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THE ROLE OF ORDAINED WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE HOLINESS CHURCH IN KENYA

A THESIS
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY
ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTERS OF ARTS

BY
DEBBIE WAIRIMU RATH

JULY 20, 1994

Advisor Approval
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PREFACE

In the New Testament, and in the introduction of the Christian dispensation, there are no exterior acts of ordination that were practiced by Christ. The calling, appointing and commissioning of the twelve Apostles was his personal act, accompanied with no symbolic act or ceremony. The word rendered in John 15:16 "Ordained," has the connotation of setting apart or placing aside. It is more spiritual than physical as in the Old Testament.

In the apostolic church, in the appointment of Mathias who was to replace Judas to the Apostleship, the principle issue seems to have centered in ascertaining whom the Lord had chosen.

The laying of hands was a public cognition of the person to the service irrespective of their status or gender. To the one who is ordained, it was/is a public statement of the personal willingness and positive response to the divine call.

According to Harper's Bible Dictionary, William Neil defines laying of hands as,

An act having several implications but always associated with the idea of blessing, or of identifying oneself with a person...in the presence of God.¹

He continues to say that even the laying hands of children by their parents, imparted blessings on them.

In the New Testament, laying on of hands was associated with

¹ Harpers Bible Dictionary,
baptism. William continues to say that in the act of healing, Jesus customarily laid hands on the sick as if to communicate God's blessings or to express his intimate sympathy. This then gives the laying on of hands a more Christological meaning than the one in the book of numbers. We can clearly notice the difference between the two kinds of laying on of hands.

Firstly, the Old Testament one was done exclusively for those who were to be involved in the ministry. It was done on particular kind of groups especially the levites. It was more a male issue than it was women's. Finally this particular kind of ministry had to at hand.

In every major ecclesiastical tradition, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant, it is recognized that there is an office of ministry and that ordination is the way in which one is inducted into that office. One becomes set apart for and enters upon the Christian ministry by way of ordination. It is important to note that there are different theological view points concerning ordination. Nancy Hardesty in her work "The Ordination Of Women" has this to say,

There is a concensus that ordination is (ordinarily) necessary if one is to function as a minister in Christ's church with the authority of one divinely called to the task ... ordination presupposes , in other words, that there is a theological dimension to one's entry into the christian ministry;one is called of God to the office; one does not simply choose to be a minister as one would choose to enter a profession. And this bears on the question of women's. The question is, "Does God call women, as he does men to be ministers in his church?"^2

Having clarified the fact that the ministry differs from the profession we then settle to the question. "If God calls both men and women, are there any evidences that we can find from the scriptures? And if we do, can we join hands with the great scholar of the twenties C.S.Lewis and say that, no one who opposes women's ordination is maintaining that women are less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning and whatever else seems necessary for the pastoral office. And just as he asks,

Should the church not draw on the huge reserves which could pour into the priesthood if women were here, as in so many professions, put on the same footing with men?\(^3\)

The new era of Jesus becomes a new age in which everything has to be viewed in the sympathy and love of Christ. He comes not as a law-breaker but as one who fulfills it. He practices the Old but gives freedom to all. By laying hands on all, Jesus breaks the wall of segregation, oppression and hatred in order that all may freely serve him.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

As indicated in the bibliography, vast works have been cited based on issue of women and ordination. There has been serious studies by both men and women scholars. Numerous debates by churches have been held, and books continue to come from the press on the subject of women and leadership in the church.

Yet, with all that has been written on this important issue, no one book or series has exhaustively covered the role of women in

\(^3\) Lewis C.S. God in The Dock.
the African churches. While this thesis was not designed to be exhaustive over the role of women in all of the African churches, it was planned to cover the area within the limitations. Hence the role of women in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, Paul’s view on women and leadership in the church, Jesus and women, and the role of women in the scripture Holiness Church.

The purpose of this thesis was to survey in depth the position of women in both the Old and the New testament, and more specifically to look in depth the position of women in Scripture Holiness Church.

The reason for this choice of topic was twofold. First, was the importance of realizing the universal ministry to all, Particularly the ministry of both teaching and preaching the gospel. Therefore, every Christian need to understand the Jewish treatment of women. Secondly, he needs to know Jesus treatment of women. and third, the role of women in the Scripture Holiness Church.

The limitations of the study should be carefully noted. Such biases as stressed by the feminists community will not be included. Careful study of what Paul meant in the so called "problem passages" has been done. Also some of the possible courses that has resulted into the oppression of women in the Scripture Holiness Church have been studied.

The survey has been drawn mainly from a personal study of different kinds of work written by different Scholars which have been listed in the Bibliography.
The order of the chapters is as follows. First, the role and treatment of women in the Old Testament has been discussed, this includes the Jewish culture and women. Second, the role of women in the New Testament. This is further subdivided into two major sections. The first section deals with Jesus and women. The second section deals with Paul and women. Third, the role of women in the Scripture Holiness Church.

In the final chapter a general summary of all that has been discussed has been given.

**STATEMENT OF THESIS**

The journey of women in the church from early history to today situation has been discussed by examining the past and clarifying scriptural perspectives particularly in both the New and the Old Testament, on issues relating to women and their position in the church.

This thesis is a call to women and men both the laity and clergy to come to grips with new directions in growth and maturity as the church equips itself for the years ahead.

