen did not see this equality in spirit as involving equality in society and he was very firm about women's roles in the assembly and in public life. Even prophecy in women was to be kept in the private forum and relayed to the community if appropriate: 'Thus, for Origen, gender hierarchy as men over women in the body, and as spirit over soul in the spiritual realm, remains an unalterable part of the cosmic ontology.'<sup>45</sup>

But the alternative Latin tradition eventually held sway in the Western world and beginning with Tertullian (c. 160–225), the guilt of woman for sin was seen to be

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woman, having heard of the command from Adam, treated it with contempt, either because she deemed it unworthy of God to speak by means of it, or because she had her doubts, perhaps even held the opinion that the command was given to her by Adam of his own accord.': available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0134.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Rosemary Ruether, *Women and Redemption* (London: SCM, 1998), p. 60.

<sup>43</sup> Jager, *The Tempter's Voice*, p. 31.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Moore, 'Origen of Alexandria', article in *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2006), hosted by University of Tennessee Martin, available at <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/o/origen.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, p. 62.

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demonstrated in the circular argument: because women were under the dominion of men and had no legal rights under Roman law, therefore the woman must be more culpable, since this oppression was her punishment for Eve's sin. This argument would later become enshrined in canon law. Tertullian called on women to be ashamed of themselves; all women are 'Eve', and must do penance for the sin of disobedience and for leading Adam astray.<sup>46</sup> The idea was that the continued state of subjection of women indicated God's continuing imposition of punishment, so that the guilt of woman had still not been expiated, even by the saving act of Christ, and that women bear responsibility for that too, and so, presumably, could not benefit from its redemptive power.<sup>47</sup> Tertullian frequently observed that women's nature made them much more likely to sin, particularly through their sexual appetite and their love of finery and decoration. Thus, it was important for women to be chaste and modest, to be veiled and keep to the home. He took particular care to explain in detail how women's appearance, her self-indulgence in clothes and cosmetics, was the work of the devil, intended to seduce and entrap men into sin. This concern for the seductive power of women, their lustfulness and their interest in make-up and jewellery, arising from this interpretation of the Genesis story, formed a continuous theme over many centuries,<sup>48</sup> even after the appearance of vernacular translations of the Bible, which restored the meaning of the original Hebrew more accurately.<sup>49</sup> The subject of women's

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<sup>46</sup> Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum*, Bk 1, §1: 'If there dwelt upon earth a faith as great as is the reward of faith which is expected in the heavens, no one of you at all, best beloved sisters ... would have desired too gladsome (not to say too ostentatious) a style of dress; so as not rather to go about in humble garb ... walking about as Eve mourning and repentant, in order that ... she might the more fully expiate that which she derives from Eve—the ignominy, I mean, of the first sin, and the odium (attaching to her as the cause) of human perdition ... And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. *You* are the devil's gateway: *you* are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: *you* are the first deserter of the divine law: *you* are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of *your* desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die.'

<sup>47</sup> Noted in preliminary statement of a symposium of the inter-diocesan Council of the Laity in Belgium in 2001, and reported in *Culture et Foi*, December 2001, available at <http://www.culture-et-foi.com/critique/cil.htm>, last accessed August 2014: 'Ève fut, comme Adam, créée par Dieu à son image mais, récupérée par les interprétations machistes, elle devint le mythe fondateur de l'infériorité de la femme, celle par qui le mal arrive.' [Like Adam, Eve was created by God in his image, but interpreted from a male chauvinist perspective, she becomes the foundational myth for the inferiority of woman, the gateway for evil.], authored by Edith Kuropatwa-Fevre.

<sup>48</sup> Archbishop Hugh Latimer, sermon preached before Edward VI, Lent 1550: 'so will many women do; they will rule their husbands, and do all things after their own minds. They do therein against the order by God appointed them: they break their injunction that God gave unto them. Yea, it is now come to the lower sort, to mean men's wives; they will rule and apparel themselves gorgeously, and some of them far above their degrees, whether their husbands will or no. But they break their injunction, and do therein contrary to God's ordinance. God saith, *Subdita eris sub potestate viri*; "Thou shalt be subject under the power of thy husband." Thou shalt be subject. Women are subjects; ye be subjects to your husbands.': available at <http://anglicanhistory.org/reformation/latimer/sermons/edward8.html>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Gen 3:16: 'thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee' (King James Bible, 1611 version).

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dress continues to be used against them today, a short skirt said to provoke arousal of male desire, leading *in extremis* to sexual assault and rape.<sup>50</sup>

St. John Chrysostom (347–407), St. Jerome (c. 340–420) and others held the same views,<sup>51</sup> but believed that women could save themselves by child-bearing and by obedience to their husbands. Otherwise, for those who could not bear children, the only salvation lay in perpetual virginity or celibacy.<sup>52</sup> Jerome’s translation of the Hebrew Bible, which became part of the Vulgate and was used as the standard text for well over a millennium, while being a tremendous work of scholarship, has been shown to indicate its author’s attitude towards women in the way in which passages that specifically relate to women are often expanded to emphasise the sinfulness or culpability of women’s behaviour. This is particularly evident in Genesis, as Jane Barr has shown.<sup>53</sup> Jerome tends to exaggerate the Biblical description if he feels that the wickedness of the female character in the story has not been properly described by the original Hebrew. One such is the account of the wife of Potiphar’s attempted seduction of Joseph in Genesis 39:7–18. The source text simply reports that she said to Joseph ‘Lie with me’, and gives his response as just ‘he refused’. The Vulgate version on the other hand says, ‘qui nequaquam adquiescens operi nefario’ (by no means agreeing to this wicked deed). In verse 10, the Latin text is, ‘*mulier molesta*

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<sup>50</sup> Hence the recent (2010) phenomena of ‘slut walks’ in response to the remarks of a Canadian police officer who said women were to blame for rape if they dressed ‘provocatively’. This subject has been extensively covered in the literature, see, for instance, Joan Smith, *Misogynies* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), particularly on the attitudes to women victims of the Yorkshire Ripper; Marilyn French, *The War Against Women* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992); and Helena Kennedy, *Eve was Framed* (London: Vintage, 1992) on the treatment of women in British law.

<sup>51</sup> Chrysostom, Homily 9 on 1 Tim, referring to Paul: ‘The woman [=Eve] taught once, and ruined all. On this account therefore he saith, let her not teach. But what is it to other women, that she suffered this? It certainly concerns them; for the sex is weak and fickle, and he is speaking of the sex collectively. For he says not Eve, but “the woman,” which is the common name of the whole sex, not her proper name. Was then the whole sex included in the transgression for her fault? As he said of Adam, “After the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come” (Rom. v. 14); so here the female sex transgressed, and not the male.’: available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/230609.htm>, last accessed August 2014

<sup>52</sup> Jerome, *Letter 22, To Eustochium*, § 18: ‘Say to yourself: “What have I to do with the pleasures of sense that so soon come to an end? What have I to do with the song of the sirens so sweet and so fatal to those who hear it?” I would not have you subject to that sentence whereby condemnation has been passed upon mankind. When God says to Eve, “In pain and in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children,” say to yourself, “That is a law for a married woman, not for me.” And when He continues, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband,” say again: “Let her desire be to her husband who has not Christ for her spouse.” And when, last of all, He says, “Thou shalt surely die,” once more, say, “Marriage indeed must end in death; but the life on which I have resolved is independent of sex. Let those who are wives keep the place and the time that properly belong to them. For me, virginity is consecrated in the persons of Mary and of Christ.”’: available at <http://www.albini.net/newadvent/fathers/3001022.htm>, last accessed August 2014. An account of the relationship between Jerome and Eustochium is given in Kate Cooper, *Band of Angels: The Forgotten World of Early Christian Women* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), pp. 199 ff.

<sup>53</sup> Jane Barr, ‘The Influence of Saint Jerome on Medieval Attitudes to Women’, in Janet Soskice (ed.), *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition* (London: Harper Collins, 1990); and Jane Barr, ‘The Vulgate Genesis and Jerome’s Attitudes to Women’ in *Studia Patristica*, Vol. XVIII (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).

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*erat adulescenti et ille recusabat stuprum*' (the woman was importunate with the young man and he refused the adultery), rather than the Hebrew, rendered literally 'she spoke to him day after day, he would not consent to lie with her', just repeating the first request of the woman.

Barr comments that: 'The quite significant changes thus made in biblical narratives are likely to have had some effect on the preaching from these texts in the medieval pulpit.'<sup>54</sup> Indeed, another example, from Genesis 3, can be tracked through later writings, well on into the late Middle Ages, and the attitudes they reflect are still apparent through succeeding centuries. Following the temptation of the serpent (Gen 3:1-6), God is describing to the parties concerned, man, woman and tempter, the consequences of what they have done. To Eve he says: 'Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you' (Gen 3:16). The Hebrew word for 'desire' here (*teshukah* = eager desire) has a sexual content.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the woman will certainly be subjected to her husband's authority, but she will continue to desire him physically. The relationship will be fractured, no longer mutual but hierarchical.<sup>56</sup> Jerome's final version is rather different, even though the letter to Eustochium on virginity mentioned<sup>57</sup> shows that he knew very well what the original Hebrew actually said. He altered the first part, removing the implication of sexual desire, to give 'sub viri potestate eris et ipse dominabitur tui' (you will be under the power of the man, and he will have power over you). He used the same word, *dominare*, as in chapter 1, where the human pair is given dominion over the earth. The woman is now 'subdued' by her husband (another translation of this word).

Very quickly, once the Vulgate became widely available and accepted as the standard text of the Bible, this verse was much quoted as a proof text for the status of women, in law and in fact. Within a century of the death of Jerome, an exegetical text by Eucherius of Lyons asks: 'If woman had not sinned, would she now be under the power of her husband [*sub potestate viri*]?'<sup>58</sup> His response was that she would, by her nature, but that it would be a loving subjection nonetheless. After the Fall, it is governed by fear. The commentaries on this text developed and extended its implications over time as the account of Hugh of St.

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<sup>54</sup> Barr, 'The Vulgate Genesis'.

<sup>55</sup> The Hebrew says: 'we'el 'ishekh teshuqatekh wehu' imshal bakh' [and towards your man (shall be) your desire and he shall rule over you], available at <http://www.sarshalom.us/resources/scripture/asv/html/genesis.html#3> last accessed August 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 128.

<sup>57</sup> Jerome, *Letter 22, To Eustochium*, § 18.

<sup>58</sup> Barr, 'The Vulgate Genesis'.

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Victor (Paris, early twelfth century) shows. He said: ‘Not only under his rule, as before, but under his domination, so that he may afflict her with wounds.’ The idea that the woman had an ‘eager desire’ for her husband has now gone completely and the only matter is the man’s domination, and cruelty towards her, as if somehow he is in some sense an instrument of God’s punishment. The Genesis text does not sustain this at all. God’s address to the three protagonists simply describes the tragic effects of their own actions.

In the writings of Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–385), the creation of human beings in the ‘image of God’ continued to be seen as the original pre-lapsarian condition, where the created beings were free of the corrupting effects of sin, immortal and genderless. Gregory, like Origen, understood the *imago Dei* as the pure, intellectual being, created by God, from the beginning, as the reflection of the divine Logos.<sup>59</sup> The union with God will involve the body and soul, reunited after death, but in harmony, rather than conflict, and immortal, pure and free of all corruption. The distinction between male and female for Gregory is where the identity of humanity differs from that of God, by the separation of the sexes, which is not a characteristic of the Divinity. The male/female distinction is irrelevant where the ‘image of God’ is concerned:

... in the compound nature of man we may behold a part of each of the natures I have mentioned – of the Divine, the rational and intelligent element, which does not admit the distinction of male and female; of the irrational, our bodily form and structure, divided into male and female: for each of these elements is certainly to be found in all that partakes of human life. That the intellectual element, however, precedes the other, we learn as from one who gives in order an account of the making of man; and we learn also that his community and kindred with the irrational is for man a provision for reproduction. For he says first that ‘God created man in the image of God’ (showing by these words, as the Apostle says, that in such a being there is no male or female): then he adds the peculiar attributes of human nature, ‘male and female created He them’.<sup>60</sup>

Unlike Gregory, who had good relations with women who were his intellectual and spiritual equals and superiors, such as his sister Macrina, Augustine (354–430) tended to see women as a source of sin, through sexual desire and concupiscence. He seems always to have struggled with this side of his nature, throughout his life, and this affects the way in which he viewed the female.<sup>61</sup>

In Augustine’s mind, man symbolised the spiritual orientation of the human person and woman the temporal. While accepting that human nature in both its sexes is made in the

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<sup>59</sup> Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, p. 66.

<sup>60</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *The Making of Man*, ch. 16, W. Moore and H.A. Wilson (trs.), available at <http://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/physis/nyssa-man/>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>61</sup> Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, p. 71.

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image of God, he explained that this means that woman is only truly in God's image when she is together with her husband – alone she represents the physical side of human nature, while the man is complete in himself.<sup>62</sup> This is why Paul tells us that man must not cover his head, as he is capable of greater capacity of contemplating the higher, spiritual things:

As we said of the nature of the human mind, that both in the case when as a whole it contemplates the truth it is the image of God; and in the case when anything is divided from it, and diverted in order to the cognition of temporal things; nevertheless on that side on which it beholds and consults truth, here also it is the image of God, but on that side whereby it is directed to the cognition of the lower things, it is not the image of God. And since it is so much the more formed after the image of God, the more it has extended itself to that which is eternal, and is on that account not to be restrained, so as to withhold and refrain itself from thence; therefore the man ought not to cover his head. But because too great a progression towards inferior things is dangerous to that rational cognition that is conversant with things corporeal and temporal; this ought to have power on its head, which the covering indicates, by which it is signified that it ought to be restrained.<sup>63</sup>

While originally following the neo-Platonic tradition of Origen, and other predecessors, in seeing humans created first as an incorporeal unity, in which the image of God is an intellectual concept, Augustine later moved away from this. He came to see that gender differentiation was part of God's original design for human beings and the sequence of creation – man first, then woman – reflects the relative superiority and subordination of the two, as above. God's intention for distinction of sex in human beings also emerged in Augustine's view of the resurrection of the body, at the end of *De Civitate Dei*, when he said that, according to the Lord, there shall be no marrying in heaven, and considered that this indicates the separate genders shall be preserved after the resurrection, in answer to the question whether women shall become men in the life to come:

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<sup>62</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Book 12, ch. 7, § 10: 'But we must notice how that which the apostle says, that not the woman but the man is the image of God, is not contrary to that which is written in Genesis, "God created man: in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them: and He blessed them." For this text says that human nature itself, which is complete [only] in both sexes, was made in the image of God; and it does not separate the woman from the image of God which it signifies. For after saying that God made man in the image of God, "He created him," it says, "male and female": or at any rate, punctuating the words otherwise, "male and female created He them". How then did the apostle tell us that the man is the image of God, and therefore he is forbidden to cover his head; but that the woman is not so, and therefore is commanded to cover hers? Unless ... that the woman together with her own husband is the image of God, so that that whole substance may be one image; but when she is referred separately to her quality of help-meet, which regards the woman herself alone, then she is not the image of God; but as regards the man alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him in one.': <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130112.htm>, last accessed June 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Book 12, ch. 7, § 10, "Sicut de natura humanae mentis diximus, quia et si tota contempletur veritatem, *imago Dei est*; et cum ex ea distribuitur aliquid, et quadam intentione derivatur ad actionem rerum temporalium, nihilominus ex qua parte conspectam consulit veritatem, *imago Dei est*; ex qua vero intenditur in agenda inferiora, non est imago Dei. Et quoniam quantumcumque se extenderit in id quod aeternum est, tanto magis inde formatur *ad imaginem Dei* et propterea non est cohibenda, ut se inde contineat ac temperet; ideo *vir non debet velare caput*. Quia vero illi rationali actioni quae in rebus corporalibus temporalibusque versatur, periculosa est nimia in inferiora progressio; debet habere potestatem super caput, quod indicat velamentum quo significatur esse cohibenda".

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The Lord then denied that there would be in the resurrection, not women, but marriages; and He uttered this denial in circumstances in which the question mooted would have been more easily and speedily solved by denying that the female sex would exist, if this had in truth been foreknown by Him. But, indeed, He even affirmed that the sex should exist by saying, 'They shall not be given in marriage,' which can only apply to females; 'Neither shall they marry,' which applies to males.<sup>64</sup>

The sin of Eve, her greater culpability for sin, and the inherited mark of original sin was given more weight because of its perceived basis in Scripture. Along with the exclusions attributed to Paul, this reference to Eve's sin appears in the majority of the scholastics, as well as most of the early Fathers. Augustine's clearly and thoroughly formulated teaching on the transmissibility of original sin was foundational in the establishing of the doctrine on original sin in the Church, so by the time the scholastic theologians are writing, several hundred years later, it was definitive and undisputed, treated as being part of the canon of scripture, rather than as a theory worked out by Augustine and his successors.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, Augustine always struggled to maintain his conviction that the two sexes were intended by God from the beginning and emphasised that the female body will be resurrected as it is, countering the arguments of some of his contemporaries who preached that in the afterlife, all human beings will rise again as male: 'woman's sex is not a defect, it is natural. And in the resurrection it will be free of the necessity of intercourse and childbirth ... part of a new beauty [which] will arouse the praises of God for his wisdom and compassion.'<sup>66</sup>

In his commentary on Genesis (*De Genesi ad Litteram*), Augustine explained that woman could not have been created by God as friend and collaborator, as:

How much more agreeably could two male friends, rather than a man and a woman, enjoy companionship and conversation in a life shared together ... Consequently I do not see in what sense the woman was made as a helper for the man if not for the sake of bearing children.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Bk 22, ch. 17, "Nuptias ergo Dominus futuras esse negavit in resurrectione, non feminas, et ibi negavit, ubi talis quaestio vertebatur, ut eam negato sexu muliebri celeriore facilitate dissolveret, si eum ibi praenosceret non futurum; immo etiam futurum esse firmavit dicendo: *Non nubent, quod ad feminas pertinet, nec uxores ducent, quod ad viros.*"

<sup>65</sup> Jon Stanley, 'A Sinful Doctrine? Sexuality and Gender in Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin,' *The Other Journal*, April 2006, published by Seattle School of Theology and Psychology, see <http://theotherjournal.com/2006/04/02/a-sinful-doctrine-sexuality-and-gender-in-augustine%E2%80%99s-doctrine-of-original-sin-part-1>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>66</sup> St. Augustine, *City of God*, Bk 22, ch. 17, *City of God*, Henry Bettenson (tr.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003). Latin text from Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Bk 22, ch. 17, "Non est autem vitium sexus femineus, sed natura, quae tunc quidem et a concubitu et a partu immunis erit; erunt ...decori novo, ...sed Dei laudetur sapientia atque clementia.."

<sup>67</sup> J.H. Taylor, S.J. (tr.), *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Ancient Christian Writers Series, No. 42 (New York: Newman Press, 1982), pp. ii, 75, 170. Latin text from Augustine, *De Genesi Ad Litteram Libri Duodecim* "Quanto enim congruentius ad convivendum et colloquendum duo amici pariter quam vir et mulier habitarent?... Quapropter non invenio ad quod adiutorium facta sit mulier viro, si pariendi causa subtrahitur".

The pre-lapsarian hierarchy that Augustine presumed would only have been established for practical purposes. The man's dominance over woman after the Fall was rather the result of the sinfulness of the woman:

Hence married persons through love can serve one another, but St. Paul (1 Cor 11:7) does not permit a woman to rule over a man. The sentence pronounced by God gave this power rather to man, and it is not by her nature but rather by her sin that woman deserved to have her husband for a master. But if this order is not maintained, nature will be corrupted still more, and sin will be increased.<sup>68</sup>

Augustine's view of woman as being useful only for one thing, child-bearing, despite alternative interpretations of the term *'ezer*, as noted above, was influential and continues to be held as a valid explanation of the passage well into modern times.<sup>69</sup> The innate inconsistency of the principle that women are by nature subordinate to men, with the assertion by Paul that there is no more inequality in Christ, male or female, slave or free, was never addressed. A fully elaborated challenge to the view that male and female are equal in nature but different in function before God was only developed in the twentieth century by feminist writers and theologians.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, as Janet Soskice points out, based on a brief reflection by Friedrich Schleiermacher on Genesis, if the man had remained alone in the garden, he would have been deprived not only of the ability to procreate, but also of the ability to speak.<sup>71</sup> Language again is a key element in the Genesis story. Once there are two human beings, there can be conversation, social interaction, collaboration and song.

Isidore of Seville (560–636), the archbishop whose great encyclopaedia, the *Etymologiae*, with its wide-ranging and dubious collection of knowledge often based on inventive origins of words, was a standard and highly influential reference book for centuries, offered an interpretation of the name 'Eva', which provides a surprisingly balanced assessment, but there is no doubt which alternative he preferred:

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<sup>68</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi Ad Litteram Libri Duodecim*, Book 11, ch. 37 "Possunt itaque coniuges per caritatem servire invicem; sed mulierem non permittit Apostolus dominari in virum. Hoc enim viro potius Dei sententia detulit, et maritum habere dominum meruit mulieris non natura, sed culpa: quod tamen nisi servetur, depravabitur amplius natura, et augebitur culpa."

<sup>69</sup> See, for instance, David J.A. Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

<sup>70</sup> See for an overview, for example, Rebecca Groothuis, 'Equal in Being – Unequal in Role: The Gender Hierarchy Argument', in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, R.W. Peirce and R.M. Groothuis (eds.) (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2005).

<sup>71</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender and Religious Language* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p. 50.



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Eva can be interpreted as ‘life’ [*vita*] or as ‘disaster’ [*calamitas*], or ‘woe’ [*vae*]. As life because she was the origin of being born; disaster and woe because by her transgression she became the cause of dying, and from her falling ‘disaster’ took its name. But some say that ... woman is often the cause of man’s welfare, and often the cause of his disaster and death (which is woe [*vae*]).<sup>72</sup>

### 5.e Use of the Genesis Material in the Mediaeval Period

The canonists, as has been said elsewhere,<sup>73</sup> used arguments from Genesis to justify women’s lower status in the eyes of the Church and the subjection of women to men in particular. Sicardus of Cremona, for instance, in the late twelfth century, wrote a liturgical work, *Mitræle*, in which he gave a comprehensively damning comment on women, Eve’s sin, pregnancy and childbirth, explaining how in the old law, after childbirth, a woman remained unclean for a period matching the post-conception, developmental stage of the foetus, believed to be forty days for a boy and eighty for a girl. The post-partum blood, believed to be menstrual blood, was famously so unclean that its touch makes ‘fruits to dry up and grass to wither’, a phrase repeated *ad nauseam* throughout the centuries.<sup>74</sup> The extra period of purification after the birth of a girl is because:

a double curse lies on the feminine seed [*dupla est feminei germinis maledictio*]. For she carries the curse of Adam and also (this) ‘you will give birth in pain’. Or, perhaps, because, as the learning of physicians show, the female children remain unformed at conception for twice as long as male children.<sup>75</sup>

The masculinity of God, and devotion to the human person of Christ, as a man, is given greater emphasis from the eleventh century onwards, with the focus in spirituality moving from atonement, resurrection and judgement, to creation and incarnation, as Caroline Walker Bynum points out in her study of medieval spirituality: ‘To be holy was to be “like God” –to return the *imago Dei* to “likeness” with Him. And grace brings about not only the

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<sup>72</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, Bk VII, ch. vi, paras. 5–6, W.M. Lindsay (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), quoted in A. Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.44. ‘Eva interpretatur vita sive calamitas sive vae. Vita, quia origo fuit nascendi: calamitas et vae, quia praevaricatione causa extitit moriendi. A cadendo enim nomen sumpsit calamitas. Alii autem dicunt: ob hoc Eva vita et calamitas appellata, quia saepe mulier viro causa salutis est, saepe calamitatis et mortis, quod est vae.’ Latin text available at <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Isidore/home.html> last consulted January 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Chapter 3 on Gratian and canon law.

<sup>74</sup> Chapter 6 on biology.

<sup>75</sup> Sicardus Cremonensis, *Mitralis de Officiis* Bk 5, ch. 11, col. 242, (*Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*) ed. G. Sarkbak, L. Weinrich, (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2008). Latin text also available at <https://archive.org/stream/mitralesivedeof00petrgoog#page/n131/mode/1up>, last accessed August 2014.

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conformity of the individual to God but also the conformity of inner and outer man.<sup>76</sup> Despite the importance, as Bynum's argument goes on to show, of female characteristics in encouraging affective spirituality,<sup>77</sup> when it came to practical matters, there was no doubt about the relative status of the male and female properties of the divine. Christ is God made man, not just 'human', and therefore the representational issue becomes one associated with gender as well as with the state of soul.

Hugh of Pisa (d. 1210), also known as Huguccio, explicitly stated that woman does not truly reflect the image and the glory of God, because woman was second in creation and was not formed directly by God but through the intermediate stage of the man's rib.<sup>78</sup> Woman came from the side of the man, as the Church came from the side of Christ in water and blood after his death on the cross, and the Church is the spouse of Christ as the woman is the spouse of man. Christ governs the Church, thus man governs the woman, so 'the man must not be like the woman a sign of subjection, but a sign of freedom and pre-eminence'. Huguccio was very influential on subsequent writers, particularly Johannes Teutonicus. In his *Apparatus ad Decreta* (1215), Teutonicus cited Hugh of Pisa in his explanation of women's unsuitability for orders: 'women do not receive the character [of order] because of the impediment of their sex and the constitution of the church'.<sup>79</sup> An opinion introduced by these two authors, but which is clearly found in the later commentators on the *Sentences*.<sup>80</sup>

As regards the Genesis story, Johannes Teutonicus asserted: 'God is not glorified through the woman, as through a man, because through a woman the first sin came about.'<sup>81</sup> This followed Gratian, who saw the Old Covenant practices of allowing women to become judges, for instance, as being an imperfection that was eliminated in the New Covenant,

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<sup>76</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 101–102.

<sup>77</sup> Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 134.

<sup>78</sup> Hugh of Pisa, *Summa Decretorum*, Bk I, Distinctiones I–XX, O. Přerovský (ed.) (Vatican City: Vatican Apostolic Library, 2006), causa 33, q. 5, ch. 13: 'On account of three reasons a man is said to be the glory of God and not a woman. Firstly, because God appeared more powerful and more glorious in the creation of a man than of the woman, because it is especially through man that the glory of God is manifest because God made him by himself and from the slime of the earth against nature, but woman is made from the man. Secondly because the man was made by God without any intermediate tool, which is not the case with regard to woman. Thirdly because the man glorifies God directly, that is without any intermediary, whereas the woman only glorifies God through the man, because the man teaches and instructs the woman to glorify God.'

<sup>79</sup> Johannes Teutonicus, *Apparatus ad Decreta*, causa 27, q. 1, ch. 23.

<sup>80</sup> F. Cardman, 'The Medieval Question of Women and Orders', *The Thomist*, Vol. 42, October 1978.

<sup>81</sup> Johannes Teutonicus, *Apparatus ad Decreta*, causa 33, q. 5, ch. 13.

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with woman's punishment imposed for her sole liability for original sin.<sup>82</sup> Another commentator on Gratian, Bernard of Botone, working in the thirteenth century, in his *Glossa Ordinaria*, repeats the circular argument in a more particular form that 'woman does not have the power of the keys [to bind and release] because she is not in the image of God and must serve man in subjugation'. This statement, frequently reiterated by others, is considered by Ida Raming to be an expression of the causal relationship between the 'denigration of women and their exclusion from church office'.<sup>83</sup> She sees it as being a factor in establishing the regulations of the 1918 Code of Canon Law and, thus, of attitudes to women in the church to the present day. Whether or not that is the case, along with other basic assumptions about women's secondary status, it does underpin the arguments used in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries against women's suitability for any kind of authority, in particular that of orders. Another thirteenth-century canonist, Guido de Baysio, brought together ideas from earlier writers on woman's greater culpability for sin. His commentary, *Rosario Super Decretum*, written between 1296 and 1300 was often quoted. When considering the vexed question of the ordination of deaconesses (causa 27, q. 1, ch. 23), he explained women's unfitness by the fact that 'orders is for the more perfect members of the church, since it is given for the distribution of grace to another. A woman however is not a perfect member of the church, but a male is.'<sup>84</sup> In Guido's view, woman is the effective cause of damnation, so she cannot also be instrumental in salvation, a function of priesthood and therefore exclusively reserved for the man. This guilt of woman cannot therefore be said to have been eradicated even by the saving act of Christ. Unlike Albert the Great, who rejected this view,<sup>85</sup> Guido referred explicitly to Mary and stated that her motherhood of Christ is not enough to counterbalance Eve's sin because Mary is only 'the material cause of salvation', whereas Eve's action caused the damnation of the human soul. The Sacrament of Orders brings about salvation and so woman, who is the cause of damnation, cannot be suitable to receive orders.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> I. Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women', in B. Cooke and G. Macy, *A History of Women and Ordination*, Vol. 2, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), p. 26.

<sup>83</sup> Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women', p. 164.

<sup>84</sup> Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women', p. 96. I am indebted to Dr Raming for this account.

<sup>85</sup> Albert the Great, *Mariale Super Missa Est*, in *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, Vol. 37 (Paris: Borgnet, 1890–1899), pp. 62–246, q. 42, pp. 80–81: 'Further to this is the question why women are not promoted to sacred orders? If it is said that this is because of the beginning of guilt transmitted through Eve, it does not seem that this can stand; because the blessed Virgin has made satisfaction for that guilt. Therefore a twofold tribulation will not arise, and God will not judge the same sin twice.'

<sup>86</sup> Guido de Baysio, *Rosarium Super Decreto*, causa 27, q. 1, ch. 23: 'Moreover, woman was the effective cause of damnation since she was the origin of transgression and Adam was deceived through her, and thus she cannot be the effective cause of salvation, because holy orders causes grace in others and so salvation.': available at <http://www.womenpriests.org/theology/guido.asp>, last accessed August 2014.

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Walter Map, Dean of Oxford in the late twelfth century, wrote a popular collection of satirical letters and stories, widely distributed, of which women were an important target. He too saw punishment for the sin of Eve as being perpetuated down the generations for women: ‘After the first creation of man the first wife of the first Adam sated the first hunger by the first sin, against God’s command. The sin was the child of Disobedience, which will never cease before the end of the world to drive women to pass on tirelessly to the future what they learned from their mother.’<sup>87</sup>

Well on into the thirteenth century, Aquinas combined the subjection of woman to man with her weaker powers of reasoning, on the understanding that it is her weaker intellect that makes obedience a natural consequence: ‘Et sic ex tali subiectione naturaliter femina subiecta est viro, quia naturaliter in homine magis abundat discretio rationis.’<sup>88</sup> Earlier in the same section of the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas used the identical phrase, taken from the Vulgate: ‘subiectio et minoratio ex peccato est subsecuta, nam, ad mulierem dictum est post peccatum, *Gen. III*, sub viri potestate eris’.<sup>89</sup> So this concept of a hierarchy in power of intellect as well as in natural perfection (closest in likeness to God), leading to women’s weakness of mind, makes her obedience a necessary virtue: she has to be ruled for her own good. This led on to the logical conclusion that woman, being naturally subject and unable to signify ‘eminence of degree’, therefore cannot receive the Sacrament of Orders.<sup>90</sup>

For Aquinas, woman’s creation, being formed from man’s rib, second in order, emphasised the natural hierarchy and the precedence and priority of the male of the species. But Aquinas also saw woman’s involvement in original sin as contributing to the perfection of creation, ‘felix culpa’, since without sin, there would have been no reason for man’s avoidance of sin, a greater perfection than no temptation.<sup>91</sup>

Woman’s being made from man is fitting because of the dignity it imparts to the man, likening him to the first principle of the human race (*principium totius suae speciei*), just as

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<sup>87</sup> Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium, Courtiers’ Trifles*, M.R. James (tr.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), quoted by Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 105.

<sup>88</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae (ST)*, Part 1a, q. 92, a. 1: ‘So by such a kind of subjection by nature woman is subject to man, because man by nature has a greater discretion of reason.’

<sup>89</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 1a, q. 92, a. 1: ‘Subjection and inferiority are the result of sin; for it was after sin that woman was told, “You shall be under the power of the man”.’ See Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1 (Montreal: Eden Press, 1985), p. 403.

<sup>90</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Suppl., q. 39, a. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 1a, q. 92, a. 1, ad. 3.

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God is the principle of the whole of creation (*totius universi*).<sup>92</sup> It also emphasises the dual role of man and woman in the domestic sphere, for nurturing and providing for children, each having their own role. Woman is therefore made from man, who is her head (*caput*) and her principle or origin (*principium*). Man must also love the woman and it is easier for him to love something made from himself because they must stay together for life, perhaps indicating Aquinas's view of the fickleness of male nature? The precedence of man is also emblematic of the Church and Christ, who is the principle or origin, as man is principle of the woman, hence again it has a sacramental function.<sup>93</sup>

Aquinas also metaphorically interpreted the forming of woman from the side of man as fitting, indicative of the fact that she has no authority over him and therefore could not have been made from his head, but nor is she a slave, therefore could not have been made from his feet. There is a 'socialis coniunctio' between man and woman, a 'social affinity' implying collaboration and mutual respect, perhaps neither lordship nor subordination within the union of marriage, even though in nature there is a hierarchical relationship. They have a God-given task to perform, the raising of offspring, and within that limited framework they are partners, though not in any other way. Aquinas likened this again to the relationship of Christ with the Church, using the common image of the bleeding side of Christ being the source of the Sacraments – Eucharist and Baptism, blood and water.<sup>94</sup> Prudence Allen notes that, in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*,<sup>95</sup> Thomas defended the basic equality of husband and wife within marriage, but also explained the need for the man to be the ruling party in the marriage, by virtue of his greater powers of reasoning and greater strength. This point was also made by Aquinas in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, suggesting that women could teach men in small groups or at home, but not in public, because of their weaker reasoning capacity.<sup>96</sup> The incorporation of Aristotelian arguments relating to the differences between the sexes and the innate superiority of the male into Thomistic philosophy emerge in a consistent, coherent theory of natural female inferiority. In Thomas's view, for instance, even woman's virtue and sinfulness are lessened because of her lack of reasoning capacity and the way in which she is ruled by her emotions rather than her intellect. Her physical weakness is reflected in a weaker mind. This provided Thomas with an ethical principle for his gender discrimination in favour of the man.

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<sup>92</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 1a, q. 92, a. 2, co.

<sup>93</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 1a, q. 92, a., 1, ad. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 1a, q. 92, a. 1, ad. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Bk III, ch. 3, paras. 147–48, quoted by Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1, p. 143.

<sup>96</sup> Quoted by Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1, p. 143.

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Nonetheless, despite woman being less responsible for her actions, when it comes to the sin of Eve, according to Thomas, she was guiltier, because Eve sinned out of pride alone, whereas the man, as well as his pride, was also driven by love and respect for his wife and so was less culpable.<sup>97</sup>

Eve's sin was seen as indicative of woman's inconstancy and vulnerability, linking together two of the reasons for refusing orders to women. The greater emotionalism and poor intellect of women were often cited as reasons for her inferiority to men, who were better able to benefit from education, especially higher education, always reserved to men until the nineteenth century and beyond. Henry of Ghent, a teacher at Paris in the mid-thirteenth century, and involved in the disputes of 1277 as the adviser to Bishop Tempier, expressed this view in his own theological summary. He gave four qualities needed in a teacher of doctrine, and therefore in a priest: constancy in teaching, to ensure that the teacher keeps to the truth; a capacity for hard work; authority to persuade listeners; and 'vivacity', in order to encourage the faithful to virtue. Woman is said to fail in all these four qualities, and therefore cannot be a teacher of wisdom. Specifically, in terms of the first quality, that of constancy, he says:

A woman truly does not have the constancy for preaching and teaching and is easily seduced from the truth; and therefore after the Apostle in 1 Tim 2 said, 'I do not permit a woman to teach,' after a bit he added in some sense for the reason for it, 'Adam was not seduced: a woman was seduced and was in transgress.'<sup>98</sup>

John of Bassiolis<sup>99</sup> was a Franciscan writer, later in the fourteenth century, a 'faithful follower' of Scotus, who uses the same arguments as his teacher in his commentary on Book IV of the *Sentences*, but adds the note, from 1 Timothy 2, on Eve's greater guilt for sin and therefore her unsuitability as a teacher and hence for orders.<sup>100</sup> From the Dominican tradition, Peter of Palaude (1277–1342) also used the reference from Genesis,

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<sup>97</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, d. 22, q. 1, a. 3: 'mulier enim ex sola elatione mentis ad peccandum mota fuit, vir autem non ex sola elatione, sed simul cum hoc ex quadam amicabili benignitate ad uxorem, quod aliquo modo peccatum ejus mitigat'.

<sup>98</sup> Henry of Ghent, *Summae Quaestionum Ordinarium Theologi Recepto Praeconio Solemnis Henrici a Gandavo*, a. 11, q. 2. In *Aedibus* 1 (Badii Ascensii, 1520: reprinted New York: Franciscan Institute/St. Bonaventure, 1953), ch. I, cols. 77b–78a: 'Mulier vero praedicandi seu docendi constantiam non habet de facili a veritate seducitur; et ideo postquam dixit Apostolus, I Tim. 2, "Docere mulierem non permitto"; post modicum subiunxit quasi pro causa, "Adam non est seductus, mulier autem seducta in praevaricatione fuit."' (translation by John Wijngaards).

<sup>99</sup> In discussing these later authors, I have made use of translations from Martin, 'The Ordination of Women'.

<sup>100</sup> John of Bassolis, *Opera de Joannis de Bassolis Doctor Subtilis Scoti*: 'Et ad hoc est ratio ut discat mulier subiici iuxta imprecationem Dei post lapsum mulieris et viri per ipsam Genesis secundo (sic), "sub viri potestate eris"' quoted by Martin, 'The Ordination of Women', p. 101. .

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this time because the woman's state of subjection to her husband means she can never hold such a position of authority:

Furthermore, the reason of appropriateness means that through orders, someone is placed at a grade of excellence over those not ordained. But such a grade is not appropriate for women over men, rather a state of subjection is becoming to them, because of the weakness of their body, the imperfection of their minds, as it says in the passage in Genesis 3:16 'You will be under the authority of the man ...'<sup>101</sup>

Thomas Netter was an Oxford-educated theologian of the fourteenth century who wrote a condemnation (*Doctrinale Antiquitatum Fidei Catholicae Ecclesiae*) of Wyclif and his followers, one of whose arguments was that the priesthood should be open to all believers. Thomas also uses the sin of Eve as an argument against women's ordination, this time linking it to Paul's command of silence on women. He quotes John Chrysostom's homily, on 1 Timothy 2, where he says that Paul required women to remain silent as a universal rule:

... because of their sex, together with their subjugation. 'On account of which,' he said, 'God subjugated her since she acted wrongly by the equality of honour, not by pre-eminence.' And he judges this to be the punishment of her sex according to those words of the Apostle, 'the woman was deceived' and he disputes here what remains of nature. The feminine has received this punishment in her sex, as Adam according to his species infected all nature.<sup>102</sup>

Thomas Netter went on to add that women can nonetheless be saved by giving birth to children and raising them and, particularly, 'spiritually to bear male sons through the gift of the priesthood. What is forbidden simply in the first female, is forbidden to all females because of their sex according to the law of Paul [1 Cor 14:34].' Netter's assumption is that it is Adam whose sin affects the whole of nature, as the man, and therefore responsible and representative of nature as a whole. Woman, on the other hand, is subordinate to the man from the start and therefore it is honour, not pre-eminence that is impugned by her sin, so her punishment affects her status and dignity as a woman, not as a human being, and

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<sup>101</sup> 'Ratio autem congruentie est, quia per Ordinem aliquis ponitur in gradu excellentie super alios non ordinatos, sed talis gradus non competit mulieribus super viros, sed potius status subiectionis propter infirmitatem corporis et imperfectionem rationis, propter illud Gen. 3:16 "Sub viri potestate eris ...", etc ...': Martin, 'The Ordination of Women', p. 104.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Netter of Walden, *Doctrinale Antiquitatum Fidei Catholicae Ecclesiae*, Vol. III, §381 'Bene discussit Chrysostomus [cf., In Ep. Primam ad Timotheum Commentarius, ch. 2, 11; Hom. 9] intellectum Apostoli de silentio mulierum, quod eis injunctum est communiter quoad sexum, simul et subiectionem, "propterea", inquit, "subjecit eam Deus, quia non principatu, sed honoris parilitate male usa est", probatque hanc poenam sexus esse per verbum illud Apostoli "mulier decepta est", et ibi de reliquo de natura disputat. Foemina quae hanc poenam recepit in sexu, sicut Adam secundum speciem, totam infecit naturam: salutem tamen suam procurare concessum est mulieri per filiorum educationem et partum corporeum: sicut viros filios spiritualiter parere per sacerdotis obequium. Quod simpliciter est in prima foemina, per hanc legem Pauli secundum sexum totum foeminis interdictum.'

