

American Churches and “Women’s Place”

The recent large influx of women into the ranks of ordained clergy in American Protestant churches has not occurred in a vacuum, but rather as the latest episode in a continuing story of the ministry of women in those churches. The changing pattern of the place and activities of women in the churches may be seen as one of three parallel and interacting factors in the nation’s history: (1) the natural history of religious movements and institutions; (2) the peculiar opportunities and strains attendant upon white settlement and expansion, including the contrapuntal development of black slavery, native American subjugation, and a mentality of conquerors; and (3) processes of modernization.

The Life Cycle of Movements in American Religion

America’s denominational system is unique in that it has created, as a functional alternative to the established religions it rejected, a plurality of religious groups that can trumpet as the accepted religious wisdom, “Attend the church of your choice.” In societies with formally established religions, sectarian religion can provide a deviant choice, persecuted or denigrated, but a recognizable choice against the establishment. In America, however, many of the denominations of the informal establishment were once—and not too long ago to remember—despised sects. They have passed through the normal evolution of the new religious groups quickly and recognizably.

That process may be divided into three stages that are relevant here. The first, or charismatic stage is the one in which a new vision is brought forth by a prophet or by the kind of religious ferment in which prophecy may be expected to come from anyone touched by the spirit. Usually such movements come from groups in the society for whom the old visions have been less than satisfactory or to those who in one way

or another have been "disinherited" in the prevailing system. Their dissatisfaction with the patterns of the old system allow them to transcend established role definitions. Their guiding motto might well be verses from the prophet Joel, quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost, itself a prime example of the charismatic beginnings of that new sect that was to become the Christian church:

*And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even upon menservants and maidservants
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.
(Joel 2:28-29)*

This "charismatic" phase does not necessarily imply a direct relation with today's neo-pentecostals, nor should the appreciation of "gifts of the Spirit" be understood in terms only of "speaking in tongues" or other clearly identified gifts. Rather, what is implied is the freshness of a new movement which sees itself in direct contact with the divine, acting out a fresher mandate. In America as elsewhere, women have had an important place in new movements at their formative stage and have retained more formal leadership in those that continue to emphasize the importance of the "gifts of the spirit." From the beginning of their settlement in this country, for example, Quaker women had been active preachers not only at home but as itinerant speakers, a pattern they brought with them from England. Mother Ann Lee of the Shakers was considered a female messiah, and Mother Lucy Wright assumed leadership of the central Shaker ministry in 1796. Ellen White founded the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and led it for fifty years. Similarly, Mary Baker Eddy was not only founder but leader of Christian Science for a generation or more. Phoebe Palmer was only one of many women who led the Holiness movement, and has been called the "spiritual mother of sectarian bodies such as the Pilgrim Holiness Church and the Church of the Nazarene."¹ Aimee Semple McPherson was not only an internationally famous evangelist, but also founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. Alma White founded the Pillar of Fire Church. The list could be longer, but the point is clear: when a religious movement is at its charismatic phase, "women's place" is not an issue, though issues of "women's place" may have been involved in conditions that led to the formation of a new movement in the first place.

The second phase in the development of religious groups is one of consolidation and organization. It usually comes to the fore after the passing of the first generation of convert-founders. The second generation often lacks the immediate experience of the charismatic vision that impelled the first. It may also lack some of the impetus of disinheritance felt by the founders. This generation experiences the religion as an inherited tradition. If the general separation from the status system of the society remains strong, the group will probably feel it appropriate to continue to rely on the spirit and so prolong the charismatic phase. But if adherents of the movement become active participants in the status system of the wider society, organization and respectability become important goals; and the role definitions of the society at large become the natural order to which the group would grant religious legitimacy. The motto of this phase might well be Paul's caution to the Corinthians, particularly appropriate as it comes immediately after his remonstrances against women speaking in meeting: "So my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues, but all things should be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:39-40).

This stage possibly dominated the style of the Puritan founders who exercised such great influence over the shape of American religion, or at least those most aligned with the Separatist movement in England. The fires that had created that movement were now put to practical use in the establishment and organization of God's "New Israel in the New World." It was not time to be dreaming dreams or having visions; it was a time for putting them into action, for making all of life fit the envisioned order. It was important, also, that the new society be recognized by the rest of the world as civilized and orderly, deserving of respect in the halls of the nations. Women aspiring to prophecy were, at best, expelled. The ducking stool and witchcraft trials are potent reminders of the clarity with which those Puritan organizers defined "women's place"!

Similar processes have been repeated again and again as new sectarian groups have formed. In the earliest Baptist churches in the South, women were ordained as deaconesses, and some preached without ordination. In the eighteenth century, Separate Baptists allowed what has been described as "remarkable freedom of participation by women." After 1800, however, that freedom diminished as that body merged with the Regular Baptists. The organizational change, along with a growing number of members who were slaves, led to the restriction of leadership to white male members.² Similarly, in a study of one of the more recent movements to have reached the second phase, classical Pentecostalism, Barfoot and Sheppard have shown how the role of women ministers has been reduced from equality to more and more

limited functions. Even in Aimee Semple McPherson's Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the percentage of ordained women had declined from 67 percent at the time of her death in 1944 to 42 percent in 1978—a loss of 25 percent.³

Significantly, the organizations of classical Pentecostals, in which most of Barfoot and Sheppard's study was conducted, were not joined by the largest group of black Pentecostals. Their continuing exclusion from the American system of status and rewards has encouraged a greater emphasis on the charismatic and on women's right to prophesy in the black church. But in the white churches the division of the stages could hardly be more clear: in 1924, the last racial separation of the Pentecostal church had taken place; in 1931, the General Council of the Assemblies of God had passed a resolution denying women priestly functions in the church; and after 1932, no other major groups in the classical Pentecostal tradition were formed.⁴ The charismatic phase was over, consolidation could now begin, and that was the job of white males. Respectability demanded that women and blacks be put in their place. A similar process is already being traced in the neopentecostalism of the Catholic charismatic movement.⁵

The third phase of the development of a religious movement is that of maturity, of institutionalization, when it no longer must seek respectability, when its boundaries blur into the general social structure. No longer under the critical eye of some other "establishment," the church can now relax some of its standards and allow variations within its broader limits; it may now tolerate mildly prophetic expressions of social conscience, and attempt to lead rather than to adapt to the larger society. Its motto may be that advice offered to Timothy in the early church:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. (1 Tim. 2:1-2)

Mainline Protestantism seemed to have reached such a point, at least in the East, in the early years of the nineteenth century. The period from 1800 to 1860 has been characterized as a time of increasing "feminization" of American religion, when a loss of specific political power was accompanied by a kind of domestication of religion. Religious styles became more emotional, more accommodating, with greater emphasis on humility and Christ's sufferings. Women became more visible in the church as its organization became more complex.⁶

Within this period, women were particularly involved in the support

of the local congregation, studying in Bible societies, teaching in Sunday school classes, and working in local women's societies to support the congregation's program or charitable works. Ladies' Aid societies and Altar Guilds were primarily concerned with the affairs of the local congregations, but in many of their organizations, women made use of their separation from the organizational leadership to cross congregational and denominational boundaries to join other women on many projects.