It is an invitation for all to consider the ramifications of mutual submission and sacrifice to God.

The work does not seek for a special sphere or domain, nor does it seek to integrate women into the patriarchal society. The work formulates a "ground" on which both men and women fully participate in various ministries in the church. It is working out a theology that will enable all members of the church to minister freely. It is a moment of breaking the silence and becoming
WHY ORDINATION?

All Christian churches teach in one way or another that God must give his enabling Spirit to those on whom hands are laid in ordination if they are to have the inner spiritual strength to serve him effectively as ministers of the church.

Arguments against the ordination of women are indeed based on God's supposed blessings, holds the ecclesiastical power of guardianship over the woman, brings us to the matter of ordination. But scripture requires interpretation. Some of the "problem passages" in the scripture find redemption in other parts, in other words "scripture interprets scripture". In other words some of the Pauline difficulty passages which have been misinterpreted by other scholars find their redemption in other passages. Some in the Pauline epistles while others in the gospels. We will look at these passages later in the study.

Tradition is the reflection of the social pattern of those interpreters' view which have gained acceptance at a given moment in history. Some of the older traditions are underlooked, sometimes ignored as people adopt the new traditions. The Old Testament age of swords and clubs have elapsed. The present age in the New testament of the Spirit is at hand. An age of Spiritual influence.

Theologians have finally rediscovered of their biblical heritage, which is non-discriminative. They are now adopting a Jesus community which is both inclusive, non-hierarchical and egalitarian as they keep feeding from the "age of the spirit". As
When Christians forget the Spirit to whom they belong, the church tends simply to reflect the dominant culture, and the age old battle of the sexes erupts again. Women are seen as inferior beings who threaten the integrity of men, and eliminating them from the ecclesiastical circles is easier than the costly search for understanding and co-operation in the work of God.~

It needs to be clear that the bible is not a book of oppression for women or for anyone else, it has repeated proven to be an instrument of liberation, redemption for God’s people.

WHAT IS ORDINATION?

The Biblical usage of the word "ordain" has a connotation of setting apart to an order or office. Ordination signifies the appointment or designation of a person to a ministerial office.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew priests, Levites prophets and Kings were solemnly ordained for their several offices. A good example is in the book of numbers where Moses appoints Joshua as his successor.

So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hands on him."~

In the New Testament however, in the introduction of the Christian dispensation, there are no exterior acts of ordination that were practiced by Christ. The calling, appointing and commissioning of the twelve Apostles was his personal act, accompanied with no symbolic act or ceremony. The word rendered in

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4 Elsie Gibson, *When The Minister is a Woman.* p.12.

5 Ibid, Numbers 27:18
John 15:16 "Ordained", has the connotation of setting apart or placing aside. It is more spiritual than physical as in the Old Testament.

In the apostolic church, in the appointment of Mathias who was to replace Judas to the Apostleship, the principle issue seems to have centered in ascertaining whom the Lord had chosen.

The laying of hands was a public cognition of the person to the service irrespective of their status or gender. To the one who is ordained, it was/is a public statement of the personal willingness and positive response to the divine call.

The phrase "laying on of hands" also occurs in the book of Hebrews 6:2, but it is not entirely certain whether that refers to ordination, healing, or some other practices. The tremendous variety we see on ordination requirements and ceremonies today refer lack of reliable or information in depth in the old testament as well as in the new testament.

Gretchen Gaebelen Hull has this to say;

When confronted with legitimate questions about current ordination practices, many groups fall back on custom ...What we need to ask: Is our tradition in harmony with the scripture?  

Gretchen reminds us to be careful about Jesus strong warning about human tradition in Mark 7:6-13 and his indictment of the legalist in Matthew. She again advocates,  

In the new testament, ordination is not set forth as a prerequisite to proclamation or to the exercise of certain spiritual gifts like those of pastoring, teaching or

---

6 Hull, Graetchen Gaebelen, Equal to Serve, p. 215.
administration.\textsuperscript{7}

She also makes it clear that believers in apostolic times were not preoccupied with ordination.

According to Harper's Bible Dictionary, Laying hands is defined as,

An act having several implications but always associated with the idea of blessing, or of identifying oneself with a person...in the presence of God.

He continues to say that even the laying hands of children by their parents, imparted blessings on them.

In the New Testament, laying on of hands was associated with baptism. Harper continues to say that in the act of healing, Jesus customarily laid hands on the sick as if to communicate God's blessings or to express his intimate sympathy. This then gives the laying on of hands a more Christological meaning than the one in the book of numbers. We can clearly notice the difference between the two kinds of laying on of hands.

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\textsuperscript{7} Ibid, Loc cit
wall of segregation, oppression and hatred in order that all may freely serve him.

**WHAT IS MINISTRY?**

The word "ministry" was first used by the early christians for their many activities as christians; Interpretations by many scholars show that it is related to "deacon". The priesthood is one ministry with it's limited roles and goals. The two should be confused. Priesthood is part of the ministry.

The christian community has two sides, neither of which can be neglected; One nourishes the local community through preaching the word, healing or even celebrating the sacraments. But the community (which infact involves both men and women) has a missionary call proclaiming the presence and the coming Kingdom. The ministry then has a wider globe and a larger task. And just as hat Robert hayes states;

> Yet, ministers need not be alone' for infact ministry is not simply the task for ordained, celibate men alone, but, first, the part of the life of the entire community challenging each member.\(^8\)

For the apostle Paul, ministry is defined as 'Unity in the body of Christ"; This means the solidarity which can endure the strain of the differences of the gifts and different weakness of the different members.