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applies to aspects of women's lives – childbirth, social position, her lack of autonomy as being the property of her husband.

The sceptical Andreas Capellanus, in his satirical account of courtly behaviour, written in the late twelfth century, *De Amore*,<sup>103</sup> asks: 'Did not Eve, the first woman who was moreover fashioned by God's hand, die and lose the glory of immortality by the sin of disobedience, by her guilt dragging all her posterity to mortal destruction? So if you want a woman to do anything, you will get your way by bidding her to do the opposite.'

Eve's actions have consequences that are still reverberating, thousands of years after the story, the myth of our origins, first began to be articulated in the ancient Near East. The first tellers of this tale are not exploring a land they knew, rather, as Tina Beattie explains, they are trying 'to explain the loss of paradise ... seeking to imagine life behind the veil of suffering in order to give shape to their longings for wholeness'. The 'problem of pain' that has challenged believers from the beginning poses difficult questions of loss and incompleteness and, in trying to answer these questions, the myth of Genesis 'constitutes not an acceptance of but a protest against the human condition as we know it'<sup>104</sup> and, in particular perhaps, as we reflect on it today, against the condition of women as we know it, both inside the Church and in society in general.<sup>105</sup>

### 5.f Deborah

In addressing the issue of outstanding women characters in scripture, the scholastic writers considered Deborah, a Judge of Israel, as Bonaventure does:

In the fourth book of Judges it is read that Deborah judged Israel and presided over it: therefore it is seen that power of judgement belonged to a woman, all the more so when she had abundance of grace. Therefore priestly power belonged to her also.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> P.G. Walsh (tr.), *Andreas Capellanus on Love* (London: Duckworth, 1983), quoted by Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 121.

<sup>104</sup> Tina Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate* (London: Continuum, 1999), p. 46.

<sup>105</sup> Commenting on the writings of Julian of Norwich on the Fall, Janet Soskice shows that: 'The fall ... is not something which happened long ago in Eden for which all men and women are subsequently punished. The "Fall" or "falling" happens to everyone almost every day, and is the way in which "man who is to be saved" learns and grows. It is part of the course we run and were we never to fall, we would never fully appreciate the astonishing love of our Maker.': Soskice, *The Kindness of God*, p. 143.

<sup>106</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 649: 'Iudicium quarto legitur, quod Debbora iudicavit Israel et ei praefuit: ergo videtur, quod mulieri competat potestas iudicaria, maxime quando abundat in gratia: ergo et potestas sacerdotalis.'



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Bonaventure answered this point in the *conclusio*, by saying that such power of judgement belongs only to the temporal sphere and not to the spiritual. Spiritual ‘dominion’ (*dominio*) implies headship as held by Christ and therefore women, who cannot be the ‘head’ of a man, cannot be ordained.<sup>107</sup> The reference to 1 Corinthians 11:3, ‘the head of the woman is man’, is much used in the context, establishing in Pauline terms the necessary hierarchy of nature: God, Christ, man, woman, as already seen.

The book of Judges in the Old Testament forms part of the Deuteronomistic history, covering the period of settlement up to just before the first of the kings. It is a collection of stories, in both prose and poetic form, about heroes and battles in folklore, assembled to form a coherent whole, for mainly theological purposes. Despite there being some archaeological evidence to show destruction of settlements at the period when some of the skirmishes may have taken place, it is not intended as a piece of military history.<sup>108</sup> Rather it shows the way in which Yahweh raises up people of integrity and authority to guide and lead the people of Israel in their struggle against their enemies and how the continual apostatising of the tribes results in repeated defeats, requiring another charismatic leader to rescue the situation. The Deuteronomic cycle is clear – Israel falls away from Yahweh by worshipping false gods, she is oppressed by her enemies for a time, then, following repentance, a warrior or leader arises to free the people from their bondage.<sup>109</sup>

Deborah is a popular and much-quoted figure in mediaeval literature about women. She appears in the Book of Judges, 4 and 5, where the story of her prowess as a military leader and as a judge is told. The figures of the judges, as Norman Gottwald says, were not authoritarian, but rather arose as a response to a particular need of the times:

... the person who has a legitimate ad hoc function delimited by existing forms of traditional leadership ... most of them begin their ‘judging’ either on the basis of some traditionally sanctioned office they already hold ... or on the basis of a direct charge by those occupying traditionally sanctioned offices.<sup>110</sup>

Along with her general, Barak, Deborah led an alliance of Israelite tribal armies to victory over the army of Sisera, leader of the Canaanites. She is paired with another formidable

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<sup>107</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, p. 650: ‘Ad illud ergo quod obiicitur de Debbora, dicendum, quod illa fuit potestas temporalis, non spiritualis. Mulieribus autem bene licet temporaliter dominari, sed non spirituali dominio, quod est signum, quod ille qui dominatur, gerit typum capitis Christi; quoniam ergo mulier non potest esse caput viri, ideo ordinari non potest.’

<sup>108</sup> N.K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 199.

<sup>109</sup> B. Metzger and M. Coogan (eds.), *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), p. 397.

<sup>110</sup> Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 160.

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woman, Jael, who assassinates Sisera as he lies asleep. The earliest account of this victory, the 'Song of Deborah', may be the oldest surviving Israelite poem, dating from the late twelfth century BC, shortly after the events it reports.<sup>111</sup> Deborah has a unique role in Israelite history, as a prophet, a military leader and through the song of her victory. This may reflect the role of women in shaping tradition through their creativity.<sup>112</sup>

The Hebrew text of the story of Deborah, at its opening (Judges 4:4–5) emphasises strongly the unusual appearance into the narrative of a female prophet. There is a repeated use of female pronouns and nouns, sometimes eliminated in standard English translations, but brought out by Robert Alter in his study of these opening verses: 'And Deborah, a prophet-woman, Lapidoth's woman, she was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah ...'. Alter suggests, in line with his thesis, that this device is intended to startle the reader, awaken our sensibility to the exceptional nature of Deborah's role.<sup>113</sup> The story is part of a sequence of similar accounts of the emergence of charismatic leaders at a time of Israel's shame and need for a champion, but it stands out because of the gender of this particular leader. Deborah's statement that the Lord will deliver Sisera by the hand of a woman (Judges 4:8–9) is later made dramatically real by Jael's action with the hammer and tent-peg. Barak, the male general, is portrayed as almost helplessly dependent on the much stronger woman when he responds to her command from the Lord that he should lead the armies, with his hesitating 'if you go with me, I will go, if you don't go I won't go.' (Jdg 4:8). Alter's purpose is not to retroject modern feminist statements onto ancient literature, but to highlight the function of the text precisely as literature, apart from its theological and ideological message about Israel's relationship with Yahweh. The writer of the story of Deborah is taking authorial delight in his characters, the 'woman of manly courage and the pusillanimous man (Barak at the beginning) or the man of childlike helplessness (Sisera in Jael's tent)'.<sup>114</sup>

This was indeed the apparent (because it's impossible to be sure just what the original intention was) purpose of the story, the emergence of a champion, able to save Israel. Yahweh can raise up a saviour for his people from anywhere. If the men are indeed unable

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<sup>111</sup> Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 161.

<sup>112</sup> Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 161.

<sup>113</sup> Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature* (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 41.

<sup>114</sup> Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature*, p. 43. Alter stresses the way in which the writer uses the language itself to hint at the layers of possibility in the narrative: 'Language, straining against the decorum of ordinary usage, is fashioned to intimate perspectives the writer would rather not spell out and invites our complicitous delight in the ingenuity of the fashioning.'

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to rise to the occasion, then even a woman can be made sufficiently strong to do the work of the Lord. Just as in many other stories from the Old Testament, and other literature, it is often the character perceived as least likely – the woman, the old man, the youngest son – who proves to be the cornerstone of the scheme to save the day.

Ambrose (c. 339–397), not normally noted for his appreciation of women, thought very highly of Deborah, seeing her principally as a significant figure to encourage women to overcome their innate weakness and find their strength through valour. He wrote about her in his treatise *De Viduis (On Widows)* and presented her as a brave woman, a widow, respected and chosen because of the failure of the men to be sufficiently brave and just to rule the people properly: ‘when the Jews were being ruled under the leadership of the judges, because these could not govern them with manly justice or defend them with manly strength, so that wars broke out on all sides, they chose Deborah, to be ruled by her judgement’.<sup>115</sup> As Alcuin Blamires notes elsewhere though, Ambrose’s reason for pointing out that it is valour that makes a person strong, not their sex, was to argue that widows should not remarry using the ‘natural weakness’ of their sex to excuse their choice.<sup>116</sup> Strong women were seen as the exception and they would be held up both as an example to other women and also to shame the men into action.

The conclusion of the scholastics, such as Bonaventure, on Deborah, that she ruled in the temporal and not the spiritual sphere (*potestas temporalis, non spiritualis*), seems to ignore her influential role as inspiration and leader. Each time the warring tribes of Canaan overwhelm the communities of Israel, a leader emerges to give them energy and new hope, with the *ruah*, the spirit of God’s life in them, to give them some years of peace and retrenchment, before another oppressor appears (Judges 3:1:6). The Book of Judges has a whole succession of these, including Deborah and the courageous Jael, given equal distinction with the men such as Othniel, Ehud and Gideon. Barak’s dependence on Deborah’s guidance, his reluctance to act without her beside him, would perhaps seem to indicate moral if not spiritual support for the weaker human being. Nonetheless, the story is one of martial prowess and triumph over a human foe and thus cannot be seen, as Bonaventure says, as an argument for women’s suitability to hold authority over men.

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<sup>115</sup> Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 60; Ambrose, *On Widows*, ch. VIII.

<sup>116</sup> Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 173.

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### 5.g Writings of Paul

The Pauline letters provide another source of supporting material for the exclusion of women from the Sacrament of Orders, both in the scholastic period and on throughout the centuries up to the present day. Paul is, of course, not writing about ‘ordination’ at all. The early Christian communities were loose gatherings of people, fluid and shifting at times, often persecuted either physically or economically, and with community leaders appointed for particular roles – to host the gatherings, to teach, to administer the communal fund and so on. These leaders appear to have been either men or women on a fairly equal basis, often the wealthier members of local communities who had the resources to offer to the fledgling church and perhaps a house big enough to welcome all-comers (Acts 16:13–15; 1 Cor 11:33, 16:19; Eph 5; 2 Tim 19; Titus 2; Phil 1:1).

There are two main texts from Paul quoted by the mediaeval theologians and canonists. The most important is the ban on women teaching, from 1 Timothy 2:12: ‘I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silence.’<sup>117</sup> The reason the writer of Timothy (a disciple of Paul) gives for this prohibition is the transgression of Eve and Adam’s prior creation, the text frequently cited as we have already seen in the discussion on Genesis. This rule is considered still to be effective for modern times.<sup>118</sup> In his exploration of this point, John Wijngaards shows that the phrase ‘in the Church’ or ‘in an assembly’ has been inserted into the text here (1 Tim 2:12), by conflation with the second important passage in 1 Corinthians 14:34, which has ‘Let women keep silence in the churches’, which we will consider later.<sup>119</sup> The canonists first articulate the ban, as Gratian has it: ‘a woman ... should not presume to instruct men in an assembly’.<sup>120</sup> The insertion ‘in the Church’, then appears in most of the commentaries on the *Sentences* including those by Scotus and Richard of Middleton, and in Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*: ‘[Women cannot receive holy orders] for it is said, “I suffer not a woman to teach in the

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<sup>117</sup> In fact, the sentence could also be interpreted ‘no wife to teach or to have authority over her husband’, which would render a somewhat different interpretation, a more specific case, rather than a general ban.

<sup>118</sup> ‘The prohibition solely concerns the official function of teaching in the Christian assembly.’: *Inter Insigniores*, § 19. Although the very next chapter of Paul’s letter, where the marital state of a bishop is discussed, with recommendations as to how he should rule his household, keeping his children respectful and so on (1 Tim 3:4), followed by further recommendations on the behaviour of men and women deacons (1 Tim 3:8–13), is not considered to be binding on the Church today.

<sup>119</sup> J. Wijngaards, *The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church* (London: DLT, 2001), pp. 78ff.

<sup>120</sup> Gratian, *Decretum Gratiani*, Part I, d. 23, ch. 29, *Corpus Juris Canonici*, A. Friedberg (ed.) (Leipzig: 1879–1881/reprint Graz: 1959), Vol. 1, col. 86.

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Church, nor to use authority over the man”<sup>121</sup>. The temperamental, unstable nature of women makes them incapable of the steady, rational application and articulation needed for teaching the Word of God, so this prohibition makes perfect sense. For the teaching authority of the Church today, it is the appeal to unbroken tradition that prevails and the fact that Paul is seen to be reflecting the ‘divine plan of Creation’.<sup>122</sup> The explanation for this interpretation of Paul is given by a parenthetical allusion to 1 Corinthians 11:7, without elaboration as to its relevance. In his requirement for women to be veiled when prophesying, Paul here says that the man is the ‘image and reflection of God, but woman is the reflection of man ... [because] woman was made from man’. Hence, for the late twentieth century, although even women religious in the Catholic Church are no longer required to be veiled, and prophesying in church is an unusual event, the ‘tradition’ remains that women cannot be ordained. The remainder of Paul’s chapter discusses the propriety of women wearing their hair long, an entirely culture-specific reference, historically interesting but hardly a guide for fashion let alone Church practice. The link between this text and the Sacrament of Orders is obscure. There is a further reference to Gen 2:18–24, the second account of the creation of woman, already discussed above, which presumably is intended to reinforce the idea that, in the natural order, or in the divine plan of creation, women are subordinate to men. It is used by the author of 1 Timothy to support his contention that women should be submissive and not presume to speak in the assembly but, as we will see, it cannot be extended beyond its immediate context in the situation concerning this writer.

The first letter to Timothy is generally accepted as having been written some time after the death of Paul, by a disciple who considered himself to be following in Paul’s footsteps.<sup>123</sup> The writer of 1 Timothy was concerned to counter the influence of Gnostic teaching, particularly attractive to women as it tended to exalt them and give them a status as ‘channels of divine revelation’.<sup>124</sup> The line requiring women to ‘learn in silence with all submissiveness’ should be understood as referring to a particular situation, where women

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<sup>121</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Suppl., q. 39, a. 1.

<sup>122</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, para. 20.

<sup>123</sup> Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2004.) p. 4: ‘By the end of the twentieth century New Testament scholarship was virtually unanimous in affirming that the Pastoral Epistles were written some time after Paul’s death ... As always some scholars dissent from the consensus view.’

<sup>124</sup> See, for instance, John Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 1990, revised edn.), p. 140; J. Murphy O’Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 356; J. Wijngaards, *The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church*, p. 80; Hans Küng, *Women in Christianity* (London: Continuum, 1994), John Bowden (tr.) (2001).

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especially should be on guard against false teachers, rather than to all men in general. John Wijngaards points out that the verb used here, *epitrepsein*, ‘to permit’, indicates a specific situation and, as it is in the present tense, it should be understood as meaning ‘this prohibition is applicable at this present moment’.<sup>125</sup> The fact that Paul elsewhere accepts women’s voice in the assembly, as prophets and their role as deacons, shows that this particular ban, imposed not by Paul himself but by a follower at a later date, applies to a specific, time-limited situation, in a particular community. The letters of Paul, and of others writing in his name, are always addressed to individual communities and, while they do have universal application, caution is necessary when trying to read them from another time and with another agenda. The writer of 1 Timothy goes on to use the Genesis text to underpin his argument, but does it rather awkwardly, contradicting himself. As we have already seen, the sequence of events in creation does not indicate the priority of the first created, otherwise human beings would be subordinate to animals, plants and the ground itself. The story of the temptation and Fall clearly shows that both the man and the women were deceived and were equally guilty, so the contention that only the woman transgressed (1 Tim 2:14) is false. The salvation of woman residing in childbirth and modest behaviour is taken up, as we have seen, by many of the mediaeval writers and extended to justify the subjection of women, limiting their function to that of child-bearers and confining them to the domestic sphere.<sup>126</sup> Stanley Porter’s detailed analysis of the ‘saved by childbirth’ verse (1 Tim 2:15) shows that, despite the discomfort of modern readers, ‘the author of 1 Timothy apparently believed that for the woman who abides in faith, love and holiness, her salvation will come by the bearing of children’.<sup>127</sup>

St. John Chrysostom, in his sermon on 1 Timothy, commented on Paul’s ruling, and expanded it to complain about the behaviour of women in his own time, approving Paul’s wisdom in placing the restriction on them as they cannot restrain their tongues and, thus, not only shame themselves but prevent the more serious from attending to the wisdom of the preacher. It is also important for women to show their submission by their silence. For women of Chrysostom’s own time, it was necessary to demonstrate the greater honour and

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<sup>125</sup> Wijngaards, *The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church*, p. 81.

<sup>126</sup> Wijngaards, *The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church*, pp. 82–83.

<sup>127</sup> Stanley E. Porter, ‘What Does It Mean to be “Saved by Childbirth” (1 Tim 2.15)?’, in S.E. Porter and C.A. Evans (eds.), *New Testament Text and Language: A Sheffield Reader* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 160–175.

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status of men, to have women subservient to them. The primacy of the male for him arose from women's greater culpability for the sin of the first parents.<sup>128</sup>

This reference to the same point in 1 Timothy is always used by theologians in later periods to interpret the verses in 1 Corinthians, with the addition of the further reasons added, that woman was created after man and that she takes primary responsibility for the sin of our first parents. In his manual for preachers, *De Eruditione Praedicatorum*, Humbert of Romans (c. 1190–1270) said:

The qualities requisite for a preacher in regard to his person are first of all, that he be of the male sex, for St. Paul 'does not want women to be permitted to speak' (1 Tim. 2:12). He gave four reasons for this: 'Firstly, a lack of intelligence, for in this woman is thought to be inferior to man; secondly, her natural state of dependency (the preacher should not occupy an inferior place); thirdly, the concupiscence which her very presence may arouse; fourthly, the remembrance of her first error, which led St. Bernard to say, "She spoke but once and threw the world into disorder".'<sup>129</sup>

Humbert is using the self-same arguments as many of the scholastic teachers propose around the same time against women's suitability for orders, woman's deficiency of intellect, her subordinate position, the arousal of lust and the guilt of Eve.

Another text often quoted from the first letter to the Corinthians (14:33–34)<sup>130</sup> is usually placed alongside the 1 Timothy ruling by the mediaeval writers. In fact this is an interpolation, from a gloss added by an early commentator. It appears in a different place in some manuscripts, showing that it has been incorporated into the text at a later date. It is likely to have been inserted in the light of the parallel in 1 Timothy, as a supporting argument, quoting the law, although Paul himself teaches freedom from the law (e.g. Gal 5:14, 18).<sup>131</sup> Roger Gryson argues cogently for the insertion of the verses 33b–35 in 1 Corinthians 14 as being unlike Paul in terms of the lexical content and because the preceding and following verses naturally fit together. He points out how the ideas expressed do not fit with Paul's thoughts on women elsewhere and considers that the

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<sup>128</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies* (Oxford: Library of Fathers of the Catholic Church, 1843), Homily IX, quoted and revised by Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, pp. 58–59.

<sup>129</sup> At [http://dominicanidaho.org/humbert\\_chapter2.html](http://dominicanidaho.org/humbert_chapter2.html), Dominican Students Province of St. Joseph (trs.), Walter M. Conlon, O.P. (ed.), last accessed August 2014. And in the eighteenth century, nothing much had changed: 'Never has a people perished from an excess of wine; all perish from the disorder of women ... the first of these two vices turns one away from the others; the second engenders them all.' Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Allan Bloom (tr.), *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre* (New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2004), p.332.

<sup>130</sup> As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says.

<sup>131</sup> Wijngaards, *The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church*, p. 83.

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source of the insertion is a Judaeo-Christian community, rather than a Hellenistic one, because of the unelaborated reference to the 'law'.

L'addition est certainement très ancienne, non seulement parce qu'elle figure dans tous les manuscrits, même si ce n'est pas toujours à la même place, mais aussi parce qu'elle se trouve démarquée dans la Première à Timothée, où il est prescrit à la femme de 's'instruire en silence' et où il lui est interdit non pas simplement de 'parler' mais 'd'enseigner'.<sup>132</sup>

Despite the use of the references to both Genesis 2 and 1 Corinthians 11 in the Vatican document quoted above,<sup>133</sup> the Pauline text is perhaps the earliest and clearest defence of the equality of women in the New Testament and should be seen in this light when considering later writings, such as the Gospels and other documents of the earliest Christian communities, in their references to women. Paul in fact shows how the precedence of man in creation is balanced by the precedence of woman in generation and both are part of God's overall plan (11–12). The conclusion drawn by one important commentator is that 'the directive that women must keep silent in church cannot come from the pen of Paul'.<sup>134</sup> Paul has often been seen as a misogynist, taking the hierarchical structure of God's creation for granted and reading the Genesis story as placing woman in the created order subject to man's dominion, not just because of the punishment for sin, but even before that, in woman's creation as fit companion for man, who alone is made truly in the image of God. He uses the terms *soma* or *sarx* (body or flesh) to refer to woman in relation to man, reflecting the phraseology of Genesis, 'flesh of my flesh', and the Jewish matrimonial imagery of the Hebrew scriptures. So man is always the 'head' of the woman, just as Christ is head of the man and, in these terms, the hierarchical structure within God's plan is non-negotiable for Paul.<sup>135</sup> Nonetheless, more recent work on his writings and thought has revealed a much more nuanced approach to women's status within the Church and an acceptance of the radical nature of the social structure developing within early church communities in the real world.

In fact, in Paul's writings there emerges a picture of a mixed, common society of men and women, working in joint cause for the imminent second coming, to prepare themselves and as many of their fellow women and men to greet the returning Christ. For the early Church,

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<sup>132</sup> Roger Gryson, *Le Ministère des Femmes dans l'Église Ancienne* (Belgium: Editions J. Duculot, 1972), pp. 28–29: 'The addition is certainly very old, not just because it is found in all the manuscripts, although not always in the same position, but also because it is highlighted in 1 Timothy, where women are required to "hear and learn in silence", and forbidden not just to "speak", but also to "teach".'

<sup>133</sup> *Inter Insigniores*.

<sup>134</sup> Murphy O'Connor, *Paul*, p. 290. See also Küng, *Women in Christianity*, p. 12.

<sup>135</sup> Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women', p. 180



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the unsatisfactory nature of the world was part of its unredeemed nature. They were looking forward to the fulfilment of the work of salvation and, thus, lived within the structures of their own society, while trying to establish new ways of being, according to their understanding of what the coming Kingdom would be.<sup>136</sup> The first letter to the Corinthians, for instance, alongside its defence of the necessary equality of men and women in the plan of creation, refers to the communities of Chloe (1:11) and Prisca (16:19), where the women held leadership roles. Even the passage requiring women to have their heads covered when praying and prophesying indicates that the presence of women's voices in the assembly was a normal feature of the Christian churches.<sup>137</sup>

Again, the letter to the Philippians and Acts describe the community founded by Lydia the 'seller of purple' (Acts 16:13–15),<sup>138</sup> and mentions other women leaders of this church, Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2), whom Paul asks to resolve their differences. He describes them as 'co-workers', a term popular with Paul, indicating their equality alongside himself as apostles and missionaries of the gospel.

The roll of names in Romans is the most comprehensive testimony to the number of prominent women having significant functions within these early Christian communities. Paul identifies these people as having a variety of roles to perform, without distinguishing between men and women in any hierarchical way. There are deacons, ministers, leaders, co-workers and, of course, apostles.

Translations of these texts are often misleading, making an unjustified distinction between men and women.<sup>139</sup> The same word, *diakonos*, for instance, is translated as 'deacon', 'minister', 'missionary' or 'servant', in various versions of the text when speaking of men, but sometimes as 'servant' or 'deaconess' when speaking of women.<sup>140</sup> Once again, the language used, by deliberate choice, can contribute to reinforcing an interpretation of the text that is not supported on closer examination.<sup>141</sup> Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2), for example is

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<sup>136</sup> Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, p. 125.

<sup>137</sup> Susan Calef, 'Women in the New Testament', in Richard Miller (ed.), *Women and the Shaping of Catholicism* (Missouri: Liguori Press, 2009), pp. 22ff.

<sup>138</sup> See Kate Cooper, *Band of Angels*, p. 14ff.

<sup>139</sup> See Chapter 7 on language for more on this subject.

<sup>140</sup> Such as the King James Bible, the New International Version, the Jerusalem Bible.

<sup>141</sup> A close analysis of these two terms is given by Elizabeth A. McCabe in 'A Re-evaluation of Phoebe in Romans 16:1–2 as *Diakonos* and *Prostatis*: Exposing the Inaccuracies of English Translations', in Elizabeth A. McCabe, Lynn B.E. Jencks and Lee A. Johnson (eds.), *Women in the Biblical World: A Survey of Old and New Testament Perspectives*, Vol. 1 (Lanham: University Press of America, 2009).

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sometimes described as a ‘servant’ and ‘helper’ of the local congregation, but the terms used, *diakonos* and *prostatis*, are better translated as ‘deacon’ or ‘minister’, as we have seen, and ‘patron’, indicating that she had some wealth and provided funds to support the community, a commonly attested role for rich women of the time, assisting groups of various kinds, not just the Christian churches.<sup>142</sup> Paul himself does not differentiate the roles of men and women in the way that later translators would prefer to see.<sup>143</sup> As Susan Calef points out, Paul, Luke and other early writers invented or adopted this terminology to suit the needs of these fledgling and radically innovative communities springing up all over the region. Their usage should therefore be taken at least as the basis for a modern interpretation of the text, rather than distorting their meaning to suit the evolution of later, more hierarchical and gender-limiting structures.<sup>144</sup>

Another woman who was lost in translation for a long time is Paul’s kinswoman, Junia. For centuries, a scribal correction rendered her name as Junias, a relatively unknown masculine form, but she has been restored to her rightful place as one ‘prominent among the apostles’, and a Christian even before Paul’s conversion.<sup>145</sup> Her praises are sung by John Chrysostom, among others, ‘to be outstanding among the apostles – think what praise that is!’ Her early conversion, along with another relative, Andronicus, and their status as apostles may indicate they were witnesses of the Resurrection appearances.<sup>146</sup>

### 5.h Women in the Gospels

Many women were regarded as apostles in the centuries following Paul and the first Gospel writers, including Mary Magdalene and the Samaritan woman at the well, because they were given the direct command by Jesus ‘Go and tell ...’. Even though the label ‘disciple’ or ‘apostle’ is not applied by the Gospels to the women who followed Jesus, this does not mean that their importance within the large group of people surrounding him

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<sup>142</sup> Calef, ‘Women in the New Testament’, p. 26

<sup>143</sup> Calef, ‘Women in the New Testament’, p. 25.

<sup>144</sup> Calef, ‘Women in the New Testament’, p. 26.

<sup>145</sup> See Eldon J. Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). Epp traces how Junia’s name was changed, to eliminate her from the record and replace her with a man. In this careful study, he reinstates her to her proper position. Also James Dunn and John Rogerson (eds.), *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003). The Romans commentary is by John Reumann: ‘Especially significant are ... the Jewish–Christian *apostoloi*, the husband and wife missionary couple, Andronicus and Junia, believers before Paul, likely appointed by the risen Christ. Until about 1300 *Jounian* in most manuscripts was taken as accusative singular of a woman’s name, then down through the RSV as a man’s name, Junias.’: p. 1311.

<sup>146</sup> Calef, ‘Women in the New Testament’, p. 29.

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during his ministry was less significant than that of the men. As John Meier observes, there may be very simple, practical explanations for this. For instance, there was no feminine form in Ancient Hebrew or Aramaic for the word ‘disciple’. Also, the Gospel writers rarely mention the arrival of the women in the group, they simply appear within the narrative from time to time, as established followers and friends, so the writers may not have known the circumstances of their call to be followers, ‘the absence of the title “disciple” in the case of these female followers is a good reminder that one should not assess the functions, activities or importance of particular persons within a religious group simply by the presence or absence of certain titles or labels’.<sup>147</sup> The call of a woman may not have been treated with the same importance as that of the men.

John Duns Scotus, of all the mediaeval scholastic writers, placed particular importance on the role of Mary Magdalene in her exceptional position as an Apostle. Other writers, and Scotus too, mentioned the Mother of Christ as being unlike other women, that is, not inherently evil, unstable or intellectually deficient. The point is often made, and still is, that if Christ had considered women as suitable for ordination, surely he would have ordained his own mother, peerless and sinless as she was. The fact that Mary of Nazareth herself is excluded from the group of Apostles means that no other woman could possibly be ordained and therefore that there must be some explanation for this exclusion in the very nature of women that precludes their suitability for orders.<sup>148</sup> The case of Mary in respect of women’s priesthood is otherwise only dealt with briefly by the scholastics, although later on, into the fourteenth century and beyond, it is repeated simply as evidence that Christ did not want any woman to be ordained, since he did not ‘ordain’ his mother.<sup>149</sup>

Scotus was the first of the scholastics to mention Magdalene, however. He acknowledged that she is indeed an Apostle and a teacher, but says that she was an exception to the rule, and that the general exclusion cannot be invalidated by one solitary example, of a particularly favoured and exceptional individual.

And if you set up Magdalene in opposition to this, who was an Apostle and moreover a teacher and placed over all sinful women, I answer that she was a singular woman, and singularly accepted by

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<sup>147</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Vol. III: Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), pp. 78ff., p. 631.

<sup>148</sup> Martin, ‘The Ordination of Women’, p. 81.

<sup>149</sup> However, from the sixteenth century onwards, a popular devotion emerged to Mary as a Priest, which ran counter to the Church’s official teaching on the subject. See Tina Beattie, ‘Mary, the Virgin Priest?’ *The Month*, No. 257, December 1996, pp. 485–493. There is a historical survey of references to this devotion published on [http://www.catherinecollegelibrary.net/mrpriest/mpr\\_list.asp](http://www.catherinecollegelibrary.net/mrpriest/mpr_list.asp), last accessed August 2014.

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Christ, and this personal privilege follows the person, and is extinguished with that person. *Extra de reg. juris* in book 6 and elsewhere of the canons, of those who fall outside the scope of common law may by no means be invoked to the contrary, in the same place.<sup>150</sup>

In the mediaeval imagination, Magdalene was notable as a folk-character who had undergone a transformation, from prostitute, fallen woman and repentant sinner, to saint and paragon. She appears in all kinds of guises, a composite of all the Marys except the Mother of Jesus in the gospels, and other unnamed women.

In the Gospels, apart from the Passion and Resurrection narratives, Mary Magdalene is named only by Luke in his pericope of the women companions of Jesus (Lk 8:1–3).<sup>151</sup> She is identified by her place of origin, rather than by her relationship to a man, as most of the other women are. Perhaps her disturbed personality, described as being caused by demonic possession, leads to her being alone.<sup>152</sup> The long ending of Mark also mentions Mary Magdalene having been freed from seven demons. Nowhere is there any evidence of Mary being known for promiscuous behaviour, or that she had earned her living as a prostitute. The two unnamed women who repent of their way of life, one of whom Jesus rescues from stoning (John 8:3–11) and the other who anoints the feet of Jesus before his death (Lk 7:36–50) have been conflated with Mary Magdalene, along with Mary of Bethany (who also anoints Jesus' feet in Jn 12:3), and Mary the mother of James and John, to produce the '3-in-1' Mary, so fascinating to the mediaeval popular imagination. This multi-faceted Mary is a sexual sinner, an erotic, beautiful woman, who entranced even Jesus, she is a penitent, weeping over her own sinfulness, she is a mother, and she is also the Apostle to the Apostles, a great preacher and missionary, who is later reported living as an ascetic and hermit in the south of France.<sup>153</sup> Marina Warner identifies Mary Magdalene as the mythological figure of the repentant sinner, the female equivalent of Peter, Thomas and Paul, sinful, flawed men who overcome their faults to rise to perfection through self-denial and martyrdom. Mary of Nazareth, the prototype, cannot take this mythic role, because her

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<sup>150</sup> *Duns Scoti Opera Omnia, Vol. 24: Reportata Parisiensia*, Luke Wadding (ed.) (Paris: Vivès 1894), Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2: 'Et si opponas de Magdalena quae fuit Apostola, et tanquam praedicatrix et praefecta super omnes mulieres peccatrices, respondeo quod ipsa fuit singularis mulier, et singulariter accepta Christo, et ideo privilegium personale personam sequitur, et extinguatur cum persona, Extra de reg. juris, in 6. lib et alibi, quae a Jure communi exorbitant, nequaquam ad contraria sunt trahenda, ibidem.'

<sup>151</sup> 'The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their own resources.'

<sup>152</sup> Calef, 'Women in the New Testament'.

<sup>153</sup> For an analysis of the exegetical evidence for the confusion in the identity of Mary of Magdalene, see Carla Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and Many Others*, Paul Burns (tr.) (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1994), pp. 30ff. A thorough and readable study is Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: The Essential History* (London: Pimlico, 2005, 2nd edn.).

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complete perfection is incapable of sin so, despite her humanity, she is a less than consoling figure for ordinary human women.<sup>154</sup> Mary of Magdalene, like the Virgin Mary, is perceived in sexual terms, promiscuity in opposition to virgin purity, but repentant and therefore saved: '[the Virgin Mary's] unspotted goodness prevents the sinner from identifying with her, and keeps her in the position of the Platonic ideal; but Mary Magdalene holds up a comforting mirror to those who sin again and again, and promises joy to human frailty'.<sup>155</sup>

In Luke's account of the woman who anoints Jesus' feet (Lk 7:47), Jesus rebukes Simon, his host, for his neglect of ordinary hospitality and says that the woman's many sins 'are forgiven for she loved much', like the debtor whose release makes him grateful. The assumption was always that the woman's sins were against chastity, so much so that homes for reformed prostitutes were known as 'Magdalenes' throughout Europe. Simon's horrified exclamation that the woman's touch would pollute Jesus was assumed to be uttered because of her immorality ('because she loved much') but, in fact, the gospel text will not sustain that. The Greek word *agapao*, 'to love', has no sexual connotations but means 'love, cherish, enjoy, have affection for'. Jesus is saying that she is a loving human being, despite her sins, and therefore she has been forgiven – her loving nature has led her to repentance and forgiveness. The Mary Magdalene of later times has been constructed in the tradition of the harlot, a social role not a judgement,<sup>156</sup> who has a role to play in the narrative of the nation, or stands for the sins of the people in the Hebrew tradition, like Gomer (Hos 1:2–3), or Rahab (Jos 2), who appears in the Matthean genealogy of Jesus, said to be saved by her repentance. Mary Magdalene is one of the few female saints until modern times who cannot be designated 'virgin'. Her popularity in mediaeval times was the result of the mystery of her unknown past, of an erotic, half-concealed history, and her redeemed nature, rising from the dregs of society to be the preferred companion of Jesus and the first of the Apostles.

In the Passion and Resurrection accounts, Mary Magdalene played a leading role. Despite the subsequent proliferation of stories about her, the Gospel writers themselves make little mention of her until she is seen following Jesus on the way of the cross. John reports her at the foot of the cross, witness to the death of Jesus (Jn 19:25). She is named by Mark and

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<sup>154</sup> Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Quartet Books, 1978), pp. 225 ff.

<sup>155</sup> Warner, *Alone of All her Sex*, p. 235.

<sup>156</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 31

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Matthew as first in the group of women who visit the tomb (Mk 15:47, Mt 27:61) and who return to anoint him the next day (Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1). And, of course, she is identified by the writer of the Gospel of John as the first to meet and speak with Jesus after the Resurrection, the bearer of the good news to the other Apostles. Elaine Wainwright points out that while Jesus' appearance to the (male) Apostles takes place within the centre of power in Jerusalem, or on the mountain, the traditional place of authoritative place of divine encounter, the meetings with the women, Mary and others, take place away from such locations, in the open road, out in the world, the place where the message of Jesus is to be proclaimed.<sup>157</sup>

Some early writers tried to play down Mary Magdalene's role as the witness to the Resurrection. In his commentary on Luke's Gospel, for instance, St. Ambrose (c. 339–397) quoted Mary's encounter as a sign of her weak faith: 'Therefore she is sent to those who are stronger (by whose example let her learn to believe) in order that *they* may preach the Resurrection.'<sup>158</sup> Ambrose acknowledged that Mary Magdalene's role is to compensate for the Fall and Eve's sin, as all women must, but he emphasises that she is too unreliable to be trusted with the role of preacher, 'since she is too inferior in steadfastness for preaching, and her sex is weaker in carrying things through, the evangelical role is assigned to men'.<sup>159</sup>

Thus, the mediaeval image of Mary that prevailed was of the repentant sinner, exalted to great heights of sanctity by her encounter with the risen Lord, and one of those who goes out to preach to the world, taking the Gospel message right into the heart of Europe. Her presence in southern France was believed to have been confirmed in 1279 by the opening of her alleged tomb, in the church of Saint Maximin near Aix-en-Provence, accompanied by marvellous signs, sweet smells and a green shoot growing from the saint's mouth, interpreted as symbolising her role as Apostle to the Apostles and divinely mandated preacher.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Elaine M. Wainwright, *Shall We Look for Another? A Feminist Re-Reading of the Matthean Jesus* (New York: Orbis Books, 1998), pp. 114–115.

<sup>158</sup> Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam*, M. Adriaen (ed.) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957), translated and quoted by Blamires, *Women Defamed and Women Defended*, pp. 61ff.

<sup>159</sup> Ambrose, from Blamires, *Women Defamed and Women Defended*, p. 61.

<sup>160</sup> Katherine Ludwig Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena: Apostolorum Apostola', in Beverly M. Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (eds.), *Women Preachers and Prophets, through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

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In mediaeval interpretations of redemption theology, just as Christ as man is the counterpart to Adam, so Mary of Nazareth as woman is the counterpart to Eve. However, Mary Magdalene's transformation is also used as a type for the redemptive process, in herself, she demonstrates the efficacy of repentance and commitment to discipleship. Augustine's architecture of redemption has two women, Mary of Nazareth and Mary of Magdalene, as instruments for the restoration, 'per feminam mors, per feminam vita'.<sup>161</sup> The enjoyment of the symmetry drove commentators and preachers to seek further and further for models and types in the Gospels and in traditional legends. Eastern traditions sometimes conflate all the Marys, including the Virgin, as reported of a vision attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, in which Mary herself tells him 'I am Mary Magdalene ... My name is Mary of Cleopa. I am Mary [mother] of James the son of Joseph the Carpenter.'<sup>162</sup> It was Gregory the Great who decreed the identification of the three Marys as one 'Mary Magdalene'. Mary became identified as the *apostola apostolorum*, as her cult spread wider. It is her witness to the Resurrection of Jesus that sets the seal on her significant status. She is credited with dispelling the doubt of the (male) apostles about the reality of the risen Lord; they found the tomb empty, but she is the first to see him in his glorified bodily presence and to report it convincingly enough to overcome their doubts about the value of a woman's testimony.