One of the primary functions performed by women in the church during this period was Sunday school teaching. Though religious education was originally expected to take place in the home or under the direction of the clergy, Americans soon found a useful combination of public education and the Sunday school as a way of training not only the poor, but the children of church members as well. In the words of one historian of the movement:

Converted and eager to serve, women often were the natural choices to teach children. After all, was not the Sunday school an extension of the home, and had not mothers done much of the religious teaching there? The women, not allowed to assume official responsibilities, turned to the Sunday school and other benevolent societies as significant channels of their religious zeal. As teachers in the Sunday school they became indispensable to the new movement.⁷

That "new movement" grew to become an international force that challenged the power of denominations. Its simple creed and uniform lessons for all ages became problematic to theologians and denominational leaders, and yet the Sunday school was often the training ground out of which those very critics had come. By denying women full participation in the governance and thought of the church, church leaders had participated in their own frustration; for Sunday school teachers remained predominantly female, and the independent Sunday School Union was probably the most pervasive shaper of popular piety between its founding in 1824 and its peak in 1910.

This period of the nineteenth century also saw a new charismatic wave of the Second Great Awakening, when many new religious movements were founded, calling forth a new period of organization and consolidation after the Civil War. But the activities of women were not totally suppressed during this later period of consolidation. Rather, they were pushed to the boundaries of church structures, where tolerant males thought the women could be kept busy on unimportant projects, or into the new movements as prophets and leaders. But as

women expanded their charitable concerns from children and the local poor to home and foreign missions, they moved from local to regional and national associations out of their need for a broader base to support their causes. Again, women were not particularly constrained by denominational lines, and one of the first national societies was the interdenominational Woman's Union Missionary Society, formed in 1861. Between that time and the turn of the century, denominational missionary societies were formed by the women in nearly all mainline Protestant churches, most of them independently run.

The formation of the missionary movement represents a new religious vision at its charismatic phase. Denominational leaders may have been involved in consolidation and reorganization after the trauma of the Civil War, but the great evangelical thrust of the prewar years had left converted and committed Christians across the nation with a conviction that God wanted them personally to continue to spread the Good News to all lands. Some, both men and women, had joined new religious bodies still afire with such zeal. Others, particularly women who were prevented from exercising directly their new sense of Christian responsibility, stayed within traditional patterns that aroused little opposition, but transformed those patterns into national and international networks capable of doing the work they felt called to do. In the process, many of them developed organizational and managerial skills supposed to be beyond the abilities of the "weaker sex."

Much of the emphasis on foreign missions among women focused on the need to take the Gospel to women and children in societies whose social structures male missionaries could not penetrate. Also, while many men were caught up in the enthusiasm of the missionary movement, women had additional motivation. Many of the stories they heard told of forms of severe oppression against women in non-Christian cultures, and women sought to use the liberating word of the Gospel against foot binding, bride buying, and other such practices. In addition, the sacrificial giving of women to the missionary activities they sponsored gave them a feeling that they were "a real force in the world."⁸ In more than one denomination, men who were interested in supporting missions had to call upon women's groups to keep their projects afloat, and in turn women were able to exercise the power of their financial contributions to gain concessions from the all-male power structure of the denominations.⁹

The work of the Christian laywomen who supported foreign missions was also an important foundation of later movements for the ordination of women for service in home churches as well. The experience of women in the mission field gave them a sense not only of calling but

also of competence, not deliberately cultivated so much as a side effect of "radical obedience." Says one historian of Methodist women in the movement:

The lady missionary had metamorphosed. From her first shocked gaze at a foreign race, she pursued her ideal of service into alien hamlets and cities, bush and mountains, and discovered that she was capable of heroic labors.¹⁰

Not all women in missionary societies were agreed on the place of women preachers, but many of them were ready to push for clergy rights for women missionaries when it seemed likely that it would help the expansion of Christianity. And when these women returned on furlough or retired and became part of the local church, their ability and confidence as well as their wider range of experience opened doors of perception to women that made the notion of clergywomen far more accessible than it had been before.

National organizations for home missions tended to come somewhat more slowly than those for foreign missions. Part of the reason was that much of the charitable work could be done through local groups; part was the greater visibility of "meddling women" to those in structures that might be threatened by their meddling, often dominated by church leaders. The women themselves, particularly in the South, tended to prefer foreign missions support.¹¹ Much of the home mission emphasis of Northern women was developed around the need to provide services and education for slaves freed by the Civil War, and they were responsible for organizing many schools and services that have had a lasting impact on the region. Similarly, home mission support for Indians, mountain folk, and other isolated people was popular among the women. The home mission movement was also closely aligned with a number of reform movements, as we shall see shortly.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the charismatic phase of the missionary movement had passed in the mainline denominations, to be picked up and continued in later-developing sects. With the phase of organization and consolidation, the separate women's organizations were, one by one, absorbed into denominational structures. This process legitimated women's work in the larger organizations, and some of the women were even astute enough to have written into the merger the right to participate in decision-making bodies of the church. Disciples women, for example, retained 50 percent membership on the boards of trustees and managers of the United Christian Missionary Society.¹² Yet, even in that denomination, women have observed that reorganization has "organized them out." After forty-six years of serving as ex-

ecutives of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions (during which time they established homes and overseas ministries still in existence), and in more than fifty years following the reorganization, not one woman had served as top executive of any general or regional unit of the denomination.¹³

Their experience was not unique. Another denomination that has recently studied the participation of women in churchwide structures is the Lutheran Church in America. Overall, in 1980, 23.3 percent of elected positions and 24 percent of appointed ones on decision-making bodies of the denomination were held by women, up slightly over 1 percent from the figures in 1978. Women delegates to national conventions had risen in number to nearly 50 percent, but on denominational staff they were only 23 percent (almost double the 1978 figure, at that).¹⁴ The Lutheran case, then, points to an increase in the integration of women into denominational structures only recently accelerated, and most evident in lay rather than professional involvement. Again, it is a common pattern.

The third phase of the evolution of the mission movement is probably best symbolized by the further reorganization of local and denominational women's societies in the mid-twentieth century. At that time women had been given automatic membership in the women's societies along with their church membership, regardless of their desire for involvement in these activities, and without the expectation of any call to a specific form of service by the group.