> And to some, his gift was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers ;so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ. In this way we are all to come to unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the son of God , until we become the perfect man , fully

\(^8\) Hayes, Roberts, *Women and Orders*, p.77.
mature with the fullness of Christ himself.\textsuperscript{9}

Paul makes a clear conclusion on the major issue here. That the breakthrough in 2 Timothy is accomplished. He brings the modern church into the revelation of what Jesus intended when he called into the existence the "ecclesia".

\textbf{WHY ORDINATION?}

Arguments against the ordination of women are indeed based upon the scripture and tradition. But scripture requires interpretation. Some of the "problem passages" in the scripture find redemption in other parts, in other word "scripture interprets scripture". In other words some of the Pauline difficulty passages which have been misinterpreted by other scholars find their redemption in other passages. Some in the Pauline epistles while others in the gospels. We will look at these passages later in the study.

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Theologians have finally rediscovered of their biblical heritage, which is non-discriminative. They are now adopting a Jesus community which is both inclusive, non-hierarchical and egalitarian as they keep feeding from the "age of the spirit". As

\textsuperscript{9} Bible, N.I.V.Eph. 4:11
Elsie Gibson work states,

When Christians forget the Spirit to whom they belong, the church tends simply to reflect the dominant culture, and the age-old battle of the sexes erupts again. Women are seen as inferior beings who threaten the integrity of men, and eliminating them from the ecclesiastical circles is easier than the costly search for understanding and co-operation in the work of God.\(^\text{10}\)

It needs to be clear that the bible is not a book of oppression for women or for anyone-else, it has repeated proven to be an instrument of liberation, redemption for God's people.

**CHURCH HISTORY AND THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN**

Credit is always given to the men in and outside the church, who have been able to recognize the good tasks that can be offered by women. They have also helped in their search for spiritual growth.

Church history, introduces to the age when the political developments made it necessary for the early Roman Empire to adopt Christianity. An influx of the masses joined the church. The immediate result was secularism. Church standards or morals were so diluted that monasticism sprang up to preserve the purity of the church.

Several women have been presented as having participated in some of the activities in the monasteries. Elsie, states,

...Hildah, opened her first monastery...she died in 680 while urging her people to preserve harmony in the church.\(^\text{11}\)

\[\text{10} \text{ Gibson Elsie, *When The Minister is a Woman*, p. 12.}\]

\[\text{11} \text{ Ibid, p.13.}\]
She later lists a number of other faithful women who participated in the missionary work, and in reform movements affecting the development of Christian institutions.

Catherine of Siena, a Dominican tertiary who lived in the fourteenth century, heard God's call to both active and contemplation...the period is remembered in church history for the location of the papacy at Avignon just prior to the struggle of the popes for office. A woman of fine intelligence and disciplined in prayer, Catherine was influential with two popes, Gregory XI and Urban VI.\(^2\)

Before the reformation by Luther, there were several women who are known to have tried to reform the church. A good example is Teresa of Avila who is referred to as Martin Luther's contemporary.

Moving to the protestant realm, women felt summoned to public ministry, even though they seemed not to be aware of what was happening. Anne Hutchinson, who was a daughter of an Anglican clergyman held small study group in her home as she helped them understand the King James Version of the bible. We should not leave behind Catherine Booth, the wife of the "Salvation Army" leader William Booth. Just like her husband, she became a great evangelist.

This reveals the fact that, even though women's work, traditionally was usually not defined as ministry, it was ministry. Since the early Church their work was not officed; even those who had taken religious vows. The great evidences left behind shows how rich they built the traditions.

The ministry of women has been varied, suited both to their individual gifts and charisma, and responsive to a

particular needs of the human community in a given time and place.

"The ministry of women have been marked by those virtues foolish to men; weakness, poverty, and powerlessness."\textsuperscript{13}

Due to the past struggles as they tried to get into the office, women have finally come to the conclusion that office is not the ministry. Their strive is to combine the past traditions with the office. By performing various ministries, such as healing, comforting, and prophesying. This then gives a clue that even in the history of the church women have never been left behind in the ministry.

\textsuperscript{13} Heyers Robert J. \textit{Women and Orders}. p. 71
Before we judge the Old testament so harshly as some in the feminist society has done, we need to see them over against the surrounding cultures. It is true that God gave Israel the law. This he did so he could use this nation as his instrument of revelation to the world. Some of the similarities that exist between the Old Testament law and the New Testament law, is because God issued the law in the midst of a culture that was male oriented (to the extreme). However as time went on these laws were distorted due to human weakness.

Besides the new culture of God’s people that was to be adopted slowly as they obediently followed the commands, was the original Hebrew culture formulated by man himself. The order of the sequence was to have the father as the legal head of the household. Every rule in the house was administered by the man in the house. Wives were under the authority of their husbands. In other words women were viewed as slaves if not possessions.