The next stage is the assignment of the new title *praedicatrix*, preacher, to Mary Magdalene. This extends her role way beyond that of the first message to the Apostles. The tradition was well-established that she did not disappear into obscurity once the Twelve begin to spread the good news and establish churches throughout the region, but instead joined them in their preaching and is one of the women credited with missionary activity and leadership in the new Church. As time went on, further legends grew up around her name, giving her a full biography, with many *vitae* written praising her beauty, erudition, oratory and holiness. She served as an inspiration to women, probably including Catherine of Siena, who seems to echo Mary's words and actions in her writings.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena: Apostolorum Apostola', p. 58: '[as] humanity's fall was occasioned by womankind, humanity's restoration was accomplished through womankind, since a virgin brought forth Christ and a woman announced that he had risen from the dead.' Augustine, *Sermo 232, PL*, vol. 38, col. 1108.

<sup>162</sup> Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena: Apostolorum Apostola', p. 59.

<sup>163</sup> Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena: Apostolorum Apostola', p. 79

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In the early twelfth century, Geoffrey of Vendôme (d. 1132) gave a sermon on her feast day, describing her as a preacher,<sup>164</sup> and it was in this period that images first appear showing Mary preaching to the Apostles, and the Apostles asking her to ‘Tell us, Mary, what you saw on the way’ (Jn 20:18). Despite her status as an iconic female figure, however, Mary Magdalene remained a subversive, partly because of her erotic attraction to the human (male) imagination, but also because her undeniable status within the Gospel stories threatened to undermine the prohibitions in place, based on Pauline teaching, on women’s voices being heard preaching and teaching in public. Henry of Ghent and others, in the early thirteenth century, agreed that the saintly women who did teach, including Mary Magdalene, did so by divine dispensation and therefore could not be seen as models for all women – they were exceptions to prove the rule. She provided a model of sanctity and was treated as an ‘honorary’ virgin, in much mediaeval imagery. She was particularly seen as a model for married women and a sign of ‘the redeemability of women with a past’.<sup>165</sup> Scotus followed this example in admiring Mary Magdalene but firmly excluding the possibility that she could be used as a model for womankind in general to be permitted to teach and lead men.

Peter Abelard defended the position of women as apostles, using Mary Magdalene as his model, in the history he wrote at the request of Heloise on the order of holy women.<sup>166</sup> His seventh letter to Heloise, ‘On the Origin of Nuns’ was a polemic on the virtues and even superiority of women, using many examples from Old and New Testament, beginning with the creation of Eve ‘inside Paradise’, whereas Adam is created outside. Abelard did not see Mary Magdalene as unique, but set her alongside other holy women in the Gospels, such as the Samaritan woman at the well, and said that these women were superior to the males, since they were sent to give the message to the men.<sup>167</sup> Some other writers also take up this position, that Mary’s special selection by Christ as the first to announce the Resurrection

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<sup>164</sup> Jansen, ‘Maria Magdalena: Apostolorum Apostola’, p. 61.

<sup>165</sup> Jocelyn Wogan Browne, *Saints’ Lives and Women’s Literary Culture* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), p. 140: ‘She mediates not only widowhood and other forms of honorary virginity, but the contradictions of motherhood for all those who, unlike the Virgin, cannot reproduce without losing their virginity.’

<sup>166</sup> Quoted by Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), pp. 95ff.

<sup>167</sup> The apocryphal ‘Gospel of Mary’, dating from the late third or early fourth century, written in Sahidic, a Coptic dialect, and discovered in Egypt, gives a leading role to a Mary, generally presumed to be Mary Magdalene, among the Apostles, and sets Peter as her opponent, with Levi/Matthew to defend her position as teacher and Apostle. See Wilhelm Schneemelcher (ed.), R. McL. Wilson (tr.), *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writings* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992).



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reflects favourably on womankind as a whole and is an example of the virtue of women and their faith and commitment to the Gospel.<sup>168</sup>

But against this argument, the personal status accorded to Mary Magdalene by Christ may not, according to Scotus, be used as precedent for other cases and, hence, died with Mary herself, despite the signs and wonders at her exhumation. His remarks would be taken up, throughout the fourteenth century and beyond, along with those concerning Mary of Nazareth, and developed even more strictly to exclude the possibility of ordaining women..

### 5.i *The Exclusion of Women from 'The Twelve'*

As mentioned, the scholastic writers generally made little use of the Gospels in their arguments against women's ordination. The presence of many women among Jesus' followers and the special cases of Mary of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene were perhaps factors that deterred them from making too much use of the exclusion of women from the 'Twelve'. Modern commentary on the Gospels is reasonably consistent on the reasons for this. As discussed elsewhere, the concept of 'ordination' and 'priesthood' as understood today did not develop until several centuries after the life of Jesus and he himself, and the early Church, had quite a different understanding of what 'priesthood' meant and what was the role of the male and female leaders and ministers in the original Christian communities. Jesus was a 'sacramental person', a priest in the sense that he saw himself, and was seen as, a mediator of the presence of God in the world. Although he was a leader and teacher, instructing his followers in how to live, he saw his mission as one of service, even to death (Jn 15:13, 'Greater love has no-one').<sup>169</sup> This was the heart of the message he left to his followers, both men and women, and that he wanted them to take out to the whole world. The Twelve, appointed as leaders of this new movement, also saw that as their role, teaching others, healing and guiding, and setting up new communities of men and women who would spread the message everywhere. The Acts of the Apostles describes this process clearly. Joseph Martos explains how the words we apply to leaders and functions in the Church, 'apostle', 'deacon', 'episcopal' and 'priest', were originally simply the Greek words for particular individuals or tasks. Only later did they gradually become titles and positions of authority within an institutional church, after Constantine. So the Twelve

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<sup>168</sup> For further examples, see Blamires, both *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* and *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*. It is the 'Golden Legend' of one Jacobus de Voragine which recounts Mary's travels through southern France, converting Provence by her preaching.

<sup>169</sup> Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred* (Missouri: Ligouri Press, 1991), p. 397.

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were not the only apostles – those who were sent out – and, even in Jesus’ lifetime, as we know, several women were given this instruction.<sup>170</sup>

The significance of the Twelve is understood as being a sign of the new Israel, the restoration of the tradition of the twelve patriarchs. As Raymond Collins points out, the ‘Israel renewed in Jesus can start with no fewer than Twelve’, hence the urgent need to appoint a replacement for Judas after his death. After the Pentecost event, the members of the Twelve are not replaced when they die, ‘they are not to be an ongoing institution in the church of subsequent centuries, but are a once-for-all symbol for the whole of the renewed Israel’.<sup>171</sup> The work of scholars such as Noth and Gottwald has shown how the symbolic twelve-tribe system came about in the Hebrew tradition and history and Gottwald, in particular, has surveyed the origins of the immigration and conquest theories of the Hebrew people and the establishment of Israel, showing how, by the beginning of the Common Era, the powerful image of David’s twelve tribes had become an essential and unquestioned part of Israel’s self-recognition.<sup>172</sup>

John Meier analyses the terms, ‘the Twelve’, ‘disciple’ and ‘apostle’, in some detail, picking up the way that the term ‘apostle’ in particular is used in the Gospels and in Paul’s writings as referring to people, men and women, designated to a particular task, that of going out as ‘messengers’, the meaning of the word in Greek, on a limited mission. In Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:30, the eschatological promise is given to the (twelve) Apostles, that they will sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew specifically says twelve thrones). This is part of Jesus’ vision of the end times, when the prophesied kingly rule of God will come about. Jesus is preparing for this, by appointing the inner circle of the Twelve as the start of this process. Later on, as the members of the Twelve die or are martyred, this image of the restoration of Israel quickly becomes diluted and disappears, as a much larger vision for the establishment of the new religion that is Christianity becomes clearer.<sup>173</sup>

It is evident in the Gospels that the Twelve, a varied group of around a dozen men, who were picked out by Jesus and named individually in the texts, were intended to set the

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<sup>170</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, p. 398.

<sup>171</sup> Raymond Collins, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1999), p. 282.

<sup>172</sup> Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 85ff.

<sup>173</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. III, p. 137.

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paradigm for discipleship, to be ‘exemplars’ of what it meant to serve and follow Jesus.<sup>174</sup> But they also served, as already noted, as the hope for the future coming of the Kingdom, a restoration of the promised land and establishment of God’s rule. Jesus came in a long tradition of prophets (Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) who foretold this future event, when God will vindicate those who have been patient and kept faith and reinstate the Jewish people to their rightful inheritance. This tradition became all-pervading, part of Jewish folklore, and was taken for granted. The regathering of Israel was not simply an apocalyptic event, as in Revelation, but would be a renewal of earthly rule, when the leaders of the Twelve tribes would once more sit in benevolent judgement. The Qumran community seems to have had a group of twelve leaders also.<sup>175</sup> Jesus addressed his message to the whole of Israel and to the wider world, not one isolated or exclusive group. He wanted rich and poor, Pharisees and rulers, fishermen and market traders, Romans, Jews and Samaritans, men and women alike to hear what he has to say. And this choice of the Twelve lay within his consciousness of his role as prophet, so becomes ‘a power-laden, prophetic act’.<sup>176</sup>

After Easter, the work of the Twelve was to preach the gospel themselves, and to appoint apostles, messengers, to spread the word. And they certainly included among these messengers many women, who received the same mandate, to ‘go and tell’, that Mary Magdalene and the woman at the well received from Jesus himself, and travelled alongside the men to fulfil their mission. It is misleading and reductionist to assign the significance of the gender of the Twelve to a supposed intention to limit to the male sex only the call to a priesthood that had not yet been imagined let alone ordained.

### 5.j *Conclusion*

Jesus himself is seen in the Gospels as treating all human beings equally, associating freely with men and women, slaves and free, the occupying forces and the oppressed people, the sick and healthy, sinners and the righteous. He called everyone to follow him, giving his message indiscriminately to all who would listen. He expected/hoped they would hear it, own it for themselves and take it to others.<sup>177</sup> Although the distinction is made between

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<sup>174</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. III, p. 148.

<sup>175</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. III, p. 151.

<sup>176</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. III, p. 153.

<sup>177</sup> There is an extensive bibliography on the subject of apostleship in early centuries, see as an introduction, for instance, Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol III, and Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*

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‘disciple’, a follower, and ‘apostle’, one who is sent, both terms are used to describe the groups around Jesus and those who become ‘Christians’ during the first century (Acts 11:26). The definition of the terms was not fixed in the New Testament and early Christian writings.<sup>178</sup> After the Resurrection, Jesus is reported as appearing to all his followers, men and women, and again charged them all with witnessing to what they had seen. At Pentecost, all those gathered, men and women, are described as receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, before going out into the streets to proclaim the message.<sup>179</sup> Peter quotes the prophet Joel: ‘Even on my servants, men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.’<sup>180</sup> The accounts of the early church communities describe them as something new,<sup>181</sup> setting aside some accepted conventions, in which the work of the first Christians is a shared business, with leaders, teachers and prophets who are both men and women: ‘Paul took it entirely for granted that women were ministers of the church in precisely the same way as men. He recognised their gifts as fruits of the Spirit, which he had neither the desire nor the authority to oppose.’<sup>182</sup> Women as well as men were persecuted by Saul (Acts 8:3). In the account of Peter’s raising of Dorcas (Acts 9:36–43), it is her work for the community and the poor that marks her out.

The exclusion of women from the historical narrative came later, as the strength of the male position within society and the Church prevailed against the persistence of women and some men to encourage equality among the people of God.<sup>183</sup> Tina Beattie uses Rosemary Ruether’s account of the ‘insidious dualism’ of ancient near-Eastern religions to explain how the message of Jesus, witnessed through his life, that all were equal in the sight of God, was undermined very early in the life of the Christian Church, so that: ‘the

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(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) who both include points of interest relating to women as Apostles; and essays by Karen L. King, Karen Jo Torjesen and Katherine Ludwig Jansen in Beverly M. Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (eds.), *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, pp. 21–98. Jansen discusses the mediaeval view of the restoration of the order of creation through woman, after its loss through woman, in the light of the appellation of Mary Magdelene as ‘apostle to the apostles’.

<sup>178</sup> Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, ‘The Apostleship of Women in Early Christianity’, in Arlene Swidler and Leonard Swidler (eds.), *Women Priests* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 135–140: ‘There is neither consensus on the origin and derivation of the Christian designation “apostle” nor agreement on who belonged to the circle of the apostles in early Christianity. The use of the designation in pre-Christian Hellenism and Judaism does not explain the meaning of the term and its origin in early Christianity. The majority of scholars would agree today that neither the function nor the self-understanding of the Christian apostle can strictly be derived from the use of the “ambassador” term in Rabbinic Judaism, since the Jewish missionaries were never called “apostles” and use of the term is not documented for pre-Christian Judaism. The use and meaning of the designation “apostle” has a peculiar Christian origin and emphasis.’

<sup>179</sup> Acts 1, 14, 2:14.

<sup>180</sup> Joel 2:29.

<sup>181</sup> Acts 2:42–47, 4:32–36

<sup>182</sup> Murphy O’Connor, *Paul*, pp. 289–290.

<sup>183</sup> Küng, *Women in Christianity*, pp. 12–13.

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message of reconciliation between word and flesh, creator and creation, God and humankind, and woman and man, never achieved the transformation in practice and belief it promised'.<sup>184</sup>

The specific texts in the *Sentence* commentaries that we are examining generally use references to the Genesis stories, some later stories from the Hebrew Scriptures and the writings of St. Paul in support of their contention that it is not possible to ordain women *de facto* and *de jure*. Their opinions are determined by their own cultural and historical understanding of the Scripture texts and of the role of women in general. Modern exegesis has done much to elucidate some of the obscurities in this area and, in particular of course, we no longer consider the story of Adam and Eve and the creation account in Genesis to be historical fact, even though, as we have seen, in some contexts the Church nonetheless insists on the historicity of the Fall event. It is puzzling when some writers and even modern Church documents use the argument that Genesis provides a faithful account of God's intentions in creating a hierarchically ordered cosmos, and even refer to Adam and Eve as if they were historical characters. While such writers may understand this as metaphor, it can be misleading to the general reader.<sup>185</sup> Figures are often quoted of the numbers of Christians who cling to a literal interpretation of the Bible, which may raise a smile,<sup>186</sup> but it is also true that the metaphorical power of the Hebrew myths is still very persistent and can subtly colour thinking when making judgements about matters of considerable significance within the Church.

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<sup>184</sup> Tina Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, p. 52.

<sup>185</sup> See *Inter Insigniores*, § 20, where reference is made to the 'divine plan of creation'; Bernard M. Ashley, O.P., *Justice in the Church* (Berkeley: CUA Press, 1996), especially p. 76; and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §397 passim.

<sup>186</sup> Most marked in the United States, where it is said that nearly half of all adults, including their 43rd President, believe in 'Young Earth creationism', the idea that the universe sprang into being more or less in its present form within the past 10,000 years or so (Source: Gallup, 2007).

## 6. Biology

### 6.a Introduction

Fundamental to the mediaeval views on the suitability of women to receive the sacrament of orders was the inescapable fact that the Saviour was born as a man. Hence, factors relating to gender, and the biological and psychological differences between men and women, played a crucial part at the time in the evaluation of the relative roles of the two sexes in the church, particularly as regards ministry and governance, and continue to do so now.

In the West, Greek medical and scientific views about reproduction were influential on the belief that nature intended the newly implanted embryo to be male and that the conception of females resulted from a flaw in nature, albeit a necessary one, for the sake of the propagation of the species. This notion was sometimes expressed by a term taken from the writings of Aristotle (384–322 BC),<sup>1</sup> and reasserted by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), that woman is a ‘defective male’<sup>2</sup>. The precise meaning of the term, ‘femina est mas occasionatus’,<sup>3</sup> its position in Aquinas’ account of human biology, the influence of Aristotle, and the adoption of the point of view by other mediaeval scholars have been endlessly debated. Aquinas is seen as being maligned and misunderstood, and Aristotle as one of the first great scientists, who was making a purely biological statement when he describes the female of the human species as being ‘as it were, a deformed male’.<sup>4</sup> We will explore the meaning and importance of this idea below.

Apart from the understanding of gender and sexual difference explained by Aquinas,<sup>5</sup> the scholastics also used arguments deriving from their contemporary understanding of women’s intellectual and emotional capabilities, as well as those around the issues of

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, A.L. Peck (tr.) (London: Heinemann, 1949): ‘Just as it sometimes happens that deformed offspring are produced by deformed parents, and sometimes not, so the offspring produced by a female are sometimes female, sometimes not, but male. The reason is that the female is as it were a deformed male; and the menstrual discharge is semen, though in an impure condition; i.e., it lacks one constituent, and one only, the principle of Soul.’: Bk IV, col. 737a, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae (ST)*, Part 1, q. 92, a. 2, r. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part 1, q. 92, a. 2, r. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Nolan, *Do Women Have Souls: the Story of Three Myths* (Dublin: University College Dublin, 2006) for an explanation of the ways in which both Aristotle and Aquinas have been misunderstood, or else used to support polemic, available at <http://www.churchinhistory.org/pages/booklets/women-souls-1.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>5</sup> See Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), pp. 132–133, a general account of Aquinas’ sources, and his use of Aristotle and subsequent writers.

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menstruation, childbirth and female biology generally. In this chapter, we will consider these aspects of female biology in more detail, their consequences on attitudes to and treatment of women in the Catholic Church during the mediaeval period and their influence on the writings of the scholastics on the subject of women's suitability for Holy Orders. All three of the theologians considered had something to say that related to the biological nature of woman. As well as examining the Aristotelian understanding of sexual differentiation, the relative weakness of women, both physical and especially intellectual, was an important factor for the scholastic writers and women's perceived emotional instability would also prevent her from holding positions of responsibility. Her natural state of subjection, exacerbated by inherited guilt for the sin of Eve, was another factor that influenced mediaeval teachers. Contamination through sexual contact and pollution caused by blood, both in menstruation and in childbirth, are enduring issues that can be traced through the centuries. Such factors pervaded the work of male writers during the period, sometimes explicitly, sometimes as unspoken assumptions about the importance of male purity in sacred spaces.

### 6.b *Greek Ideas and their Influence on Mediaeval Writers*

By the time Thomas Aquinas was writing in the mid-thirteenth century, translations of the extant writings of Greek philosophy, especially those of Aristotle, had become more widely available in Western Europe, both from Greek via Arabic into Latin and then, subsequently, from the original Greek into Latin.<sup>6</sup>

The influence of Greek ideas on biology and on the difference between the sexes in animals and human beings was profound wherever they were encountered but, once the ideas of Aristotle and other Greek writers became generally available to the academic world in the early Middle Ages (from ninth century onward in the Arab world and after the twelfth century in Latin countries), these concepts could be systematised and incorporated into the scientific and especially medical fields of learning. Subsequently, particularly as the universities in France and Italy gained access to these texts, from the end of the twelfth century onwards, they were absorbed within a Christian theological perspective, clarifying and justifying further the hierarchical understanding of sex difference. There was much

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<sup>6</sup> For a study of the rediscovery of the work of ancient Greek scholarship, see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998). This area is covered in more detail in this thesis in Chapter 7 on language.

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controversy and dispute about the use of Greek philosophy within Christian schools, among which were the Condemnations of 1277 in Paris by Bishop Tempier, in which Thomas Aquinas himself became embroiled – some of the ideas taken from Aristotle and being taught in the university were among those defended by Aquinas.<sup>7</sup> Despite conflicting opinions about Aristotle's ideas and those of the Arab commentators on his work, Greek philosophy became an essential component of scholastic teaching during the thirteenth century in Western Europe and the authority of the 'great philosopher' was accepted in many areas of learning.<sup>8</sup> The principal components of his teaching that are relevant to this thesis are presented below.

To start with, according to Aristotle, the female component of generation was 'matter' and the male component 'form'; the female the passive agent, the male the active. Aristotle perceived woman's contribution to generation as simply being to provide a place where the foetus is nurtured and fed until birth takes place: her passive matter is formed by the male semen:

The semen is the active, productive factor; while the residue of fluid in the female [i.e. what has not been outwardly discharged in menstruation] is that which is acted upon and receives a form.

This basic assumption leads on to the conclusion that:

... the female *qua* female is passive, whereas the male *qua* male is active ... Accordingly ... we can see that there is no other sense in which the offspring comes from them jointly than that in which a bedstead comes into being from both the carpenter and the wood, or a ball from the wax and the form.<sup>9</sup>

Aristotle gave structure and focus to the essentially polarised understanding of sexual difference already developed by earlier philosophers. His key contribution to this notion was to establish a consistent approach, developing and linking previously unconnected areas, as Prudence Allen points out:

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<sup>7</sup> It has been suggested that William of Moerbeke (d. 1286?) undertook his translations of Aristotle at Aquinas' request, though this is disputed: see Marshall Clagett, 'William of Moerbeke: Translator of Archimedes', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 126, No. 5, 1982, pp. 356–366.

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of Aquinas' involvement in the controversy, see John F. Wippel, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Condemnation of 1277', *The Modern Schoolman*, Vol. 72, January/March 1995, pp. 243–272.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, Bk 1, ch. 21, available at <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/generation/book1.html>, last accessed August 2014, and in the translation by A.L. Peck already mentioned.



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In contrast to Plato, where the linking was only implicitly expressed, Aristotle explicitly argued for the logical implications of metaphysical distinctions between the sexes – for the philosophy of nature – and of epistemological arguments for ethics.<sup>10</sup>

It seems implicit then, according to Allen, in Aristotle's assertion that the formation of a female foetus was the result of a failure by the material provided by the mother to accept the form (a male child) delivered by the father, that there would inevitably be other deficiencies in the consequent female individual and, hence, in woman 'reason does not develop to its full human potential'.

Allen characteristically summarises Aristotle's position on the distinction between the sexes and the innate superiority of the male in four steps:

1. The male, separate from the female, is better and more divine, since it is the principle of movement for generated things, while the mother serves as the matter for the offspring.
2. A woman is, as it were, a defective male.
3. The female is, as it were, a deformed male.
4. The male is by nature superior to the woman, and rules over her.<sup>11</sup>

She goes on to say that part of Aristotle's endeavour was to explain the fact of there being two sexes and to try to understand the significance of this in general terms. Nonetheless, in doing so, he demonstrates the classic error of those who adhere to a 'sex-polarity' argument, namely that he extrapolates from one factor in the difference between the sexes, in this case the lack of heat in the female, and uses it to demonstrate a whole series of other deficiencies in woman. In this way, he justifies his own understanding of the superiority of the man over the woman: 'Aristotle's theory of sex-polarity, therefore, set a precedent in which a single aspect of the materiality of the female was isolated and devalued in relation to the male.'<sup>12</sup>

The collection of writings ascribed to the physician Galen (129–c. 200–216 AD) were treated as authoritative medical texts for hundreds of years, also translated from Greek to Arabic and thence to Latin. Galen used Aristotle as the basis for his understanding of the

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<sup>10</sup> Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1 (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 120.

<sup>11</sup> Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1, p. 121.

<sup>12</sup> Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, Vol. 1, p. 126.

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difference between the sexes, asserting the superiority in nature of the male over the female:

... just as mankind is the most perfect of all animals, so within mankind the man is more perfect than the woman, and the reason for his perfection is his excess of heat, for heat is Nature's primary instrument ... it is no wonder that the female is less perfect than the male by as much as she is colder than he.<sup>13</sup>

The humours or fluids associated with the male were heat and moisture, whereas women were cold and dry. Although Galen himself advocated observation and investigation, his followers also took up his use of astrology and the doctrine of the humours to determine diagnosis and treatment of any ailment and his writings were treated as dogmatic in Western Europe for centuries, until a more scientific approach to medicine began to emerge in the sixteenth century. Unlike Aristotle, who believed that the man contributed the seed for reproduction and the woman only the material from which the foetus was formed, Galen advocated the two-seed model of human reproduction. His anatomical observations led him to assert that women's genitalia were the mirror image of the male organs, simply inverted inside her body, like a glove: 'Consider first whichever ones you please, turn outward the woman's, turn inward, so to speak and fold double the man's, and you will find them the same in both in every respect.'<sup>14</sup>

As well as biological imperfection in her conception, the nature of the woman was also a drawback, making her inferior to the man. We will see in Chapter 7 on language that the popular etymology of the Latin terms *mulier/vir*, woman/man, taken from the work of Isidore of Seville (c. 570–636), and quoted widely, gave rise to the idea that *mulier* indicates *mollities*, softness and *vir* comes from *virtus*, strength and moral courage.<sup>15</sup> The frailty of the sex was taken into account by Clement of Alexandria (150–215), in his

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<sup>13</sup> Galen, *De Usu Partium*, M.T. May (tr.), (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. ii, 630–632, quoted in Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome. A Source Book in Translation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1992), pp. 243–245.

<sup>15</sup> Isidore, *Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri*, Bk XI, ch. ii, para. 17, available at <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/isidore/11.shtml>, last accessed June 2013: 'Man [*vir*] is so called because there is in him greater strength (*vis*) than in the woman [*feminis*]; whence also comes the word 'strength' [*virtus*], or because he controls woman by force. Woman [*mulier*] is called so because she is softness [*mollitie*] or else softer [*mollier*], taking a letter away or changing one. For the two sexes differ in the strength and weakness of their bodies. So there is the greatest strength [*virtus maxima*] in the man [*viri*] and less in woman [*mulieris minor*] so that she might be submissive to him; otherwise if women were to resist them, their lust might drive men to desire some other thing, or to rush off to another sex ...' [Vir nuncupatus, quia maior in eo vis est quam in feminis: unde et virtus nomen accepit; sive quod vi agat feminam. [18] Mulier vero a mollitie, tamquam mollier, detracta littera vel mutata, appellata est mulier. [19] Vtrique enim fortitudine et inbecillitate corporum separantur. Sed ideo virtus maxima viri, mulieris minor, ut patiens viri esset; scilicet, ne feminis repugnantibus libido cogeret viros aliud appetere aut in alium sexum prouere].

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*Paidagogos* discussing the necessity of physical exercise, wrestling or ball games for young men, writing that:

Nor are women to be deprived of bodily exercise. But they are not to be encouraged to engage in wrestling or running, but are to exercise themselves in spinning, and weaving, and superintending the cooking if necessary. And they are, with their own hand, to fetch from the store what we require.<sup>16</sup>

Women's physical weakness paralleled her intellectual and even moral weakness.

The statement by Aquinas, quoting Aristotle, that 'the woman is a defective male', comes in Objection 1, Article 92 of the first book of his *Summa Theologiae*, as to whether the creation of woman was necessary. Aquinas' answer is that her creation was necessary, and was ordered to procreation. In that respect, she is not defective but is part of the divine plan, so therefore cannot be 'misbegotten' (another translation of the term *occasionatus*). Nonetheless, his full answer to the question is:

As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence; such as that of a south wind, which is moist, as the Philosopher observes (*De Gener. Animal.* iv, 2). On the other hand, as regards human nature in general, woman is not misbegotten, but is included in nature's intention as directed to the work of generation.<sup>17</sup>

So, although the creation of woman is necessary, she is not the active force in procreation (the individual nature: semen) but her generation is occasioned by a defect, or outside influence, and it remains that the male is the norm, the standard of perfection in creation. Woman holds a secondary position and, therefore, and most importantly, cannot signify eminence of degree over man. This automatically excludes her, before everything else, from the Sacrament of Orders.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paidagogos*, Bk III, ch. 10, available at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-instructor-book3.html>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Pt I, q. 92, "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod per respectum ad naturam particularem, femina est aliquid deficiens et occasionatum. Quia virtus activa quae est in semine maris, intendit producere sibi simile perfectum, secundum masculinum sexum, sed quod femina generetur, hoc est propter virtutis activae debilitatem, vel propter aliquam materiae indispositionem, vel etiam propter aliquam transmutationem ab extrinseco, puta a ventis Australibus, qui sunt humidi, ut dicitur in libro de Generat. Animal. Sed per comparisonem ad naturam universalem, femina non est aliquid occasionatum, sed est de intentione naturae ad opus generationis ordinata." Available at <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/sth1090.html>, last accessed February 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Suppl., q. 39, a. 1: 'Certain things are required in the recipient of a sacrament as being requisite for the validity of the sacrament, and if such things be lacking, one can receive neither the sacrament nor the reality of the sacrament. Other things, however, are required, not for the validity of the sacrament, but for its lawfulness, as being congruous to the sacrament; and without these one receives the sacrament, but not the reality of the sacrament. Accordingly we must say that the male sex is required for receiving Orders not only in the second, but also in the first way. Wherefore even though a woman were made the object of all that is done in conferring Orders, she would not receive Orders, for since a sacrament

Bonaventure (1221–1274) drew the same lesson from Aristotle as did Aquinas, quoting the same Latin phrase, *vir occasionatus*, and explaining it as *imperfectus*, giving a slightly different slant to it – not so much faulty, as incomplete, the subtle change in an alternative translation dictated by his focus on Christ. His subject is the human nature taken by God when entering the human condition and whether God could have chosen to assume the womanly sex, *sexum muliebrum*.<sup>19</sup> His conclusion is that, of course, he could not, since only the most perfect, the male, would have been suitable.

Some theologians had already challenged this view of woman as imperfect, arguing that nothing God makes can be less than perfection. William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris from 1218, in a long treatise on human marriage, criticised the new Greek philosophy, as one of the earliest readers of Michael Scot's translation of Aristotle's work,<sup>20</sup> saying that it was 'unacceptable' to call woman imperfect.<sup>21</sup>

The scholastic writers usually state implicitly or explicitly that woman is in some way inferior to man, by her nature as woman, by the fact that she cannot properly represent Christ, or by her subordinate status in creation. So, simply by nature of her sex, woman is excluded from the Sacrament of Orders. As Duns Scotus noted, this is an apparent injustice if indeed all sacraments are ordered towards the benefit and greater holiness of those who receive them.<sup>22</sup> Scotus' conclusion is that it must indeed have been the mysterious will of Christ to ordain only men, but others refer to woman's weakness of intellect, emotion and so on that mean she cannot be a teacher or leader in the church. These objections are based on the understanding of human biology drawn from the Greek writers, as we have seen.

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is a sign, not only the thing, but the signification of the thing, is required in all sacramental actions; thus it was stated above (32, 2) that in Extreme Unction it is necessary to have a sick man, in order to signify the need of healing. Accordingly, since it is not possible in the female sex to signify eminence of degree, for a woman is in the state of subjection, it follows that she cannot receive the sacrament of Order.' Latin text: "Cum igitur in sexu femineo non possit significari aliqua eminentia gradus, quia mulier statum subiectionis habet; ideo non potest ordinis sacramentum suscipere". Available at <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/>.

<sup>19</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium in IV Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi, 1251–1253*, Vol. III, d. XII, a. III, q. 1 (Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1889), pp. 270–271.

<sup>20</sup> Aristotle, Michael Scot, *De Animalibus: Michael Scot's Arabic–Latin translation*, Aafke M. I. van Oppenraaij (tr.) (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

<sup>21</sup> William of Auvergne, *De Sacramentis*, 'De Sacramento Matrimonii', cap. 3, in *Opera Omnia* (Paris/Orléans, 1674,) Vol. I, pp. 515b–516a, cited in Maaïke van der Lugt, 'Sex Difference in Medieval Theology and Canon Law: A Tribute to Joan Cadden', *Medieval Feminist Forum*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2010, pp. 101–121, available at <http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1854&context=mff>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Scotus, *Duns Scoti Opera Omnia Vol. 24: Reportata Parisiensia*, Luke Wadding (ed.) (Paris: Vivés, 1894), Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2, pp. 367–371.

6.c *Women's Weakness of Intellect*

Along with the cultural and social judgements made about the nature of women, that they were less stable, incapable of serious thought, emotional and flighty, the scholastics took extra encouragement for their views from the text from Paul that women are forbidden to teach in public, in the church. 'I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.' (1 Tim 2:12) This was interpreted as meaning that women's nature made them unsuitable for the position of teacher or preacher, although there is nothing in the Pauline text to support this. This perceived female characteristic, their flightiness and penchant for chattering and gossip, which attracted the criticism of early preachers and writers, was taken as indicating their incapacity for serious thought. John Chrysostom (c. 344–407) had spoken of how women should keep silent, as instructed by Paul, and listen to the words of the homily but that they often do not do this and waste their time in 'racket and talking ... For when our preaching has to compete with the chatter ... what good can it do them? The extent of the silence required of women is that they are not to speak even of spiritual matters, let alone worldly ones, in the church.'<sup>23</sup> In another homily on Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Chrysostom explained that the instruction on women to keep silent has a dual purpose:

And what may be the cause of his setting them under so great subjection? Because the woman is in some sort a weaker being and easily carried away and light minded. Here you see why he set over them their husbands as teachers, for the benefit of both. For so he both rendered the women orderly, and the husbands he made anxious, as having to deliver to their wives very exactly what they heard.<sup>24</sup>

The injunction reinforced the existing legal framework, based on Roman law that in many parts of Europe gave women little or no status in society outside of that conferred by the men in their lives, husbands or fathers. Canon law forbade women from giving evidence in court against a priest and, in general, the canonists did not recognise women as having authority in society. Johannes Teutonicus (c. 1180–1252), for instance, in his definitive commentary on Gratian, says: 'Women cannot hold any civil or public responsibility.'<sup>25</sup> The consensus was that, with some exceptions normally associated with nobility and

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<sup>23</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homily IX on St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy*, quoted in Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, p. 59.

<sup>24</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily XXXVII, on I Cor, 14:34*, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220137.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Johannes Teutonicus, *Apparatus ad Decreta*, on causa 15, quoted by Ida Raming, *History of Women and Ordination, Vol. II: The Priestly Office of Women: God's Gift to a Renewed Church*, Bernard Cooke and Gary Macy (eds. and trs. ) (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2nd edn, 2004), pp. 93–97.

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hereditary imperatives, women were incapable of fulfilling masculine roles in politics or the law and were forbidden to act as witnesses to last wills and testaments or in criminal cases (again, with a very few exceptions).<sup>26</sup>

Alcuin Blamires describes the recycling of standard misogynistic texts and tropes as ‘a form of individual or group therapy in support of celibacy’ by clerical writers, whether in scholarly or popular texts, a way of deterring priests from seeking the company of women. There was a strong tradition of satirical writing, usually in Latin, but often in the vernacular, which made use of such material in a facetious or acerbic style to form sly or explicit attacks on women in poetry and prose.<sup>27</sup> Works such as those by Walter Map (c. 1140–1208), Andreas Capellanus (late twelfth century) and many more revel in tales of lustful, wicked and deceitful women, and these texts were widely distributed and read throughout Europe. Hence, the passing references in theological texts, in the assembly of objections to the suitability of women for the most exalted position in the church, that of the ordained priest, needed no supporting evidence but for the general understanding of the differences between the sexes in terms of intellectual capacity.

Thomas Aquinas was very specific in his views about women’s intellectual weakness. He followed Augustine<sup>28</sup> in believing that a man was better served by another man for every purpose except procreation:

It was necessary for woman to be made, as the Scripture says, as a ‘helper’ to man; not, indeed, as a helpmate in other works, as some say, since man can be more efficiently helped by another man in other works; but as a helper in the work of generation ....<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> R. Howard Bloch, ‘Medieval Misogyny’, *Representations*, Vol. 20, Fall 1987, pp. 8–9: ‘from the fourth through the fourteenth centuries [there were] essential differences in men’s and women’s rights to possess, inherit, and alienate property; in their duties to pay homage and taxes; in their qualification for exemptions. To these are added differences in men’s and women’s civil and legal rights: in the rights to bear witness, collect evidence, represent oneself (or others) in judicial causes; to serve as judges or lawyers, as oath helpers; to bring suit or to stand for election. Legal penalties for the same crime often differed substantially, as, for instance, in the punishments for adultery, for bearing children out of wedlock, for beating one’s spouse.’

<sup>27</sup> Blamires, *Woman Defamed*, p. 98.

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *De Genesis Ad Litteram*, 401–416: ‘... if the woman was not made for the man to be his helper in begetting children, in what was she to help him? ... How much more agreeably could two male friends, rather than a man and woman, enjoy companionship and conversation in a life shared together?’ John Hammond Taylor, S.J. (tr.), *Ancient Christian Writers 41* (New York: Newman Press, 1982), p. 75. (See Chapter 5, Scripture, fn 67).

<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Pt I, q. 92, a. 1. “...quod necessarium fuit feminam fieri, sicut Scriptura dicit, in adiutorium viri, non quidem in adiutorium alicuius alterius operis, ut quidam dixerunt, cum ad quodlibet aliud opus convenientius iuvari possit vir per alium virum quam per mulierem; sed in adiutorium generationis.”

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He confirmed that, in the process of creation, God separated the sexes so that one, the male, could develop the intellectual powers and the other the generative powers: ‘But man is yet further ordered to a still nobler vital action, and that is intellectual operation. Therefore there was greater reason for the distinction of these two forces in man; so that the female should be produced separately from the male; although they are carnally united for generation.’<sup>30</sup> This then leads to the natural subjection of woman to man, as his superior mental capabilities make it necessary that he should rule and guide the weaker sex and the world in general: ‘For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates.’<sup>31</sup>

Richard of Middleton (c. 1249–1302) used the standard phraseology when explaining why this factor is an obstacle to women’s reception of orders:

But teaching in public is not proper for a woman because of the weakness of her intellect and the instability of her emotions, of which defects women suffer more than men by a notable common law. But a teacher needs to have a vivid intellect to recognise the truth and stable emotions to persist in their expression.<sup>32</sup>

The assumed weaker intellect of women was passed from one writer to the other unquestioned, with the same phrases recurring. The roots of this presumption were embedded in popular culture and literature, hence its perpetuation throughout history well into modern times.

### 6.d *Pollution and Defilement*

#### 6.d.i Blood

In his thorough and lengthy essay on misogyny in the mediaeval period, R. Howard Bloch surveys all kinds of writing, from letters and tracts, through medical and scientific texts to canon law and theology, and finds that: ‘[t]he discourse of misogyny runs like a rich vein

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<sup>30</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Pt I, q. 92, a. 1. “Homo autem adhuc ordinatur ad nobilius opus vitae, quod est intelligere. Et ideo adhuc in homine debuit esse maiori ratione distinctio utriusque virtutis, ut seorsum produceretur femina a mare, et tamen carnaliter coniungerentur in unum ad generationis opus.”

<sup>31</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Bk I, q. 92, a. 1, ad. 2. “.defuisset enim bonum ordinis in humana multitudine, si quidam per alios sapientiores gubernati non fuissent. Et sic ex tali subiectione naturaliter femina subiecta est viro, quia naturaliter in homine magis abundat discretio rationis”.

<sup>32</sup> Richard of Middleton, *Super Quarto Sententiarum*, d. 25, a. 4, n. 1, M.A. Rossi (tr.) for <http://www.womenpriests.org>, last accessed August 2014.

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throughout the breadth of medieval literature'. With some exaggeration, though correctly as has been said,<sup>33</sup> he states that, '[i]n the misogynistic thinking of the Middle Ages there can, in fact, be no distinction between the theological and the gynaecological'.<sup>34</sup>

The impurity and uncleanness of woman, especially as regards menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth, forms another and important objection to the presence of women at the altar, used by several of the scholastic commentators. The thread of these ideas can be traced back through the centuries to Greek ideas, bolstered by scriptural support for women's inferiority. Only through suffering could woman avoid the natural consequences of her own flawed nature. According to Ambrose,<sup>35</sup> (c. 340–397) the Logos, the Word of God could infuse even woman with the heat of the Spirit and imbue her with the masculine strength of virginity, keeping her pure and free of the contamination of female fecundity. This accounted for the strength and firmness of purpose shown by so many women martyrs, for instance, otherwise something of a puzzle to male observers.