The American Experience

One of the primary conditions influencing American church life has been the high level of mobility in this country. An important force behind both the Sunday school and the home missions movements was the combination of the constant arrival of new and unassimilated immigrants on the one hand, and the expansion westward into "un-churched" areas on the other.

Immigration offered a particular challenge to the Protestant establishment, as it sought to make God-fearing, clean-living, hard-working Americans out of new arrivals through the combined agencies of the public school and the Sunday school, both of which have become part of the realm of women's work. It also brought with it another model of church women's involvement. Roman Catholic nuns began their ministry in Canada in 1639, in New Orleans in 1727. From that time on, and particularly after the mid-nineteenth century's great influx of immigrants from Roman Catholic countries, they made their mark on the society as they established hospitals, schools, churches, and orphanages. As the women who taught in public schools and Sunday schools

created much of the shape of Protestant piety in several successive generations, so these sisters in the parochial schools molded popular Catholicism. Their record of service to the poor, the sick, and the outcast has made a lasting impression on the society, and the administration of their communities and services has given many of these women experiences denied others in less separate environments. Throughout the nineteenth century they worked with exceptional freedom within the areas of their ministry.¹⁵

Similarly, other societies with state churches and consequent strong ethnic identities produced women who came to America to minister to their people. German Lutheran deaconesses arrived in Philadelphia in 1884.¹⁶ Others soon followed. These immigrant patterns found some indigenous development. Episcopal deaconesses were "set apart" by local bishops in the United States as early as 1885, and such actions were authorized by the General Convention in 1889. The Methodist Episcopal Church recognized deaconesses in 1888, the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1902, and the Methodist Protestant Church in 1908. Deaconesses have also served Baptist churches, Congregational, Evangelical and Reformed, and Evangelical denominations, and are retained in the merged structure of the United Church of Christ. Their status in some denominations has been hotly debated, particularly in the Anglican tradition, where they were declared to have received Holy Orders by the 1920 Lambeth Conference, only to have the decision reversed in 1930.¹⁷

Given such a history, they are considered by some to be precursors of ordained women clergy. But the general definition of the deaconess in this country is that of a laywoman given special status in the church, who does full-time paid church work. Lutheran deaconesses, in addition, have been particularly likely to form communities that appear halfway between the style of Roman Catholic nuns and that of independent lay workers—a style similar to that of many Catholic sisters in this post-Vatican II era. In the United Methodist Church, most deaconesses serve in combined community service and congregational posts, in community centers, or in homes or schools of the denomination. In other denominations, the most common area of service is the hospital, though deaconesses serve in a wide range of activities. Their function often overlaps that of the home missionary. On the whole, the deaconess pattern has not gained widespread acceptance in the United States, probably because of the wider range of other options for American church women as compared with those in Europe, as well as a lack of clarity concerning the role.¹⁸

The home missions movement, on the other hand, was fertile ground for the involvement of American women and led to two forms of activ-

ity. In their desire to extend Christian service to the unfortunate, women became involved both in church institutions of service and in secular reform movements. It was out of their Christian concerns for black slaves that many women became involved in the abolition movement, and it was in response to not being heard in that movement that they launched the movement for women's rights that culminated in women's suffrage in 1918. It was out of their concern for the families of the poor that women built and staffed church-sponsored settlement houses and training schools. It was that same concern that launched them into the Women's Christian Temperance Union, resolved to excise the evil effects of "Demon Rum" from those suffering families.

The activities of Christian women, in church structures and out of them, were an integral part of the reform and progressive movements in post-Civil War United States. In some ways, their activities provided both the motivational seedbed and practical examples for those movements.

Another important way in which the particular history of the nation affected the involvement of women in the churches may be seen in the common history of their organizations. During the nation's formative period, women's "place" was generally in the home or the local congregation, and their primary specialized, though volunteer, involvement that of the Sunday school teacher. It is also true that during that period most attention was being given to local structures. The family was the primary economic, social, political, and educational unit; and the church, particularly as its professional leadership was so thinly spread in much of the continent, was heavily local and lay dominated. After the Civil War, as the task of nation building became a prime focus of the political and economic structures, national organizations of church women were a part of that process. One of their prime foci, foreign missions, laid the foundations of cultural expansion that brought in the twentieth century American rise to world leadership. Home missions paralleled the expansion of the nation along its western frontier, and the issues that brought about the Civil War and the problems of its aftermath were focuses of the expanding consciousness and benevolent action of women. Women's movements have affected the work of church women, not only through the interlinking of the two groups, but also as church reaction against such movements has occurred. For example, it is reported that Southern Baptist women were taking some positions of lay leadership in the churches until the women's movement began. Then they were put in their "place."¹⁹

The general loss of separate power by women in the reorganizations of the early twentieth century probably carried some of this negative freight along with the positive hope that the success of the movement in

attaining the vote for women heralded the time when "woman's place" would be the whole area of public life. The breadth of cultural influence during that period may be seen in the fact that, even among the Quakers—that group most out of step with much of the denominational establishment—the separate Women's Meetings were abolished, and women were incorporated into the general meetings at almost the same time that other reorganizations were bringing women's missionary societies into the general structure of other denominations.²⁰ It was during this same period as well that the freedom of Roman Catholic nuns was severely restricted by new Vatican rules.

This does not mean that all women's organizations were suppressed. The style, however, may have become more hidden during that period. An excellent example of this more subterranean style may be found in the Episcopal Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross, organized in 1884 by a group of friends led by Emily Malbone Morgan, seeking to allow an invalid friend to participate in their good works through a network of intercessory prayer. The organization has grown to a society of about six hundred women who share a common rule and sense of vocation, though they are scattered around the world and live in quite varied circumstances. Not an "order," the society counts as members women in many professions, married or single, who claim a search "to lead a Christian life walking in the way of the Cross, sharing in intercession, thanksgiving, and simplicity of life, with special concern for social justice, Christian unity, and the mission of the Church."²¹ While few people have heard of the Society, many of the leading women of the Episcopal Church, who have served as well in top positions of ecumenical agencies, are members. It includes some nuns, and now, a few priests who find in it social support for Christian activity in the society at large. Its style is indebted to religious orders, other church women's societies, and, in some ways, to organizations such as the Junior League. Its effect on the denomination or other structures will probably never be measurable; however, it should not be considered negligible. It is one of many such "pious societies."