Wives were regarded in both palestine and Greece as the property of their husbands, and they were expected to avoid bringing dishonor on their husbands. A woman need to exercise particular care that she not give the appearance of being an adulteress or a prostitute. To protect herself and her husband from scandal, she exercised discretion in appearance and speech. She neither spoke in public, nor appeared outside her home unless covered with a veil.⁴¹

Wives were seen as a means of obtaining children. In other words...

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⁴¹ Hewitt Emily, Women Priests. Yes Or No?, p.48
cases wives were more as their husbands nursemaids. Proverbs 31 reveals the wife as a surbodinate to their husbands and generally of lower status, child bearers or as homemakers.

A woman was exempt from the state demands of the law. It was not obligatory on her to attend the sacred feasts and festivals. Women and children were classed together.

Womanhood was more associated with Eve’s sinfulness, if not her weakness. A reference quotation of Genesis in I Timothy 2:13 "And Adam was not deceived," is verse that openly declares that women so easily succumb to sin. A premise which affected the Jewish culture and changed to this today.

Hebrew woman since the old testament times were excluded from "Israel". They were completely cut off from the rituals which were a sign of who was or was not a member of God’s people. The question at hand is "Was God ignorant about the second sex?"

The following examples of great women in the Old testament serves as an answer to our questions.

The book of Genesis opens up with the creation of man. The very fact that woman was created in Genesis chapter 2, and that she was removed from the man’s rib has brought about lot of controversies.

Most scholars would argue that, God showed the ultimate example that should be followed in the church. He is the author of surbodination of women. It is such a crucial passage that even saint Paul, in the New testament quotes it. And for so many centuries, this has acted as the capstone to close the door for

20
women not to participate in the ministry.

We may have to say that we do not know the exact reason that was in the author’s mind in the story of both man and woman. However the truth of the matter is, after both are created, God blesses them and after the fall both are cursed. Without any limitations the divine law instituted was for both to be companions, to be instruments that God could use to propagate the gospel. They were to be co-workers to carry on the work God had begun.

EXAMPLES OF THE GREAT WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

According to the Hebrew nation in the Old testament, the position of women was in marked contrast with her status in surrounding heathen nation. The divine law given to the children of Israel demanded children to obey their fathers and mothers.

In order to be able to have a better understanding of the Old testament women, we will refer to some of them who were used of God to carry out his ministry.

Socially, both men and women feasted together without any restrictions. And just as their male counterparts, women also shared in the sacred meals and great animal feasts. Women could also appear in courts. (Genesis 12:14).

There are many questions which would be asked by a twentieth century scholar concerning the place of women in the Old Testament time socially. The law of Hammurabi gives us a clue. In his work "man and woman in Biblical perspective", James Hurley has this to say from the correction of Hammurabi’s legal scribe,
there does seem to have been some sheltering of women and the laws do presume that most women who inherit will ask either a brother or an appointed manager to handle their estate, indicating perhaps that women were not prepared to handle such things...we may assume that while careful measures were to guard the women from attack and from shame, they necessarily involved in various social and commercial activities which would take them outside the home.\textsuperscript{15}

He continues to express the fact the laws make it clear that there was a hierarchy of priestesses and other devoted women which ranged from loyalties to the daughters of poor free men. It would not be wrong to conclude that the law or code of Hammurabi reveals a culture in which women enjoyed a greater degree of liberty and legal privilege.

Genesis chapter one and two, expresses the source of human dignity. It is true that human dignity stems from the fact that mankind is God's image. The basic Old Testament view of men and women, therefore understands both to be the image of God and to be called to show or portray that image in their daily lives

Unlike saint Paul, further issues must be taken into account as we look at the Old Testament we should be careful. Special care must be taken in comparing different portions of the text. We should carefully consider the cultural setting, ranging from the nomadic life by Abraham to the wealthy urban monarchy of Solomon and even to the dire poverty of the city of Jerusalem, at the return of the exiled Jews from Babylon.

We should not ignore the prophets and the poor complains of the failures of those in numerous provisions to safeguard those who

\textsuperscript{15} Hurley James, \textit{Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective}, p. 25.
ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN AS THEY IMAGED GOD IN THE NATION OF ISRAEL

Israel’s nation was patriarchal and centered around the tribe or clan. All the members were tied together as they were all Abraham’s children. All tribes trace their relationships back through their patriarchal fathers. Quite often the phrase "fathers house" is mentioned in the old testament. (1 Samuel 9:20-21).

Men and women grew up in a nation which thought itself as extended family. A person did not think of him or her as an individual, but as so and so, of the tribe of so and so. With this kind of frame work it would not be a surprise to find that marriages were arranged by the father for his sons and daughters.

Besides the centrality of marriage, the role of women as mothers in the Old Testament times was not all that was permitted them. Genesis 16:6 expresses the tasks of wives of nomads who ran whatever size of household their husbands had, evidently managing their domestic servants.

The book of Proverbs 31 presents a very different view of a woman an ideal woman. This ideal woman is a woman who is valuable to her husband. he perceives her as very capable and has confidence in her. His confidence in her proves well founded as she makes a fine profit from her business ventures. In the running of her prosperous household she is involved in the manufacture of clothing for her family and servants at both the level of purchase
and of sewing (31;13-14, 19, 21-22). She also supervises the servants which bring blessing and honor to her husband and to herself (31;23-31).

The book of Proverbs gives us a better insight of an Old Testament woman who goes beyond the confines of her private dwelling. A woman who yearns and gets involved with what is beyond her "described position" house-maker.