Ambrose likened the Logos, the *immaculatum semen*, the Son of God, in other words Christ, to heat that can dry up the passion of blood, offering the analogy of the virgin woman as the healed woman with the haemorrhage who was cured by touching the hem of Jesus' robe, the sick female nature needing to be healed by the touch of Christ.

The woman who had suffered from an issue of blood hoped in him and she was cured immediately, but only because she approached with faith. And you, O daughter, by faith also touch his fringe. The flux of worldly delights issuing forth like a torrent, is already dried up by the heat of the saving Word as long as you approach with faith, grasping at least the extreme fringe of the divine discourse with equal devotion, as long as you throw yourself trembling at the feet of the Lord.<sup>36</sup>

The woman with the issue of blood (Mt 9:20–22; Mk 5:25–34; Lk 8:43–48), like those suffering from diseases such as leprosy, was doubly handicapped, by the disease itself and also by her consequent exclusion from the community.

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<sup>33</sup> Blamires, *Woman Defamed*. p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Bloch, 'Medieval Misogyny', p. 20.

<sup>35</sup> Ambrose, *De Virginitate*, PL 16.285B, Daniel Callam (tr.) (Toronto: Peregrina Press, 1991), quoted in Kim E. Power, 'Of Godly Men and Medicine: Ancient Biology and the Christian Fathers on the Nature of Woman', *Woman-Church*, Vol. 15, Spring 1994, pp. 26–33. Latin text at [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0339-0397\\_Ambrosius\\_De\\_Virginitate\\_Liber\\_Unus\\_MLT.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0339-0397_Ambrosius_De_Virginitate_Liber_Unus_MLT.pdf) *De Virginitate Liber Unum*, §100. "Speravit in eo illa, quae fluxu sanguinis laborabat, et continuo sanata est: sed quia fidelis accessit (Luc. VIII, 43 et seq.). Et tu cum fide, filia, vel fimbriam ejus attinge. Iam saecularium fluxus voluptatum, modo torrentis exundans, Verbi salutaris caiore siccabitur; si cum fide tamen accedes, si pari devotione divini sermonis extremam saltem fimbriam comprehendas, si tremens procidas ante Domini pedes."

<sup>36</sup> Ambrose, *De Virginitate*, PL 16.100, Callam (tr.), p. 40, quoted in Power, 'Of Godly Men'.



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The Jewish purity code, as contained in the book of Leviticus, explains how uncleanness could arise and how purity could be recovered. The distinction and importance of uncleanness and purity related essentially to cultic practice, as a person or object that was impure could not take part in worship or community life. It was not a moral issue, *per se*, but was a fundamental condition of the whole person before God.<sup>37</sup> Women's monthly cycles regularly made them a source of defilement for themselves and those with whom they came into contact (Lev 15:10–30). These regulations were made more complicated in succeeding centuries by the rabbinical traditions. Women also had to be purified after childbirth, although purification for a boy lasted 40 days, for a girl twice as long, 80 days (Lev 12:1–8). Hence, for example, the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of Mary's Purification on 2 February, the fortieth day after Christmas. The doubling of the period for the birth of a female child was explained as the consequence of Eve's sin, a double punishment for women, as in the liturgical text, the *Mitrале*, by Sicardus of Cremona, a canonist of the late twelfth century, who gave a combined theological and biological explanation for the rule:

But why was the time for a female child doubled? Solution: because a double curse lies on the feminine growth. For she carries the curse of Adam and also the (punishment) 'you will give birth in pain'. Or, perhaps, because, as the knowledge of physicians reveals, female children remain at conception twice as long unformed as male children.<sup>38</sup>

Such requirements for women to be cleansed following menstruation and childbirth were naturally carried forward into rituals in organised religions,<sup>39</sup> particularly in the Middle East and Western Europe.

The daily consequences of their menstrual and reproductive cycle tended to exclude women from participation in religious practices at certain times, and still do in Orthodox Jewish communities,<sup>40</sup> but it was not just the Jewish tradition that imposed such rules on

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<sup>37</sup> For further details, see *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 1, R. Browne, J.A. Fitzmeyer and R. Murphy (eds.) (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), pp. 74ff.

<sup>38</sup> Sicardus, *Mitrале*, Bk V, ch. 11, quoted by Ida Raming, *History of Women and Ordination*, pp. 87, 109.

<sup>39</sup> For an account of these continued through later centuries, see Becky R. Lee, 'The Purification of Women after Childbirth: A Window onto Medieval Perceptions of Women', *Florilegium*, Vol. 14, 1995–1996, pp. 43–55; William Coster, 'Purity, Profanity and Puritanism. The Churcing of Women 1500–1700', in W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds.), *Women in the Church* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 377–387; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in Popular Belief in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 43.

<sup>40</sup> 'The Mishnaic sages taught that women were exempt from religious ordinances whose fulfilment depended upon a certain time of the day or the year (Mishnah, Berachot 3:3; Kiddushin 1:7). Thus, the lengthy periods of seclusion mandated by their ritual uncleanness, as well as their responsibilities at home, led to a general non-participation of women in the public activities of community religious life.': available at <http://www.jerusalemerspective.com/2646/>, last accessed August 2014; also Jonathan Klawans, 'Concepts

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them. Women were also considered ‘impure’ in Greek and Roman societies during their monthly periods and would defile men with whom they came into contact or with whom they had intercourse. The encyclopaedic work of Pliny the Elder (c. 23–79 AD), his *Natural History*, contains a summary of the ideas prevalent throughout the ancient world about menstruation and its effects on women and on the natural world in general.

Pliny speaks of menstruating women with a kind of ghoulish horror. The menstrual blood has the potential to wreak havoc in the natural world, causing bees to leave their hives, turning linen black and blunting a razor.<sup>41</sup> The threat of death hangs over a man who has intercourse with a woman during her period, ‘if the monthly discharge coincides with a lunar or solar eclipse, it leads to catastrophic evils, since intercourse with a woman carries disease at that time, and is fatal to the man’.<sup>42</sup> The reason given for this poisonous nature of menstrual blood was that it was the female body’s method of expelling toxic ‘humours’, accumulating because she did not generate sufficient heat to burn up the body’s natural products: ‘the sexual biology of women who were not contained by pregnancy held manifold dangers’.<sup>43</sup> The necessity of the surplus was to nurture and contain seed for producing children. Thus, it was only in pregnancy that the natural balance of a woman’s body could be maintained. ‘Galenic theory implied that creation purposely made one half of the human race imperfect.’ Menstrual fluid was even used to compound potions, intended to weaken men and make them more susceptible to female charms.<sup>44</sup> Pliny seems awestruck by the power of women’s bodies, especially during menstruation:

... hailstorms, they say, whirlwinds, and lightning even, will be scared away by a woman uncovering her body while her monthly courses are upon her. The same, too, with all other kinds of tempestuous weather; and out at sea, a storm may be lulled by a woman uncovering her body merely, even though not menstruating at the time.<sup>45</sup>

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of Purity in the Bible’, *The Jewish Study Bible*, Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler and Michael Fishbane (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 2041–2047, p. 2044: ‘...ritual purity – the established absence of any ritual defilement – is the prerequisite for encountering God’s holy presence, as manifest in the tabernacle or the Temple.’

<sup>41</sup> Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Bk 28, ch. 23, pp. 78–80, Latin text from <http://penelope.uchicago.edu>, last accessed August 2014: “apes tactis alvarii fugere; lina, cum coquantur, nigrescere; aciem in cultris tonsorum hebetari; aes contactu grave virus odoris accipere et aeruginem, magis si decrescente luna id accidat...”

<sup>42</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, Bk 28, ch. 23, pp. 78–80: ‘si in defectus lunae solisve congruat vis illa, inremediabilem fieri ... coitusque tum maribus exitiales esse atque pestiferus’.

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Hughes, ‘Alchemy and Late Medieval Sexuality’, in A. Bernau, R. Evans and S. Salih (eds.), *Medieval Virginities* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), p. 146.

<sup>44</sup> Hughes, ‘Alchemy and Late Medieval Sexuality’. p. 159.

<sup>45</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, Bk 28, ch. 23, (fn 41) “ iam primum abigi grandines turbinesque contra fulgura ipsa mense nudato; sic averti violentiam caeli, in navigando quidem tempestates etiam sine menstruis”.

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This passage from Pliny and the ideas it encapsulates were quoted, redrafted, added to and perpetuated throughout the centuries, to the medieval period and well beyond.<sup>46</sup> Ute Ranke-Heinemann notes the prohibition from many sources during early centuries on intercourse with a menstruating woman because of the terrible consequences it would have for the resulting foetus. She quotes a number of authorities:

In the opinion of such Fathers of the Church as Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen (c. 200) and Jerome (c. 400), children conceived during menstruation were born handicapped. Jerome: 'If a man has intercourse with his wife at this time, leprous hydrocephalic children are born of this conception, and the effect of the tainted blood is such that the contaminated bodies of both sexes become either too small or too large' (*Commentary on Ezekiel*, 18, 6).<sup>47</sup>

Joan Branham identifies the importance of how blood and sacred spaces interact, in terms of sacrificial blood and polluting blood in the Jewish temple and the Christian church. The prohibitions on women's access to holy ground in both traditions, as we will see below, arise from the way in which the two bloods conflict with each other, both having a function or an impact on cultic practice. The female menses are both corrupting and life-giving and, therefore, a confusing factor where order and predictability are important, within the worship space. Branham identifies the different effects of these two forms of blood at the altar,

It is often the mandatory presence of sacrificial blood, in fact, that renders a space sacred. Female reproductive blood, by contrast, possesses an altogether different potency. It carries the ability to defile entire ceremonial complexes if introduced within them, and is therefore excluded from them almost without exception.<sup>48</sup>

The Jewish temple in Jerusalem was divided into distinct areas, according to the degree of sanctity of the space concerned, with increasing limits on who could enter, the closer one approached the Holiest of Holies, which only the High Priest could access. Jewish women could go no further than the 'Court of Women', but every group must be pure/purified to enter, and women were especially restricted. Josephus states:

Now then all such as ever saw the construction of our temple ... know well enough how the purity of it was never to be profaned...Into the first court everybody was allowed to go ... and none but women during their courses were prohibited to pass through it: all the Jews went into the second court, as well as their wives, when they were free from all uncleannesses.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Joan R. Branham, 'Bloody Women and Bloody Spaces: Menses and the Eucharist in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages', *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Spring 2002, pp. 15–22, p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women, Sexuality and the Catholic Church*, Peter Heinegg (tr.) (Garden City: Doubleday, 1991), p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> Branham, 'Bloody Women'.

<sup>49</sup> Josephus, *Against Apion*, ch. 2, in Josephus, *The Complete Works*, William Whiston (tr.) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), p. 958.

On the other hand, the Syrian *Didascalia*, from the beginning of the third century, did not impose the monthly washing and purification rituals on women and stated that their husbands should not refrain from contact with them.<sup>50</sup> However, the Eastern Church did impose rules about women receiving communion during menstruation, as Ranke-Heinemann notes: ‘Patriarch Dionysus of Alexandria (d. 264 or 265), a pupil of Origen, declared that it was unnecessary even to pose the question of permissibility for it would never occur to pious, devout women to touch the sacred Communion table or the Lord’s body and blood (*Epistolae can.* 2, PG10, 1281A).’<sup>51</sup> Some of the Latin fathers had already begun to preach a much stricter rule, beginning with Tertullian in northern Africa (160–225) in the late second century. Much of what is said in these writings covers not simply the blood taboo but all sorts of issues around sex and marriage, expressing sometimes extreme revulsion for women’s body parts, bodily functions and secretions, and the changing female body, from menarche to menopause. For Tertullian, and many after him, even marriage was tainted with lust of the body.<sup>52</sup>

In the fourth century, St. Jerome (c. 347–420) believed that all sexual relations led to corruption and pollution of body and soul. Marriage was a necessity occasioned by the Fall.<sup>53</sup> It was better to abstain entirely from sexual intercourse. A woman who lived as a virgin could become a ‘man’ and therefore perfect herself. He describes menstruation as

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<sup>50</sup> R. Hugh Connolly (tr. and ed.), *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), ch. 26, vi. 22: ‘Wherefore, beloved, flee and avoid such observances: for you have received release, that you should no more bind yourselves; and do not load yourselves again with that which our Lord and Saviour has lifted from you. And do not observe these things, nor think them uncleanness; and do not refrain yourselves on their account, nor seek after sprinklings, or baptisms, or purification for these things.’: available at <http://www.bombaxo.com/didascalia.html>, last consulted August 2014.

<sup>51</sup> Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 13

<sup>52</sup> Tertullian, *An Exhortation to Chastity*, Ante-Nicene Fathers Series, Vol. 4, Philip Schaff (ed.) (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895), ch. 9: ‘Besides, what is the thing which takes place in all men and women to produce marriage and fornication? Commixture of the flesh, of course; the concupiscence whereof the Lord put on the same footing with fornication. “Then,” says (someone), “are you by this time destroying first—that is, single—marriage too?” And (if so) not without reason; inasmuch as it, too, consists of that which is the essence of fornication. Accordingly, the best thing for a man is not to touch a woman; and accordingly the virgin’s is the principal sanctity, because it is free from affinity with fornication.’: on Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.iii.vi.ix.html>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Quoting Paul, Jerome says: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption”. This is so clear that no explanation can make it clearer: “Flesh and blood,” he says, “cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” If corruption attaches to all intercourse, and incorruption is characteristic of chastity, the rewards of chastity cannot belong to marriage ...’: St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, Bk 1, § 37, quoted on <http://www.womenpriests.org>, last accessed August 2014.

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the ‘curse of God’<sup>54</sup> and said that a menstruating woman would make anything she touched unclean. In his letters to Eustochium, he commanded her to adopt strict ascetic practices and praised her mother, Paula, seriously ill through starving herself, who yet refused sustenance despite the pleadings of her doctors. Such a regime of extreme fasting and self-denial in a young woman would undoubtedly have caused amenorrhoea, a sign that the female body was purified of the contamination of blood and was becoming masculinised, and thus holy. ‘There in the body was physical “proof” of the reformatory power of the Word ... patristic writers wrote of virile women, whose faith had raised them in the hierarchy of being.’<sup>55</sup> Down the centuries, such practices, particularly for women, have been seen as a sure and certain route to holiness and been imposed by male confessors on their female charges.<sup>56</sup> The idea that a woman who does not bleed is somehow masculinised, and is therefore holier and more wholesome, became a significant theme in spiritual writings, particularly in early centuries, but is also carried forward into mediaeval times: ‘The emphasis on ritual impurity ... heightened admiration for those women who had against all the odds preserved their virginity and thus, in some sense at least, had overcome the demands of the flesh.’<sup>57</sup> Thus, in the passage from Ambrose quoted above, using the image of the woman with a flow of blood, the potential sinfulness of women will be healed by Christ. Her purification would be her freedom from blood, as happened, for instance, when women fasted and ceased to menstruate. The issue of fasting, especially in those who took it to extremes, was often a subject of awe. In his study of female saints who fasted, *Holy Anorexia*, Rudolph Bell sees such women as clinical cases, using the instrument of self-denial as a means of retaining control over their bodies and lives, all too often in thrall to the men in authority over them and to the male-dominated Church:

Just as critical as the course of this war against bodily urges, wherein the quest for autonomy is purely internal, is the contest for freedom from the patriarchy that attempts to impose itself between the holy anorexic and her God ... holy anorexics did in fact break out of the established boundaries within which a male hierarchy confined female piety, and thereby established newer and wider avenues for religious expression by women more generally.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Jerome, *Against Helvidius*, *Saint Jerome: Dogmatic and Polemical Works*, The Fathers of the Church Series, Vol. 53, John Hritz (tr.) (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1981), p. 41: ‘she who has ceased to be a married woman with the cessation of the flow of blood, is freed from the curse of God’.

<sup>55</sup> Power, ‘Of Godly Men’.

<sup>56</sup> Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex* (London: Quartet Books, 1978), p. 74; and Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

<sup>57</sup> Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women* (London: Phoenix Press, 1996), p. 39.

<sup>58</sup> Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia*, pp. 116–117.

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In a reversal of an instruction from Pope Gregory to St. Augustine of Canterbury (d. 605),<sup>59</sup> one of the latter's successors, Theodore (c. 602–690) forbade menstruating women to visit a church or receive communion:

During the time of menstruation women should not enter into church or receive communion, neither lay women nor religious. If they presume to do so all the same, they should fast for three weeks ... In the same way those women should do penance, who enter a church before their blood is purified after birth, that is for forty days.<sup>60</sup>

Pope Gregory, though he did not forbid women from the communion rail in the instruction noted above, nonetheless praised those who chose to abstain.

Such ideas and prejudices influenced attitudes to women's bodies, to their natural rhythms, to pregnancy and childbirth and, ultimately, to sexual intercourse, contraception and other areas of sexual health inside and outside the Church.<sup>61</sup> They reflect ancient taboos and fears which were transferred to church teaching on the body and sexual issues, at its extreme in doctrines such as Manichaeism, but pervading much of Christian thinking down the ages. They lie at the root of subsequent prohibitions on the presence of women at the altar and their contact with the cultic objects, chalices, altar cloths, vestments and so on, as we will see.

As noted in Chapter 3 on Gratian and canon law, the polluting effects of menstruation and the presence of a woman in church during her monthly bleed provoked disagreement among lawyers and churchmen, so, while Gratian had used Gregory's precedent, cited above, to decide that a menstruating woman could visit the church, his pupil Paucapulea used the decision of Theodore to forbid it and Rufinus, in the same century, explains how women must do penance if they presume to enter a church while menstruating or in another forbidden period, after childbirth, for example: 'fasting on bread and water for as

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<sup>59</sup> Gregory the Great, *Epistle* 64, *PL* 77, col. 1183; tenth interrogation, col. 1193. Gregory's letter reflects a more nuanced and understanding attitude to women's biology, making no rules about purification or cleansing rituals customary in the Church. Gregory cites the healing of the woman with the haemorrhage: 'We know, moreover, that the woman suffering from flux, after she had touched humbly the fringe of Our Lord's dress, was cured immediately. So if this woman may touch Our Lord's dress, and it is told as a laudable thing, why should a menstruating woman not enter church? Nor is she to be prohibited from taking Communion at this time.' (See discussion on the miracle story above.)

<sup>60</sup> Theodore of Canterbury, *Poenitentia*, Bk. I, ch. 14, §§ 17–18, from Raming, *History of Women and Ordination*, pp. 47–49.

<sup>61</sup> Bloch, 'Medieval Misogyny', p. 1: 'So persistent is the discourse of misogyny – from the earliest church fathers to Chaucer – that the uniformity of its terms furnishes an important link between the Middle Ages and the present and renders the topic compelling because such terms still govern (consciously or not) the ways in which the question of woman is conceived ...'.

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many days as she would have needed to stay away from Church'.<sup>62</sup> He too uses extreme language to describe menstrual blood, as 'execrable and impure', quoting Julius Solinus, a Latin writer of the mid-third century, much of whose material also came from Pliny, to explain its effects. He goes further, saying that 'intercourse at the time of the monthly flux is full of danger', not only because of the contamination of the blood itself but because a child born as a result could be deformed.

Secular and medical texts also provided contrasting views on menstruation and female biology. The mediaeval compendium of women's medicine, reputed to be assembled by a woman physician from Salerno in Italy, known as Trotula (early eleventh century, d. 1097?), provided a positive view of women's natural rhythms. It used the vernacular expression, *flos*, flowers, as a metaphor for menses, and explained it in terms of its necessary presence in relieving excess in women, balancing her humours and nourishing the growing foetus after conception.<sup>63</sup> But although popular with male doctors of medicine and midwives, especially in Italy, its distribution was limited. This positive, female view of blood is highlighted again by Tina Beattie:

For a man, the sight of his own blood must always be associated with trauma and violence. Men's bodies do not bleed unless they are wounded. But for a woman, the sight of her own blood is routine, and the messages it gives are usually to do with fertility and birth.<sup>64</sup>

The woman's capacity to bleed without dying was feared by men – it is mysterious and a sign of power. When men bleed, they are in danger, they are vulnerable; when women bleed they celebrate it, rejoice in it, take it for granted, are relieved, etc. Its absence is a sign of ill-health, pregnancy or ageing – often unwelcome events.

On the other hand, in '*De Secretis Mulierum*', a work of the late thirteenth century, a male writer, addressing a male audience, established a firm basis for the dangers of female blood, relating to the nature of woman, the importance of her menstrual flow in determining her health and the hazards of its constant presence to the woman and those around her. These 'secrets', ascribed to Albert the Great (c. 1193–1280), but in fact compiled from a number of sources, including the writings of Albert, mainly relate to sexual and generative matters. In terms of menstruation, it is condemnatory of women and

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<sup>62</sup> Rufinus, *Summa Decretorum*, on d. 5, ch. 2, quoted by Raming, *History of Women and Ordination*, p. 83.

<sup>63</sup> See Monica H. Green (tr. and ed.), *The Trotula* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001). Green's introduction is particularly useful and insightful.

<sup>64</sup> Tina Beattie, 'Mary the Virgin Priest?', *The Month*, No. 257, December 1996, pp. 485–493.

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belongs to a new kind of learned, scientific writing, used later to justify persecution of women accused of witchcraft. Women are evil by nature, proven by the poisonous quality of their discharges.<sup>65</sup>

This association of sexual relationships with violent and aggressive acts, whether these are acts perpetrated on women by men, or the acts of nature on women (childbirth and its associated dangers), created the aura of taboo and aversion around women's bodies that led to their exclusion from areas men needed to preserve as their own spaces. As Beattie points out, René Girard gives voice to the often unspoken fear of both women and men that 'women's blood is defiling because its sexual associations imply violence'. The lifting of the curse of Eve through Mary 'has not yet been fully recognised in all its implications by the Catholic Church'.<sup>66</sup> The virginity of Mary instead was used to provide an exalted, perfect condition of womanhood to which women must aspire, even though they could never attain it.<sup>67</sup>

### 6.d.ii Touch

The issue of the contamination of sacred things by the touch of women, for both the priest himself and the sacred materials – vestments, altar vessels and cloths – was frequently addressed by the canonists. Gratian refers to the so-called 'False Decretals', as already discussed in Chapter 3. Gratian and his commentators used the collection frequently as an authority. On the issue of purity at the altar, a letter supposed to be from Pope Soter and addressed to bishops in Italy is quoted at some length. It provides evidence of women's service, perhaps as acolytes in Eucharistic celebrations, and bans this: 'Consecrated women are forbidden to touch the sacred vessels and altar cloths and to carry incense

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<sup>65</sup> Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, *De Secretis Mulierum*, Helen Rodnite Lemay (tr.) (New York: State University of New York, 1992), pp. 35–37.

<sup>66</sup> Beattie, 'Mary the Virgin Priest?'

<sup>67</sup> Joan Smith, *Misogynies* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989): '... putting women on pedestals is one of those devious masculine devices whose meaning is exactly the opposite of what it appears to be ... the woman ... is *good*, which is to say that her behaviour falls within acceptable parameters and therefore she does not pose a threat to us ... every woman is Eve, but none of us will ever be another Mary.' pp. 58–59. This dualism with regard to women is a permanent ambivalence, pointed out by Gérard Delteil in a presentation given to the conference on 'Paroles de femmes pour la Paix', at le Mans, March 1999: 'Idéalisation et stigmatisation vont de pair, tout comme se répondent les deux figures d'Eve et de Marie. La femme est ainsi prise dans un discours religieux qui tout à la fois la survalorise et la discrimine. Telle est l'ambivalence de sa représentation.' [The two figures of Eve and Mary are opposite faces, the stigmatised, the idealised. In this way, woman is caught in a religious discourse which simultaneously exalts her and discriminates against her. Her image is thus ambivalent.]



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round the altar.<sup>68</sup> Similar prohibitions were placed on women wearing or touching sacred garments (stole and alb, for instance). These were reserved for men only.<sup>69</sup> Importantly, there were few or no other authorities apart from these quoted to support the idea that women's touch caused contamination and impurity for the sacred species, the altar itself or vestments.

Theodulf of Orléans (c. 750–821) banned all women in his diocese from entering the sanctuary or touching sacred things: 'While a priest is celebrating Mass, women should in no way approach the altar, but remain in their places, and there the priest should receive their offerings to God. Women should therefore remember their infirmity, and the inferiority of their sex: and therefore they should have fear of touching whatever sacred things there are in the ministry of the Church.'<sup>70</sup>

Many of the mediaeval theologians, in their commentaries on Lombard, repeated the ban on women touching sacred objects, without giving any reason for it, and often without authority. Where they do have a reference, it is the quotation from the *Decretum Gratiani*, based on the 'False Decretals' of Pope Soter as mentioned above. Thus, Richard Fishacre (c. 1208–1248) quotes Gratian almost verbatim:

If it is asked about those religious women who are called deaconesses ... Since it is not permitted to them to touch the sacred vessels as a deacon. Thus in distinction 23 [*Decretum*, dist. 23, c. 25] Pope Soter to the bishops of Italy, 'It has been brought to the attention of the apostolic see that women consecrated to God, or nuns, touch the sacred vessels or blessed palls, that is in the presence of your company, and carry incense around the altar. That all this is blameworthy conduct to be fully censured can be rightly doubted by no wise person. Because of this, by the authority of this Holy See, lest this plague spread more widely, we order all provinces to most swiftly drive it out.'<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Gratian, *Decretum Gratiani*, d. 23, ch. 25, Vol. 1, col. 85: 'Wherefore (Pope) Soter wrote to the bishops of Italy: 'It has come to the notice of the apostolic See that consecrated women or nuns among you touch sacred vessels or palls and carry incense round the altar. No one in his senses doubts that this behaviour deserves condemnation and correction. Therefore we command you on the basis of the authority of this Holy See, that you put an end to this behaviour thoroughly and as soon as possible. And in order that this kind of plague will not proliferate further in other provinces, we order that the practice be discontinued as soon as possible.' [Latin text: Unde Sother Papa Episcopis Italiae: Sacratas Deo feminas uel monachas sacra uasa uel sacratas pallas penes uos contingere, et incensum circa altaria deferre, perlatum est ad apostolicam sedem: que omnia uituperatione et reprehensione plena esse, nulli recte sapientum dubium est. Quapropter huius sanctae sedis auctoritate hec omnia uobis resequare funditus, quanto citius poteritis, censemus. Et ne pestis hec latius diuulgetur, per omnes prouincias abstergi citissime mandamus.]

<sup>69</sup> Gratian, *Decretum*, d. 1, ch. 41, Vol. 3, col. 1304: 'The Holy See decrees that the consecrated vessels may be handled only by holy men (males) ordained to the Lord's service and by no others, in order that the Lord in his anger may not punish his people with calamity...' [Latin text: In sancta apostolica sede statutum est, ut sacra uasa non ab aliis, quam a sacratis Dominoque dicatis contrectentur hominibus. Ne pro talibus presumptionibus iratus Dominus plagam inponat populo suo...]

<sup>70</sup> J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Vol. 13 (Florence: 1759ff/reprint Paris: 1901ff), p. 996, available at <http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in *A History of Women and Ordination, Vol. I, The Ordination of Women in Medieval Context*, Bernard Cooke and Gary Macy (eds.) (London: Scarecrow Press, 2002), pp. 52–55, from Richard Fishacre,

Bonaventure and Scotus used the same reference. Richard of Middleton (1249–1302) also used the impediment to women’s presence on the sanctuary of the church in his *Commentary on the Sentences* and adds to it, explicitly quoting the same lines as the canonists do, that: ‘women ... touch sacred vessels and altar cloths, and carry incense around the altar, which as no one in his right mind will doubt deserves reprehension and condemnation [*reprehensione ac uituperatione*]’. He goes on to draw the logical conclusion from this: ‘that which impedes the touching of sacred things impedes the reception of orders. Therefore, the female sex impedes the reception of orders.’<sup>72</sup>

The prohibition on women’s attendance and service at the altar in any capacity persisted until well into the twentieth century in many Christian denominations, especially those of the Catholic tradition. Even now, there is resistance in many parts of the world to allowing girls and women to serve as acolytes. Women were finally accepted in the Catholic Church to act as readers and as special ministers of the Eucharist to distribute Holy Communion towards the end of the twentieth century. It is a mere generation or two since the only time a woman was allowed onto the sanctuary during a liturgical celebration was as a bride during a nuptial Mass or to be clothed as a religious sister.<sup>73</sup>

#### 6.d.iii Sex and Childbirth

The physiological origins of the view that women were, by their nature, polluting and defiling of sacred spaces came via the Greek medical texts, as we have already seen with regard to the weaker nature of women and the superior status of males in the hierarchical view of creation. This notion that women were subordinate, passive and a receptacle for the offspring combined with other preconceptions, deep-rooted fears and desires within male-dominated societies and structures to ensure that the relative position of men and women remained unquestioned. Following on from the Aristotelian understanding of the processes of reproduction, outlined above, giving the male the active role/the female the passive, the primitive aversion to blood was and remains very powerful in human beings,

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*Sentencias Commentaria*, Vol. IV, d. 24; Balliol Ms. 57 (University of Oxford, Balliol College); Oriel Ms 43 (University of Oxford, Oriel College): ‘Quia non licet eis sacra vasa tangere ut diacono. Unde D. 23 (c. 25). Sother Papa episcopis Italie, “Sacratas Deo faminas vel monachas sacra vasa vel sacratas pallas, id est corporales, penes vos contingere, et incensum circa altaria deferre, perlatum est ad apostolicam sedem, quo omnia vituperatio reprehensione plena esse nulli recto sapientium dubium est, quia propter huius sancte sedis auctoritate ne pestis hec latius divulgetur, quod ornnes provincias abstergi citissime mandamus.”’

<sup>72</sup> Richard of Middleton, *Super Quarto Sententiarum*, d. 25, a. 4, n. 1.

<sup>73</sup> Women have always been allowed to perform domestic service and housekeeping duties on the sanctuary.

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and particularly men. As we have seen with regard to the female menstrual cycle, the processes of pregnancy and childbirth have also been a focus of male fears and mistrust, generating particular social constraints of which women were normally the focus and, in practical terms, the victims.<sup>74</sup>

Augustine (354–430)<sup>75</sup> went much further in his criticism of the sexual side of human nature, deciding in his earlier writings that sexual intercourse was simply allowed by God for procreation only and that it was the result of sin, and a cause of sin, if indulged in for pleasure and not for the practical purpose of producing children. Just as Jerome described Jesus as nobly tolerating the ‘revolting conditions’ in Mary’s womb in order to be born for our salvation,<sup>76</sup> Augustine was quick to point out that Jesus was not conceived by sexual intercourse and thus avoided the taint of ‘sinful flesh’.<sup>77</sup> In her essay analysing René Laurentin’s thesis on *Mary, Church and Priesthood*, Tina Beattie articulates the male aversion to the idea of Mary’s motherhood conferring a priestly character on her and logically on all women, asking and then answering her question, with an ironical twist: ‘why is it that educated men will fall over themselves in the rush to flee like frightened animals from an idea which Laurentin admits seems like a logical conclusion – that Mary is a priest? I think that fundamental to this is an issue of blood.’<sup>78</sup>

Not only was sexual intercourse the cause of sin *per se*, but it was also the vector for the propagation of the sin of Adam and Eve down the generations, in Augustine’s view. It is the ‘shameful lust’ of the organs of generation that indicates the presence of sin in the

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<sup>74</sup> For an account of Aristotle’s understanding of menstruation see Lesley Dean-Jones, ‘Menstrual Bleeding According to the Hippocratics and Aristotle’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 119 (1989), pp. 177–192. Dean-Jones points out that the Hippocratic doctors had fixed ideas about what constituted a healthy cycle and blood flow, and would treat women who deviated from the norm, even if they were in fact not suffering from any disorder.

<sup>75</sup> All quotations from Augustine and other early Fathers come from the Christian Classics Ethereal Library collections unless otherwise stated: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Jerome, *Letter 22, To Eustochium*, § 37: ‘For our salvation the Son of God is made the Son of Man. Nine months He awaits His birth in the womb, undergoes the most revolting conditions, and comes forth covered with blood, to be swathed in rags and covered with caresses. He who shuts up the world in His fist is contained in the narrow limits of a manger.’

<sup>77</sup> Augustine, *On Concupiscence*, Bk I, ch. 13: ‘Only there was no nuptial cohabitation [between Mary and Joseph]; because He who was to be without sin, and was sent not in sinful flesh, but in *the likeness* of sinful flesh, could not possibly have been made in sinful flesh itself without that shameful lust of the flesh which comes from sin, and without which He willed to be born, in order that He might teach us, that *everyone who is born of sexual intercourse is in fact sinful flesh*, since that alone which was not born of such intercourse was not sinful flesh.’ [Latin text: *Solus ibi nuptialis concubitus non fuit, quia in carne peccati fieri non poterat sine illa carnis concupiscentia, quae accidit ex peccato, sine qua concipi voluit, qui futurus erat sine peccato, non in carne peccati, sed in similitudine carnis peccati, ut hinc etiam doceret omnem quae de concubitu nascitur carnem esse peccati, quandoquidem sola quae non inde nata est non fuit caro peccati...*]

<sup>78</sup> Beattie, ‘Mary the Virgin Priest?’.

action. If it were not for sin, then the sex organs would behave in the same way as the urinary tract, doing their job without any associated urges of the body or excessive pleasure. It is sin which requires the prior sexual desire, the preliminary excitement or ‘concupiscence’ in the sex organs before they will do their job:

... even the liquid contained in the urinary vessels obeys the command to flow from us at our pleasure, and when we are not pressed with its overflow ... With how much greater ease and quietness, then, if the generative organs of our body were compliant, would natural motion ensue, and human conception be effected ...<sup>79</sup>

The pollution caused by the presence of women, their touch contaminating the space they occupy, represents a widespread, instinctive revulsion on the part of men to women’s bodily fluids and fear of the power of the female body to generate life. This was bound up, in mediaeval times, with the confusion and ignorance around fertility, pregnancy and childbirth and with the dread of sin through sexual desire and the difficulty men might feel in maintaining self-discipline and control around women. The potency of the male sex drive was perceived as being in some way controlled by women, who themselves were considered to be sexually insatiable and eager to lead men astray. Bloch’s essay, already quoted, starts with an examination of mediaeval literature on ‘woman as riot’, looking at popular satires and romances that illustrate the prevalence of misogynistic discourse:

The ritual denunciation of women constitutes something on the order of a cultural constant, reaching back to the Old Testament as well as to Ancient Greece and extending through the fifteenth century. Found in Roman tradition, it dominates ecclesiastical writing, letters, sermons, theological tracts, discussions and compilations of canon law; scientific works, as part and parcel of biological, gynecological, and medical knowledge; and philosophy. The discourse of misogyny runs like a rich vein throughout the breadth of medieval literature.<sup>80</sup>

The insatiability of women’s sexual appetite was perceived as a characteristic inherited from Eve, whose tempting of Adam was described in sexual terms. Mediaeval literature frequently used sexual imagery when describing the temptation and Fall.<sup>81</sup> There was also of course a link between Eve and the curse of menstruation, which we will consider shortly. The experience of being bitten by a snake was believed by some cultures in the

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<sup>79</sup> Augustine, *On Concupiscence*, Bk II, ch. 53. “Humori denique, quod est mirabilius, in vesica intus posito, qui, et quando eius copia non urgemur, imperatur ut profluat et obtemperat? ... Quanto ergo facilius atque tranquillius oboedientibus genitalibus corporis partibus et ipsum membrum porrigeretur et homo seminaretur...?”

<sup>80</sup> Bloch, ‘Medieval Misogyny’, p. 1

<sup>81</sup> Eric Jager’s study of the literature based on the Genesis story of Adam and Eve has many examples of this, in works such as the *Ancrene Wisse*, the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux and others: Eric Jager, *The Tempter’s Voice: Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993).

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Middle East to bring on menstruation and Mary's Immaculate Conception, preserving her from all sin, also implied that she was spared this additional punishment, keeping her pure for the future blessing of the divine child she would carry.<sup>82</sup>

The human nature of man and woman is created by God and, therefore, good of itself, but the sexual act and its associated pleasures come from the devil, as a result of human sin at the beginning, and are therefore hateful and to be rejected by good Christian people:

Hence it follows that infants, although incapable of sinning, are yet not born without the contagion of sin – not, indeed, because of what is lawful, but on account of that which is unseemly: for from what is lawful nature is born; from what is unseemly, sin. Of the nature so born, God is the Author, who created man, and who united male and female under the nuptial law; but of the sin the author is the subtlety of the devil who deceives, and the will of the man who consents.<sup>83</sup>

At various times, Augustine advocates married couples living together as brother and sister, says that a man should 'hate' the carnal connection necessary to produce offspring and be averse to meeting his wife again in heaven.<sup>84</sup>

Pollution from the presence or touch of women was a significant factor in such restrictions. Following Jewish traditional practice, many bishops required priests to abstain from relations with their wives for a period before and after celebrating the Eucharist. This was extended in later centuries to the rule in some dioceses that all married couples should abstain on Saturdays and Sundays, or any day before receiving the Eucharist. So for instance, at the end of the seventh century, at the Council of Constantinople, Bishop Timothy of Alexandria sets out such rules but says that a man who has a 'nocturnal emission' does not have to refrain from communion the next day, if its cause was the devil, but if a woman was involved, he does have to abstain.<sup>85</sup> During intercourse, the man suffers loss of energy and some essence of his own being and there was a danger that a man could become 'feminised' or weakened through loss of heat by indulgence in too much intercourse. The idea of loss of energy was also a factor in the requirement for

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<sup>82</sup> Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, p. 268

<sup>83</sup> Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ*, Bk II, § 42. "Hinc est quod infantes etiam qui peccare non possunt, non tamen sine peccati contagione nascuntur; non ex hoc quod licet, sed ex eo quod dedecet. Nam ex hoc quod licet, natura nascitur; ex illo quod dedecet, vitium. Naturae nascentis est auctor Deus, qui hominem condidit, et qui virum ac feminam nuptiali iure coniunxit: vitii vero auctor est diaboli decipientis calliditas, et hominis consentientis voluntas."

<sup>84</sup> Augustine, *Sermon on the Mount*, Bk 1, § 41, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series 1, Vol. 6, Philip Schaff (ed.) (first published 1886), available from Christian Classics Ethereal Library <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>85</sup> From the *Canonical Answers of Bishop Timothy of Alexandria*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xvii.xxiv.html>, last accessed August 2014.

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continence, so that ‘the priest should abstain from intercourse before sacrifice, [and] so avoid pollution and vitiation of spirit’.<sup>86</sup> Bishop Timothy also ruled that a menstruating woman may not receive communion, ‘until she is clean’, nor may she be baptised, or visit the church at Easter.

The pure whiteness of semen, contrasted with the red menstrual blood, an image taken from Aristotle,<sup>87</sup> was seen as symbolising the heavenly nature of the male, contrasted with the more fleshly nature of women, identified through blood. The male desire in intercourse is to produce a son, his own image. Aquinas’ account of how the ‘sensitive’ soul is infused into the foetus, which obtains the ‘vegetative’ soul from the woman’s body, explains his view, referring again to Aristotle, of how the male semen takes precedence over the female material and strives towards reproduction of a ‘perfect’ offspring (a male):

In perfect animals, generated by coition, the active force is in the semen of the male, as the Philosopher says (*De Gener. Animal.* ii, 3); but the foetal matter is provided by the female ... And after the sensitive soul, by the power of the active principle in the semen, has been produced in one of the principal parts of the thing generated, then it is that the sensitive soul of the offspring begins to work towards the perfection of its own body, by nourishment and growth.<sup>88</sup>

### 6.e Conclusion

Tracing the roots of the biological understanding of the mediaeval scholars takes us back to the Greek physicians and natural scientists, whose studies provided results based on observation, placing the female of the species in her place as the minor party in the generation of offspring, the receptacle for the developing embryo planted in her womb as the male seed so that she could provide merely nourishment and shelter, albeit in a ‘revolting’ environment, until the child was born. After this, the woman remained unclean for a period of time, until she presented herself for purification to a (male) priest. During the woman’s natural cycle, in Jewish, Christian and many other societies, she was untouchable, or unclean while menstruating, and often for several days afterwards. Her husband could not have intercourse with her and, sometimes, objects and household linen she touched were also contaminated. This uncleanness, in Jewish tradition, was not a moral

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<sup>86</sup> Power, ‘Of Godly Men’. Power goes on to suggest that the requirement for celibacy for priests originates with the same fear of loss of spiritual essence in men if they engage in sexual intercourse.