The erosion of the expectation of full participation of women in church and society climaxed during the Cold War period following World War II, when women were firmly pushed—and often eagerly went—back into the home and the expanding local congregations of the suburbs. During this period there was a renaissance of a role for women in the church first made important by the early reformers—that of the minister's wife. For generations, churches had been able to assume that when they hired a pastor they also could expect to receive the services of his wife—at no salary, of course. Ministers' wives were expected to take the lead in the women's societies as well as in the educational

programs of many churches, and in addition to provide informal pastoral duties, particularly among the women and children of the congregation. In the post-World War II period, many women who felt called to serve the church in leadership roles chose to work for college and sometimes seminary degrees, then married classmates who would become the official ministers, while they provided a well-trained supportive function.

Yet it was inevitable that women who felt called in this way might also consider doing the formal jobs themselves. That period also saw the rise of pressure within many denominations to open up professional positions for women in the churches, including ordination, to clergy roles. The model on which this developed was considerably different from early forms of the pastorate for women, a factor that has been the unrecognized source of some tension within the ranks of contemporary clergywomen. The underlying influence that has created the difference is that of the process of modernization, and it is to that that we must now turn to understand this portion of the story of Protestant women in the denominational structure of the churches.

The Impact of Modernization

The use of the term "modernization" is taken from the definition of Peter Berger et al.²² of modernization as a process based on technological production and/or bureaucracy, characterized by rationality, specialization, large-scale organization, a compartmentalization of various facets of the life of the individual, and a moralized anonymity that is "no respecter of persons" but only of functions. The United States has been seen as the epitome of involvement in modernization, indeed its evangelist to the rest of the world. American Protestantism in particular has been seen as a modernizing religion. The effect of modernization on women and the definitions of "women's place" within the religious institution has been particularly interesting. At stake in modernization have been definitions of work, modes of organization, and styles of leadership.

The modernization of work has largely been one defined by Marx as the alienation of labor, an alienation that has proved as intractable in socialist countries as capitalist. In essence, it involves the growing externalization of work, the loss of a sense of ownership of one's own labor. One puts in time at tasks devised by others, the final product of which may not be visible to the worker. The reward is the paycheck, not the product of one's efforts. One's value and importance thus are lodged in the paycheck, since only functional definitions of worth are appropriate, and the worth of a function in modern society is measured by the price it can command. Modern work is specialized, a small

segment of a group effort, usually directed from outside the group. It is also arranged hierarchically, and a high status is granted the professional whose speciality is subject only to peer review.

Woman's work in the home has not been much touched by modernization. As homemaker, she is a generalist, not a specialist. Her reward is expected to be her perception of and participation in the happiness and welfare of her family; otherwise, her labor is unpaid. Patterns of community involvement for women have been similar. They have been largely volunteer, rewarded only by the knowledge of community betterment that has been accomplished. Traditional church work has also shared the premodern pattern, based either on demands of "radical obedience" to a transcendent call not recognized in the secular modern culture, or by the perception of "ladies" that their task in the society was one of cultural enrichment based on a traditional division of labor between the savage competition of men and the soft culture of women.

Yet the technological revolution of modernization did not leave women untouched. The new technologies freed them from much of the time-consuming drudgery of the household, and medical technology eliminated much of the risk of childbearing, along with the need to bear many children in order to have any survive. The more affluent women were, of course, the most affected by this process. It was these "ladies" who formed the mission societies and reforming crusades, these women who were free to serve and to seek avenues to act out their desire to make a difference in the world.

Even so, women who have opted for full-time church work have been largely judged by premodern values, working in generalized posts at subsistence wages on the assumption that they have other rewards. While this pattern is now more honored in those sectarian churches whose populations are less touched by modernization, it is instructive to see on the roster of missionaries of such denominations as the United Methodist a high percentage of women still listed as, simply, "missionary wife."

Organizational forms under modernization become increasingly complex and impersonal. Again, women have tended to form organizations less tinged with modernization. There is a lively contrast between the way women organized their missionary societies and the denominational boards formed by men. The women formed boards and committees that resembled (and often were) friendship groups engaged in a common task and personally supervised all the work under their care.²³ They established personal communications between missionaries and their supporters, giving the latter a sense of identification with the work which broadened their horizons and gave them an expanded sense of purpose.²⁴ While the men tended to publish official reports in large

and expensive books, women published magazines tracts and leaflets within the financial reach of their audiences.

Again, however, women also participated in forms of modernization. When modernization is accomplished primarily through technological production, as was the case in America, task-oriented organizations like those of the mission societies are the mode. Their societies, in their work, bore some interesting characteristics of entrepreneurship.

The sociologist Max Weber has defined three types of authority exercised by leaders: the traditional, the charismatic, and the rational-legal. *Traditional* authority rests "on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them"; *charismatic* authority rests "on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative pattern or order revealed or ordained by them"; and *rational-legal* authority rests on "a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands."²⁵ Modernization has been a process of moving toward the last of those three. We have already seen how women found places of leadership through charismatic channels. It is also evident that, while men held most of the traditional leadership posts in the churches, women came into a type of traditional leadership at the time when modernization accomplished the separation of the work place from home and community. Increasingly affluent life styles brought about by modernization were often dominated by women seeking higher status through more refined "manners." Women became the cultural mentors of men, and this often extended to religious styles as well. "Women's place" had extended to an increasingly separate private sphere of life in which were placed the home and the church. This cultural power of women "in their place" was only overthrown in the great thrust toward modernization immediately following World War II, when men took a quantum leap ahead in education with the help of the GI Bill, and women were uprooted from local communities and thrust into the new culture of suburbia where their traditional power was not legitimated. They have never since been able to build the base of status and influence held by the earlier "ladies." Instead, a bifurcation has taken place, with some women attempting to reactivate that model by emphasizing traditional women's roles, and others moving toward the roles more consistent with modern forms of leadership within the mold identified by Weber as rational-legal.

That model is best exemplified by the term "professionalization." It assumes specialization based on educational programs usually at the graduate level; yet, it also links up with definitions of the clergy role as a religious profession. Professional leadership by women in the

churches has taken five primary forms, not all fully within the modern definition of the professional—religious orders, deaconesses, missionaries, lay professionals, and ordained clergy.

In American Protestantism only the Episcopal Church has had traditional religious orders. Episcopal nuns do not comprise a very large group, but there are some eighteen separate orders in the United States, maintaining forty-five or more centers and houses. The earliest of these orders was founded in 1865; the latest, in 1974. Most, however, regardless of their date of origin, emphasize, in addition to rules of religious discipline, service to church and community that is well within traditional definitions of "women's place." Many are teaching orders, and others serve children through special programs such as camps and counseling. Some give particular emphasis to serving the poor, the elderly, or the underprivileged. Some provide nursing care. Most offer their facilities and support for retreats and conferences. Only a few offer community support for women engaged in work in the secular society. Of all groups of women giving full-time work to the church, these religious sisters appear to fall most fully into traditional roles for women; yet, they have in recent years engaged in programs to update the professional competence of their members. Their position in the church tends to be peripheral to its primary formal organization, defined instead by their direct devotion to God and the service of others.