The participation of women went beyond the hearing and obeying of the law generally. They were free to approach God in prayer. In return, God responds to their prayers and appears to them (1 Sam.1;10; -Hannah, Gen.25;22; -Rebekah. As we go along in the Old Testament we find out that women also participated in public worship.

The bronze basin used in Moses' tabernacle was made from the mirrors of the women "who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting" (Exo. 38;8). Basing our argument on the book of Exodus, it is clear that women also participated in the worship of God by singing.

Women as well as men were eligible to self renouncing vow of Nazarite.' In numbers 6;2, The Lord speaks to Moses, 

Speak to the Israelites and say to them, If a man or woman wants to make a special vow of separation to the Lord as Nazarite...16

(nazarites were a people who were set aside to be used of God in special ministries for example Samson in Judges 13;7.)

16 iBID, P. 52
Most women in the old testament are remembered by their faith in prayer. There is no person who surpassed Hannah in intelligence, beauty and fervor of religious devotion. Notice women of great counsel like Huldah. In 2 Chronicles 34:22, Hilkiah and those the king had sent with him went to speak to the prophetess Huldah.

In the book of Judges, the courage, faith in God and commitment is well portrayed by Deborah. She is a prophetess and manifestly speaks for God. She is a judge to whom Israelites willingly submit, many travelling some distance to reach her. She plays the role of a wife, a judge and a counselor. As a result, of her courage and willingness to obey God, the nation of Israel wins the battle. under the leadership of a woman.

Very well, I will go with you...the honor will not be yours because the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.17

Queen Esther in the book of Esther was raised up when all seemed hopeless to the people of God. God's own providence had brought her to the kingdom for "just such a time as this". (Esther 4:14). She devised a tremendous plan to save the Jewish nation. God gave her both the fortitude and the wisdom to execute the plan. The tremendous result were, many gentiles turned to faith in the true and living God. (Esther 8:17)

Let us also consider a question which God asked the prophet Micah,

What does the Lord require of thee, but to do justice,

to love mercy and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).  
Prior to this the Lord asks,

Have I not sent before thee Moses and Aaron and Miriam to lead thee.  

Here God openly reveals his Universality even when it comes to "sending off" His servants, He sends two men and a woman to lead his children from bondage. Can we say then that God is mindful of the gift of the leadership of Miriam?. What have we done today with our Miriams; and with the gifts of so many other talented women?. Have we allowed them to minister or have they been turned away.

The Old Testament does not offer many examples of women holding civil offices. When it does however, it does not show any discrimination. It appears to be accepted that God raised up these women to refute the fact that "A woman's place is in the home".

It would not be wrong to say that social customs of the day probably militated against women holding positions as authorities. The Old Testament lacks any criticism of queen Athalia for ruling as a female monarch.

**CONCLUSION**

After considering the role of women in Israel, we must note that their exclusion from the priesthood had nothing to do with their being the second sex. Infact it was only whole Aaronic males who were unblemished who qualified to priesthood. All the blemished Aaronic males, and all other males were excluded. We also notice

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that the appointment of representatives male leaders in priestly office was not a consistent thing in Israel. Time to time they would appoint a woman to be their leader.

More so, in all the Old Testament, there was no suggestion that women were in fact inferior beings. Hence the evidences at hand does not teach women’s intrinsic inferiority but rather a situational subordination. As we continue on to the New Testament we shall experience the changes between the Old Testament period and the New Testament time of Christ. This will also help us to deal with Paul’s references to the old testament especially the book of Genesis as his footstool for forbidding women to take any responsibilities in the church.
CHAPTER III
THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

JEWSH TREATMENT OF WOMEN:

Just as the old testament circles around a patriarchal society, the New testament circles around Judaism. This kind of religion which was particularly a Jewish religion, was concerned about the relationships of single persons and worked to minimize contact between persons of opposite sex.

Within the Jewish society there was no question of authority. The husband was in charge. On the other hand every woman was under her father's authority. It is very clear that the husband was the final authority in the home. Her place was in the home. In worship, women were restricted to the court of Gentiles. They had very little freedom in the synagogue than in the temple (Synagogues were the local places of prayer and worship for the Jewish communities.)

The presence of women, slaves or manors was of no significance for the quorum. This rule explains why Paul could not go to a synagogue at Philippi but rather went to the "place of prayer" by the river, where he met with the women who gathered there.28

The rule underlying the learning and teaching of women in Jewish community was derived from the book of Deuteronomy 31:10-13. a law that required children also to be included. It is noted that rules based on separation of sexes were emitted by the rabbis to such a degree that women were relegated to a position of inferiority. The rabbis also talked frequently of women in a

28 Hurley James, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective, p. 71
depreciating manner.

JESUS’ TREATMENT OF WOMEN

The main purpose of Jesus’ ministry and teaching is summarized by the church as the manifestation of his Kingdom. A kingdom that has not come in its final state. The arrival of his kingdom leads to a situation where the unfortunate, the poor, the rejected find hope. Jesus teaching, which expresses the nature of his kingdom, represents a break from that of Judaism. It establishes new rules which are even more closer to the old testament one than to the judaism. It also updates some of the old rules that seemed to destructive than constructive. For our point of view the rule concerning the place of the poor and women in focus.