<sup>87</sup> Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, Bk II, ch. 4, at <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/generation/book2.html>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>88</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Pt I, q. 118, a. 1. “in animalibus perfectis, quae generantur ex coitu, virtus activa est in semine maris, secundum philosophum in libro de Generat. Animal.; materia autem foetus est illud quod ministratur a femina....Postquam autem per virtutem principii activi quod erat in semine, producta est anima sensitiva in generato quantum ad aliquam partem eius principalem, tunc iam illa anima sensitiva prolis incipit operari ad complementum proprii corporis, per modum nutritionis et augmenti.”

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issue but one associated with unacceptability to God. The irregularity in the woman's body, and thus her temporary infertility, indicated unwholeness. The Jews perceived bodily wholeness and regularity as a symbol of the nation of Israel and her special status before other nations as the chosen people of God.<sup>89</sup> Anyone suffering from a bodily ailment, including menstruation in women, could be seen as representative of the Gentile, outside the people of God, even for a short time. Nonetheless, the male revulsion of women's bodies – their mysteries – imposed serious restrictions on women's lives in general.

Janet Soskice traces this kind of uncleanness back to a ritual requirement for purity. The presence of the Lord in the Tabernacle, in the centre of the camp during the wandering in the wilderness, meant that the whole people, assembled together, were holy. Purity rules therefore applied within the camp. Blood shed in anger, or as a result of disease or malfunction of the body, is a pollutant. Blood of animals sacrificed, or associated with fertility, on the other hand, is a sign of life and is holy.

Soskice reads the story of the woman with the haemorrhage as being about her impurity in religious terms, which Jesus overcomes, not by ignoring the law, but by transcending it, reaching out and healing her, as he does the dead child and the leper:

... the story does not dismiss purity laws or ignore them, but rather turns upon the deeper meaning of the laws surrounding blood and the flow of female blood. There 'impurity' or 'defilement' has nothing to do with sinfulness and a great deal to do with the holiness of birth and of blood and of life. The woman is in an excluded position, however, because her bleeding is irregular and is thus a bleeding which does not yield life.<sup>90</sup>

The healing of the woman, just as it is for the leper, is a representation of the healing of Israel, "unclean" because of sin, but who can find restoration, health, well-being, wholeness and "cleanness" through the power of Jesus if only it would *reach out and touch* even the tassels of his garments' (emphasis added).<sup>91</sup>

As we have seen, from ancient times, physicians believed menstrual blood was a poison, which the body had to expel. The Hippocratic corpus of the fourth and fifth centuries BC

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<sup>89</sup> Bruce Chilton, 'Purity', in Craig Evans and Stanley Porter (eds.), *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000): 'All laws of cleanness are Israel's means of maintaining solidarity of sacrifice with God, apart from which the land may not be retained.'

<sup>90</sup> J.M. Soskice, 'Blood and Defilement' in *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender and Religious Language* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p. 96.

<sup>91</sup> Séamus Mulholland, *Meeting with Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, Vol. 1 (Canterbury: Franciscan International Study Centre, 2012), p. 135.

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and the writings of Aristotle and Galen, treated as authorities on medical issues for centuries, variously argued that, through menstruation, women's bodies discharged their impurities, or expelled material not required to form the foetus, or else that was part of the excretory process, undigested food. Isidore of Seville believed that the menses were superfluous blood and that women were essentially inefficient organisms, requiring constant purging of excess fluids.<sup>92</sup> Sexual intercourse during menstruation was a particularly thorny subject in mediaeval times, some theologians believing it to be a mortal sin, requiring absolution from a priest.

It seems apparent that this otherwise inexplicable prohibition on simple contact with sacred cloths and vessels has its roots in the purity requirement and, for women, the uncleanness and ritual impurity always revolves around menstruation and childbirth. Its persistence well into modern times is indicative of a deep-seated, unarticulated distaste towards these aspects of female biology. The literature contains plenty of evidence regarding contemporary attitudes towards menarche, menstruation and female gynaecological disorders, indicating high levels of unease, disgust and aversion incompatible with the actual nature of the biological processes involved.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Blamires, *Women Defamed*, p. 44.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, K.E and J.M. Paige, *The Politics of Reproductive Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Sarah Covington, 'Untouchability: Menstrual Taboos', *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005), available at <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3424300796.html>, last accessed August 2014.



## 7. Language

### 7.a Introduction

This chapter will consider a range of ways in which language has a part to play when examining the issue of the unsuitability of women to receive the sacrament of ordination as so judged by the scholastic commentators on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. The various means whereby language participates in the story of how women have been refused ordination in the Catholic Church make a contribution to the whole picture, not previously brought together in this way.

There are four main aspects to be addressed, regarding language:

- Firstly (in 7.b), the prevalence of the male as the norm in society generally and in the Church up to and including during the twentieth century is discussed, in that the man always represents the ‘human species’ while the woman in some sense becomes a ‘sub-species’. Misogynistic language and linguistic oppression is also relevant here.
- Secondly (7.c), the role of translation and dissemination of texts is presented, touching on how the writings of Greek philosophers reached the European schools in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and became so profoundly influential.
- Thirdly (7.d), the translation of Latin into vernacular tongues, which took place over many centuries up to and including the mediaeval period, is important here for two main reasons. The rendering of the terms *vir* and *homo* in other languages was usually a specific masculine, thus, ‘man’ rather than ‘human’ in English, *Mann* rather than *Mensch* in German and so on. The use of the masculine gender and the way it was carried over into vernacular languages thus tends to an assumption of the male as the default option in any circumstances, especially when determining suitability for positions of authority and for ministry above all. Latin was also the language of the educated classes, therefore of men of the professions, of the Church and of the universities, from which women were excluded. Once the texts – canon law, scripture, church documents – became accepted, with this inherent male bias, they could then be used evidentially to reinforce barriers against women’s entry into such reserved roles. Following on from this, usage and meaning of the terminology about ordination is also mentioned, considering the way in which the various terms such as *ordo/ordinatio*, *presbyter*, *episkopos*, and others were

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adopted from Latin and Greek and how their meanings evolved to take on restricted and specific significance by the Middle Ages.

- Finally (7.e), the issue of metaphor is considered, with reference to the way metaphors are gradually absorbed into everyday speech and take on a reality they were never intended to convey. This is of particular importance in this thesis with respect to the spousal imagery used about Christ and the Church.

These five points have all been addressed in one way or another by writers considering the issue of the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, but the goal in this thesis is to show that in some cases they are maintained by the church in modern teaching, often using the mediaeval scholastics as their authorities, specifically to support the notion that women are unsuitable for the ordained ministry.

### 7.b *Misogynistic Language, Grammatical Gender and the 'Male-as-Norm'*

#### 7.b.i Misogynistic Language

As we have already seen in the sections dealing with the mediaeval writers (Chapter 4.b.i, ii and iii), popular culture and literature of the early Middle Ages and onward, as well as religious writing, even up to modern times, perpetuate historical sources about women that tend to focus on a number of stereotypes about the female. These include the biological assumptions about the physical weakness of women, along with myths about menstruation and childbirth (already discussed in Chapter 6 on biology), the role of the woman in the Genesis stories of Creation and Fall, women's flighty natures and their inclination towards sexual infidelity. Such denigrating accounts inevitably affect the contemporary perception of women, then and now. As examined further below, any culture in which one group is seen as flawed, less than complete, deviant from the norm because of race, gender, religion or sexuality cannot help but take for granted the automatic degradation of that group, its subordinate status, fewer rights and, of course, exclusion from positions of power, particularly moral power.<sup>1</sup>

A society that uses language as a tool of power to dominate and diminish the status of a particular group will find its behaviour influenced accordingly. This concept, known as 'linguistic determinism', or less forcefully 'linguistic relativism', was fairly widely accepted during the twentieth century as being an acceptable account of how language

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Hardesty, *Inclusive Language in the Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), p. 16.

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shapes thought and perception. It may be expressed roughly in Wittgenstein's dictum, 'the limits of my language indicate the limits of my world'.<sup>2</sup> Although still a subject for intense discussion and disagreement in scholarly circles, it is expressed in a nuanced way by many writers, such as Daniel Chandler, who explains: 'the ways in which we see the world may be influenced by the kind of language we use'.<sup>3</sup> He goes on to say that linguistic influence relates to cultural conventions and individual style (de Saussure's *parole*). The way in which societies and individuals use language indicates their selective worldview, 'tending to support certain kinds of observations and interpretations and to restrict others. And this transformative power goes largely unnoticed, retreating to transparency'.<sup>4</sup> Although, more recently, scholars have disputed the power of this metaphysical argument, particularly in relation to assumptions about cultural mindsets,<sup>5</sup> the choice of terms considered derogatory by one group about another will affect the way in which they relate to each other, even though they may not be aware of this. In this respect, it is indeed difficult to separate the influence of language from behaviour and vice versa. Language as a tool for the dominant group is particularly powerful in authoritarian institutions, indeed all governments use it.<sup>6</sup>

Instances of misogynistic language today, even in the politically correct Western media, are all too common, some would say becoming more common. They are often disseminated widely through social networking, advertising and in popular music.<sup>7</sup> Women

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<sup>2</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness (tr.) (London: Routledge, 1921) 5.61.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Chandler, *The Act of Writing: A Media Theory Approach* (Aberystwyth: University of Wales, 1995), p. 34. Dan Slobin has carried out a number of studies in this field, see, among others, 'From "thought and language" to "thinking for speaking"', in J.J. Gumpertz and S.C. Levison (eds.), *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996); 'Language and Thought Online: Cognitive Consequences of Linguistic Relativity', in D. Gentner and S. Goldin-Meadow (eds.), *Advances in the Investigation of Language and Thought* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Chandler, *The Act of Writing*, p. 35

<sup>5</sup> See D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 1996, 2nd edn.), p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> George Orwell, 'Politics and the English Language', *Horizon*, London, 1946: 'In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of political parties. Thus, political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called transfer of population or rectification of frontiers. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called elimination of unreliable elements.' widely available online e.g. [http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e\\_polit/](http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit/), accessed August 2014. This subject was also addressed by Barbara Trapido in her novel *Frankie and Stankie* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> There is a multitude of examples of this online. See, just as an introduction, everydaysexism.com, with tens of thousands of instances from women all over the world. An interesting recent article by Hannah Betts, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10553284/Misogyny-came-into-the-open-during-annus-misogynis-that-was-2013.html> accessed August 2014. She quotes Joan Smith's recent book *The Public Woman* (London: Westbourne Press, 2013), with case studies of specific individuals.

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are frequently the targets of bullying, aggressive and insulting language on-line, if they speak out even on subjects that might seem completely inoffensive.<sup>8</sup> The treatment of women in the workplace can also be seriously detrimental and remains a problem, despite legislation to counter its most harmful effects.

... the continuing pervasiveness of male as norm makes some territories of experience dangerous to explore. Despite some use of the rather distanced term 'embodiment' these days, bodies are not very clearly incorporated in thinking about management and leadership. Mentioning menstruation, the menopause and health, for example, is still likely to provide hostages to fortune and make women vulnerable, as these terms too readily evoke notions of women as potentially deficient.<sup>9</sup>

Where modern management sees female biology as affecting the efficiency and usefulness of women in the workplace, the mediaeval Church saw the same characteristics as indicative of the innate inferiority and guilt of women, their malign influence on the male, their greater responsibility for sin, and their impurity and uncleanness for sacred functions. The power of the words, their emotive authority, means that language could be used to evoke a whole panorama of images about defilement, corruption and toxicity, rendering ineffective any attempt to argue for consideration of the female as meriting equal treatment and access to all the sacraments, including that of orders.

As we have already seen (Chapter 6), there are countless examples of this kind of discourse about women and the female body in the mediaeval canonists and theologians. Several of the mediaeval writers quote the lines from the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville (c.570–636), already mentioned elsewhere: 'From contact with this blood, fruits fail to germinate, grape-must goes sour, plants die, trees lose their fruit ... dogs which consume it contract rabies.'<sup>10</sup> This list of dire consequences appears in writers such as Paucapulea, pupil of Gratian, whose commentary on the *Summa* of canon law appeared in the mid-twelfth century, and Sicardus of Cremona, another twelfth-century canonist, who ascribed the rule about mothers requiring a double period of purification after the birth of a girl to the same corrupting effect of menstrual blood.<sup>11</sup> Rufinus, another lawyer from the same period, produced his own commentary on the canons, which would be used for centuries in the

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<sup>8</sup> Caroline Criado-Perez's campaign in 2013 to have Jane Austen featured on the £10 note, for instance, which led to her being subjected to threats of sexual violence.

<sup>9</sup> Judi Marshal, 'Researching Women and Leadership: Some Comments on Challenges and Opportunities', *International Review of Women and Leadership*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1995, pp. 1–10.

<sup>10</sup> *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi: Etymologiarum sive Originum*, Bk XX, W. M. Lindsay (ed.) (Oxford: OUP 1911) – translation by Alcuin Blamires, quoted in his *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 44. Blamires points out that the origin of this prejudice goes back to Pliny.

<sup>11</sup> Sicardus of Cremona, *Mitræle, Sive, De Officiis Ecclesiasticis Summa*, Bk V, § 11, PL, [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org), last accessed August 2014, and new edition, *Sicardi Cremonensis Episcopi Mitrælis de Officiis*, Gábor Sarbak and Lorenz Weinrich (eds.) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

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church as a legal textbook. Commenting on Distinction V of Gratian's *Decretum*, when speaking of menstruating women he reiterated the popular account:

That blood is so execrable and impure, as already Julius Solinus has written in the book about the miracles of the world, that through its contacts fruits do not mature, plants wither, the grass dies, the trees lose their fruits, the air becomes dark, if dogs eat it they are afflicted with rabies .... And intercourse at the time of the monthly period is very risky. Not only because of the uncleanness of the blood has the desire to be restrained from contacting a menstruating woman: from such an intercourse a spoiled foetus could be born.<sup>12</sup>

Such prejudice against menstruating women extended into all areas of life, at least as expressed in Church law, from the specific exclusions on intercourse, on touching sacred vessels, even to women receiving communion during the time of their periods (as we have seen in Chapter 6 on 'Biology').<sup>13</sup> The dramatic and powerful aversion language used is intended to warn the (male) reader against the dangers involved in the female, both physical and spiritual. Its roots go back to the classical Greek texts on the same subjects, which were becoming more familiar to Western European readers from their original sources as they spread from the East at this time. We will look at this phenomenon in section 7.c of this chapter, but it is worth remembering that the medical knowledge applied especially to women's biology of this period hardly changed right through the subsequent centuries, until the nineteenth century, and thus the assumptions made about women's bodies and the psychology involved also persisted, colouring many aspects of social practice in Western European law and culture.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Rufinus, *Summa Decretorum*, Heinrich Singer (ed.) (Paderborn: Druck und Verlag von Ferdinand Schöningh, 1902) pp. 16–17, full text available at [http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=david\\_freidenreich](http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=david_freidenreich), last accessed July 2014. "Adeo autem execrabilis et immundus est sanguis ille, sicut ait Iulius Solinus in libro de mirabilibus mundi, ut eius contactu fruges non germinent, arescant arbusta, moriantur herbe, amittant arbores fetus, nigrescant era, si canes inde ederint in rabiem efferantur. Non autem solum propter ipsam immunditiam sanguinis a menstruata arcenda est voluptas, sed etiam ne vitiosus fetus ex illo coitu nascatur..."

<sup>13</sup> *Theodori Poenitentiale*, Bk I, ch. XIV, 17, 'Mulieres autem menstruale tempore non intrent in ecclesiam neque communicent, nec sanctimoniales nec laicae.' A.W. Hadden and W. Stubbs (Oxford: OUP 1869), Vol. III, p. 188.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Darwin was entirely a man of his time in ascribing clear sexual differences, favouring men, to the human species, the man being 'more courageous, pugnacious and energetic than woman [with] a more inventive genius. His brain is absolutely larger [...] the formation of her skull is said to be intermediate between the child and the man', from *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: Murray, 1871), Part III, ch. 19.

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### 7.b.ii Grammatical Gender and the Male-as-Norm

Gendering is an inescapable feature of many languages, to a greater or lesser extent, even though grammatical gender does not necessarily reflect sexual difference at all.<sup>15</sup> For instance, some languages, such as the Native American families, use gender to differentiate animate and inanimate objects, shapes of natural features, different kinds of plant life and so on. Australian Aboriginal languages have four genders: classing animate objects with the male; fire, water and violence with the female; plants and animals together; and everything else into the final category. Modern English largely does not require agreement among parts of speech by gender, though this is unusual in a European language as most languages in the Indo-European family have retained the Latin categories to some degree.<sup>16</sup> Of the languages that are not so closely related to their European neighbours, Finnish and Hungarian differentiate between humans and inanimate objects but not between male and female humans (even this distinction is often ignored in spoken Finnish). Both use a single pronoun for ‘he’ and ‘she’, *hän* in Finnish and *ő* in Hungarian.<sup>17</sup> This does affect the way in which people speaking these languages express themselves, as one Hungarian writer says, in Hungarian:

there is no grammatical gender, thus no difference between ‘he’ and ‘she’, ‘his eyes’ and ‘her eyes’. This makes it possible for writers (and especially poets) to express things in a more abstract or more unspecified way.<sup>18</sup>

The use of the masculine pronoun in language is a marker for the way in which the male is the default sex in many human situations. Women struggling against exclusion from male-dominated professions during the nineteenth century highlighted this characteristic in their attempts to create a reasoned, balanced debate, with varying levels of success. Antoinette Brown, an early fighter for women’s rights in America in the nineteenth century, who herself was ordained a Congregationalist minister (although she later left the church in

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society* (London: Penguin Books, 2000 4th edn.), pp. 61–80.

<sup>16</sup> R. L. Trask, *Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 100.

<sup>17</sup> Discussing translation of a novel from Turkish to English, Maureen Freely (best known for her translations of Orhan Pamuk’s books) explains how a similar situation in Turkish leads to difficulties in translation: ‘Two characters are having a discussion [about two missing persons, a man and a woman] but neither realises they are talking about different people. In Turkish, a language without gender, this is an easy mistake to maintain as long as neither character mentions the name of the person they are talking about. In English ... it took us a long time to think up paraphrases which sounded natural and didn’t reveal the subject’s gender.’ Maureen Freely and John Angliss, ‘Close Reading’, *In Other Words: The Journal for Literary Translators*, Vol. 43, Summer 2014, pp. 17–21.

<sup>18</sup> A. Nádásdy, ‘Hungarian, A Strange Cake on the Menu’, *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. 51, Spring 2000, p. 157. Thanks to a much loved and now deceased Hungarian friend and scholar, Bela Boda-Novy, for a fascinating afternoon’s discussion on this subject.

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protest at the continued oppression of women by organised religion) was also a noted scripture scholar. However, her work is now little known because she had few opportunities to be published in her lifetime. One of her perceptions relates to the male-as-norm concept, observing that men have decreed themselves as representative of humanity and taken their experience as the totality of all human experience, rendering the whole of women's experience as non-existent. She gave a speech to the National Women's Rights Convention in Syracuse in 1852 in which she said: 'Man cannot represent woman ... The law is wholly masculine; it is created and executed by man. The framers of all legal compacts are restricted to the masculine standpoint of observation; to the thought, feelings and biases of man.'<sup>19</sup>

Alice Bach talks about the 'gender code',<sup>20</sup> this underlying assumption of male gender in written texts. She is particularly referring to biblical texts and the women's stories in the Old Testament, which impose particular frames of reference onto the women concerned, requiring them to be dutiful wives or daughters, silencing those who speak out, assuming the authority of the patriarch, and the *imago Dei* as being a male image. This argument, as we have seen, was influential with the scholastic theologians. But the same criticisms can of course be applied to much writing by men throughout history, where the male is norm, and the female is deviant from the norm.

The male gender has dominated the voice of the text ... for such a long time that it is considered normative, objective, usual... the gender code in the interpretation of biblical texts has usually been adopted in its masculine version. But each time the canon is termed universal, the life of the patriarchal myth is extended. When the gender code is implicit, it contains the same characteristics as the moral code. It imposes upon every signifying element of the text a unified and preestablished theme ... If feminist criticism has demonstrated anything, it has demonstrated the importance of the reader to what is read.<sup>21</sup>

In the introduction to her influential work on the masculine bias in language, *Man Made Language*, Dale Spender speaks of:

... the male-as-norm ... a relatively innocuous rule for classifying the objects and events of the world, but closer examination exposes it as one of the most pervasive and pernicious rules that has been encoded ... [classifying] the world on the premise that the standard or normal human being is

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<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al. (eds.), *History of Women's Suffrage*, Vol. 1 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1882), p. 524 available at <https://archive.org/details/historyofwomansu01stanuoft> accessed May 2014.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 4.b.i on 'Bonaventure' for a discussion of this image.

<sup>21</sup> Alice Bach (ed.), *The Pleasures of her Text: Feminist Readings of Biblical and Historical Texts* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990) available in full-text version at <http://www.religion-online.org/showbook.asp?title=1945>, accessed August 2014. Quotation is from Bach's 'Introduction' to this collection of essays.

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... male and ... those who are not of it ... are minus male [so] the status of the female is derived from the status of the male.<sup>22</sup>

The default grammatical gender in Latin is the masculine and this feature was carried over into most European languages, so that any reference to multiple individuals is always given with the male pronoun, as happens in French, Italian and so on. Where one individual is the subject or object of a sentence, again, the male is normally used, unless reference is being made particularly to a female. The ‘politically correct’ and occasionally awkward English that sometimes provokes irritation (his/her, s/he, etc.) is a way of dealing with this, but it also serves to highlight how women’s secondary status has been assumed for centuries and how language is an important factor and can also provide a useful corrective to discriminatory patterns of thought, if only as grit in the oyster.

Gendered language also struggles with the development in understanding of the nature of human physiological gender and human sexuality, which was given some attention in the discussions about ordination in the scholastic period. The mediaeval canonists took a pragmatic view of confused gender. Hermaphrodites could be treated as men if they behaved like men, and like women if they tended to behave like women. Huguccio of Pisa, writing in 1188, said in his compendium of Church law,

As to a hermaphrodite, if he has a beard and always wants to engage in manly activities and not in those of women, and if he always seeks the company of men and not of women, it is a sign that the masculine sex predominates in him and then he can be a witness where a woman is not allowed, namely with regard to a last will and testament, and he also can be ordained a priest. If he however lacks a beard and always wants to be with women and be involved in feminine works, the judgment is that the feminine sex predominates in him and then he should not be admitted to giving any witness wherever women are not admitted, namely at a last will and testament, neither can he be ordained then because a woman cannot receive holy orders.<sup>23</sup>

In a revised introduction to her seminal work *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler discussed the fluidity of sexual gender boundaries and how the burgeoning understanding of the variation in human sexuality and gender challenges the deepest-held assumptions about the inevitability of the male–female binary in human beings and thus the dominance of the heterosexual pattern for human behaviour and physiology. Commenting on reactions to her own, deliberately dense, writing style she says:

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<sup>22</sup> Dale Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

<sup>23</sup> Huguccio of Pisa, *Summa Decretorum*, causa 27, q. 1, ch. 23, ad. v (John Wijngaards (tr.), from <http://www.womenpriests.org>, accessed August 2014. See Huguccio Pisanus, *Summa Decretorum, Distinctiones I–XX*, O. Pferovský (ed.) (Vatican City: Vatican Apostolic Library, 2006).



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Are those who are offended making a legitimate request for ‘plain speaking’, or does their complaint emerge from a consumer expectation of intellectual life? ... If gender itself is naturalised through grammatical norms ... then the alteration of gender at the most fundamental epistemic level will be conducted, in part, through contesting the grammar in which gender is given.<sup>24</sup>

She highlights the panic in the face of the variety of sexual practices available to human beings and how the reaction against liberalisation of legal acknowledgement of the possibility of alternatives to ‘ordinary’ heterosexual partnerships creates more frightening environments for those who cannot or choose not to live within such boundaries, very much to the fore in the ‘gay marriage’ debate. We have to rethink the basic categories, ‘what is gender, how is it produced and reproduced, what are its possibilities?’<sup>25</sup> On the same subject, Gareth Moore, arguing that gender distinction generates social structure at a profound level, says:

One of the things we are taught is most important about us is whether we are male or female; and we are taught what it means to be a woman or a man, we are trained into gender roles. If we are alienated from our society, for whatever reason, one of the most natural and effective ways of expressing this alienation is by breaking the rules of these gender roles.<sup>26</sup>

The Vatican’s guidelines on psychological screening of candidates for the priesthood includes mention of ‘strong homosexual tendencies’ as an adverse marker when judging the suitability of a prospective seminarian.<sup>27</sup> The Code of Canon Law requires ‘a certificate of the candidate’s state of physical and psychological health’ (Canon 1051, 2). No mention is made of transgendered people or, of course, women. Unlike the mediaeval writings on the *Sentences*, there is no elaboration of what is meant by ‘man’ (*vir*) in Canon 1024: ‘Only a baptised man can validly receive sacred ordination.’

### 7.c Translation and the Spread of Learning from Greece

Transmission of texts plays an important part in the issue we are considering here, regarding the suitability of women for ordination, in a number of ways. As we have already seen above, the choice of language, grammatical gender, etymology and interpretation have all been factors in influencing writers, institutions and authorities. Translation has also been crucial in the handing on of tradition and knowledge from

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<sup>24</sup> Judith Butler, ‘Introduction’ in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999, 2nd edn.).

<sup>25</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Gareth Moore, O.P., *The Body in Context* (London: Continuum, 1992), p. 103.

<sup>27</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood* available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20080628\\_orientamenti\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20080628_orientamenti_en.html) accessed August 2014.

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ancient times to each generation, as knowledge of some languages is lost and as populations move around and acquire new vernaculars.

The mediaeval writers conventionally used Latin for writing and speaking in their working lives, but would all have known a birth language that they would have used in daily life, and perhaps also the vernacular of the area in which they lived and worked. Ancient Greek was not widely understood in Western Europe by the Middle Ages, but was being rediscovered, and Greek philosophy and other works were being newly translated into Latin. Holy Scripture, the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, had been translated into Latin by St Jerome and others, producing the version known subsequently as the Vulgate which was the standard text for generations. The Bible has since been translated into multiple languages, numerous times, to suit all kinds and manner of people and religious groups. Each time the process requires choices to be made about particular words and phrases and such choices will be affected to some degree by cultural and political choices as well as by linguistic needs. Controversy arose over the use of inclusive language in a revision of the New International Version in 1997, initiated by a conservative US group, Focus on the Family, which convened a hasty meeting to draw up guidelines for Bible translation, recommending the preservation of various masculine terms when rendering the text of the scriptures into vernacular languages, especially English.<sup>28</sup> Reflecting on this and other commentaries on inclusive language, David Burke examined the various ways in which the Hebrew word *'ish* has been translated over the centuries, based on its occurrence in Genesis. It is a non-specific term for human persons of either gender, used in the same way as the Greek *anthropos*, but has been rendered by a wide range of terms in the Septuagint (LXX), the Vulgate and in various English translations over the centuries, some of which were gender-neutral (each, no one, anyone, one, etc.). Generally, however, it was translated by a male substantive or pronoun (man, husband, the steward, any man, etc.).<sup>29</sup> In his review, Burke demonstrates that until recently, as least as regards the example he chose, there was no particular attention paid to choice of translation for ideological reasons. His conclusion is that: 'Rigidly consistent patterns that would limit translation of such key words to gender-specific [male] terms only could actually hinder, rather than

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<sup>28</sup> Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, guidelines available at <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csguidelines.html> last accessed July 2014 and published in Wayne Grudem, *What's Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations?* (Libertyville, Illinois: Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> David Burke, 'The Translation of the Hebrew Word *'ish* in Genesis: A Brief Historical Comparison' in Lynne Long (ed.), *Translation and Religion: Holy Untranslatable* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2005), pp. 129–140.

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help, the transfer of meaning for present-day users of English.<sup>30</sup> Such limitations, as imposed by the guidelines mentioned above and by the Vatican instruction on translation in the Roman Liturgy, *Liturgicam Authenticam*,<sup>31</sup> are a fairly recent phenomenon, but their avowed intention of preserving the revered ancient texts may do more harm than good.

The issue of preserving the original meanings of texts was addressed by James Barr also with regard to translation from Hebrew. He pointed out the way in which some scholars believe that the exercise of translation itself could be destructive of the true meaning of the text and that some believe the Hebrew language itself, in its structure and shape, somehow reflects ‘theological realities’. Barr asserts forcefully that: ‘The real bearer of the theological statement is the large complex like the sentence ...’.<sup>32</sup> Similarly for translation from Latin, the Vatican *Ratio Translationis* for the English language, the special instructions for the vernacular accompanying *Liturgicam Authenticam*, requires the translator to render as closely as possible the complexity of the structure of Latin sentences, with their ‘extended subordination’, in order to achieve a ‘successful translation’. Despite the fact that this form of sentence structure is not used in modern English, the writers of the Instruction require it to be used ‘to the extent that is necessary in order to translate accurately the prayers of the Roman Rite’. In addition to the requirements to avoid inclusive language, to use male pronouns and particles whenever possible in speaking of God, and so on, the translator has to ensure as far as possible a literal rendering of the Latin text, in terms of structure, vocabulary and choice of phrasing, to ‘convey key elements of the unique tone of the Roman expression’. There is constant reference to the fact that such practice will achieve ‘accurate translation’.<sup>33</sup>

Benjamin Baxter highlights the difficulties involved in translations from one language to another and in multiple interpretations of individual words and phrases – for instance, when the meaning of a word in the LXX is assumed to equate with the meaning of the Hebrew word it translates – with his own judgements about the significance of particular terms.<sup>34</sup> Baxter bases much of his argument on the work of James Barr and of Donald Carson, both of whom consider the subject of fallacious interpretation focussing on

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<sup>30</sup> Burke, ‘Translation of the Hebrew’, p. 140.

<sup>31</sup> *Liturgicam Authenticam* (Vatican City: Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: SCM Press, 1998, 2nd edn.), p. 265.

<sup>33</sup> *Ratio Translationis for the English Language* (Vatican City: Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2007), pp. 49–50; *Liturgicam Authenticam* (Vatican City: Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Benjamin J. Baxter, ‘Hebrew and Greek Word-Study Fallacies’, *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* Vol. 12, 2010–2011, pp. 3–32, p. 17.

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individual words as carrying a weight of theological meaning, rather than attending to their function within the semantic unit of the sentence, where the meaning actually resides, ‘the things the writers say, and not ... the words they say them with’.<sup>35</sup> Barr has several examples of the way in which interpreters of Scripture will pick up on a particular word and go on to develop their argument based on the use of that word, leading to a ‘failure to see any difference between what is indicated by a word and other things which may in fact exist in or in association with the object referred to by that word’.<sup>36</sup> Barr also discusses how the complexity of the biblical text means that a translator or exegete can choose both the etymological connections he or she makes with the words on the page, Hebrew or Greek, but also the particular ‘strand or aspect of Biblical thought with which he makes them fit’.<sup>37</sup> This can lead to other problems, and he warns against the way in which an interpretation of a word in one context may be applied generally, causing ‘the mind to be infected by the spurious associations attached ... even if these words are only of marginal importance at the particular point being studied’.<sup>38</sup>

Baxter again also considers the problem of false etymologies, that appeal to an ‘original’ meaning or earlier meaning of a word, or use of the component parts of a compound word to construct an unjustified history for it. There are also instances of reverse etymology, where a contemporary meaning is retrojected onto an earlier text.<sup>39</sup> Donald Carson, in his work on exegetical fallacy, also addresses the problem of historical fallacies and challenges the way in which scholars and others try to ‘squeeze’ the Biblical data to make them fit the particular theory they are trying to prove.<sup>40</sup> The discourse about and around women’s suitability for orders reveals elements of these techniques, both etymological and interpretative, in the process of invoking scriptural and patristic support for the arguments.

James Barr points out another form of this kind of error, practised by the scholastic writers, who believed that the language structure paralleled modes of thought, what Barr calls ‘logico-grammatical parallelism’. He notes that this doctrine ‘gained some of its plausibility from the predominant position of Latin and the corresponding attempts to force

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<sup>35</sup> Barr, *Semantics*, p. 270.

<sup>36</sup> Barr, *Semantics*, p. 155.

<sup>37</sup> Barr, *Semantics*, p. 138.

<sup>38</sup> Barr, *Semantics*, p. 140.

<sup>39</sup> Baxter, ‘Hebrew and Greek’, pp. 10–11.

<sup>40</sup> Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 135.

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the forms of other languages into the moulds of Latin grammar',<sup>41</sup> as noted above with the Vatican instructions on translation of liturgy today.<sup>42</sup>

The influence of the Latin language was all-pervasive, both in terms of the content of the texts itself (the Vulgate Bible, the writings of Latin Church Fathers, Councils, canon law) and the very structure and grammar of Latin itself:

The *auctoritas* that accrued to Latin was rooted precisely in its status as a language whose acquisition, chiefly by men, was dependent on alienation from associations of birth-origin and upon bonding with other male pupils in submission to the master and his command of grammar.<sup>43</sup>

Latin grammar, with its logical, structured form was seen as the optimum way of expressing complex thought in a clear, organised way. Latin expanded its vocabulary enormously during the mediaeval period, with neologisms created to cope with the demands placed on the language by the expansion of the fields of philosophy and science.<sup>44</sup>

Nonetheless, the mediaeval theologians considered here, all speakers and writers of Latin, were also witnesses to a paradigm shift in the academic world that took place over a period of two or three hundred years from the tenth century onwards, as previously rarely seen material from Greece penetrated Western Europe and became more readily accessible through translation. In the West, knowledge of Ancient Greek had declined over the centuries until, by the early Middle Ages, it was relatively little understood. There were scholars, such as Boethius (c.480–524/5), for example, capable of translating into Latin and commenting on some of the available texts of Plato and Aristotle and, through this, contributing to the development of neo-Platonic philosophy. In turn, Boethius' most popular work, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, was translated into the vernacular up to and during the Middle Ages by several outstanding writers, as varied as King Alfred (849–899), Jean de Meun (1240–1305) and Chaucer (1343–1400).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Barr, *Semantics*, p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> There is global dissatisfaction and resentment about the imposition in 2011 of the new translation of the Missal in the Roman Catholic Church, which complies strictly with the rules of *Liturgicam Authenticam*. See '2013 Survey of US Priests on the New Roman Missal', carried out by Godfrey Diekmann OSB, at the Center for Patristics and Liturgical Studies, Saint John's University School of Theology Seminary, Collegeville, Minnesota.

<sup>43</sup> David Townsend and Andrew Taylor (eds.), *The Tongue of the Fathers, Gender and Ideology in 12th Century Latin* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Stephen F. Brown, 'Theology and philosophy' in F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg, *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1996), pp. 267–288.

<sup>45</sup> B.B. Price, *Medieval Thought* (Blackwell: London, 1992), p. 62.

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The writings of philosophers, engineers, mathematicians and physicians of Ancient Greece had been translated into other Eastern Mediterranean languages, Semitic and Syriac tongues, and Arabic, by the schools of Baghdad during the eighth to tenth centuries. The classical period and its authors were considered to be, along with Holy Scripture, the source of all knowledge, and all later work could only be interpretation and reinterpretation of these authorities.<sup>46</sup> Translation of this material was essential to its diffusion and the often unknown individuals who carried out this vital work were responsible for providing the materials with which the medieval scholars built their edifices of learning. Dmitri Gutas, in his excellent and accessible study of the social and historical importance of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement of the Baghdad school in the eighth to tenth centuries, shows that almost every secular Greek book available in the fields of science, medicine and philosophy was translated into Arabic during this period, making, as he says, 'Arabic ... the second classical language, even before Latin'.<sup>47</sup> There were many sponsors and patrons of particular translators and groups of translators in Baghdadi society during this period, not least the Caliphs, who were especially interested in mining the Greek texts for knowledge of mathematics, engineering and military science.<sup>48</sup> Medicine, astrology and astronomy, as well as philosophy, were also subjects of vital interest, socially and culturally, and once translated, they were then disseminated around the Arab-speaking world as the power and influence of the Muslim empires increased throughout the Mediterranean basin. Gutas identifies the translation movement at this period of early 'Abbasid society as being integral to the foundation of the city of Baghdad itself, and with the rise of the 'Abbasid dynasty as an imperial power.

After the reconquest of the Muslim lands in Southern Europe at the end of the eleventh century, translators obtained greater access to the many Arabic version of Greek texts of all kinds and these began to be rendered into Latin editions that were then gradually adopted in the new and burgeoning universities of Italy, France and Germany during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In Toledo, a group of translators was formed at the cathedral in the early twelfth century, working from multiple languages, either directly into Latin or bridging from Arabic to Castilian and then Latin. As well as the writings of the Ancient

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<sup>46</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964/Canto reprint 2009): 'When we speak of the Middle Ages as the age of authority, we are usually thinking about the authority of the Church ... but they were the age not only of her authority but of authorities .... Every writer, if he possibly can, bases himself on an earlier writer, follows an *auctour*: preferably a Latin one .... In our own society, most knowledge depends, in the last resort, on observation. But the Middle Ages depended predominantly on books.' p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Dmitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Translators are reputed to have been very highly paid in Baghdad during the ninth century, some accounts giving a figure of up to 500 dinars a month, the rough equivalent of €12,000 today! See Gutas, *Greek Thought*, p. 138.

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Greek masters, they also translated commentaries on their work by Arabic and Hebrew philosophers. This enterprise is known to history as the Toledo School. Among its most renowned members was Gerard of Cremona (1114–1187), to whom some seventy translations are ascribed, including mathematical texts and Aristotelian philosophical works.<sup>49</sup>

The newly available works by Plato and by Aristotle, in particular, were greeted enthusiastically by scholars in the developing European universities as they were disseminated during the thirteenth century. There was tremendous intellectual curiosity and these writings contributed to the broadening of the curriculum in the schools, incorporating logic, new philosophical ideas and natural sciences, and to developments in various aspects of mediaeval thought, including ideas about the ‘self’, about creation and divinity and about the nature and origin of the world. Some of these concepts were treated at various times as unorthodox and even as heretical, provoking spiritual anxiety for, while their importance was acknowledged, there was concern that they would prove to be challenging to Christian thought. The Greek theory of the eternal nature of the material world conflicted with the Christian teaching that the world was created in time by God. The Greek perspective was given support by the Arabic commentators such as Avicenna and Averroes, working from the ideas of Plato and Aristotle. The eternity of the world, along with other ideas taken from the Greeks, was condemned as heretical in 1270 and 1277 by the Bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier.<sup>50</sup> Notwithstanding such resistance, the penetration of these concepts into education and learning was unstoppable, despite attempts to ban particular ideas or even whole books of the ancients during this period.

From the thirteenth century onward, many more Greek–Latin translations were produced for use in the West, such as notable works by Robert Grosseteste (1168–1263) and William of Moerbeke (1215–1286).<sup>51</sup> As the texts became familiar in Western Europe, there were retranslations and attempts were made to flesh out lacunae, resulting in the so-called ‘pseudo’ texts, such as those by Bartholomew of Messina (working in the mid-thirteenth century). The influence of both philosophical and medical texts on the scholastic masters of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was immediate and powerful. In particular,

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<sup>49</sup> Charles Burnett, ‘The Coherence of the Arabic–Latin Translation Program in Toledo in the Twelfth Century’, *Science in Context*, Vol. 14, Nos. 1/2, 2001, pp. 249–288.