Deaconesses represent the other more traditional form of full-time involvement of women in the work of the churches. Their close relationship to religious orders is evident in the history of at least one Episcopal order, the Sisterhood of the Good Shepherd, which disbanded in 1900, allowing remaining sisters to become deaconesses.²⁶ However, deaconess orders usually include women living independently, including many who are married and have families. To some extent, the evolution of the deaconess role provides a model of the changes in the role of women in the church that have been brought about by modernization. The diaconate, male or female, is based on the ideal of service, and deaconesses have been characterized by the full-time service they have offered within the church or to the society at large through agencies of the church. One of the most common activities of deaconesses has been that of nursing, a position early recognized as both traditional women's work and a profession, thus a bridge from the traditional to the modern.

The nearness of the role of deaconess to that of clergy was evident in the ambivalence of the Church of England in this matter, and continues to be reflected in its American Episcopal offshoot. Suzanne Hiatt, now an ordained Episcopal clergywoman, says of this issue:

Episcopal deaconesses are a peculiar case and cannot easily be compared with other Protestant deaconesses. In the Anglican church male deacons have always been considered clergy, indeed every priest has first been ordained a deacon and remains a deacon as well as a priest. The debate at the Lambeth Conference of 1920, 1930, and 1968 was over the issue of whether deaconesses were "within the diaconate" and therefore had received Holy Orders and were clergy. (1920 said yes; 1930 said no; 1968 said yes—local option). After Lambeth, 1968, the American Episcopal Church ruled in 1970 that deaconesses who had been "set apart with the laying on of hands" had in fact been ordained into the diaconate and were to be considered clergy. That same convention stated that henceforth women deacons were to meet the same educational standards as men deacons and be subject to the same canonical requirements for ordination. The great debate in the Episcopal Church in 1964 when Bishop James Pike allegedly "ordained" a woman was over this very point. All he did in fact was to declare a deaconess, the Rev. Phylliss Edwards, to be within the diaconate and to put her in charge of a congregation.

Originally, in the mid-nineteenth century, deaconesses were revived as a low church answer to the high church party's revival of religious orders for women. With a few exceptions, such as the Sisterhood of the Good Shepherd, deaconesses did not live in community but were attached to parishes, dioceses, and missionary stations (especially in Canada where they were an enormous factor in the missions of the Northwest Territory). In the American church, however, they have been considered clergy since 1970 and are subject to the same rules and have the same privileges as male deacons. All priests, male and female, are also deacons. The office of deaconess no longer exists.²⁷

While in detail Hiatt is correct in calling the Episcopal case unique, the United Methodist Church clergy shows its Anglican roots in its understanding of the deaconess role. A 1964 description of the role of deaconess in the Methodist Church defines the deaconess as:

A woman who has been led by the Holy Spirit to devote herself to Christ-like service under the direction of the church. This office entitles a woman to serve the Methodist Church through any of its agencies in any capacity not requiring full clergy rights.²⁸

Since at the time that definition was set out the Methodist Church was admitting women to full ordination for the ministry, it is evident that the position of deaconess was not seen as simply a substitute for the clergy position. In fact, at the present time, the United Methodist Church has instituted the Office of the Diaconal Minister as a professional position open to men and women alike, who occupy positions in the church such as the following: Director of Christian Education,

Associate in Christian Education, Church and Community Worker, Church Business Administrator or Associate, Director or Associate in Evangelism, Health and Welfare Worker, Director or Associate in Music. Again, the opening of Diaconal Ministry of this sort has not completely supplanted the position of Deaconess, but offers a slightly different position to the lay professional in the church, recognized by the denomination as necessary to the functioning of the churches, but not as part of the ordained clergy. The opposite end of the position is also blurred, since male and female clergy are first ordained deacon before they enter full elder's status as clergy and are considered ordained clergy at that diaconal stage.

The label "professional" among deaconesses is not limited to those in nursing or to the nearness of the position to that of clergy. Many deaconesses now are fully trained for a fairly wide range of professions, particularly in education and human services. In the Lutheran Church in America, deaconesses are required to meet current standards of their profession, in addition to taking required courses in theology and to serving as interns in a place of service related to their profession. They are scattered around the country; in 1978 the Lutheran Deaconess Association claimed:

Although deaconesses in active service and fully registered students together number only about one hundred, their representation is widespread. They can be found on the territory of 26 synods. They serve or are preparing to serve in many professions as nurses, social workers, directors of Christian education, librarians, teachers, counselors, parish secretaries, institutional administrators, rehabilitation therapists, recreational directors and in other professions as well. Except for some living in retirement centers, almost every deaconess is an actively participating member of a different local congregation.²⁹

Their work is placed under the direction of the denomination's Division for Professional Leadership. The Lutheran Deaconess conference defines itself as "the professional organization for deaconesses."

Yet as professionalism has increased, the number of deaconesses has declined. As one student of the movement has said:

Why have the numbers of deaconesses been dwindling in recent years? There seem to be many reasons: the competition of many different types of vocational opportunity for work, both church and secular, is a very important one. Deaconesses have tended to have relatively poor status as church workers. This, apparently, is partly because standards for training have tended to lag behind those for other professions in the Church; partly because neither as parish workers or social workers are they ordinarily

trained for highly specialized service; partly, no doubt, because even in the Church status tends to be associated with salary. Both Methodists and United Lutherans report much greater interest in deaconess work since educational standards have been raised.³⁰

In the long run, that optimistic prediction does not seem to have been accurate.

Another aspect of modernization which has had an effect on the status of deaconesses has been the principle of fairness that has been applied in modern societies, holding that separate positions for women are inappropriate. In some denominations, deaconesses have suffered the same sorts of assimilation into the wider structures of the church. We have already noted this assimilation in the establishment of the Office of Diaconal Ministry in the United Methodist Church, an office open to both women and men. In the Episcopal Church, also, the office of deaconess has been merged since 1970 into that of deacon, open to both women and men, though some deaconesses have continued to hold on to their separate designation.

There is considerable ambivalence here concerning modern values, both equality of the sexes and the nature of professionalism. The strain concerning the latter is evident in a recent statement of the Lutheran Deaconess Association:

[T]he church, the people of God, the persons in the pew, are beginning to realize that the church must always match demands for professional excellence with the need for constant pastoral concern.