We cannot discuss the role of women in the new testament without considering Paul and Jesus. This is because, present arguments on whether women should be ordained or not is based on Paul’s argument. On the other hand, arguments for the ordination of women is based on how Jesus viewed the women. In order to be able to draw a clear distinction between the two we will look on each one of these in depth.

Scholars’ research indicate that Jesus’ personal attitude toward womankind was not summarized by him in any formal statement. It is not so much in what he said, as how he related to them. He rather taught His doctrine of women in a much more forceful manner than mere words. He appreciated the spiritual and intellectual capabilities of women, and he freely accepted services from them.

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and intimate contact with them.

Saint John presents Jesus’ encounter with a woman who was both an outcast, immoral as well as a woman (Jn.4:5-30). At the well Jesus initiates a conversation with the Samaritan woman with the purpose of bringing her to the good news of the kingdom. The conversation between this woman and Jesus is considered theologically profound. She becomes aware of her past sins, keeps her relationship with him secret and finally becomes the first witness to her people.

In Matthew, Jesus’ willingness to meet with other women is well presented as he talks to the canaanite woman. The encounter comes right after the episode with the pharisees who were more concerned about the outward cleanliness than the inward cleanliness. The conversation with this woman drives his point home. The disciples and the pharisees wanted Jesus to dismiss this woman on the ground that both the samaritans and the canaanites were considered unclean. In response to them, Jesus listens to her and responds to her persistence.

In the house of Simon, Luke reports an incident in which a woman who had been a sinner repents of her sins. She enters in Simons house and anoints Jesus’ feet. This woman goes out her way and offers the hospitality that Simon had given him. This could be referred to as a ministry. Jesus main reaction to this, is that he allows her to anoint him irrespective of her sex.

The new gospel writer refer and presents women as people. In a society where women were put in the same class with children and
slaves. Luke especially took pain to include as many women as he could in the ministry of women. It is very important to note that this is the beginning of acknowledging women as eligible to the kingdom as well. It would be important to notice that, the term ordination was not as crucial as today. It is a period where they did not have offices as they do today.

It is the first time that women have a legitimate place among the hearers of Jesus. It is the first time that they are considered as members of the kingdom. In fact it is the very first time that they are sent out with a message. Besides it is the first time that they proclaim the gospel message freely to men.

SAINT PAUL AND WOMEN

As we begin to investigate the formal ministries of the early church from the evidence of it’s practice, it is also important to note that the New Testament does not give the reader the directory for the church order, or even formal offices. Some of the words used by the apostle Paul such as, apostolos, diakonos, presbyteros, may be descriptive of the formal office.

Even though Paul is often quoted by our churches today, especially at the question of whether women should hold any offices as men, we find in him a man who promoted women a great deal in his ministry. There were both women deacons, and prophets in his time. Phoebe who is mentioned quite a few times by Paul is thought to have been a diakaonos.

Paul’s ministry circles around a strict Jewish society that carefully observed and kept the law of Moses, a society whose
spirituality and right living was determined by how serious they practiced the law.

Scholars, refer to some of Paul passages as "difficult passages" or "problem passages". (They are referred to as problem passages as they seem to contradict Jesus' teachings. Besides they can only be understood by studying other passages). What are these problem passages? There are quite a number of them that seem to address to different problems. However due to the nature of this study will focus mainly on two of these; I Timothy 2:8-15, 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33-36.

1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15

Translations and interpretations are crucial. Proper interpretation of a passage can bring redemption. Hermeneutically, clearer texts should interpret less clear texts and any viewpoint that is claimed to be "biblical" should be inclusive of all the texts that speak to that particular issue. Most churches too which have not considered the deep meaning of such passages have strongly slammed the door of ministry to women. Let us consider what Paul really meant,

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. v.14, And Adam was not deceived but it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. v. 15, But women will be saved through childbearing -if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.21

The motives for the Pauline command to keep silence must be distinguished from the reason for it. The reference to custom and

21 1 Bible, N.I.V. I Timothy 2:8-15.
tradition in other communities and the abpruteness of the action in I Cor 14:36 clearly shows that the apostle Paul is taking a polemical stand against a bad custom which had grown up in corinth and which in his own eyes were a matter of principle.

Paul seemed to have been more concerned about the heathenness surrounding the new churches from getting some entertainment in his newly found churches.

In their work, "Asbury Bible Commentary", Eugene E. Carpenter and Wayne McCown says,

This section (I Timothy 2;II-15) and I Corinthians 11;2-16, represents directions given to a city dominated by a female deity. In Ephesus she was known as artemis or Diana, an earth mother goddess. It seems clear that in these cultures that Christian women felt so liberated that they needed stricter boundaries to guide their new freedom than did their counterparts in Galatia. Consequently, it’s questionable whether this warning was universal.\(^{22}\)

This particular verse is later redeemed by Galatians 3;28. Paul here shows that women are fully redeemed, they are equal ambassadors for Christ. He later makes it clear that in Christ there is no male or female. In 2 Corinthians 5;7, he states that in Christ all believers are now new.

The new International Biblical Commentary, views this verse differently.