<sup>50</sup> For an account of the condemnations in Paris and Aquinas’ involvement, see John F. Wippel, ‘Aquinas and the Condemnation of 1277’, *The Modern Schoolman*, vol. 72, January/March 1995, pp. 232–272.

<sup>51</sup> See the article by B.G. Dod, ‘Aristoteles Latinus’ in N. Kretzmann, A. Kenny and J. Pinborg (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), pp. 45–79 which has a helpful table of the Latin translations of Aristotle’s works and of Greek and Arabic commentaries of this period.

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for the topic under consideration here, the views of the Greek philosophers on the generation and nature of women were extremely important, along with the medical texts from Galen (129–200) and the Hippocratic corpus (400–300 BC), which reached Europe similarly through Arabic translations.<sup>52</sup> (The impact of the medical texts is discussed in Chapter 6 on ‘Biology’.)

Mediaeval thought tended towards greater definition and precision in speaking, writing and thinking. The mediaeval scholars used the work of their forebears as the basis for building and developing their own ideas. Innovation of itself was not a virtue, value being placed on tradition, antiquity and the knowledge of masters of previous generations. Despite the dearth of original sources, the early mediaeval teachers looked to classical writers and the *auctoritates*, the Church Fathers, to provide the core material for their syllabus. Ideas were thus rediscovered, rather than created anew.<sup>53</sup> This applied in all fields, not least in the reading of scripture. Despite the many-faceted nature of the scriptural texts, the Fathers of the Church, and later the scholastic theologians we are considering here, had to try to reconcile the multiple possible interpretations of the Bible with the single message they believed it contained: ‘The main question was how to read the Books by discovering in them, not new things, but the same everlasting truth rephrased in ever new ways: *non nova sed nove*.’<sup>54</sup> This principle applied not just to scripture but to all the ancient and newly rediscovered texts, such as those of the Greek philosophers and scientists. Thus translation provided access to further possible sources of new/old thinking, theological speculation and philosophical exploration. The choices made by translators, ways of rendering meaning from one language and one culture to another, are crucial in the expression of concepts that have an influence on society, religion and human life, not least in the way that women were affected by decisions and judgements made about them and their role in the divine plan.

### 7.d *Etymology and Definition of Important Terms*

Medieval Christian etymology looked for connections between words, in particular words that had similar spellings or sounds, especially in Latin. It could then find a spiritual meaning that linked the two words, or a group of words, to use this specious shared history

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<sup>52</sup> Discussed by Gutas, *Greek Thought*, p. 133.

<sup>53</sup> See Price, *Medieval Thought*, pp. 54–58, for a resumé of the Liberal Arts syllabus in the early Middle Ages.

<sup>54</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 12.



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to provide a spiritual interpretation of the world that could offer a lesson or an instructive idea. Writers used this form of wordplay as a homiletic tool or a key to unlock layers of meaning in a text.

Etymology in this way was used to explain the nature and character of women and thus indirectly affected the judgement on their suitability for orders. It is therefore useful to explore what mediaeval scholars understood by the terms used in Latin for women and men, *femina* or *mulier* and *vir* or *homo*. Avoiding preconceptions is important, holding the tension between, on the one hand, modern understandings of the ideas of prejudice, discrimination and justice and, on the other, the relative unimportance of such ideas at the period under discussion. It is also interesting to consider some of the terms directly applicable to the sacrament of Holy Orders – *ordo*, *ordinare*, *minister* and *sacramentum*. The way in which terms and ideas become stabilised, acquiring their specific meanings and significance in both the spoken and written word, affects thought itself, as we will see further on in this section.

### 7.d.i *Homo, Vir, Femina, Mulier*

The famous encyclopaedia of Isidore of Seville (c.560–636), phenomenally popular across Europe, was used as an authority throughout the continent for generations.<sup>55</sup> Its popularity is witnessed by the sheer number of manuscript copies extant, around a thousand, the earliest of which were found in Switzerland, at the monastery of St. Gall. Bede made use of it and it was known and used in schools and monasteries in Gaul, Ireland and Britain. As the introduction to a current edition says: ‘Both directly and indirectly ... Isidore’s influence pervaded the High Middle Ages of the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, in which the *Etymologies* was always regarded as a prime authority.’<sup>56</sup>

Despite the imaginary nature of his explanations, there was a real purpose to Isidore’s work and its breadth and ambition are admirable.<sup>57</sup> He was keen to expand the possible areas of learning, and increased the content of the 20 divisions of knowledge in his

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<sup>55</sup> Blamires, *Woman Defamed*, pp. 43–44.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Introduction’, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, Stephen Barney et al. (eds. and trs.) (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), p. 25.

<sup>57</sup> For a thorough study of early Mediaeval grammar and etymology, see Mark Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin’s, 1989): ‘Isidore’s etymological explanations and grammatical frame for epistemology cannot be anything but absurd ... But when read as a formalization of human knowledge, Isidore’s program ... is a stunning instance of science as a discursive practice.’ p. 135.

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*Etymologiae sive Origines* by fabricating etymologies of the words under discussion.<sup>58</sup> Sometimes, the sound of the Latin word was considered to be onomatopoeic, reflecting the nature of the individual object, or type of object described. In discussing the origins of the substantives man (*vir*) and woman (*mulier*), Isidore says:

(17) Vir nuncupatus, quia maior in eo vis est quam in feminis: unde et virtus nomen accepit; sive quod vi agat feminam.

(18) Mulier vero a mollitie, tamquam mollier, detracta littera vel mutata, appellata est mulier.

(19) Utrique enim fortitudine et imbecillitate corporum separantur. Sed ideo virtus maxima viri, mulieris minor, ut patiens viri esset; scilicet, ne feminis repugnantibus libido cogeret viros aliud appetere aut in alium sexum prouere<sup>59</sup>.

[Man is named thus, because in him there is greater force than in woman: hence he also receives the name of strength; or because he controls woman with force.

Woman is so named [*mulier*] as she is truly soft [*mollier*], or softer, with a letter removed or changed.

Each one differs from the other in the strength and weakness of their body. Therefore there is the greatest strength in man, and less in woman, so that she might submit to the man; otherwise, should women repel them, men's sexual desire might cause them to desire something else, or to fall on another sex.]

Although Latin, like most European languages, has one word for 'human being', *homo*,<sup>60</sup> a member of the human race in translation into English and in other European languages, this word when it occurs in many Latin texts, especially religious ones, is and always has been translated as 'man' (*homme, uomo, Männ*, etc.), with the proviso, explicit or otherwise, that the subject is in fact the human race in general, male and female alike. This is despite the fact that Latin writers normally did not use the term to refer specifically to a man or men.<sup>61</sup> The same is true of the Greek – the word usually translated as man, or mankind, *anthropos*, is generic and there is a separate word to designate the male as opposed to female (*aner*). The Latin word for a man, the male of the species, as opposed to 'woman', is *vir*. The distinction between the two terms is blurred in translation into European languages, however, as the default in understanding always tends towards the masculine and the gender-neutrality of *homo*, which could accurately be translated as 'human being', is lost. The reason for this choice in translation, which could be considered a mistake, is unclear. It may arise from the need for conciseness, if a longer word or two

<sup>58</sup> Price, *Medieval Thought*, p. 56.

<sup>59</sup> Isidore, Bishop of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive Originum*, Bk XI, ch. ii, <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/isidore.html>, last accessed June 2014, and English translation, Barney et al. *The Etymologies*.

<sup>60</sup> C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879): 'Homo ... 2. In opp. to a woman, *a man* (ante and post-class., and very rare)'.

<sup>61</sup> For example, in their introduction to their translation of the letters of Hildegard of Bingen, Joseph Baird and Radd Ehrman make the comment: 'A note about gender is in order. When Hildegard speaks about people in this world, her language tends to be quite generalized, universal. *Homo, homines* (human being, people) occur very frequently, while *vir* (man), *vir* (men), *mulier* (woman), *femina* (female persons) appear only rarely. Indeed sometimes she uses *homines* when *vir* might well have been the more natural form. Moreover, when the voice from the Living Light speaks directly to her, a *paupercula* (a feminine form) ... it is not as might be expected, *O mulier, O femina* ... but with the awesome *O homo*.'; Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman (eds. and trs.), *Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: OUP, 1994), p. 23.

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word term (human being) may be needed in the target language, or it could simply be an assumption that the term ‘man’ (or equivalent) in the target language is sufficient to encompass the human race in general, as was the case in English until recent times. Even in translations into English of the Latin Credo, the phrase ‘homo factus est’ is rendered as ‘and was made man’.<sup>62</sup>

The precedence of man over woman continued with scriptural interpretation. Janet Soskice compares the two creation texts in Genesis, highlighting the differences between them and pointing out that it is the second which supplants the first. The initial story describes God as creating the first human being in his own image, male and female. Soskice describes how preference was given to the later story of the creation of first man and then woman since it complied with the accepted order. Woman is created as man’s helper and is therefore subordinate to him.<sup>63</sup>

Adam on his own was virtually sufficient. Eve/Woman was almost universally thought of as lesser and almost an afterthought. ‘Helper’ was routinely understood by the early theologians as indicating a subordinate – leaping over the fact that elsewhere in Genesis God Himself is described as ‘helper’ using the same Hebrew word.<sup>64</sup>

The standard text of the Bible used by the scholastics would have been the Vulgate of Jerome, in one edition or another. In that, the account of the creation of human beings in chapter 1 of Genesis says: ‘Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostrum ... Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam: ad imaginem Dei creavit illum, masculum et feminam creavit eos’ (Gen 1:26–27). The word *homo*, *hominis*, ‘human being’, is generally translated as ‘man, men’ in most European versions, as already noted. The second version of the creation story has God creating human beings again, this time from the earth: ‘Formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terræ, et inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitæ, et factus est homo in animam viventem’ (Gen 2:7). In this case, however, it is clear that the single creature created is the male, named Adam by God. He is to have a fit companion, woman, this time formed separately from Adam’s own body: ‘Et ædificavit Dominus Deus costam, quam tulerat de Adam, in mulierem: et adduxit eam ad Adam’ (Gen 2:22), so that he could give her a name. Discussing her exercise in translating Genesis with a quasi-literal reading of the Hebrew text, Mary Phil Korsak notes that while the RSV translation of Gen 3:20 has: ‘The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she

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<sup>62</sup> Or in the new translation of the text of the Mass, now used in the Catholic Church ‘and became man’, a mis-translation in both linguistic and theological terms.

<sup>63</sup> Janet Soskice, ‘Imago Dei’ *The Other Journal* No. 7, April 2006, <http://www.theotherjournal.com>.

<sup>64</sup> Soskice, ‘Imago Dei’, p. 2.

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was the mother of all living'; the Hebrew version underlines the significance of the name more nearly, with '[he] called his woman's name Life (Eve) for she is the mother of all that lives'. Korsak goes on to say: 'Whereas Eve as life-giver is not subject to moral judgement, as mother she is: she may be a good or a bad mother.'<sup>65</sup>

Augustine rejected the idea that, through being second in order of creation, woman is somehow less perfect than man, saying that nothing God creates can be imperfect.<sup>66</sup> He says, in *City of God*:

From the words, 'Till we all come to a perfect man, to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ,' (Eph 4:13) and from the words, 'Conformed to the image of the Son of God,' (Rom 8:39), some conclude that women shall not rise women, but that all shall be men, because God made man only of earth, and woman of the man. For my part, they seem to be wiser who make no doubt that both sexes shall rise.<sup>67</sup>

Augustine, however, had a great deal more to say about women in many other respects. He firmly believed in the need for the subordination of woman in marriage and that the role of woman was solely that of bearing children, as everything else could be done better by a man.

If woman was not given to man for help in bearing children, for what help could she be? To till the earth together? If help were needed for that, man would have been a better help for man. The same goes for comfort in solitude. How much more suitable is it for life and conversation when two friends live together than when a man and a woman cohabit?<sup>68</sup>

Thomas Aquinas, referring to Augustine, used the second version of the Genesis story in his justification of the relative positions of men and women: 'When all things were first formed, it was more suitable for the woman [*mulierem*] to be made from man [*ex viro formari*] than (for the female to be from the male) in other animals.'<sup>69</sup> He also confirmed the role of woman in relation to man in God's plan for creation: 'It was necessary for woman to be made, as the Scripture says, as a "helper" to man [*in adiutorium viri*]; not,

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<sup>65</sup> Mary Phil Korsak, 'The Challenge of Translating a Bible Text', *In Other Words: The Journal for Literary Translators*, Vol. 43, Summer 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Augustine, *De Natura Boni*, 12: 'Bona singula seu parva, seu magna, esse a Deo': available at [http://www.augustinus.it/latino/natura\\_bene/natura\\_bene.htm](http://www.augustinus.it/latino/natura_bene/natura_bene.htm), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>67</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, XXII, 17, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120122.htm>, last accessed August 2014. 'Nonnulli propter hoc, quod dictum est: *Donec occurramus omnes in unitatem fidei, in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi*; et: *Conformes imaginis filii Dei*, nec in sexu femineo resurrecturas feminas credunt, sed in virili omnes aiunt, quoniam Deus solum virum fecit ex limo, feminam ex viro. Sed mihi melius sapere videntur, qui utrumque sexum resurrectorum esse non dubitant.'

<sup>68</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi Ad Litteram*, PL 34, IX, 5: 'Aut si ad hoc adiutorium gignendi filios, non est facta mulier viro, ad quod ergo adiutorium facta est? Si quae simul operaretur terram; nondum erat labor ut adiumento indigeret, et si opus esset, melius adiutorium masculus fieret: hoc et de solatio dici potest, si solitudinis fortasse taedebat. Quanto enim congruentius ad convivendum et colloquendum duo amici pariter quam vir et mulier habitarent?'

<sup>69</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae (ST)*, Part I, q. 92, a. 2.

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indeed, as a helpmate in other works, as some say, since man can be more efficiently helped by another man in other works; but as a helper in the work of generation [*sed in adiutorium generationis*].<sup>70</sup>

Edmund Hill commented on Augustine's views in an exchange with Rosemary Radford Ruether in the pages of *New Blackfriars* journal in the 1980s,<sup>71</sup> neither able to come to an agreement. Hill explains Augustine as addressing human beings on two levels, the 'higher mental function' of contemplation, where they are imaging God equally, and the secondary distinction of sex, which for Augustine, Hill says, was relatively unimportant.

Janet Soskice makes the point that using the term 'man' to cover the whole of humanity, male and female, obscures any specific comments about 'men': 'Since "men" are everyone, we don't have much idea what males are about.'<sup>72</sup> Discussing *Gaudium et Spes*, and its Christian anthropology, she points out that, although it uses the inclusive *homo/homine* in the Latin, the examples given are both male, Adam and Christ. Telling women they will become 'more of a man' (§41) by following Christ is, to say the least, confusing to women who are content as women. Soskice is also unhappy with the Vatican's letter to bishops of 2004, 'On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World'.<sup>73</sup> It speaks of sexual difference as 'belonging ontologically to creation', which in Soskice's view comes dangerously close to saying there is an ontological difference between men and women. It would mean 'it is impossible for a woman to say that, in all significant senses, Christ is like me in every sense except sin'. Hence, in Christological terms, men and women cannot be different. Tina Beattie also comments on this development:

In our own time, when excuses based on women's moral inferiority or creaturely dependence are deemed unacceptable, we find the maleness of Jesus elevated to an ontological status that by its very nature excludes women from participation in the priesthood.<sup>74</sup>

The distinction between men and women at the profound level of their essential humanity was found in the mediaeval canonists, such as Hugh of Pisa, or Huguccio, writing in the

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<sup>70</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Part I, q. 92, a. 1.

<sup>71</sup> R.R. Ruether, 'The Liberation of Christology from Patriarchy', *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 66, July 1985, pp. 324–335 and Edmund Hill, O.P., 'Response', pp. 503–504, and R.R. Ruether, 'Dr. Ruether and Augustine', *New Blackfriars* Vol. 67, 1986, pp. 92–93.

<sup>72</sup> Soskice, 'Imago Dei', p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040731\\_collaboration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html), last accessed August 2014.

<sup>74</sup> Tina Beattie, 'Mary, the Virgin Priest?', *The Month*, No. 257, December, 1996 pp. 485–493.

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late twelfth century, who described the creation of man as revealing the glory of God to a greater extent than the creation of woman. Man was created first and directly by God from the earth while woman was created second and from the body of the man, so ‘the man glorifies God directly, that is without any intermediary, whereas the woman only glorifies God through the man, because the man teaches and instructs the woman to glorify God’.<sup>75</sup>

Scholars who take the view that, by excluding women from the priesthood, the Catholic Church is not being discriminatory or unjust have to counter such evidence with arguments such as those of Benedict Ashley, who rests his case on the notion that the male/female relationship is one of ‘complementarity’ and that it is a matter of revelation by God that this relationship is a way of showing His true nature as Father of an Incarnate Son, who is Bridegroom of the (female) Church, through our basic human experience.<sup>76</sup> I will consider this spousal metaphor below.

### 7.d.ii *Ordo, Ordinare*

In their commentaries on Lombard’s *Sentences*, mediaeval scholars would excavate the original bare bones of an argument, then flesh them out with layer upon layer of additional meaning, elaborating and developing the ideas they contain, and applying and reapplying them to new areas and contexts. Hence, though Lombard himself never referred to the ordination of women as such in the section on the Sacrament of Orders in his *Sentences*, his mediaeval commentators picked up on the need to determine who could and could not be ordained and thus covered the subject of women’s suitability for orders.

In a short but well-argued article,<sup>77</sup> Yves Congar examined the terms *ordinare* and *ordinatio*, and the ways in which their meaning changed over the period he terms an ‘ecclesiological watershed’ (*grand tournant ecclésiologique*), the hundred years between 1059, when the decree of Nicholas II on election of a pope is issued, and 1140, when the Decretum of Gratian appears. The Latin word *ordinatio* was originally equivalent to an English ‘order’ or ‘a setting in order’, with the verb *ordinare* describing ‘to set in order, settle, arrange, appoint to govern (a people or a country)’. The root words again cover a similar range of meanings: *ordo* is a ‘class’ or ‘rank’ and *ordine* means ‘in due order,

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<sup>75</sup> Huguccio Pisanus, *Summa Decretorum, Vol. I: Distinctiones I–XX*, Přerovský (ed.), causa 33, q. 5, ch. 13.

<sup>76</sup> Benedict M. Ashley, *Justice in the Church: Gender and Participation* (Washington DC: CUA Press, 1996), pp. 185–188 and passim.

<sup>77</sup> Yves Congar, ‘Note sur une valeur des termes *ordinare, ordinatio*’, *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, Vol. 58, 1984, pp. 7–14.

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regularly'. These terms (*ordo* and *ordinare*) applied to civil responsibilities in the early Church and up to the Middle Ages and were taken from Roman law as concepts relating to the selection of monarchs and the appointment of people to responsible positions. The Graeco-Roman world had *ordines*, such as the order of senators, the order of knights and so on. These orders were embedded in Roman and Greek society and commanded respect. The early Christian Church, as it became slowly institutionalized, adopted these structures to identify and describe its own respective hierarchical levels. Individuals became members of an order, were ordained, and anyone not ordained was 'laity', one of the people.<sup>78</sup>

Kenan Osborne, in his study of lay ministry, demonstrates clearly how the changing use of the term *ordo* was crucial in distinguishing the laity from the clerical caste, as he describes it, within the early Christian churches and, once these Christian communities began to adopt the hierarchical structures of the Graeco-Roman world around them, they began 'a process of theologizing', based on Old Testament models of priesthood. In Osborne's view, 'the later patristic theology of orders, which began to substantiate the clerical/lay church structure, is itself somewhat suspect, since the basis for that ... is in many ways devoid of a gospel foundation'.<sup>79</sup> Even royalty, 'kings and queens, emperors and empresses often considered themselves and were considered by their subjects as validly ordained into an important *ordo* of the Church'.<sup>80</sup> This form of ordination, supported wholeheartedly by the Church, and with military force by popes on some occasions, would later on be re-evaluated and considered not to be ordination as such at all.

Congar discusses the work of the reformer Peter Damian (1007–1072) at some length. He contributed to the process of producing Nicholas II's decree of April 1059, the start of Congar's watershed period, on the election of popes:

On the death of a pontiff of the universal Roman church, first, the cardinal bishops, with the most diligent consideration, shall elect a successor; then they shall call in the other cardinal clergy [to ratify their choice], and finally, the rest of the clergy and the people shall express their consent to the new election.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See Kenan B. Osborne, O.F.M., *Ministry, Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1993), pp. 10–31.

<sup>79</sup> Osborne, *Ministry*, p. 39.

<sup>80</sup> G Macy, 'The Ordination of Women in the Early Middle Ages' in G. Macy and B Cooke (eds.), *A History of Women and Ordination*, Vol. 1 (London: Scarecrow Press, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>81</sup> [http://rbsche.people.wm.edu/H111\\_doc\\_popenicholasii.html](http://rbsche.people.wm.edu/H111_doc_popenicholasii.html) *Medieval Source Book* (New York: Fordham University), last accessed August 2014.

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Peter Damian used the terms *ordinare* and *ordinatio* in several different ways, considering them to comprise the whole process from selection of the candidate to the liturgical ceremony of investiture. In a letter discussing the competing claims of Benedict X versus Nicholas II, Damian speaks of the process of enthronement when the antipope ‘*ordinatus est*’.<sup>82</sup> This is clearly not ordination as it would be understood today. In Damian’s *Disceptatio Synodalis*, the king’s lawyer comments on the election of a pope, his selection by the emperor being part of the process, but the emperor must then obey the duly elected and ordained pope and ‘we will make it clear, anew, that those specified by the authority of the canon, after ordination, owe obedience to the pope, on condition he is ordained’.<sup>83</sup>

Congar quotes one authority, Notker (the monk of St Gall, in Switzerland) in the tenth century, who says, in the preface to his *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ‘*Karolus Francorum rex ... ipse imperator ordinatus est*’. He offers several other examples of the use of the term in this sense of appointment or assignment to a position of importance and authority, including the phrase *être ordonné* (to be ordained) as the formula used in the coronation of the Capetian monarchs.

In his essay on the subject of the ‘ordination’ of women in the early Middle Ages,<sup>84</sup> Gary Macy provides a number of sources that use this term in a general way to refer to the appointment of women to senior office, as deaconesses, abbesses or simply for entering religious life. There seems to be no difficulty in its use in liturgies and rites, or by bishops and popes, in this way. As Macy points out, relying on Congar, ‘the words *ordo*, *ordinatio*, and *ordinare* had a far different meaning in the early Middle Ages than they came to acquire in later centuries’.<sup>85</sup> He goes on to explain that, in mediaeval Latin, the terms are in everyday use for a range of applications. *Ordo* could refer simply to a state of life and *ordinare* would still be used in its original sense of providing order either in a political or metaphorical sense:

It is no wonder that canonists and theologians had difficulty in clearly differentiating which of the many appointments to posts both civil and ecclesiastic actually counted as a true sacramental ordination as well as which aspects of those ordinations were sacramentally effective.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> For an account of the reform of the papacy in the eleventh century, see Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 110.

<sup>83</sup> Peter Damian, *Disceptatio synodalis*, in *Opera Omnia*, Vol. III (Paris: Costantino Gaetani, 1743), p. 26: ‘certe liquido novimus, quia illi debent pontificem, cum ordinatur, eligere, quos sibi, postquam ordinatus fuerit, canonica decernit auctoritas oboedire’.

<sup>84</sup> Macy, ‘Ordination’, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Macy, ‘Ordination’, p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Macy, ‘Ordination’, p. 4.



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In an article on the ancient prayers of ordination, Pierre-Marie Gy<sup>87</sup> argues that in the patristic period at least, *ordinare* has a broader range of meaning than *consecrare* or *benedicere* and designates not only the prayer of ordination but the whole ecclesial process of which the prayer was a part. Gy comments that the term *ordinatio* had, moreover, been applied in the high Middle Ages to kings, abbots, abbesses and, by imperial Christian law, to civil functionaries.<sup>88</sup> Congar makes the point that the choice or appointment of a person to fill a significant role is the first step in the process of ordination and is therefore ‘comme tout ce processus, sous la mouvance de l’Esprit Saint’. This results in the use of terms such as *inspiratio*, or even *revelatio*, when describing this process.<sup>89</sup> Macy also shows that in fact, based on mediaeval examples given in the *Novum Glossarium Mediae Latinitas*, the words *ordinatio* and *ordinare* were used to describe not only the ceremony and/or installation of bishops, priests, deacons and subdeacons but also that of all the minor orders, as well as canons, abbots, abbesses, kings, queens and empresses. The terms could be applied to the consecration or establishment of a religious order or of a monastery or even to admission to the religious life. He quotes several examples of these varied uses of the term, as well as the term *ordo*:

.... an *ordo* did not necessarily refer to a particular clerical state. In 1199, Pope Innocent III described canon lawyers as a separate *ordo*. At least as late as the 14th century, *ordo* was used to designate the sacrament of extreme unction, and marriage was referred to as an *ordo* as late as the 15th century.<sup>90</sup>

Hence, as Macy concludes in this part of his argument, when reading early mediaeval sources discussing ordination it cannot be assumed that they are discussing the same process that is understood two or three hundred years later, and certainly not that which emerged from the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and which determined the basis for the sacramental rites in the Catholic Church for the next six hundred years. As he says, ‘A history of ordination might even claim that Christians never ordained women; a history of *ordinatio* could not make that claim.’<sup>91</sup>

Congar states that the terms *ordinatio* and *consecratio* were applied in the early Church generally to both men and women for a variety of functions. He stresses that ‘election’ was

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<sup>87</sup> P-M. Gy, ‘Les anciennes prières d’ordination’, *La Maison-Dieu*, Vol. 138, 1979, pp. 93–122.

<sup>88</sup> Gy, ‘Les anciennes’, p. 109.

<sup>89</sup> Congar, ‘Note sur une valeur’, p. 9.

<sup>90</sup> Macy, ‘Ordination’, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Gary Macy, ‘The Future of the Past: What Can History Say about Symbol and Ritual’, in Bruce Morrill, Joanna Ziegler and Susan Rodgers (eds.), *Practising Catholic: Ritual, Body and Contestation in Catholic Faith* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 29–37.

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an essential part of the process, the individual is the choice of the community, ‘on a pu écrire que le prêtre préside a l’Eucharistie parce qu’il preside la communauté’.<sup>92</sup> Gradually however, ordination came to have the sacramental meaning it has today, as we will see in the following pages, indicating a specific ‘mark’ on the soul of the recipient, which could not be eradicated and was not affected by the state of grace of the soul.<sup>93</sup> These discussions were further developed and elucidated in the arguments relating to simony and its effects on ordination, especially given the scandals surrounding the papal elections in the eleventh century. Whether a priest was validly ordained if the bishop concerned was guilty of simony was a subject for heated debate. Initially, Peter Damian himself was certain that ordination as a result of money changing hands was invalid and wrote against it, but later he changed his mind, stating, in his *Liber Gratissimus*, that although the practice should be condemned, sacraments administered by priests guilty of simony would retain their efficacy since they were effective through the power of Christ, not men. ‘Probabilmente, Damiani cambiò il suo giudizio perché, nel frattempo, aveva saputo che anche il vescovo da cui era stato ordinato era simoniac!’<sup>94</sup>

Congar goes on to explain how, from the end of the eleventh century onwards, the legal understanding of ordination gradually changed. The discussion on the sacrament of orders developed later by the scholastics in the thirteenth century becomes dominated by references to the Eucharist and the *potestas conficiendi*, the power of consecration.<sup>95</sup> It is at this point that the sacramental character of ordination became more important and was believed to be held individually and in perpetuity by the person ordained. Although the Council of Chalcedon (451) had declared ‘void’ (*irrita*) ordination without an associated ministry of service, this was gradually forgotten over the centuries and ordination became the end in itself, rather than intended for the service of the community or the church as a whole. By the time of Thomas Aquinas, ‘il n’y a pratiquement pas de considération de l’Église locale existant dans les communautés de fidèles’.<sup>96</sup>

Rolandus Bandinelli, who became Pope Alexander III, wrote a commentary on Gratian’s *Decretum* in 1148 in which he discusses ‘ordination’ of deaconesses (in his interpretation,

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<sup>92</sup> Congar, ‘Note sur une valeur’, p. 14.

<sup>93</sup> Macy, ‘Ordination’, p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> ‘Damien probably changed his mind because in the meantime he had found out that the bishop who ordained him was himself guilty of simony!’. Irene Zavatero, *Il Liber Gomorrhianus di Pier Damiani: omosessualità e Chiesa nel Medioevo* (Doctoral thesis, 1996), published at <http://www.phmae.it/IZ/liber.htm>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>95</sup> Congar, ‘Note sur une valeur’, p. 13.

<sup>96</sup> Congar, ‘Note sur une valeur’, p. 14: ‘there is practically no attention paid to the local Church as it exists in communities of the faithful’.

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a reader of the gospel), with reference to the age at which a woman could be ordained.<sup>97</sup> Other canonists and theologians also refer to this question and to the interpretation of the word *ordinatio*, as, for instance, Rufinus writing his *Summa Decretorum* between 1157 and 1159. He comments on the contradiction between a ruling given by the Council of Chalcedon already mentioned, permitting women to be ordained deaconesses over the age of 40, and the teaching of ‘Ambrose’ (in fact pseudo-Ambrose, written around 360) who rejected deaconesses altogether:

We consider it surprising enough how the Council decrees that deaconesses should be ordained after 40 years, while Ambrosius states that ordaining deaconesses goes against authority. But it is one thing for women to be ordained through the sacrament for an office at the altar, in the way deacons are ordained, as this is forbidden; quite another matter to be ‘ordained’ to some other ministry of the Church, what is here permitted. However, today deaconesses of this kind are not found in the Church; but it may be that abbesses are ordained in their place.<sup>98</sup>

The canonists continued the use of ordination in this sense, bringing it closer to the meaning that it would obtain of being a sacramental rite to consecrate an individual to the ministerial priesthood. Albert the Great (1200–1280), in his consideration of why Mary, the Mother of Jesus, did not receive the sacrament of Holy Orders conferred, as he said, on the apostles, discusses several aspects of ordination to priesthood that describe it as an exalted state, placing a special character on the soul, and involving particular dignity and status, the power to command and teach, as well as being for service and for bringing souls to God. Albert believed that Mary’s status was greater than that of mere priests but that one of the reasons she did not receive ordination was:

her humble conformity to other women, who are excluded from this sacrament, that is, on account of the unworthiness of their sex, of their greater weakness regarding sin, and on account of something that follows from these, the incongruity of their holding authority.<sup>99</sup>

Richard Fishacre (d. 1248) also uses the same language about women with regard to ordination: ‘Et nota quod femina si ordinetur, nec suscipit characterem, nec est ordinata, et hoc impeditente sexu et constitutione ecclesie.’<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Rolandus Bandinelli, *Summa Magistri Rolandi*, causa 15, q. 3, Friedrich Thaner (ed.) (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1962).

<sup>98</sup> Rufinus, *Summa Decretorum*, canon XXVII, q. I, Singer (ed.), p. 437: ‘Satis mirandum ducimus, quomodo concilium diaconissas post annos XL statuat ordindandas, cum Ambrosius dicat diaconas ordinari esse contra auctoritatem...Sed aliud est eas ordinari sacramento tenus ad altaris officium, sicut ordinantur diacones: quod quidem prohibetur; aliud ad aliquod aliud ecclesie ministerium: quod hic permittit. Hodie tamen huiusmodi diaconisse in ecclesia non inveniuntur, sed forte loco earum abbatisse ordinantur.’

<sup>99</sup> Albert the Great, *Mariale Super Missus Est* published in *B. Alberti Magni, Ratisbonensis Episcopi, Ordinis Praedicatorum, Opera Omnia*, Augustus and Aemilius Borgnet (eds.) (Paris: Vivés, 1890–1899) Vol. 37, q. 41, p. 85.

<sup>100</sup> Richard Fishacre, *Sentencias Commentaria*, Vol. IV, d. 24; Balliol Ms. 57 (University of Oxford, Balliol College); Oriel Ms. 43 (University of Oxford, Oriel College): ‘Let it be noted that a woman, if she should be

By the time Bonaventure is writing his *Commentary on the Sentences* (1251–1253), he is speaking of sacred orders, *sacros ordines*, and the Sacrament of orders, *ordinis Sacramentum*. His arguments have been considered in detail in the section devoted to his writings on the subject (Chapter 4.b.i), but it is worth repeating here that he too asserts that, despite what earlier writers said, women known as deaconesses were never ‘promoted to sacred orders’, but only given ‘some kind of blessing’.<sup>101</sup>

John Duns Scotus similarly addresses the issue of women appointed as deacons and, in his case, offers alternative translations of the terms used to describe female ministries, *presbytera* and *diaconissa*.

As for the second argument about ‘*Presbytera*’, I say that the term *Presbytera* is applied not to a woman ordained in Holy Orders, but an elderly widowed woman, about whom it is presumed that she has been tested and found holy among women. ‘*Presbyterae*’ can also be used for the wives of priests of Greece, so named from the offices of their husbands. Hence in Law ‘*presbyterae*’ do not signify ordained women, as you might reasonably suppose, because Canon. distinct. 27.c.1. says: *We have decreed that those women ought not to be established as ordained in the Church, ...* But ‘*Diaconissa*’ means Abbess, according to the gloss there. But it might be better to say that Deaconesses can be understood to be women who have the task by an ordination of the Abbess or of the community to read the homily of the gospel at Matins, which is not the action of any Order.<sup>102</sup>

Gary Macy describes how these changing definitions of ordination affected the discussion of the validity of ordination of women to the diaconate throughout this period. Although some authorities<sup>103</sup> held that ordination given to women involving the laying-on of hands

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ordained, would not receive the character [of orders], nor would she be ordained, and this because of the impediment of sex and the constitution of the church.’ quoted by John Hilary Martin OP, ‘The ordination of women and the theologians in the Middle Ages’ published in (1986) in *Escritos del Vedat*, Vol. 16, 1986, pp. 115–177, p. 101. Fishacre is still only available in manuscript, as far as I can find out, at Baliol College, Oxford, and in the Vatican Library, among others. There is a project ongoing at the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaft to edit his writings. See [http://www.badw.de/englisch/forschung\\_e/theo\\_e/e\\_38\\_utxt/index.html](http://www.badw.de/englisch/forschung_e/theo_e/e_38_utxt/index.html), last accessed September 2014.

<sup>101</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium in IV Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi, 1251–1253* (Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1889), Bk IV, d. XXV, a. II, q. 1: ‘quibus fiebat aliqua benediction. Unde nullo modo credendum est, quod unquam secundum canones mulieres fuerunt ad sacros ordines promotae.’

<sup>102</sup> John Duns Scotus, *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, Latin text printed in *Duns Scoti Opera Omnia Vol. 24: Reportata Parisiensia*, Luke Wadding (ed.) (Paris: Vivès 1894), Bk 4, d. 25, q. 2, pp. 367–371: ‘Ad secundum de Presbytera. dico quod ibi vocatur *Presbytera* non mulier ordinata sacro Ordine, sed mulier vidua antiqua, de qua praesumitur quod sit probata et sancta inter mulieres. Possunt etiam uxores Presbyterorum de Graecia dici *presbyterae* ut denominatae ab officio virorum suorum. Unde in Jure non intelliguntur per *presbyteras* mulieres ordinatae, ut supponit ratio, quia dicit Canon. distinct. 27. c. 1. *Illas tanquam ordinatas non debere in Ecclesia institui decrevimus ...* Per *Diaconissam* autem intelligitur Abbatisa, secundum glossam ibi. Melius tamen potest dici, quod per *Diaconissas* intelliguntur mulieres, quibus competit ex ordinatione Abbatissae, vel collegii legere homiliam Evangelii in matutino, quod non est actus alicujus Ordinis’.

<sup>103</sup> This ordination process was specifically for nuns, abbesses who were appointed to lead their communities and could read the gospel when necessary. Ida Raming discusses this in some detail in ‘The priestly office of

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was an authentic, sacramental act, most, like Bonaventure, tended to disagree, stating that women could not be validly ordained. There was, however, no taint of heresy attached to those who held the former opinion as the debate in this period, at least up to the mid-thirteenth century, was open. By the end of that century, however, ordination had been restricted, in both law and theology, to men and to the higher orders of the clergy only.<sup>104</sup> This debate, according to Macy, followed the larger debate on the nature of Christian sacramental ritual. Particularly as regards the Eucharist, there was much discussion over who could validly offer the sacrifice of the Mass. Following the arguments about simony, mentioned above, there were exegetical discussions about the actual words said by Jesus at the Last Supper, about the timing of the change in substance of the elements and about whether it was the words or the actions or both that effected the change. Of those who said that it was the rite that effected the change, some could then go on to argue that the person performing the rite had no effect on it and could be ordained or non-ordained, male or female, sinful or in a state of grace. The other sacraments and the office of preaching were also open to similar discussions. It is only as the century closed that such issues were resolved.

The sense of novelty which such debates might occasion in the twelfth and thirteenth century transmogrified into a sense of inevitability in later centuries. This inevitability would then be read back into early centuries and sometimes even the knowledge of earlier practices, such as that of the ordination of women, was lost.<sup>105</sup>

The thesis of Macy's article is that hindsight may be applied to select the appropriate material to be recovered from the past for validation in the present, what he calls 'ecclesial Darwinianism', the survival of the best traditions, in the view of the current Magisterium, to be now considered normative and for all time. All that is relevant here in this debate, however, is that the way in which the terms concerned modified their meaning also affects the theology to which they are applied and vice versa. When the terms *ordinare*, *ordo* and *ordinatio* have a general meaning, relating to appointment or selection for a variety of offices, such as that of abbess, they can then apply to all conditions of people, including women, and the question of the ordination of women to the altar, with the laying on of hands and so on, remains open for discussion. Later on, during the scholastic period, as the terms become applied only to ordination for priestly, Eucharistic functions, they also become more limited in their scope and apply to fewer people, men only and those being

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women: God's gift to a renewed church' in G. Macy and B. Cooke (eds.), *A History of Women and Ordination*, Vol. 2 (London: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

<sup>104</sup> Macy, 'Ordination', p. 13.

<sup>105</sup> Macy, 'Ordination', p. 14.

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ordained sacramentally, not simply for service to the community, whether as emperor or acolyte, but specifically to offer the sacrifice of the Mass and to celebrate sacramental rituals (baptism, confession, marriage and so on).<sup>106</sup> Hence, the restriction in the application of the terms themselves reflects and is reflected by what they signify.

### 7.d.iii The Hierarchy of Orders: Deacon, Priest, Bishop and Others

Some of these titles were adopted by the Christian Church from Jewish usage and practice or else from Graeco-Roman society. During his earthly life, Jesus is described as perceiving his mission as being one of service, a term expressed in Greek as *diakonia* and in Latin as *ministerium* (Mt 20:28; Lk 22:27; Mk 10:51; Jn 13:4–17) and he instructed his disciples and listeners to do the same (Mt 25:45; Mk 6:37; Mk 10:43; Lk 14:13). The Greek word *diakonos*, servant, which can be used as a masculine word denoting a male servant or as a feminine one (i.e. with feminine definite article and agreement of adjectives) denoting a female servant/helper, appears in the gospels (Mt 20, 26; Lk 8, 3; Jn 12, 26) and in the post-Resurrection text of Acts,<sup>107</sup> as well as in Paul's letters (Rom 16:1; Col 1:7; Col 4:7; 1 Tim 3:8–12). Translations into English of these texts are often misleading, making an unjustified distinction between men and women. The same word, *diakonos*, for instance, is translated as follows: in 1 Tim 3:8–12 as 'deacon' (NIV, RSV, Jerusalem, KJV); in 1 Tim 4:6, 'minister' (NIV); or in Colossians 4:7, 'fellow-servant' (Jerusalem, NIV, KJV); in various versions of the text when speaking of men, but as 'servant' or 'deaconess' when speaking of women (Rom 16:1, 'Phoebe, a servant of the church', in NIV, KJV, and 'deaconess of the church' in the Jerusalem translation). The word itself in Greek does not refer to a church office but simply to the role of serving. Once again, the language used, by deliberate choice, may contribute to reinforcing an interpretation of the text that is not supported on closer examination. Paul himself did not differentiate the roles of men and women in the way that later translators would prefer to see.<sup>108</sup> Paul uses the word *diakonos* frequently to indicate a church leader who has a particular function, that of preacher and teacher (Hans Küng describes Phoebe as 'the

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<sup>106</sup> Possibly first formally defined at the second Council of Lyons in 1274, on the conversion to Christianity of the Holy Roman Emperor Michael Paleologus, see J. Neusner and J. Dupuis (eds), *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 1982, revised edn.), No. 28, p. 19.