The Deaconess Community has faced the same struggle to make clear that while its members are professional people, their service is motivated by deep concern for those they serve as "your servants, for Jesus' sake!" Compassion and competence must be linked together.³¹

A similar ambivalence can be found in the memoirs of many of the earliest women to achieve ordination in mainline denominations, particularly those who were missionaries. The reasons for their ordination were most often based in the work they were trying to do, rather than any demand of their own for equal status or professional recognition. Women serving in mission fields where strict separation was observed between the world of men and that of women and children were often able to make a convincing case for, and receive ordination by, churches that forbade anyone but clergy to baptize, serve communion, or perform other rites considered necessary to church life. Their motivations for having gone to the mission field were mixed, some simply following their husbands, others probably restless and feeling pinched by the limitations of the roles of women in local congregations of their time.³²

Many were undoubtedly following what they perceived to be a divine call. But it is probable that a large percentage of them accepted the general approach stated by a Southern Methodist bishop in a 1910 debate over lay rights for women in that denomination:

We have reason to believe that the demand for this kind of equality is not in harmony with the general sentiment of the women of our church, who, in the main, look upon their relation to the church in the light of duties to be performed rather than of rights to be claimed.³³

In those days it was expected of clergymen that they also would have similar priorities, though their actual behavior in church meetings sometimes cast doubt upon it.

Modern professionalism has always been in at least some tension with the definition of clergy roles, whether held by men or by women. The clerical role, in spite of common definitions to the contrary, is probably the oldest profession, and many of its definitions and expectations arise out of pre-modern social forms. Even where clergy roles were available to women, it is doubtful that most during the pre-World War II period were understood to be professional in the modern meaning of the term. Certainly the limitations put on many women serving churches as clergy in that time show that they were not treated as self-directed professionals by the denominations they served.

Nonetheless, the 1927 Congregational Yearbook listed one hundred women ministers in full standing, many serving as pastors of local congregations. There were some 125 to 150 women ministers in the Disciples denomination at that time, and the Cumberland Presbyterians had ordained approximately fifty women between 1918 and 1928. In 1928 there were seventeen women ministers in the Unitarian Church, and twenty-five in the United Brethren. The Methodist Episcopal Church in 1920 licensed women as local preachers; and in 1924 it admitted them to a "course of study" that opened to them ordination as local deacons, authorized to preach, conduct divine worship, solemnize matrimony, administer baptism, and assist an elder (full clergy rank) in administering the Lord's Supper. After two years they could be ordained local elders, authorized to administer communion in the local congregation only. By 1928, there were 112 local deacons and sixteen local elders in this body.³⁴

This stepping into professional roles tended to be, as the "local" designation of the Methodists shows, handled as positions of service to specific local congregations rather than in the full status of a minister able to serve in any pastoral appointment in the annual conference. The relation between these roles and those sought by modern women clergy

is somewhat tenuous, partly because of changing definitions of professionalism in the church, as well as the clear limitations of status within the church afforded these earlier church servants. In particular, insofar as denominational judicatories may be judged professional bodies, women's role in such levels of the system was generally restricted.

In some ways, at least, the process of professionalization is best traced in the stories of women occupying other positions in the church as lay professionals, particularly in the field of religious education. An excellent example is the development of the position of Director of Christian Education, and the way in which it was handled in such denominations as the Presbyterian. In 1938, that denomination approved the status of "Commissioned Church Worker," which gave women a direct tie to the presbyteries, though no vote in them. Early standards included graduation from high school, plus at least four years of study in approved schools, two years of which involved specific training for church workers, though no degree was required. By 1949, following trends in the rest of the society, the requirement was raised to include two years of specialized study in an accredited seminary, or a master's degree or its equivalent. The upgrading of the position according to educational standards, so typical of modern professionalism, brought into existence in 1950 a lower status position of "certified church worker" for those with only undergraduate training. Many persons serving as Directors of Christian Education, however, did not seek either to be commissioned or certified. There were no denomination-wide requirements that were binding on local churches.³⁵

The Methodist diaconate mentioned above is really a similar lay professional position to the Presbyterian Commissioned Church Workers. Lutherans also now have open to women and men the position of Certified Lay Professional, and other denominations likewise have on their staffs, in local congregations as well as in judicatory and national offices, numbers of lay persons, men and women, serving in professional capacities.

However, particularly at the local level, the status of lay professionals tends to be indeterminate, and the salary low. No one has better expressed the problem of the lay professional in the church than Harriet Prichard, in her reflections on the Nature of the Ministry report of the United Presbyterian Church in 1965:

The title "Commissioned Church Worker" means a lot of things to a lot of people. To some it means professional church educator, but to others it means "church drudge," "Sunday school bracero," and many other things not worth mentioning. The title "CCW" has been given to so many different functions in the church (Director of Music, Board Staff Executive,

teacher, doctor, nurse) that the idea of educator is not singular or unique at all when connected with this ecclesiastical jargon. People in the pews do not know what it is all about! The title is in limbo—it connotes neither “clergy” nor “laity.” It does not define the job being accomplished. It is a worthless specification, and The Report does well to ask for its abolishment. Certainly better titles are not difficult to discover. . . .

What is the “CCW” then? He or she is a competent educator (social worker, musician, or doctor) with special training in Bible and theology. The “CCW” in education has passed the Presbytery examination which allows him or her to engage in educational ministry (but many are engaged in this ministry who have not passed such an examination!) and he or she has been installed—but nothing more! There is no committee of Presbytery that continues to care about the CCW’s work, that helps him or her to continue his or her education or that protects him or her from malpractice in the local church. Besides this, the CCW is without vote in the Presbytery, the body that each one is required to serve faithfully. The CCW cannot enjoy a degree of understanding, for of all tasks in the church, his or hers is the most ill-defined.³⁶

Thus one factor in the growing demand for the ordination of women to full clergy status has been the need for a clarification of the status they hold in the modern church. In a society ever more specialized, in which job descriptions are expected to be explicit, professional roles for women in the church have been particularly frustrating in their generality. Yet clergy also occupy a role ill-defined by modern standards. Why should women seek this in exchange for other frustrating positions?

One reason is imbedded in another facet of the process of modernization, the division of social life into two increasingly separate spheres, the public and the private. It may be, in fact, that the division is becoming tripartite, with much of the educational institution in its own separate sphere. But what is most relevant here is the separation of church and family, as institutions of private life, from the economy and government as public institutions. In traditional societies, where the family had a more public dimension, the relegation of women to the home did not banish them from public life. Since World War II, however, and the subsequent dominance of patterns of suburban living and the role of the commuting worker, earlier trends making the sphere of the family almost invisible in the public life of the society have been exacerbated. The role of wife and mother, however honored in the tradition, is not given low status in the public dimension of life; it is given *no* status. It has no public dimension.