Gordon D. Fee. and W. Ward Gasque, that the Greek Text uses singular. The meaning of this verse from verse five until the middle of verse 15 is to 'learn' not in silence or without speaking but in a "quiet demeanor" as it is later given in 1 Cor

\(^{22}\) Eugene and Wayne McCown, *Asbury Bible Commentary*, p. 1116
By saying "I am not permitting", Paul focuses particularly on the problem at Ephesus. The "I want" in verse 8 lacks any sense of Universal imperative for all situations. This is not to say that he does not see his word as authoritative, but that it simply lacks the thrust of a universal imperative.

It would not be wrong to presume that the religious elements that existed in Ephesus and it's environs may have played a part in the heresies attacked in the pastorals and particularly in the prohibition against women teaching in the church.

Turning to verses 13 and 14 Gordon continues to enlighten the reader of this passages by adding this,

"...The deception of Eve" had a long history of speculative interpretation in Judaism, seen sometimes as sexual seduction on the part of the serpent. Even if Paul knew these traditions he is not here alluding to them. He is only interested in the fact of her deception, as a vital illustration of the current problem."

According to Paul, Eve is responsible for the fall and woman is therefore in a subordinate position to man even in our new life in Christ. Genesis divides the blame and the burdens of the fall between Adam and Eve, (Genesis 3:16-19), but this point has apparently eluded Paul. He emphasizes on the subjugation of women falls short of conveying the gospel message of forgiveness of sins and a new man-woman relationship 'in Christ'. This leaves so many scholars with the conclusion that women are therefore saved through childbirth.

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23 Gordon D Fee, W Ward Gasque New International Bible Commentary, p.71
This idea presents some difficulties because of its apparent inconsistency with other comments in other Pauline letters and also with the New Testament. This then gives us an immediate conclusion. To suggest that women may not be priests or even be in the ministry because they are all mothers is in itself an anti-messianic regression. The theological basis for these limitations cannot be maintained today. We are called instead to implement the new relationship between men and women that we have "in Christ".

While we do not question the sincerity of the scholars as well as church people who offer arguments of the opposition of ordaining women, we should go back to the freedom given by the death and resurrection of Christ. The kind of freedom that frees us from the powers and principalities of the evil forces beyond our control which, wholly without our permission, clamor to govern our lives. Refuting C.S. Lewis statement that "when we mix women and religion we are dealing with the live and awful shadows of realities utterly beyond our control."

The fundamental issue in all the deliberations about the ordination of women to the priesthood is the willingness of the church to test the work of the Holy Spirit. And just as Paul K. Jewett concludes in his essay to the response to the argument concerning the ordination of women,

In truth, the argument against women ministers taken from 'male weakness', disarming as it may seem, is just about as bankrupt as an argument can be. It is but a thinly veiled admission that the woman is still regarded as a sex object rather than as a person. And if this is so, rather than limiting the woman in her freedom as a child of God, men ought to redeem the man/woman relationship in the church by
repenting of their sins.24

It would not be wrong to agree with most authors that scripture interprets scripture. As we read Paul's letters we should not ignore the message they carried for that particular century as compared to the message he has to the twentieth century community.

In his work, "Women authority and the Bible", Alvera Mickelson asserts,

Regarding the theological background, it is sometimes wrongly assumed that to appeal to the social background automatically involves dismissing Paul's theological assumptions and argument....Paul is giving normative teaching. But the normative teaching is not women's silence, it is how God's people are to behave in the world of the first-century church and therefore in any other similar circumstance...Paul is dealing with a problem far deeper than the participation of women, it is not the behavior of women but the protection of the Christian community as a whole.25

The central issue is, the same Paul who instructs women to be "subordinate, as even the law says," also tells us in the letter to the Corinthians that "in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. and all things are from God." In Galatians 3:28, Paul states,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.26

Having thoroughly investigated, interpreted the two passages

24 Paul K Jewett, Ordination of Women, p. 10.
which are mainly considered as the "Problem passages" by Paul, we come to the conclusion that Paul is not writing to impose an arbitrary permanent restriction of women’s ministry. Rather he is teaching us how to apply biblical principles to social perceptions and social relationships. He finally teaches that women indeed do have "authority", the right to pray and prophecy in the assembly of God’s people, even in a society where these practices were controversial.
As we turn to the New Testament we get into a new advent, a new age, a period which is totally different from the Old Testament period. The messiah inaugurates the fullness of redemption. He creates the a new community of God’s family: the church. He brings about a clear difference between the old-covenant people and the new-covenant family.

The effects of the fall are being conquered, and the line of continuity that flows from God’s creational design determines the life of the church. Where there was loss of Eden and alienation from God erupts a reconciliation, where the curse had predicted "He shall rule over you", the blessings speaks words of love.

When theologians speak of the inability of a woman to represent Christ as a priest, the argument that is used is the fact that Christ himself, being the high priest took the form of a man. Because it is in his human nature that Christ is priest, the representation of his sacrifice demands that one be a human being. The most important thing would be to notice the fact that, Jesus set at nought the oral law, and publicly excoriated it's propounders. He said, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"  

He directly points out what the problem was in Judaism, honoring the creature more than than the creator. To stress on this point farther, the author of the book "The Question of Women and

27 Ibid, Matthew 14:3.
The Priest, Sister E. Hannon has this to say,

The gospels on the contrary stress again and again the universality of Chris’s saving activity. Neither race nor sex forms a barrier to the bounteous overflow of these spiritual gifts. Indeed they break all barriers so that there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.\(^{28}\)

From Its inception, the christian community has understood it’s ministry as an extension of that of Jesus hence all ministry and all priesthood are indebted to christ. This is done more through the very act of humbling oneself and more to the obedience of his death.