<sup>107</sup> Acts 6:2: 'It is not right for us to give up preaching the word of God to serve at table.' So the seven, reputable men, were selected to perform this task of serving at tables. The verb for 'serve' here is *diakoneo*, with the cognate noun *diakonos*.

<sup>108</sup> Susan Calef, 'Women in the New Testament', in Richard Miller (ed.), *Women and the Shaping of Catholicism* (Missouri: Liguori Press, 2009), p. 25.

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leader of a house community'),<sup>109</sup> not simply a 'servant' or 'helper'. Another term Paul uses often is 'co-worker' (Greek *synergos*), for instance, Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:3). A significant number of women's names appear in Paul's letters. Most of these women are associated with his work and those of other 'apostles' or missionaries, sent out to preach the gospel. Priscilla is, with her husband, a fellow-worker and teacher with Paul when he arrives in Corinth (Acts 18:3 and 26). Junia and her husband (Rom 16:7) are leading apostles, members of Paul's own family. As well as being a 'deacon of the Church' (Rom 16:1), Phoebe is a 'benefactor' of many and of Paul himself. The list in the final chapter of the letter to the Romans is indicative of the way men and women work together, freely and with equal status, in these early Christian communities. Affirming this equality, Paul's statement that 'there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' asserts this new order in a powerful way, eliminating all the former divisions, the most deeply ingrained in the society of his time. Paul's letters, and Acts, provide an indisputable account of the role of women in the very early days of the Christian movement. They founded churches, provided funds and resources to promote the work of other missionaries, male and female, and were co-workers for the gospel alongside the original disciples of Jesus himself.<sup>110</sup>

The function of what became known as the office of deacon, therefore, within these early Christian communities, first appears with the decision by the Twelve to appoint seven men as 'helpers' for the distribution of food to the poor (Acts 6:3–6). The apostles, the original core group of Jesus' followers, continued to be seen as the chosen leaders. They understood themselves as having greater spiritual responsibility for guiding the new disciples. Having had the responsibility of caring for the poor, they choose to hand this on to the Hellenists. Their idea that these material tasks would be delegated, so that the original group could continue the preaching and teaching, did not in fact work out as they had imagined. Stephen, the leader of the group of so-called deacons, though the term is anachronistic in the New Testament context, proved to be an excellent teacher himself and the first to suffer the ultimate act of witness, through his death. Philip, the second on the list, takes the gospel to the Samaritans, while the Twelve stay in Jerusalem.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Hans Küng, *Women in Christianity*, John Bowden (tr.) (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 10.

<sup>110</sup> Küng, *Women in Christianity*, p. 11.

<sup>111</sup> That the division of labour proposed by the apostles did not work out in practice is a point often missed by commentators, but one developed by the close analysis of the Greek text of Acts by J. Rius-Camps and J. Read-Heimerdinger, see e.g. *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae. A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition*. Vol. I. Acts 1.1–5.42: Jerusalem: Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 257 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), pp. 18–31.

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In New Testament times, and during the first century, the only distinction made was between those who had known Jesus personally and those who had not. The roles given to various people, according to their own gifts, were purely practical. The ‘deacon’ was simply a helper for the community and community leaders were often the householder in whose home the local Christians met.

So, most of the titles used in the early Church for the various functions and roles within the community were ordinary Greek or sometimes Latin words taken from domestic or social situations. Words were adopted such as *apostolos*, meaning an ‘envoy’ or ‘ambassador’, *episkopos*, an ‘overseer’, *presbyteros*, an ‘elder’, someone whose concern was the welfare of the other members of the community. Paul’s letters contain recommendations for the character of these people, for instance, for the *episkopos* (translated as ‘bishop’ in the NRSV), the person should be ‘above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome and not a lover of money’ (I Tim, 3:1–7). Similar recommendations are given for both male and female ‘deacons’ (I Tim, 3:8–11). There are no indications in the texts, however, as to how these people were appointed, or that any particular ritual was required such as a ‘laying on of hands’, except in the case of the very first ‘deacons’, as described in Acts 6. The letter to Titus again speaks of the appointment of *presbyteroi*, listing the qualities of these people (Titus, 1:5–9) and calling them ‘stewards of God’s house’, another description taken from ordinary domestic life. In this letter, however, the function of these ‘elders’ is specified as being that of preachers/teachers and may be indicative of an early establishment of a particular role for a particular title.<sup>112</sup> The ministers, the office-holders, are appointed to build up the community and the presider at the Eucharist is not necessarily a community leader, although they seem to have been the host for the house-church, men or women.

Ignatius of Antioch (d. 110) refers to the need for obedience in his Letter to the Ephesians:

It is therefore fitting that you should in every way glorify Jesus Christ, who has glorified you, that by a unanimous obedience ... being subject to the bishop and the presbytery, you may in all respects be sanctified.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Osborne, *Ministry*, p. 102.

<sup>113</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Ephesians 2 available at <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=3836>, last accessed July 2014.



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From this time on, and as the Church expanded, the bishop (*episkopos*) came to be the person appointed with responsibility for a particular district or town, assisted by deacons. The *presbyter*, a word that subsequently became conflated with the term ‘priest’, was the local community leader and administrator. Later on, towards the end of the first century, these leaders or pastors become appointed to specific positions of authority in the church. Formerly, all carrying out particular tasks as individuals, lay people serving the church and the needs of the community, they took on offices in the administrative authority of the church.<sup>114</sup> The term ‘ministry’, while retaining its connotations of service, was gradually understood as referring to these specific functionalities of church government and ecclesiastical office. Not only that, but the people fulfilling these roles, who had once been selected because of their perceived qualifications for the task,

... were thought of as having these abilities by reason of their office. Lectors were once chosen for their reading ability, for example, but now they were considered as empowered to read in virtue of their ordination ... Those in clerical orders, therefore, were considered as having knowledge, power and holiness which set them apart from ordinary Christians.<sup>115</sup>

The function of priesthood was originally understood as belonging to Christ alone, the High Priest, but, by virtue of baptism, all the faithful share in his role as priest, prophet and king. The memorial meal of the Last Supper was celebrated by the house churches gathering together but, as communities became larger, the language also changes and the terms ‘breaking of bread’ and ‘Lord’s supper’, as used in the first-century apostolic writings, are replaced by the ‘Eucharist’ found in writings of Ignatius of Antioch (d. 110) and Justin Martyr (d. 165/166).<sup>116</sup> At this stage in the early Church’s life, the leader of the community, the *episkopos*, continued to preside at this communal meal and it is clear from the letters of Ignatius that he saw himself, as bishop, as the person who represented Christ, both in worship and in teaching, for his community in Antioch.<sup>117</sup> With the presbyters and the deacons, the bishop led the church and, as the responsibilities grew with the numbers of Christians, ‘it was becoming accepted that they and their families should be supported by

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<sup>114</sup> Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred, A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (Liguori, Missouri: Triumph Books, 1981), p. 410.

<sup>115</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, p. 410.

<sup>116</sup> Ignatius, Letter to Philadelphians 4:1: ‘Take care, then, to use one Eucharist, so that whatever you do, you do according to God: For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the union of His blood; one altar, as there is one bishop with the presbytery ...’ available at <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=3836> last accessed July 2014; Justin Martyr, First Apology 66: ‘... since Jesus Christ our Saviour was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus’ available at Christian Classics Ethereal Library <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.x.ii.iii.html>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>117</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, p. 401.

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the offerings of the faithful'.<sup>118</sup> At this stage, during the third and fourth centuries, the presbyter was still an administrator, who might stand in for the bishop during his absence at a prayer service or Eucharistic celebration with his permission, but continued to have regular employment to support a family. Nonetheless, the term 'priest', *hierēys* in Greek and *sacerdos* in Latin, was being used more widely during the fourth century. As bishops, priests and deacons were appointed to their roles with a ritual laying on of hands, they were seen as being set apart from the ordinary Christians and the 'clerical' state, the separate class already recognised in other fields such as the law, appeared also in the Church.<sup>119</sup>

Until the mid-fourth century, women did continue to act as leaders in a number of ways and, in particular, were venerated post-mortem as martyrs, for example: Blandine in Lyons (d. 177); Perpetua in Carthage (d. 202). Women's roles were given greater attention in non-canonical writings such as the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*<sup>120</sup> but, as time went on, and particularly once the Roman empire became Christian in the early fourth century, the greater identification of Church leadership with secular leadership and the clericalization of the Church as an institution eliminated any further opportunities for female leadership except in women-only communities. The social pressures to keep women within the domestic sphere, the disputes between 'mainstream' Christian groups and others, such as the Montanists, and particularly the leadership role, claiming succession from the apostles, all influenced attitudes to women's participation in the life of the Christian communities.

By the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth, with the establishment of the Christian church as the religion of the Roman empire, the function of the appointed leaders of the Church communities, their 'ministry', was more sharply defined as the presider at the Eucharist, the teacher and the preserver of an apostolic tradition. Edward Schillebeeckx describes how, in the first two or three centuries, 'those who hold office ... have their own unalienable responsibility for preserving the community in its apostolic identity and in the authentic gospel'.<sup>121</sup> Initially, as the Council of Chalcedon decreed in 451 (canon 6), an individual could not be ordained 'absolutely' but only for a particular role or ministry, with responsibility for a worshipping community.

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<sup>118</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, p. 403.

<sup>119</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, pp. 408–409.

<sup>120</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), pp. 145–182.

<sup>121</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: A Case for Change*, John Bowden (tr.) (London: SCM, 1981), p. 35.

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Neither presbyter, deacon, nor any of the ecclesiastical order shall be ordained at large, nor unless the person ordained is particularly appointed to a church in a city or village, or to a martyr, or to a monastery. And if any have been ordained without a charge, the holy Synod decrees, to the reproach of the ordainer, that such an ordination shall be inoperative, and that such shall nowhere be suffered to officiate.<sup>122</sup>

This role was reserved to an ordained priesthood and ordination, or appointment, came to mean being ordained to ministry, within a male-only order, set apart from the laity, the ordinary people, to perform special functions and to mediate between the people and God.<sup>123</sup> The development of the understanding of the nature of orders followed the change in understanding of other concepts, such as the difference between power and authority, and between validity and liceity, so that the canonists could allow ordinations by illegally ordained bishops still to be valid, for example, as we have seen above. Once Augustine's idea of the sacramental character of ordination had been fully developed,<sup>124</sup> the idea of the indelible mark of sacramental ordination could be accepted and thus the 'once a priest, always a priest' rule became the norm. Augustine developed his idea of this once-and-for-all nature of sacrament, particularly baptism and orders, when addressing the Donatists, who believed that priests that had fallen into sin or taught heresy would have to be re-ordained before they could exercise their ministry again. Augustine said that the priestly character was received directly from Christ and, as a *sacramentum*, it left a mark on the soul forever. Like marriage, it was for life. Thus even a sinful priest was still a priest and he could still validly perform his priestly role.<sup>125</sup> The scholastic theology of the priesthood that developed during the Middle Ages was a 'reflection of and a reflection on priestly ministry as it existed' at that time.<sup>126</sup> By the mediaeval period, the identification of ministry and priesthood was complete.

Ministry was conceived primarily in terms of sacramental ministry, because at that time, that is what it was, and sacramental ministry was conceived basically in terms of priestly ministry because all those who administered the sacraments were priests.<sup>127</sup>

Originally, leaders were chosen by the community itself, from among those of proven moral probity and gifted with the necessary abilities to serve the local church as needed.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Council of Chalcedon, Canons, available at [http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/chalcedon\\_canons.htm](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/chalcedon_canons.htm), last accessed July 2014.

<sup>123</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, p. 401.

<sup>124</sup> Augustine, *Contra Epistolam Parmeniani*, Bk II, ch. 13, §28, PL, cols. 1844–1864, available at [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0354-0430\\_Augustinus\\_Contra\\_Epistolam\\_Parmeniani\\_MLT.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/02m/0354-0430_Augustinus_Contra_Epistolam_Parmeniani_MLT.pdf), last accessed September 2014.

<sup>125</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, p. 413.

<sup>126</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, p. 428.

<sup>127</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, p. 428.

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The Lateran Councils, held during the twelfth century and into the thirteenth, established more rigorous rules for the clergy/lay divide in the church. As part of a process of centralising control in Rome, no longer could lay people own church property, or make church appointments, and church offices could no longer be hereditary. The first and second Lateran Councils ended clerical marriage and imposed celibacy on all men in holy orders. Vesting was included in the ordination ritual during the early Middle Ages, creating further separation between the lay and clerical state, by emphasising the special clothing needed, as well as simple rituals of laying-on of hands and anointing. Additional signs of authority were bestowed on the higher levels of orders, such as the ring, pectoral cross, crozier and mitre.

The different ‘orders’ of ministry in the church were each initiated into their own ministries by a ritual with sacramental characteristics. Considerable thought was given to whether each of these – lay or ordained monks, nuns and abbesses, bishops and priests – were separate orders, or if the sacrament was reserved only for priesthood itself and was not the same as the ‘ordination’ experienced by lay brothers or the abbess of a female monastery. Peter Lombard defined the meaning of ‘sacrament’ itself: ‘Sacramentum enim proprie dicitur, quod ita signum est gratiae Dei et invisibilis gratiae forma, ut ipsius imaginem gerat et causa existat.’<sup>129</sup>

Thomas Aquinas developed this idea of the sacramental character received through the conferring of holy orders. The priest received an image of Christ as a mark on his soul, Christ who is the High Priest,<sup>130</sup> instituting the Eucharist and, as the sacrificial Victim himself, on the cross. The priest’s role is focused on the Eucharist: ‘when they are ordained, they receive the chalice with wine, and the paten with the bread, because they are receiving the power to consecrate the body and blood of Christ’.<sup>131</sup> This is a God-given power, not dependent on the personal gifts or holiness of the priest, and thus given for life, not to be erased from the soul, no matter how the priest uses it, well or badly. And as he acts in celebrating the Eucharist in the person of Christ, ‘such is the dignity of this

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<sup>128</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Ministry*, p. 42.

<sup>129</sup> Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, Vol. II, Bk IV, d. 24, c. IV, para. 3 (Rome: Collegii S Bonaventurae, 1981), p. 233: ‘A sacrament in the proper sense is said to be a sign of God’s grace and a visible form of invisible grace, in such a way that it bears its image and is its cause.’

<sup>130</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Pt III, q. 22, a. 4c: ‘Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ’.

<sup>131</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Pt III, Supp., a. 37, r. 2.

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sacrament that it is performed only as in the person of Christ',<sup>132</sup> therefore it is only possible for a male person to fulfil this role.

So, in this period, the theology of priesthood elaborated by the scholastics was centred around the close connection of the ministerial priesthood with the Eucharist and other sacraments that could only be celebrated by an ordained male priest. It covered the process of selection and ordination, the rules governing the duties of a priest and the nature of his duties and functions. The scholastic theologians were themselves almost all ordained priests and thus were considering their own lives and the only world they knew. They found the support and evidence to underpin their conclusions in scripture and in the traditional teaching of the Church. They saw their priestly ministry almost entirely as being a ministry of sacraments and a sacrament in itself because, at the time, that is what it had become. The priest, the image of Christ, functioned as Christ did, as a mediator between God and the faithful. Bonaventure repeatedly uses this image in his writings, both spiritual and theological,<sup>133</sup> and again it reinforces the exclusively male nature of priesthood.

### *7.e Metaphor*

Taking a historical view, the changing meaning of language and particular terms is a fluid, gradual process, adopting metaphors to describe indescribable concepts, that fluctuate and meander through the centuries, until the necessary 'freeze' in meaning is applied. Far from being written in stone, such terms are written in water, just as all language evolves over centuries. In discussing 'dead metaphors', Janet Soskice points out 'it is most interesting that, when considering vocabulary and word meaning, language which, when viewed synchronically, seems to be stable, viewed historically, gives evidence of a constant flux'.<sup>134</sup> In many fields, particularly cutting-edge scientific investigation, and in theology, metaphor is used to describe the indescribable – the Rutherford-Bohr planetary model of atomic structure, the ideas of conservation and wastage of energy, electricity as current, gravitational field, all these terms began as metaphors that have become embedded in the language and influence the way in which these concepts are studied and investigated, sometimes hindering development.<sup>135</sup> God as Judge, Father, Shepherd, always male,

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<sup>132</sup> Aquinas, *ST*, Pt III, q. 82, a. 1.

<sup>133</sup> Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, 7, 1; *Commentary*, Bk 1, d. 27 (Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi, Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1889).

<sup>134</sup> J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 71.

<sup>135</sup> Sabine Hosenfelder, German physicist: 'I've seen it over and over again that people take analogies too seriously and start trying to build arguments on them. Suddenly a rubber sheet isn't just an analogy for space-

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creates powerful and all-pervasive imagery that through art, poetry and religious expression is seen itself as being God-given and therefore necessary. Naming things helps to crystallise an idea but, when the metaphor proves successful, it can take over and become the reality, losing the original purpose of the imagery and instead influencing the way in which the concept is applied.

This notion that thought is to some extent conditioned by the kind of language available is seen by some as indicative of one of the ways in which language itself developed, becoming able to express abstract and sophisticated concepts, using techniques such as metaphors drawn from ordinary experience to describe the indescribable (the natural world, God) that have left their imprint indelibly on human consciousness, disguised but still present in everyday speech. Explaining the premise stated by one of the earliest exponents of this idea, Giambattista Vico (1668–1754), Janet Soskice says,

Despite the common assumption that metaphorical speech is an ornamental accretion on an original literal underlay, in fact the metaphorical is chronologically prior, and only gradually gave place to what we call 'literal' description .... [M]etaphors and figures ... are indicators of a wholly different way of seeing the world.<sup>136</sup>

The metaphor that describes Jesus Christ as the bridegroom – variously of the Church, of the people of God, of the cosmos – used extensively in religious writing, Church documents and popular culture from the New Testament right up to current Church documents, is often used in modern Church teaching to reject the possibility of ordaining women. Although it does arise in traditional writings and in the scholastics, it was not used until fairly recently by the Church to argue against women's suitability for orders. Nonetheless, the Church documents that refer to it support their arguments with extensive reference to scripture, combining both Old and New Testaments, so that the Church is born from Christ: 'from his pierced side the Church will be born, as Eve was born from Adam's side ... Christ is the Bridegroom, the Church is his bride'.<sup>137</sup> Mediaeval mystics, such as Catherine of Siena, used imagery of motherhood to apply to Christ, with his blood likened

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time, but it is space-time. The universe is an inflating balloon ... Except that, well, they're not ... An electron isn't a spinning top, it's an element of a Hilbert space that transforms under the spinor representation of the Lorentz-group. There is really no metaphor that'll do equally well.' Blog post, October 2013, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>136</sup> Soskice, *Metaphor*, p. 75.

<sup>137</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § V: 'cuius e latere transfixo Ecclesia nascitur, sicut Eva e latere Adam est nata ... Christus est sponsus; Ecclesia est sponsa', *From 'Inter Insigniores' to 'Ordinatio Sacerdotalis'* (Washington DC: US Catholic Conference, 1996), pp. 42–45.

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to mother's milk, nourishing the Church or the worshippers with life-giving fluid.<sup>138</sup> This mixing of metaphors, parenting and spousal imagery, disregards the incongruity involved. In the Church documents there is an emphasis on the literal importance of the masculinity of Christ as spouse being predominant, with the natal imagery ascribing the maternal role to the man being ignored. The tone of *Inter Insigniores* is one of practical common sense, explaining the importance of this nuptial symbolism in 'the economy of salvation', and thus, that in 'actions that demand the character of ordination', *ordinationis characterem*, where Christ is represented, this role must be taken by a man. It goes on to say, 'This does not stem from any personal superiority ... in the order of values, but only from a difference of fact on the level of functions and service'.<sup>139</sup> So the metaphor now becomes a functional fact.

This spousal imagery is commonly found in many cultures and religions, back to antiquity, with myths of the union between gods or between a divinity and a human being, or a natural object, such as the tree of life or a mountain. In Canaanite mythology, Baal consummates a marriage with his sister Anat, which unleashes the creative forces of nature. *Inter Insigniores* invokes the testimony of the Hebrew prophets,<sup>140</sup> such as Hosea, using this imagery taken from the polytheistic peoples around them, and adapting it to describe the relationship between Israel and the one God (Hos 2:16–20). Isaiah describes the joyful marriage of Israel and the Lord when the covenant between them is fulfilled (Is 62:4–5). Despite the male role assigned to Yahweh in this metaphor, the Lord has no sexual gender and the female role is assigned to the whole people of Israel, with male rulers, especially priests (Hos 4:4) and royalty (Hos 5:10; 7:5–7) being guilty of unfaithfulness to their spouse, the Lord. Jeremiah (2:26) and Deutero-Isaiah (49–55) also give Zion/Israel the female role. In Isaiah, however, God is compared to a mother: 'Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb?' (Is 49:15). These complex images are fluid and adaptable, an instrument for the poet not the theologian.

When Paul uses the same image for the relationship of the new Church with Christ, he is recalling the ancient poetry (Eph 5:27) and Jesus himself is also reported in the Synoptic gospels as using the same metaphorical allusion to refer to himself when challenged by the

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<sup>138</sup> Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, section 96: 'So the soul rests on the breast of Christ crucified who is My love, and so drinks in the milk of virtue', *Classics of Western Spirituality*, Suzanne Noffke, O.P. (tr.) (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980) p. 179.

<sup>139</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § V, p. 45.

<sup>140</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, § V, p. 43.

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followers of John to explain why his own disciples do not fast as they do with the Pharisees. Jesus replies, ‘The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they?’ (Mt 9:15). He is using this as an analogy with guests at a party and their host, rather than specifically a bridegroom (there is no mention of the bride here). Even the nuptial parables of the king’s wedding feast and the wise and foolish virgins (Mt 22:1–14, 25:1–15) make no mention of a bride; their purpose is eschatological, with the marriage feast of the Lamb as described in Revelation, where the bride is the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2, 9–11). In the gospels, Jesus uses many images and metaphors to try to describe his work and his intentions to his sometimes obtuse followers (Mt 16:5–11): the shepherd and sheep, the vine, the king, and so on. It is the bride/bridegroom image, however, that, although it has no greater weight in the gospel writings than does the image of the Good Shepherd, and is arguably less powerful, is still used as if it were a functionally essential property of the representative of Christ to be a man. The maternal imagery also used, of the Church being born from the side of Christ, just as Eve was born from Adam’s side, is not considered to be similarly binding, so that motherhood should be a prerequisite for priesthood. This confusion between masculine and feminine imagery will be considered below.

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul is instructing married couples and provides an analogy of the relationship between Christ as head of the church and the husband’s lordship over his wife. He goes on to elaborate this through an extended passage, describing how Christ loves the church, gives himself up for her, makes her holy. Paul weaves the two strands together (Eph 5:31–32) – the love of Christ for the church, the love of man for wife – ‘This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.’ In other words, nuptial love is a symbol of and metaphor for the love Christ has for the people of God, gathered together as one body (Eph 5:29), called the church. In a discussion on the work of Methodius (d. 311), Ralph Norman comments,

Study of the content of a metaphor is just as important as study of what the author expressly says that metaphor means, for how something is said is just as important as what it expresses, carrying with it all kinds of additional resonances ... Symbolic language has the facility to affect the reader in ways which cannot be determined by either readers or writers.<sup>141</sup>

Nuptial imagery was used to describe the relationship of bishop to people, husband to wife, from the fourth century onwards. Bishops who moved from one see to another, following

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<sup>141</sup> Ralph Norman, ‘Methodius and Methodologies: Ways of Reading Third-century Christian Sexual Symbolism’, *Theology Sexuality*, Vol. 13, 2006, pp. 79–100.



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disputes and arguments, were accused of infidelity, in terms of a marital relationship. The bishop's ordination included the gift of a ring and prayers evoking the commitment between bride and groom.<sup>142</sup> The attitude of the Church Fathers in their preaching towards the conjugal relationship is testimony to the relative positions of the bishop/priest to his congregation. John Chrysostom says: 'A wife has just one purpose: to guard the positions we have accumulated, to keep a close watch on the income, to take charge of the household ...'. He described the fittingness of the hierarchy of the sexes in the original plan of God to the natures of man and woman, the one the head, the other to be subordinate:

God [did not] assign both to be equal lest ... women in their contentiousness would deem themselves deserving of the leading place rather than the man! God's plan was extremely desirable for us, on the one hand because of our pressing needs and on the other, so that a woman would not rebel against her husband due to the inferiority of her service.<sup>143</sup>

Ida Raming, in her study of the canonists, shows how confused and confusing the use of this metaphor became during the Middle Ages. She cites the example of one Simon de Bisiano, writing between 1177 and 1179, who used the imagery of Ephesians 5 to explain the role of the bishop to the abbess of a monastery of women, where the bishop embodies Christ, and the abbess represents the church. Raming goes on to say: 'The result has been a decisive imprint on Catholic thinking about ecclesiastical office, creating a foundation for opposition to the admission of women to church office.'<sup>144</sup> She explains later how this original metaphorical image has been extended and understood as a fixed reality in terms of all levels of the church hierarchy, from bishop down to the local priest in their relationship to the congregation.<sup>145</sup>

As we have already seen in examining the writings of the individual scholastics, the arguments relating to sex in opposing the ordination of women use the suitability of representation – male sex to represent Christ as man – but not specifically the bridegroom image in that part of their commentaries on the *Sentences*. Bonaventure says that the

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<sup>142</sup> Megan McLaughlin, 'The Bishop as Bridegroom: Marital Imagery and Clerical Celibacy in the 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries', in Michael Frassetto (ed.), *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform* (New York: Garland, 1998), p. 210.

<sup>143</sup> John Chrysostom, *Opera Omnia*, Vol. III, 'On the Kind of Women Who Ought to be Wives', *PG* Vol. 51, col. 231, quoted by Elizabeth Clark (tr.), *Message of the Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 13, *Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1983).

<sup>144</sup> Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women,' p. 89.

<sup>145</sup> Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women,' p. 205.

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ordained person represents Christ the Mediator and, as the mediator was of the male sex only (*in virili sexu fuit*), so only the male sex can represent him.<sup>146</sup>

The complex intertwining of imagery and symbol, from the relationship of the God of the Hebrews, often spoken of as bridegroom, to the Christian Church, which can be both the Bride of the Lamb and the Body of Christ at one and the same time,<sup>147</sup> builds a net in which writers can sometimes become entangled. St Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) saw Christ as both bridegroom and bride:

He is the head and we His body; He the bridegroom and He also the bride; in Himself the bridegroom, but the bride in the holy souls whom He hath bound to Himself in the bonds of an everlasting love. *As upon a bridegroom, saith He, hath He set a crown upon Me, and as a bride hath He adorned me with ornaments.*<sup>148</sup>

Anselm also uses maternal imagery to describe Jesus in his relationship with his disciples:

It is by your death that they have been born, for if you had not been in labour, you could not have borne death; and if you had not died, you would not have brought forth. For, longing to bear sons into life, You tasted of death, and by dying you begot them.<sup>149</sup>

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) also used both maternal and spousal imagery in devotional writings and homilies to describe the Godhead, Christ and Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Sometimes these images did become very convoluted. Writing about the Song of Songs, for instance, Bernard described Christ and Mary as King and Queen of Heaven, coming together to redeem humankind after the fall brought about by Adam and Eve. Mary herself is often described as the new Eve, bringing salvation to the world through the birth of her child with whom, according to Bernard, she is then coupled, or perhaps paired, as representative of the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’ in God, offering the metaphor of love between man and woman as a symbol of the soul’s ecstatic union with God. They form the response in the new heaven to the sin of Adam and Eve described in Genesis. Commenting on the Song of Songs, Bernard says: ‘this is the Christ ... whom Mary bore in her womb, fostered in her lap, and like a bride placed between her breasts’.<sup>150</sup> William of St Thierry (1085–c. 1148) is even more confused in his explanations of the imagery of the Canticle,

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<sup>146</sup> Bonaventure, *Commentarium*, Bk IV, d. 25, a. 2.

<sup>147</sup> See Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, p. 116.

<sup>148</sup> Anselm, *Devotions*, Meditation IV, Clement C.J. Webb (ed.) (London: Methuen, 1903), p. 67, available at <http://www.ccel.org>, last accessed June 2014.

<sup>149</sup> Anselm, *Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm with the Proslogion*, Oration 10, Benedicta Ward (ed.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1979).

<sup>150</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, p. 249, available at <https://archive.org/details/StBernardsCommentaryOnTheSongOfSongs> last accessed July 2014.

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seeing the references to breasts as Christ's nourishing of the soul with his teaching: 'Since that everlasting blessed union and the kiss of eternity are denied the Bride on account of her human condition and weakness, she turns to your bosom; and not attaining to that mouth of yours, she puts her mouth to your breasts instead.'<sup>151</sup> Perhaps because of their erotic connotations, modern Church teaching does not use these examples in support of the arguments about Christ as bridegroom requiring a male priesthood to represent him, even though they are a widespread and enduring part of the Church's tradition, in devotions, art and theological texts.<sup>152</sup> The male imagery for Christ is by no means the only way in which he is presented in Christian writings of all kinds.

In fact, the symbolic imagery applied to the priest often becomes explicitly sexualised, as indicated by Tina Beattie in her critique of Hans Urs von Balthasar's understanding of Eucharist, as a kind of transcendent orgasm<sup>153</sup> and the way in which she believes the Church has added a sexual dimension to the self-giving of Christ.<sup>154</sup> The increased attention paid in the Church's sexual teaching on the sacredness of the male/female union, faced with the changing understanding of human sexuality in the twentieth century and on to today has perhaps ironically emphasised the physical, genital nature of the relationship between men and women, less so the concept of companionship and friendship in human relations, so that maleness achieves even greater prominence than before.<sup>155</sup> The idea of physical intimacy that does not involve penetration is hardly considered by church documents, focused on the dualism of the sexes, the importance of procreation and the illicit nature of all sex acts other than the strict definition of genital intercourse, free of obstacles to conception, between a man and woman within a sacramental marriage. Hence the Christ as bridegroom image used in contemporary teaching is hard to separate from a very physical, fertile, masculine Christ and Balthasar's description of the priestly role is

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<sup>151</sup> William of St. Thierry, *Works, 2: Exposition on the Song of Songs*, Cistercian Fathers Series 6, Mother Columba Hart (tr.) (Massachusetts: Spencer, 1970), p. 30.

<sup>152</sup> See C.D. Muir, *Saintly Brides and Bridegrooms. The Mystic Marriage in Northern Renaissance Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), a study of many saints, female and male, shown as brides or bridegrooms of Christ in European art from 1300 to 1550, including Catherine of Alexandria, Agnes of Rome, John the Evangelist, Bernard of Clairvaux and Henry Suso.

<sup>153</sup> Hans von Balthasar, *Elucidations*, John Riches (tr.) (London: SPCK, 1975), p. 226: 'What else is his eucharist but, at a higher level, an endless act of fruitful outpouring of his whole flesh, such as a man can only achieve for a moment with a limited organ of his body?'

<sup>154</sup> Tina Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate* (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 79ff., also see Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 157.

<sup>155</sup> For a discussion on the understanding of marriage, in this regard, see Michael G Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament, A Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (Omaha: Creighton University Press, 1995), pp. 177–179: 'In the contemporary age we assign too privileged a position in marriage to the genital union.'

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entirely understandable within this framework.<sup>156</sup> Any attempt to claim that the spousal imagery is intended as metaphor falls down, in such muscular teaching, and the idea of a woman taking that role would indeed be inconceivable. Such an emphasis on the maleness of the priest, according to Beattie, has pushed women into the background of the Eucharistic celebration. Without the capacity for the metaphorical emptying described by Balthasar, the woman cannot represent Christ at the altar, so that, as Beattie says, ‘women have become bystanders in the metaphysical consummation of homosexual love, a marriage between men and God in which the male body is both the masculine bridegroom and the feminine bride ... masculine Christ and the feminine Church’.<sup>157</sup> Once again, the metaphors become confused and applicable only to the man. As we have noted above, the ignored metaphors in our everyday speech, whose power to surprise and inspire is lost, nonetheless maintain their influence. Janet Soskice says: ‘It may sometimes seem to us that dead metaphor has brought into our language, and into our habits of thought, a structuring of experience of which we are for the most part unaware.’<sup>158</sup>

The history of the Eucharist reveals paradigm shifts in the Church’s understanding of what is taking place at the altar. As far as can be ascertained from the New Testament evidence, the earliest Eucharistic celebrations were modelled by Paul’s account of the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:20–26), describing how Jesus broke bread. The symbolism was simple, a shared meal, which should be taken reverently, in remembrance of what was done before. This memorial aspect of the Eucharistic meal remained central to the Church’s understanding of what it was doing in breaking bread for centuries. It commemorated the saving action of Jesus and what he did with his disciples – eating and drinking together. To the image of meal and memorial was then added the idea of the body of Christ as both the bread and the gathered community, developed by Augustine,

You, though, are the body of Christ and its members (1 Cor 12:27). So if it is you that are the body of Christ and its members, it is the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord’s table; what you receive is the mystery that means you.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> See Tina Beattie’s article, ‘Sex, Death and Melodrama: A Feminist Critique of Hans Urs Von Balthasar’, *The Way* Vol. 44, No. 4, October 2005, pp. 160–176. Speaking of von Balthasar’s theology she says: ‘it equates God’s creative power with male sexual activity, so that in von Balthasar’s Christology (and indeed ecclesiology) it becomes important that only a male body can represent God, in a way which comes close to an idolatry of the masculine.’: p. 164.

<sup>157</sup> Beattie, *God’s Mother, Eve’s Advocate*, p. 80.

<sup>158</sup> Soskice, *Metaphor*, p. 74.

<sup>159</sup> Augustine, Sermon 272, ‘On the Sacraments’, John E Rotelle, O.S.A. (ed.), in *Works of Saint Augustine, Sermons*, Part 3, Vol. 7, Edmund Hill, O.P. (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1993), pp. 300–301. ‘*Vos autem estis corpus Christi, et membra. Si ergo vos estis corpus Christi et membra, mysterium vestrum in mensa Dominica positum est: mysterium vestrum accipitis.*’

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As the Eucharist became ‘the Mass’ and the people attended a Mass, in a language they did not understand, said by a priest, often hidden behind a screen, the emphasis was shifted to that of Sunday observance. Entering the Middle Ages, the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist grew in importance while the meal symbolism faded into the background. Greater emphasis was placed on the divinity of Christ and in the centrality of the consecration to the Mass, the point at which the priest pronounces the words over the offerings as spoken by Jesus in the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper, ‘this is my body, this is my blood’. Hence the reception of communion by the ordinary people declined, as they felt unworthy to approach the table of the Lord. During this period, the term ‘transubstantiation’ was coined to describe the way in which the bread and wine become the ‘reality’ of the presence of the Lord in the elements of the Eucharist, while remaining unchanged in appearance.

All these factors led to increased attention being paid to adoration of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the reduction in the numbers and frequency of reception led to the ruling by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) that all the faithful should receive communion at least once a year. Pious devotions emerged including the elevation of the host and chalice at Mass, the Benediction ritual, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the institution of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

The scholastic theologians generally did not invoke the maleness of Christ himself nor the spousal imagery of the Church among their reasons for not ordaining women. They did highlight the fact that the Twelve were all men and that Christ appointed them as the leaders of the Church. Their problem with women’s ministry and authority was that it went against nature and against the will of God for women to have ascendancy over men, for all the reasons already noted in this thesis – their intellectual incapacity, their greater physical weakness, their subordination in creation, Eve’s greater guilt in the Fall, the hierarchy of man as head, woman as subject to him and so on. The emergence of the bride/bridegroom imagery is a more recent phenomenon, particularly in papal documents, as being an incontrovertible argument for the necessity of the male representation of Christ. The fact of its being a metaphor, or a symbol, along with many others used in scripture for and about God and Jesus Christ and the relationship with the church and the believer is forgotten. The male-as-norm default position, already mentioned, applied to the relationships between the divine (God, Christ) and the human (the Church, the human individual) diminishes the beauty of the imagery and renders it mundane, purely practical. Tina Beattie expresses it

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thus: 'Poetry and analogy yield to systematicity and literalism, and from there it is a small step to believing that the words we use to describe God actually define God.'<sup>160</sup>

The Second Vatican Council in the 1960s restored some of the original symbolism of the Mass as the sharing by the people in the body of Christ and the Eucharistic ritual being a gathering of all people, at which the ordained priest was the presider. This did not restore the full participation by all the congregation in the liturgy, as greater emphasis than ever was placed on the person of the priest as representing, or even, temporarily 'being' Christ, with the necessity of his maleness. As Tina Beattie says,

An all-female community cannot celebrate Mass, since a priest is necessary, but the converse is not true. In an all-male community, the male congregation represents the feminine, bridal Church, while the male priest represents the bridegroom.<sup>161</sup>

Turning the metaphor into a factual account of the part played by the various characters in the drama of the Eucharist, the Church and the relationship between Christ and humanity creates a complex and confusing mixture of symbols and images, in which the male characters, especially the ordained minister, can take any part, but for the females there is only a subordinate, passive role, as we have seen, sidelined by the increasing significance of the male representation of a male Christ. Benedict Ashley argues that, as Jesus Christ is 'Husband of the Church', the choice of the ordained minister as the 'icon' of Christ should be a man, but the people as a whole is an 'icon of the Church', the Bride of Christ. In a rather strange aside, he notes that the people of God, the laity, are indeed both male and female, although representing the female role in the relationship with Christ but '[i]t is not ... the sometimes unfaithful faithful as individuals who *symbolize* Christ in this relationship, but the ever faithful church as a *corporate whole*' (author's italics)<sup>162</sup>. Thus, the priest must be a man (presumably part of the ever-faithful corporation).<sup>162</sup> However, despite this duality represented by the ministerial priesthood, the priests themselves, as human beings, are also members of the Church by their baptism. If the Church is feminine, so that its members are represented by the feminine imagery, as Paul Lakeland says: 'the priests ... cannot be said to be both bride and groom, both masculine and feminine, out of their very nature ... In other words, if a man can be a member of the Church, symbolically

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<sup>160</sup> Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, p. 81.

<sup>161</sup> Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, p. 81.

<sup>162</sup> Ashley, *Justice in the Church*, p. 118.

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feminine, then a woman can be a member of the ministerial priesthood, symbolically masculine.<sup>163</sup>

### 7.f *Conclusion*

From the biblical text to the late nineteenth century, the female voice was rarely heard, and the male voice was almost the only outlet for describing human history, experience and feeling. Is it any wonder, therefore, that within such a context, mediaeval writers and philosophers could freely and unquestioningly express what seem to modern ears to be extremes of misogyny, outrageous views of women's inferiority and incapacity? The language in which these views were given and the genderised, male-oriented register available in which to couch thought and opinion served to provide unconscious reinforcement for this status quo. Where there is no feminine substantive for the human race and the masculine is always used, it becomes impossible to reflect on the inclusion of women, except as an adjunct to the male norm. The hierarchy of sexual gender enforces subordination and dominance as a natural history of humanity.