Much of the activity we have traced indicates the way in which church women have found a public dimension for their lives through

activities of the church or parachurch groups. Yet, as modern society has tried to deal with problems of pluralism and diversification that might create tension by defining as private opinion or "life style" such potential sources of conflict as religious ideologies, the place of the church has become more and more private as well. Particularly the local congregation has become "privatized," speaking mainly to issues of home, family, and life style, and for that reason it has been understood to have become "feminized." Yet, women have been eager participants in the more public aspects of the church, particularly through social service and missionary endeavor, even if they have had to form their own social organizations to do so. Those organizations have now largely been absorbed into the denominational structures at a time when women have become more directly involved in other public structures of the society. But on the whole, as we have seen in the cases of both "amateur" and professional laity, women have not found it easy to participate in the more public portions of contemporary church life, the decision-making bodies of the denominations. These, for the most part, have been the realm of the professional clergy. Thus one motivation for seeking ordination lies in women's desire to participate in the public facets of the only institution to which they have had natural access beyond the home.

In discussing the nonordained ministries of women in the Protestant churches we have implied the boundaries set on that work by policies refusing ordination to women. In most denominations, this has indeed been stated policy, while in others it has occurred in a *de facto* way, with the limitation on women's performance of clergy roles rooted in traditions that reach far back into western history. That tradition may now even be threatening male clergy as the "privatization" of the church in modern society puts them also more and more into what has been defined as "women's place."

This is particularly true of those clergy serving local congregations. In recent years, any public voice attributed to the churches has usually come from persons occupying staff positions in denominations or ecumenical organizations, or those in specialized roles such as the campus ministry, rather than from local pulpits. For some men, the idea of an increasing number of women in those local positions of leadership becomes an attack on their already shrinking sense of masculinity, which in modern society seems so tied to involvement in the public sphere of life. Women clergy may be not only a threat as competitors in a shrinking clergy job market, but also as a symbol of the diminishing status of the profession.

The status threat extends beyond clergy to the laity as well. Women clergy are between two antagonistic forces: one based in a traditional-

ism that denies women clergy status simply because that has been the tradition; and another based on modern understandings of public status and power that leads people to fear a loss of both in an institution led by women. Women can share this fear, and have been known to seek male leadership in order to give their organizations status.³⁷

Another fear that has affected women has been the threat posed by professional women invading the one institution in which the home-bound "amateur" has been able to have status. At a time when women are pressured to seek employment beyond the home, many for whom this message seems inappropriate or impossible to attain have found the church the one source of consolation. Having a woman in leadership in the congregation who is professionally trained and now has that kind of status, can be seen as a real threat.

Thus it has not been easy for churches to pull down barriers to women's ordination, nor is it easy to offer full acceptance to women in clergy roles once they have been ordained.

The fight for the ordination of women in the various denominations has been documented in many places. The particular details and timing in each denomination have been different. Some denominations can look back through some founding branches to one hundred or more years of the ordination of women. Some, like the Episcopal Church, still only ordain women in specific dioceses whose bishops favor the practice, and in the Roman Catholic Church the ordination of women is still a distant hope. But the modern model of the clergywomen, in most cases, is a fairly recent phenomenon, born out of social changes that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century.

Although the 1950s have been seen as a regressive decade in the area of women's roles in the society, it was also a decade during which the ordination of women to full clergy roles was opened in major denominations such as the Methodist and the Presbyterian. The great expansion of the churches during that decade created a demand for all available professional leadership. At that time professionalism developed its modern definition, as society at large began to accept the idea of leadership by a professional class. To be a professional meant that one had received specific training, usually at the graduate level, and had skills pertinent to a position somewhat autonomous yet intimately connected with the growing institutional bureaucracies of a modern society. The accent was on the training and the skills; it was inappropriate to refuse a professional position to anyone on the basis of any characteristics other than those. It was, then, a scandal to deny clergy positions to women whose training and ability had given them preparation equal to that of male clergy.

The push for professionalism led to the upgrading of the training for deaconesses and lay professionals in the church to a level nearly equal to that demanded of men who were becoming ordained clergy. It created a demand within the churches that opened theological seminaries to persons not planning on ordination, including women. It became evident that to refuse ordination to women simply on the basis of their sex was inappropriate in a modern system. Many of the churches that have dropped barriers to women's ordination in the past several decades have done so primarily for that reason.

However, the real rush of women to the seminaries and the pulpits did not occur when those first barriers were dropped. Rather, even in denominations in which that option had been open for a generation or longer, the rush occurred in the 1970s. Clearly there are other sociological factors at work. The timing, as well as a good deal of the rhetoric, suggests that the source of that change lies in the various movements of the mid-twentieth century, beginning with the civil rights movement and proceeding on through some of the campus causes of the 1960s and early 1970s, to current awareness of international unrest.

This observation is supported by trends in the ordination of women in denominations where it has been possible for the longest period of time. For example, there was a slow decline in the number of women ministers after World War II in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and in the American Baptist denomination. It was in the early 1970s that that trend was reversed among the Disciples. In 1973, guidelines were developed for the participation of women on denominational boards, and a consultant on women in ministry was hired.³⁸ Similar agencies, caucuses, and other denominational structures intended to serve as advocates for women in the system were developed in other denominations during that general period.

To some extent those movements of the 1970s were protests against modernization, even while those who participated accepted it and sought places in the bureaucracy for formerly disenfranchized persons. The protest was primarily in the rhetoric, which questioned the assumption that education and proficiency are the only apparent measures of human quality. In the worldview of these movements, the contribution of women may be particularly valuable, just because of their exclusion from the modernization process. This is exemplified in the words of one of the first women ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church:

As women enter into new ecclesiastical roles, with responsibilities not only for decision making and leadership in heretofore male arenas of activity, but also for new symbol-building, the present order will change. All

roles, those of both men and women, will change. Nothing will remain the same. We are agents of transformation. . . .

Our transforming power is not in our gender. . . . Our power lies in our having been born, nurtured, and acculturated into a corporate symbol: a symbol not necessarily of "femininity," but rather a symbol of difference. . . .

As a woman, together with my sisters, I offer a difference—a different ethic, derived from collective exclusion, which I will help build on behalf of other "outsiders"; a different visual, audible, sensory image I will help create; a different theology I will help shape; a different priesthood into which I have been ordained; indeed, a different Episcopal Church, as one manifestation of catholic Christendom.³⁹

There appear, then, to be at least three orientations of women leading to their desire to become ordained clergy. The first, which may be an element for all three but can also stand alone, is the traditional understanding of vocation, of the ministry as a "calling." In responding to their experience of God and the church, these women seek ordination simply because it is necessary for the performance of tasks they perceive to be God given. It may be easiest to see this among women to whom ordination is still closed—the many Roman Catholic women whose ministry has put them in positions of leadership in groups that, when they follow a church-encouraged tendency to celebrate their activities with the sacrament of communion, must call in an outsider, a stranger to the group, in order to have a priest authorized to perform the rite. They see this as a serious impediment to the ministry they are doing, a ministry they feel has been faithful to God's call.⁴⁰ Thus ordination is seen as the simple fulfillment of their work. Protestant women, who have for years in some denominations filled the pulpits of small churches or provided clergy services in out-of-the-way places where men could not be found or would not serve, have sought ordination for similar reasons. Many of them married, they have been willing to take advantage of a social system that allowed them the financial support of husbands, to take on ill-paid and part-time jobs that family bread winners could not afford to fill. Their professional training may have been as good as that of the men, but their understanding of the clergy role has been cast less within the modern definitions of professionalism than within traditional definitions of ministry that have carried over from premodern times.

The second orientation is that of modern professionalism, in which equality between the sexes is taken for granted among those in possession of equal training, and the role of ordained clergy considered appropriate to anyone who has the qualifications. Women coming to clergy

positions in this frame of reference understand that the primary concern is one of competence, and many church people testify to the quality of ministerial performance given by many women. In a society where not all occupations are equally open to women even yet, many extremely able women have entered church professions at a time when equally qualified men have chosen among a wider range of options. The church, then, may have more than its share of able women, not only because of this, but also because of its institutional closeness to the home, and so its greater accessibility to women.

This factor may become more important in future years, as more and more older women are entering the seminaries, seeking clergy positions as second careers. For many of these women, their first career was that of homemaker, and the seminary their choice for a second career, based on experience as lay leaders in the congregation and as trained volunteers in the community. The combination of experience and ability represented by these women, when supplemented by contemporary professional theological education, may prove a powerful force in the churches in the next few decades.

Their background puts them often in a different position from that of mostly younger women whose experience is rooted in a feminism that has arisen out of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s. This third orientation toward the church, which sees it as an agency of social transformation under the leadership of women, is also a particularly powerful one in a society where we seem to hear daily demands for social transformation, for some kind of new vision.

The agenda of women seeking ordination from this orientation includes not only competence in the performance of recognized tasks of ministry, but the development of new forms of speaking, acting, and relating. They are offended by the exclusiveness of the male language about God and humankind, common in the churches, as well as by hierarchical forms of theology and church polity. Their approach is radical, not so much in the image of "radical obedience" carried by early women clergy, as in their assessment that given structures are an impediment to the gospel they preach.

A primary question for the future may be the way in which these three orientations overlap as more and more women move into the field. Will the different agendas create conflict among women clergy? Or are they, in the field, coming to some sort of synthesis that takes elements of each to build something more than the sum of the three? What are the pressures and processes of the lives of clergywomen in the church that impact upon the fulfillment of their aspirations? In entering a male-dominated occupation, will women, as one opponent of

women's ordination gloomily predicted, "... conform to male images of priesthood and ministry, partly because of their anxiety to excel, and partly because of a desire to be accepted. They will thus be tempted to betray their vocation as women, and become carbon copies of men..."⁴¹ Or, will the influx of ordained women into church power structures, instead, revitalize these structures, in the more hopeful words of the following advocates of clergywomen, through better "yoking" of "traditional male values ... with traditional female values as the undergirding of the administrative and institutional life of the church"?⁴²

It may also be that the three orientations, though each may be stressed by different persons, tend to be present together for most. The stress may be more related to the circumstances in which women attempt to gain access to the roles to which they feel called. Barbara Brown Zikmund has noted a general pattern of the access of women to full participation in the church, which she finds falling into seven stages, and which may summarize much of what has been said here.

The first stage deals with the right of women to speak about matters of faith in the public realm, particularly in groups that include men. The second deals with the right of women to be elected and to take leadership positions in local churches. Third is the issue of female representation in upper levels of church organization, in conventions, on boards, and the like. The fourth step occurs when women seek to be recognized as valid pastoral leaders in the churches, without raising the question of ordination. The fifth is the step of ordination itself, rather than just licensing. The sixth step is that of obtaining the right to compete with men to serve the church in all ways open to men, including senior leadership in leading churches and positions of denominational leadership reserved for the ordained, such as bishop, conference minister, presbytery executive, and the like. Finally, the seventh step refers to the work of the theologian, to the right of women to think differently about the Christian faith itself.⁴³

While these steps generally come in sequence, the history of each denomination shows that there has been considerable variation in the time when each reached a particular stage. All nine of the denominations in this study have reached the fifth step, at least in part. Our investigation in this chapter, while recognizing the sequence, has been concerned primarily with the working of that stage, with overtones of movement toward the sixth. It is at the sixth stage, in particular, that the professional marginality referred to in Chapter I begins to be put behind, and it is with the movement into this stage that the remaining chapters are concerned.

Summary

This chapter has described how the position of women in church structures of sects and denominations, particularly the mainline Protestant denominations represented in this study, has changed over time. In part, changes in the status and visibility of women in churches have been in response to internal phases within the life cycle of religious movements. In the three phases described, women have been typically permitted freedom of expression and exercise of leadership in the first early phase of the movement, or "charismatic phase." However, as the movement becomes older and larger, it enters into its "consolidation and organization phase" in which women are absorbed into a system dominated by men and not allowed much autonomy of expression, organization, or decision making. Further development of the religious movement into a well-established denomination typically creates conditions favorable for the reemergence of women as visible leaders, as the denomination and its churches become more complex and less differentiated in structure, membership, and values from the general society.

Hence, factors which are external to the denomination per se but are characteristic of general societal trends are also of great importance to women's position within churches generally and these nine denominations in particular. Modernization and its accompanying processes of specialization, bureaucratization, and professionalization have had strong impacts on religious movements, organizations, and women's position within all church structures. The increased valuing of expertise led to the upgrading of the training for deaconesses and women lay professionals. The expansion of churches in these major Protestant denominations in the fifties created a demand for professional church workers, including well-trained women. Indeed, the rationality and democratization characteristic of modernization made it appear less right and rational to exclude any because of their sex from professional church work, even that requiring ordination.

Parallel changes have occurred in the kinds of motivations women themselves have for being ordained. This chapter described three primary motivations for ordination which, though distinct, may be combined within individual women in varying degrees: (1) a traditional motivation to seek ordination as fulfillment of a calling from God; (2) a professional motivation in which individual women seek ordination as legitimate church recognition that they have achieved certain high levels of competence which would fit them to minister to others in an official capacity; (3) a desire to attain official church standing to be agents of change in order to give women influence and power in the church and society equal to that of men.

In the next chapter we will examine early life experiences which prompted clergywomen to enter seminary as compared to those important for clergymen. In the fourth chapter we will give specific attention to how these different motivations for seeking ordination seem to have been distributed among contemporary women pastors.