This chapter has looked at perceptions of language, in mediaeval times and later, both as a tool for communication and as a subject for scientific study. Language was considered the basis for all knowledge and education and, in the mediaeval period, it was considered essential that, along with all knowledge, language should be analysed and codified. Depending on the vocabulary available and the choice of term in translation of ancient texts, both of scripture and philosophy, meaning shifts in the process of expressing concepts in one language or another. Translators enjoy exploring options,<sup>164</sup> but have to select in the end and, once a text becomes effectively canonized, the nuances of expression in the mind of the original writer may be lost.

Incidentally, the distinction between the relativistic and universalist approaches to language is sometimes expressed in terms of translatability between different tongues. Rather than asking whether or not a text in one language can be translated accurately into another, it is better to consider whether what the writer is trying to say can be rendered clearly and accurately in another language, or if a new version of a text in a different

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<sup>163</sup> Paul Lakeland, *Can Women be Priests?* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1975), pp. 64–65; see also his *Theology and Critical Theory: The Discourse of the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990).

<sup>164</sup> See Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), for instance, when discussing various translations of Gérard de Nerval's *Sylvie*, pp. 108–110.

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language is in fact a brand-new speech-act, as, for instance, the translation of a poem may be.<sup>165</sup>

Particular terms relevant to the discussion about women's suitability for reception of the sacrament of orders are important in the debate about ordination itself, specifically, the history of the changes in meaning of the terms *ordo* and *ordinare*, as well as how this relates to women, with the significance of the words *homo* and *vir*. In the modern context, the term 'man' in English is no longer considered an inclusive word in a text applicable to both sexes and its use may be considered a conscious, political statement, a positive rejection of politically correct language, correctness of address, gender-inclusiveness and so on.

Preconceptions about gender, and in particular the female sex, are embedded in the language of the Middle Ages, particularly references to the female body, as we have seen. The basic assumption that the masculine is the norm, the default mode for human beings, can be illustrated by reference to current and historical literature on the subject. Metaphors used to describe the attributes of the divine, and of Jesus Christ, are taken as literal truths, supporting the argument that woman, by virtue of her sex, cannot act as a priest, *in persona Christi*. The assumptions and preconceptions that the roles, rules and language relating to women and men make are embedded in the language that we use to discuss them. Challenges to these assumptions have always been made but, as society begins to take them on, to unwrap and examine these preconceptions and, however painfully and slowly, change in accordance with a fresh appraisal of what constitutes equality and justice, those institutions that do not follow suit are brought under the spotlight and interrogated as to why they are reluctant.

In the twenty-first century, there are many and varied challenges to the preconceptions that the Church has carried ever since its inception, that God made man and woman, put them in their places, established their relationship and interaction, gave each their role in the world. It is important to ensure that it is not a mediaeval understanding of what constitutes gender, sex, body that is being used when making decisions about the pastoral care of

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<sup>165</sup> Translators have very different views on the process of translating poetry and poetic language. Arthur Waley, in the introduction to his collection, *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (London: Constable 1918), says 'considering imagery to be the soul of poetry, I have avoided either adding images of my own or suppressing those of the original', p. 19. Boris Akunin, discussing translating Yukio Mishima into Russian, says 'every single phrase in Mishima's books was a mantra ... I had to become a Russian Mishima inside.': Sebald lecture, 2013, 'Paradise Lost: Confessions of an Apostate Translator', *In Other Words: The Journal for Literary Translators*, Vol. 41, Summer 2013, 7–45.



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people and when asserting time-honoured principles about the suitability of certain human beings for particular roles.

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Leonardo da Vinci's depiction of the Last Supper, so familiar for centuries, interpreted and exploited in so many ways, in composition seems to be simply a painting showing Jesus seated at table, about to identify his betrayer, with the Apostles around him. Yet, its chosen location, on the wall of the room that was to be the refectory in the Friary of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, made it the fourth side of a square, formed by the tables at which the community sat to eat. The food on the table in the painting is similar to that eaten at that time, the late fifteenth century, and in that place during Lent, the gestures of the Apostles matched the sign language used by the brothers to comply with the rule on eating in silence. Seeing the painting not simply as a formal, religious icon, but as a realistic representation of the presence of Jesus within the community – 'whenever two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt 18:20) – alters the perspective of the viewer. We are not meant to gaze respectfully on the past, but to live in the present, with the past alongside us to support and encourage, and from which we go forth, as those friars went out from their meal, to continue our work in the world. Yet, even this image of the Last Supper, at which Jesus institutes the Eucharist and gives the command to the disciples to serve one another, in humble, even demeaning actions such as washing feet, despite its familiarity, is misleading as a representation of the original event. Not only is the food anachronistic, but the thirteen seated along the table may be only a small number of those typically present at the Jewish Passover meal, if that is what it was. At the very least, women are likely to have prepared the food. In a family meal, the annual Passover gathering was intended to re-enact the liberation from slavery and the desert journey.

The Church uses a similarly anachronistic construct of the past as one of the arguments on which to base the prohibition on women's ordination (Christ did not choose women to lead the Church),<sup>1</sup> specifically referring to the presence of the Twelve at the Last Supper, but this is unsupportable in historical terms. Traditionally, the Last Supper is depicted as the locus for the institution of the Eucharist, but even this was not about the 'who' but about the 'what' and 'how' of breaking bread and sharing wine with all who were present. The instructions Jesus left with his companions at this Passover meal were about loving service,

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 1994, § 2: 'Therefore, in granting admission to the ministerial priesthood, the Church has always acknowledged as a perennial norm her Lord's way of acting in choosing twelve men whom he made the foundation of his Church.': available at <http://www.vatican.va>, last consulted August 2014.

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washing feet (Jn 13:1–17), and his continuing presence with them, not about status, hierarchy and power. He handed the bread to each of those around the table, including Judas, whom he reportedly knew would betray him, telling him, in the Johannine version, ‘Go and do what you have to do’ (Jn 13:26–27).

This thesis has sought to show that the Church’s present ban on the ordination of women relies on ideas that originated in antiquity, and were canonised in the Middle Ages, about the actions of the historical Jesus, about the nature of male and female human beings, based on assumed differences between the sexes that promote male dominance, in laws that discriminate on the basis of gender and anatomy, and in habits of speech, metaphor and imagery that perpetuate a male-only, exclusive concept of what constitutes Christian priesthood.

### 8.a *The Status of Women in the Church*

The process of muffling the voices of women during the history of the Church is described by Hans Küng, who considers that ‘the subordination of women desired by the church was legitimated by divine revelation and sacred tradition’.<sup>2</sup> Although there is evidence, from the work of a number of scholars, that women in the very early centuries sometimes held significant roles and were notable as martyrs, prophets and teachers, this is not the picture that survived to the end of the first millennium and, therefore, was not necessarily accessible or even of interest to the scholastic writers whom we have been considering.<sup>3</sup>

There were a number of factors that emerged in the period leading up to the early Middle Ages that adversely affected the status of women, including Augustine’s theology and the growing authority of Rome and the Pope within the Church. Augustine’s teaching on original sin, particularly as regards sexual morality, reinforced existing male attitudes to women’s inferior status, placing their justification from scripture and tradition on a sound footing. His emphasis on the essential sinfulness of sexual pleasure and determined assertion that sexual intercourse in marriage should be only for the purpose of procreation left a legacy that endures to modern times.<sup>4</sup> As noted in Chapter 6, on biology, the need for ritual purity in the priest celebrating the Eucharist meant that ordained married men were

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<sup>2</sup> Hans Küng, *Women in Christianity* (London: Continuum, 1994), translation by John Bowden (2001), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Küng, *Women in Christianity*, pp. 19–21.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin T. Kelly, *New Directions in Moral Theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), p. 34.

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bound to abstain from sexual relations with their spouse for lengthy periods<sup>5</sup> and was a contributory factor to the eventual imposition of priestly celibacy. Women, who were biologically unclean for long periods of their life, from puberty to the menopause at the very least, as we explore elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> could, of course, never be considered for ordination. The requirement for celibacy completed the process of separation of ‘clergy’ from ‘laity’. After the ruling on this discipline by the Second Lateran Council in 1139, the status of priest was entirely detached from that of the layman and priests could be seen as being of a more elevated, more perfect, quality of human being, closer to God, ‘holier’ than ordinary people.<sup>7</sup>

### 8.b Legal Restrictions

Looking at the legal background, we have been able to show how, throughout the early centuries AD, bishops and Church Councils, both West and East, gradually imposed ever tighter restrictions on women’s presence at and participation in the sacred liturgy. Considering the situation as it prevailed in apostolic times, when women seemed to have taken a fairly equal share with men as leaders and presiders, we have seen how their role was curtailed, initially to the position of deacon(ess), then as helpers only where necessary – to attend at the baptism of women catechumens, for instance – until eventually they were reduced entirely to the lowest rank of the laity, where they remained until the late twentieth century. Local synods imposed rules forbidding the ordination of women as deacons in the West from the fifth century onwards, despite it being clear that prior to this women took a full and active part as assistants to the priest on the sanctuary or in the house church. The Eastern Church continued to ordain women as deacons until the practice gradually died out by the eleventh century.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 162, for a very helpful guide to these rules.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 6 on biology.

<sup>7</sup> Küng, *Women in Christianity*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the ordination of women as deacons in both East and West, see Phyllis Zagano, *Holy Saturday: An Argument for the Restoration of the Female Diaconate in the Catholic Church* (New York: Crossroad Press, 2000); John Wijngaards, *Women Deacons in the Early Church* (New York: Crossroad Press, 2002); Gary Macy et al., *Women Deacons: Past, Present and Future* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011). In an interview in 2012, Phyllis Zagano said: ‘To say that a woman is not ordainable and cannot serve *in persona Christi*—as a deacon, in the person of Christ the servant—is to argue against the incarnation. The important thing is not that Christ became male. It’s that Christ became human. If we say that a woman cannot live *in persona Christi*, I think we’re making a terribly negative comment about the female gender.’: *U.S. Catholic*, Vol. 77, No. 1, January 2012, pp. 18–21.

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Canon law, examined in Chapter 3, enshrined the pollution caused by women's physical 'infirmities' as reasons for banning their presence at the altar for all time, many of which prohibitions remained in force until the revision of Canon law in 1986, and their impact is still felt in the Church. When the *Corpus Iuris Canonici* was promulgated as official church law in 1234, it contained a whole series of explicit regulations regarding women, many of which had their origins, spoken or tacit, in the ancient concept of defilement and the distaste for the female body and its attributes. They included the ban on women touching altar cloths<sup>9</sup> and on receiving communion in the hand, or during their periods, again quoting Theodore of Canterbury, who forbade women, either nuns or laywomen, entering a church or receiving communion at this time of the month:<sup>10</sup> 'If they dare to do so, they must fast for three weeks.' There was no question at that time of women being allowed to distribute communion, but even centuries later in 1917 when the Code was revised for the first time, women were still not allowed to distribute communion except in dire circumstances: 'A woman of special devoutness may be chosen in emergencies, namely whenever any other suitable person cannot be found.'<sup>11</sup>

In the early twentieth century, women were not even allowed to sing in church choirs, according to an instruction by Pius X in a *motu proprio* on the use of sacred music in churches:

Except the chant of the celebrant and the sacred ministers at the altar, which must always be sung in plainchant without any accompaniment, the rest of the liturgical singing belongs properly to the choir of clerics ... It follows from the same principle that the singers in church have a real liturgical office, and that women therefore, being incapable of such an office, cannot be admitted to the choir.<sup>12</sup>

The ban on women and girls serving at the altar was also strictly imposed and was reinforced by further instructions on at least two occasions during the twentieth century. Even within a convent or girls' school, female altar servers were forbidden. If the priest considered it necessary to have a server, and there were no men or boys available, a girl could serve, 'on this understanding that the woman responds from a distance and does in

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<sup>9</sup> *Codex Iuris Canonici* (Freiburg: Herder, 1918), canon 117, quoting Theodulf: 'Let not a woman put forth her hand to the Lord's table-cloth [*ad pallam Dominicam*].'

<sup>10</sup> *Theodori Poenitentiale* Bk I, ch. 14, §§ 17–18, 'Mulieres autem menstruale tempore non intrent in ecclesiam neque communicent, nec sanctimoniales nec laicae.' quoted in Ida Raming, 'The Priestly Office of Women: God's Gift to a Renewed Church' in Bernard Cooke and Gary Macy (eds. and trs.), *A History of Women and Ordination*, Vol. II, (Maryland and London: Scarecrow Press, 2004, 2nd edn.). p. 79.

<sup>11</sup> *Codex Iuris Canonici*, canon 845.

<sup>12</sup> Pius X, Encyclical Letter *Tra le sollecitudine*, 1903, § V:12–13, available at <http://www.adoremus.org/TraLeSollecitudini.html>, last consulted August 2014.

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no way approach the altar'<sup>13</sup> – remember that, at this time, the main function of the server was to make the responses to the priest, while the congregation remained largely silent. In a statement from the Liturgical Commission, the unbroken tradition of the church in this respect was reiterated, as recently as 1967:

How far the liturgical task of women, to which baptism gives them a right and duty will go, still needs to be studied further; but, in the actual organization of the liturgy, women do not fulfil a ministry around the altar, that is certain. For their ministry depends on the will of the Church and the Catholic Church has not ever entrusted liturgical ministry to women. Therefore, every arbitrary innovation in this matter shall be considered a grave infringement of ecclesiastical discipline and will need to be suppressed with firmness.<sup>14</sup>

Only a few years later, of course, this 'certain' fact of the unbroken tradition that women had no function at the altar was changed to allow women and girls to be readers, ministers of the Eucharist and servers. The modern Code of Canon Law no longer forbids lay women as well as men from fulfilling all the appropriate roles in the liturgy available to the non-ordained. The commentary on the Code in fact states: 'What would be the impact on the community if some who provide these ministries [reader, acolyte, Eucharistic minister] were to be installed but others, equally qualified and experienced, were to be denied installation merely on the basis of sex? It would seem to belie the provisions of canon 208 on the equality of the baptized.'<sup>15</sup> So, the immutable tradition of the Church has now been altered, on the basis of justice and the good of the community.

### 8.c Scholastic Writers

The Vatican documents enforcing the ban on women's ordination in the late twentieth century mention a number of authorities to reinforce their ruling and to provide support for their arguments. This thesis has carefully examined these various sources and shown that the scholastic theologians and these authorities, in turn, often quote earlier authorities, classical, Scriptural, apostolic and patristic. The three teachers on whom we have focused,

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<sup>13</sup> *Codex Iuris Canonici*, canon 813.

<sup>14</sup> Congregation on the Sacred Liturgy, letter dated 25 January 1966, quoted on <http://www.womenpriests.org>, last accessed August 2014. Also, 'According to the liturgical norms handed on in the Church, women, whether young girls, married women or nuns, are forbidden to serve the priest at the altar, whether in church, in a home, a convent, a college or an institute for women.': Third Instruction on the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol. 62, 1970, p. 700, available at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/index\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/index_en.htm), last accessed August 2014, reiterated several times after that, until finally waived in 1994.

<sup>15</sup> *The Code of Canon Law. A Text and Commentary*, J.A. Coriden, T.J. Green and D.E. Heintschel (eds.) (Leominster: Fowler & Wright, 1985), p. 189. Although this equality still does not encompass ordination for women.

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Bonaventure, Aquinas and Duns Scotus, all use a number of references in their discussions of this issue. Each of these has been explored in some detail and the Church documents that mentioned them also studied. *Inter Insigniores*, for instance, refers to Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and Durandus de St. Pourçain, though without quoting them directly, simply noting that some of their arguments would be unacceptable today.<sup>16</sup>

Without quoting from the scholastics, however, *Inter Insigniores* uses many of the same arguments, reinforced by their scriptural basis. The prohibition on women being allowed to teach, taken from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (14:34–35), where he actually says 'women must not speak in the assemblies', is cited by *Inter Insigniores* as being part of the divine plan of creation,<sup>17</sup> justified by the creation story in Genesis 2:18–24, where woman is formed from Adam's rib and becomes his 'helper'. The document applies this to an 'official' function of teaching, reserved for the clerical state, and therefore closed to women – another circular argument.

The exclusion of women from membership of the 'Twelve' is the main argument offered by the Church to exclude women from the priesthood. Again, this is also a major plank of the scholastic case as we have seen. The significance of the choice of twelve men as the first to be sent out (Mk 3:14–15) has been addressed in this thesis,<sup>18</sup> and the gradual acceptance of male-only leadership on the basis of this, ignoring the prominent presence of women among the earliest Christian groups, was based on the traditional assumptions of women's inferiority to men in all aspects of life – intellectual, economic, social and religious.

Elsewhere, *Inter Insigniores* quotes Thomas Aquinas, from the *Summa Theologica*, Bk III, q. 83, saying that, in celebrating the Eucharist, the priest is enacting the image of Christ, standing *in persona Christi* as he speaks the words of consecration. The complex question of what is meant by this expression has been covered in this thesis, when discussing the work of the scholastics in Chapter 4. In particular, many present-day scholars see the current teaching of the Church as expanding the meaning of the term to indicate that the priest at the altar is no longer representing Christ as the High Priest, but is also acting as

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<sup>16</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, in *From 'Inter Insigniores' to 'Ordinatio Sacerdotalis'*, *Documents and Commentaries* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, p. 35.

<sup>18</sup> Chapter 5 on Scripture.

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Christ the Head of the Church, a development without support in the work of the scholastic theologians.<sup>19</sup> This moves us further than the need for a ‘natural’ sign, another point in *Inter Insigniores* where Aquinas is quoted.<sup>20</sup> Aquinas says that sacramental signs, ‘represent what they signify by natural resemblance’.<sup>21</sup> Therefore the priest must be a man, otherwise, according to *Inter Insigniores*, ‘it would be difficult to see in the minister the image of Christ’. Aquinas uses the Aristotelian view of the biological origins of the female, as being an ‘unfinished’ human being, according to the knowledge of the time, which assumed that the foetus began as a male and only became a female if it were defective in some way. So women are not fully created in God’s image, they are imperfect and cannot represent God. This was one of the reasons that the scholastics considered a woman could not serve at the altar and, while stepping away from the underlying presumption of woman’s ontological inferiority, it is still one of the reasons that the Church gives for not ordaining women.<sup>22</sup>

*Mulieris Dignitatem*, the Apostolic Letter from John Paul II, again does not explicitly cite the scholastics in support of its image of womanhood and the special place of women in the Church. But it does use the same arguments, of women’s subordination to man because of the Fall<sup>23</sup> and the exclusion of women from the leadership group appointed by Jesus. It quotes extensively, from Scripture, from the Fathers of the Church and from earlier Church documents, to give a picture of the role of mothers, wives and consecrated women, who have ‘moral and spiritual strength’, which they have to put at the service of others (i.e. men) so that their vocation is that of accomplishing the ‘royal priesthood’ (1 Pet 2:9), not in themselves but by enabling others to do it.<sup>24</sup> Despite asserting at the outset that “‘woman” is the representative and the archetype of the whole human race’, *Mulieris Dignitatem* asks for ‘conversion’ to rectify this ‘injurious and unjust’ situation<sup>25</sup> of women’s subjection but, presumably, that call is addressed to human society and not to the

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<sup>19</sup> Dennis Michael Ferrara, ‘Representation or Self-effacement? The Axiom *in Persona Christi* in St. Thomas and the Magisterium’, *Theological Studies*, Vol. 55, 1994. pp. 195–224.

<sup>20</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, Bk IV, d. 25, q. 2, quaes. 1, ad. 4. “...quod signa sacramentalia ex naturali similitudine repraesentant...”

<sup>22</sup> *Inter Insigniores*, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, § 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, § 30, available at <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014 The quotation from 1 Peter is addressed to the whole of the Christian community, an assertion that by baptism, they are ‘a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people set apart’, in other words that all Christians have this calling, including women. Peter, a married man, whose mother-in-law had been healed by Jesus, is never recorded as excluding women. His mother-in-law is the first person in the Gospels to whom the task of service towards Jesus is given.

<sup>25</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, § 10.



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divinely established community of the Church. Thus, the close links between the present teaching of the Church that women cannot be ordained and the mediaeval conclusions on the subject have been shown in this thesis. The roots of these arguments back to earlier times have also been traced, highlighting some important connections that have not always been made.

### 8.d *Biology*

As well as the assumptions about the biological nature of women, and their ‘misbegotten’ origins, the prohibitions around women’s presence on the sanctuary and at the altar reflect the idea that mere physical contact with women’s bodies was often contaminating. Using the theories expressed in Greek and Roman medical writings, and their understanding of biology, encouraged by Jerome, Augustine and other patristic writers, the mediaeval canonists and scholastics could feel secure in their preconceptions of the flawed, dangerous nature of women, the threat the daughters of Eve posed to the salvation of (male) souls and the defilement caused by women’s ‘fluids’. The writers of earlier centuries left their mark on both popular and scholarly thought in the Middle Ages, to the extent that normative statements continued to perpetuate the exclusion of women on the grounds of impurity, without needing to explain or justify such discrimination. Such contaminating effects of any involvement by women in the sacred liturgy were taken for granted, because there was no question that women’s presence at the altar was completely inappropriate, thus unacceptable to God, and the specific prohibition on women touching sacred vessels and garments is mentioned by practically all writers, without explanation. Alongside the legislative and institutional arguments, popular literature of the period continued to revel in horror stories of women’s behaviour, the dangers of sexual intercourse and the repulsive nature of the unspoken mysteries of childbirth and menstruation, underpinning the social and cultural assumptions involved.

Such images and opinions carried great weight at the time and later, continuing to influence attitudes in the Catholic Church towards women, at a very instinctive level, ever since, especially among men who had little or no contact with women in their daily lives, or practical knowledge about female life and biology. Within the exclusively male, celibate environment of the Catholic clergy, the alien nature of the female perhaps seemed much

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more threatening than in other denominations, where the ministers were free to marry and where female pastors and leaders were more visible.

It was this residue of repulsion and squeamishness, particularly relating to menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth, involving ‘blood and defilement’<sup>26</sup>, that affected male perceptions of women, however well suppressed and rarely articulated they were in modern times. The outspoken, explicit views of female contamination, of the corrupting nature of contact with women, of their poisonous tongues, seductive behaviour, of women’s clothing and decoration, falsity and intellectual frailty persisted for generations, in both religious and secular writing and thought,<sup>27</sup> until the increased sensitivity and better understanding of biology and anthropology began to make some impression on both polemic and on the law.

The Code of Canon Law revised at the beginning of the twentieth century retained the implicit sense that the touch of women was defiling in the ban on women washing altar vessels and linen before they are first ‘purified’ by a man: ‘Chalices, patens, purificators, palls and corporals before being washed should only be touched by clerics who are responsible for maintaining them’ and ‘[t]he first washing of purificators, etc. should only be undertaken by a cleric of the higher orders.’<sup>28</sup> One further obstacle to women’s reception of orders, also relating to their bodies, was that of their hair, as the tonsure was deemed to be necessary for ordination, and women were instructed, again in Paul’s letters (1 Cor 11:6), to wear their hair long.

Nonetheless, in the present discipline excluding women from ordination in the Catholic Church, the biological factors are certainly given less importance than formerly. Perhaps because of the social changes during the latter half of the twentieth century and the work of Vatican II, the leadership of the Catholic Church, still almost exclusively male, has frequently asserted the importance of women’s role in the Church, the respect due to women, the value of women’s contribution to, variously, family life, pastoral care,

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<sup>26</sup> Janet Martin Soskice’s essay of this title makes an important contribution to this discussion: ‘Blood and Defilement: Christology’, in *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender and Religious Language* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), pp. 84–99.

<sup>27</sup> Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: OUP, 1992) has multiple examples of this kind of language in the Middle Ages, from both secular and religious writings.

<sup>28</sup> *Codex Iuris Canonici*, Canon 1306, 1 and 2.

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catechesis, religious life and the Church's social teaching and practice.<sup>29</sup> It is still possible, however, to detect the significance given to the biological aspects of women's differentness from men, by observing the frequency with which women's role as mother and wife is used in Church documents – women as care-givers, women as reflections of the Virgin Mary. All of these descriptions emphasise the reproductive, and therefore maternal function and instincts of women, as being paramount in their human nature. For example, Pope Paul VI's brief address to women at the close of the Second Vatican Council encapsulates this kind of language:

... at this moment when the human race is under-going so deep a transformation, women impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid mankind in not falling. You women have always had as your lot the protection of the home, the love of beginnings and an understanding of cradles.<sup>30</sup>

The terminological register, with words such as 'impregnated', 'home', 'cradles', is typical. Men's role as fathers, in a biological sense, is not given nearly the same weight in terms of their human nature and their status in the church.

As we have seen with other parts of the argument against the ordination of women, by tracing the roots of this particular factor back to its origins we have shown it is based on beliefs and practices with no true theological basis. It may be possible to argue that the Levitical purity rules have some weight, in terms of respect for tradition, but there is now no residual, explicit prohibition as there used to be on women's presence at the liturgy, or full participation in all the sacraments, except Holy Orders, no matter what the time of the month. Nor is there any longer a requirement for abstinence from intercourse imposed on married couples, or even for a celibate life for all priests in the Catholic Church, now that former Church of England priests have been accepted, along with their wives and families. These long-standing traditions, once thought impossible to set aside, have now been partially or completely abandoned. Equally, the assumptions about weak-mindedness and incapacity for authority or teaching ability in women are based on traditional attitudes, outdated biology and on references in Paul's letters, perhaps directed to particular

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<sup>29</sup> Documents such as the *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2004; Apostolic letters *Mulieris Dignitatem*, and *Christifidelis Laici* by Pope John Paul II, 1988.

<sup>30</sup> 'Address of Pope Paul VI to Women', 8 December 1965, available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/speeches/1965/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_spe\\_19651208\\_epilogo-concilio-donne\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651208_epilogo-concilio-donne_en.html), last accessed August 2014.

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communities with specific problems, and bolstered by satirical, acerbic works by authors from Roman times onwards.

It is worth repeating once more that we cannot impose modern ideas on earlier cultures, but nonetheless, the puzzlement of some, including Scotus, as to the mystery of why one whole sex from the human race should be excluded from one of the sacraments is even more relevant in the light of twentieth and twenty-first century knowledge of human reproduction, biology and psychology, which makes nonsense of all the obstacles to women's ordination under this particular heading.

### 8.e *Language and Metaphor*

The scholastic theologians wrote fluently in Latin and absorbed new knowledge that became available to them through translation from the Greek, permeating Western Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This knowledge came with its own understanding of the relative natures of men and women, of medicine and biology, and the weight of tradition and prestige carried by the names of the classical figures associated with it, particularly Aristotle, the Philosopher. Latin was preserved as the language of the Church, in its law, teaching and liturgy, until the present day. This dominance of Latin within the Church in Western Europe ensured that, as it gradually died as an active, socially useful tongue, the concepts and registers it enshrined became fixed and there is still in some quarters a sense that only in that language can the truth be told.<sup>31</sup>

The flexibility of the English language and the agreed conventions to enable inclusive language to work with facility mean that anyone deliberately choosing not to avail themselves of current grammatical conventions in this way is perhaps showing their commitment to a particular style and register, or even declaring an allegiance to earlier values of the 'male-as-norm' kind.<sup>32</sup> This 'male-as-norm' principle, the history of which is almost unbroken from the earliest times, underlies a male-dominated society that sees woman as 'other'. Thus, the present choice of those responsible in the Church to avoid inclusive language, even when translating into the vernacular terms from Greek and Latin

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<sup>31</sup> Any quick internet search for 'Latin in the Church' will produce a wide range of websites offering some very interesting ideas about Latin, its value to the Church and even its divine origins!

<sup>32</sup> For a useful discussion on this subject, see Nancy Hardesty, *Inclusive Language in the Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), p. 1.

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that are neutral in terms of their application to human beings, despite their having a masculine grammatical gender, can be seen to indicate a deliberate choice to adhere to an outdated and often mistaken process of translation.<sup>33</sup>

The nuptial imagery and Christ as Bridegroom, which has been covered in Chapter 7 of this thesis, is another important issue used by the Vatican documents and by the scholastic theologians. The emphasis placed on this point, which is constantly reiterated by opponents of women's ordination, as we have seen, relies on the assertion that the poetic, metaphorical use of the spousal image, in fact, describes a real aspect of Jesus Christ in some way, with all its sexual and social implications. As we have seen, the dead metaphor is useful, but can be dangerous when it takes over and masks the reality, even if the reality is something that human language is inadequate to describe. The dead metaphor, the imagery that has become so well worn that it becomes a fact, an inherent characteristic of the Godhead, or of the person of Jesus himself, is used to underpin the prohibition on women's ordination. The characterisation of Christ as Bridegroom and the Church as Bride means that half the members of the Church, equal in baptism, cannot, by reason of their sex alone, represent Christ at the altar. *Mulieris Dignitatem* uses the bride/bridegroom image, citing Paul's teaching in the Letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5:21–33) but it juggles again with the symbolism, applying the role of bride to the whole human race, male and female, but also saying that it is the woman who has to represent the bride, which in terms of the text's 'interior logic', only she can do.<sup>34</sup> The interior logic is the requirement for women to submit to their husbands in everything, as the Church submits to Christ. At the same time the 'femininity' of women is considered to be here a form of 'prophecy', fully expressed in the Virgin Mother of God. As we saw before,<sup>35</sup> this analogy breaks down in logic, coupling Christ and his own Mother as Bridegroom and Bride and developing the image past the point at which the text can sustain it.

Even within this point, it should be remembered that the bride/bridegroom image in mediaeval theology was not necessarily as sexually focused as it is today, as at that time celibacy and virginity were considered superior vocations, while now procreation and the

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<sup>33</sup> As already noted in Chapter 7, translating 'et homo factus est' from the Nicene Creed in English as 'and became man' is wrong at several levels.

<sup>34</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, § 29.

<sup>35</sup> Chapter 7.

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biological function of motherhood are exalted within the Church.<sup>36</sup> We have seen in Chapter 7 that von Balthasar's emphasis on maleness as the source of life<sup>37</sup> is perilously close to the ancient understanding of the male as carrying the seed and the woman serving only as the vessel. This leads to the conclusion that 'women have become bystanders in the metaphysical consummation of homosexual love, a marriage between men and God'.<sup>38</sup> The spousal imagery used by the scholastics, and ever since by the Church, has placed the male figure as the predominant character, the one who 'takes' the woman to himself. Women's femininity is vital to this: they must not 'appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine "originality"'.<sup>39</sup> This is dangerous for the woman herself because 'there is a well-founded fear' (founded on what?), that if she does this, the woman 'will *deform and lose what constitutes [her] essential richness*'.<sup>40</sup> This richness is rooted in the fact that the first man, on looking at the woman, was instantly attracted to her physical appearance, so that he uttered 'words of admiration and enchantment' (Gen 2:23). We have seen in Chapter 5 that often in Church documents the original Genesis story is still treated as in some sense historical.

So long as woman fulfils her intended role, of helper, support, child-bearer and companion, under the supervision and control of a man, she is perceived to be no threat and no challenge to the God-given position of the male sex. In all ages, however, the fear of woman's sexuality,<sup>41</sup> her appetites and capacities to lead men astray, have impeded the development of a truly inclusive theology of priesthood for all believers through baptism, and not just for men. By delving into the deeper layers beneath the teachings of the scholastic theologians, we uncover the roots of the well-developed growth of the Church's respected Tradition and find that it is nourished by some rather thin material that may not

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<sup>36</sup> Tina Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 80. And see *Mulieris Dignitatem*.

<sup>37</sup> Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Elucidations*, John Riches (tr.) (London: SPCK, 1975), p. 150.

<sup>38</sup> Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, p. 80.

<sup>39</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, § 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, § 10, italics in the original.

<sup>41</sup> The fear of women's sexuality, her appetites and capacity for seduction has also been perpetuated into modern times, as salacious news stories in the popular press sometimes reveal. Joan Smith commented on tabloid press reports about the past of Heather Mills, ex-wife of Paul McCartney, as having been a prostitute or call-girl, and accusations of promiscuous behaviour thrown at other women celebrities. In a piece in *The Independent*, 15 June 2006. Smith said: 'When a man calls a woman a whore he usually means two things: that she enjoys sex too much, and she isn't doing it with him. The same goes for slut, slag and slapper, insults which still have no male equivalent ...'. Smith quoted Jane Mills in a book called *Womanwords*: 'The way in which whore has been used reveals an ambivalence, there is both an abhorrence of the flesh and a passion for it. These two feelings live side by side, unreconciled', which could be said about male attitudes to female sexuality in any century.

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be able to sustain it for much longer, if the teaching authority truly listens to the *sensum fidei fidelis*, the voice of the people of God.

This thesis should have ended here but, as I was finishing, the Vatican published a document on this very subject, the *sensum fidei fidelis*, the faithful's sense of the faith.<sup>42</sup> In 2012, in response to the laicisation of Fr. Roy Bourgeois, the US newspaper, the *National Catholic Register*, published an editorial, calling for this subject to be addressed, in which it stated:

The call to the priesthood is a gift from God. It is rooted in baptism and is called forth and affirmed by the community because it is authentic and evident in the person as a charism. Catholic women who have discerned a call to the priesthood and have had that call affirmed by the community should be ordained in the Roman Catholic church. Barring women from ordination to the priesthood is an injustice that cannot be allowed to stand.<sup>43</sup>

It referred to *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, which states that the prohibition on women's ordination is 'founded on the written Word of God', pointing out that this completely ignores the 1976 findings of the Pontifical Biblical Commission.<sup>44</sup> It went on to remind readers of Cardinal Newman's explanation of the *sensum fidelium*, as expressed by the ordinary people of the Church,<sup>45</sup> and called for a revisiting of the issue of women's ordination in the light of the many and varied calls within the Church for the prohibition to be lifted. This call coincided with meetings of the International Theological Commission on this subject, which took place between 2011 and 2014, the results of which are contained in this newly published document, 'Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church'. The document is an interesting and potentially game-changing development, offering as it does the possibility of greater involvement by the lay faithful in Church decision-making and more opportunities for dialogue than ever before. Following the consultation process undertaken in preparation for the coming Synod on the Family, which, despite its poor presentation and limited circulation, is an unprecedented initiative by the Church authorities, this text seems to show at least a recognition that the whole of the faithful – lay, religious, clerical – can be considered as having a voice that should be heard and even that members of other denominations might have valuable things to say about matters of

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<sup>42</sup> 'Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church', International Theological Commission, 2014, available at <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>43</sup> *National Catholic Register*, 3 December 2012, available at <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/editorial-ordination-women-would-correct-injustice>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>44</sup> *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, in *From 'Inter Insigniores' to 'Ordinatio Sacerdotalis'*, pp. 185–193 and at <http://www.vatican.va>, last accessed August 2014.

<sup>45</sup> John Henry Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine', *The Rambler*, July 1859.

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Christian doctrine. It does assert strongly that there is a need to identify the genuine *sensus fidei* in situations of controversy, when ‘there are tensions between the teaching of the magisterium and views claiming to express the *sensus fidei*’.<sup>46</sup> Quoting extensively from Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, the document explains what the term means and follows its history in the Church from the patristic period through to the Middle Ages and beyond. It says that the ‘Scholastic doctors acknowledged that the Church, the *congregatio fidelium*, cannot err in matters of faith because she is taught by God, united with Christ her Head, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit’.<sup>47</sup> During the period of the European Reformation, this teaching was used to assert Catholic orthodoxy, through the ‘infallibility of the whole Church, laity and clergy together, *in credendo*’.<sup>48</sup> As time went by, however, the emphasis changed, and the idea of the active, ‘teaching’ Church (*ecclesia docens*) was asserted over that of the ‘learning’ Church (*ecclesia discens*), which was considered a ‘passive’ partner. The document refers to Newman’s essay on the subject, which arose from the declaration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary as being a dogma that was to be held by the whole Church, an infallible teaching. It also refers to the work of Yves Congar on the same subject in the mid-twentieth century, building towards the Second Vatican Council, which asserts that:

The whole body of the faithful who have received an anointing which comes from the holy one (see 1 Jn 2:20 and 27) cannot be mistaken in belief ... through the entire people’s supernatural sense of the faith [*sensum fidei*] when ... it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals.<sup>49</sup>

After describing how this sense of the faith is found in the Church and in individual believers, living an authentic Christian life in accordance with and in harmony with Church teaching, it exhorts the Magisterium to listen to the voice of the *sensus fidelium*, ‘the living voice of the people of God’.<sup>50</sup> It is necessary, however, for discernment to be applied, to ensure that what the people say does actually correspond to the truth handed down by the Apostles. If resistance is encountered, on either side, a process of listening and perhaps reformulation is needed in order to ensure that the teaching is properly understood by the faithful. Here, the note of caution emerges, the presumption that, despite the earlier assertions that it is the whole people who come to a consensus about truth, in fact it is, in

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<sup>46</sup> ‘Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church’, § 6.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church’, § 28

<sup>48</sup> ‘Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church’, § 30

<sup>49</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, § 12; Austin Flannery, O.P. (ed.), *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996).

<sup>50</sup> ‘Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church’, § 77.



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the last analysis, only the holders of the apostolic succession (i.e. the Magisterium in this context), who can actually determine what is the ‘essential message’.<sup>51</sup> Notwithstanding this reservation, there is a section on ecumenism that allows that some aspects of the ‘Christian mystery’ have, on occasion, been given their proper importance outside the Catholic Church and that ‘ecumenical dialogue helps her to deepen and clarify her own understanding of the Gospel’.<sup>52</sup> It closes with a very firm statement that the prerequisites for a valid contribution to the consensus of faith are a full, active and conscious adherence to the life of the Church, including participation in the liturgy and sacraments, adherence to the Magisterium and the search for personal holiness. Public opinion and the results of surveys are not to be counted when determining the *sensus fidelium*.

In an article commenting on this document, Tina Beattie finds positive signs that some of the areas on which the majority of Catholics have long dissented from the Church’s teaching, especially relating to family life, may be eased in the light of these reflections and that these topics may have been problematic not because of poor teaching, as the document says, but because such teaching is ‘inauthentic’ as it ‘fails to resonate with the intuitive wisdom of the people of God in the context of their daily lives’.<sup>53</sup>

One of the major issues facing the world’s Catholics today, over one billion of them, is the lack of vocations to the ministerial priesthood and the consequent lack of access by many Catholics to the sacraments and the Mass. The congregations in the pews are exhorted to pray for vocations, to pay for campaigns and for seminaries to promote the calling to priesthood among young men. Parents are told to encourage their sons to consider the priestly life. But perhaps this is one area where the *sensus fidei* is being ignored. Without claiming that allowing ordination for women would solve the problem overnight, the contention of this thesis is that the grounds on which women are presently excluded from the Sacrament of Orders in the Catholic Church, based on arguments used by the scholastic theologians in the Middle Ages, cannot be sustained in the light of current knowledge of human psychology and biology. Nor are they supported by biblical scholarship or even tradition within the church, seen through the prism of mediaeval interpretation. Thus to open the possibility of ordination to all the baptised, no matter what their gender, would be both an act of justice and an act of faith. I have endeavoured to bring together here some of

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<sup>51</sup> ‘Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church’, § 80.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church’, § 86.

<sup>53</sup> Tina Beattie, ‘Let the Laity be Heard’, *The Tablet*, 16 August 2014, pp. 9–10.

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the objections to women's ordination namely: the use of language in establishing the male-as-norm and perpetuating the myths of women's inferiority; the impurity of contact with women and the blood taboo; the use of the spousal imagery in Church documents; and show how these are unsustainable when they are unfolded and examined closely for their roots in ancient traditions, faulty medical knowledge and fossilised habits of thought. It is time to accept that Christian baptism is truly the gateway to all the Sacraments.

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