The present generation that bears the title ‘disciples’, do not seem to grasp the very nature of Jesus’ ministry and authority. And just as John and James in the book of John, we tend to interpret interms of rights and privileges.

Long before Jesus’ time (as indicated before), the old Hebrew religion of Moses and the prophets had been replaced by a new religion called Judaism which was based on the traditions of the scribes and the pharisees. This religion, basing their arguments from Genesis 1 and 2 generally viewed women as being responsible for the evil in the world.

Jesus’ understanding of his mission was really contrary to Judaism. He was nor radical by temperament. In fact his mission was to accept, to forgive, and to heal gently. His mission was to oppose that which was against His fathers’ will. He did not

\(^{28}\) Sister E Hannon The Question of Women and The Priests, p. 112.
hesitate to affirm creation on the issue of female roles. He openly demonstrated this in his actions, teachings and examples. There is a variety of evidence in the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). His major concern was to restore women to the position of human dignity that Eve occupied in creation.

The term disciple is not limited to men only. At Joppa for instance there was a disciple named Tabitha. The immediate call for every woman, is to take Jesus’ model to restore dignity to the downtrodden by giving them the assurance that they too are precious in God’s sight. And just as Tertullian stated in one of his sermons,

Women no longer need the former splendor of outward adornment because they are now clothed with the beauty and simplicity of Christlike Character.\(^29\)

The twentieth century’s opening are witnessing the great movement by women that is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of mankind. It’s world wide and spontaneous taking it’s rise in the teaching of Jesus regarding the value of human soul, permeating every society, race or religion. This universal movement for women’s enlightenment and emancipation has greatly contributed to the world wide extension and success of christian mission.

The freedom wherewith christ did set us free includes her complete liberation to equality of opportunity with man ... The result of this latest evolution of christianity will not only be a new womanhood for the race ... but also new humanity in Christ.\(^30\)

\(^{29}\) International Bible Encyclopedia Volume iv p. 3103

\(^{30}\) Ibid, p. 3104
Any student of the Greek language would highly agree that the real meaning of the word discipleship in Jesus ministry involves more servanthood.

Fredrick H. Bosch was quoted in a magazine saying,

That which is so significant to Christian ministry must be recognized as essential to the ordained ministry ... In the New Testament variety of images are used to describe the function of a minister-He is a servant both of Christ and the Church. An awareness which should be given a recognition in every office of the ordained ministry.\(^\text{31}\)

Jesus, who is the head of the church, brought a new spirituality and perspective to the Jewish religious practices and to our church today regarding women.

Even though he was in a patriarchal lineage and it’s cultural setting, he showed a number of concrete examples which negate unjust treatment practiced against women and slaves in his day.\(^\text{32}\)

Saint Luke the great doctor and theologian, gives us a good number of examples that shows clearly Jesus attitude towards women during his three years ministry on earth. He (Luke) opens with the honor given to a woman that carried it’s benediction to the women of all times. His whole narrative of nativity gives women the halo of a new sanctity through Elizabeth and Mary.

The story of Mary’s intellectual gifts, spiritual exaltation, purity and beauty of character and her training of her divine child, has been an inestimable contribution to woman’s world wide emancipation. Today, the church is indebted to her majestic hymn the magnificat as she expresses her thankfulness to God.


\(^{32}\) Time Magazine; Jan. 1985, 9TH Third world Ecumenical.
It is important to notice that, besides Jesus reaching out for women, they were also very responsive to his teachings. The Samaritan woman in the book of John chapter 4 becomes the first evangelist in Jesus' ministry. Though the history about the enmity and the segregation between the Jews and the Samaritans is well narrated by most scholars including Luke, the extraordinary happens. The Samaritan woman's past is not the major issue according to Luke. The obedience to the immediate call and the action taken thereafter is. Instead of sending the woman to go narrate her new found freedom to her male Samaritans, who would intern spread the good news, he sends her to go and proclaim the good things - "the kerygma".

Luke, in his portrayal of Jesus with women, gives the church today a very deep insight. Luke does not show Jesus as the one who gives directions to these women he encountered, for their behavior as women; he treated them always as equals of men. The gospels report asserts that he totally rejected a stereotyped view of woman as homemaker and chilbearer. In Luke 10:41-42, the Lord gently rebukes Martha for her preoccupation with household duties.

On another occasion, he rejects the view that Mary his mother could be reduced to her reproductive functions.

Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked!" Jesus replies; "Blesses rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"^33

This in another words could mean that, according to Jesus, obedience to God.

In the gospel of Mark 5:21-34, Jesus is portrayed as one who cares for the outcasts. He releases his power, heals the woman and publicly makes it known that this woman was now healed, and was one among those of his flock he called her his daughter.

It is indeed a commonplace of biblical scholarship that the resurrection is the central theme of the Apostolic kerygma. The disciples or apostles testified to his crucifixion, burial death and resurrection. They were "eye witnesses", (1 Cor. 15:5f). Besides they dined, and even touched his resurrected body.

In view of the great importance of this apostolic witness to the resurrection, it can hardly be inconsequential that the risen Lord first appeared to women. The fact that they were the first in the tomb, could, indeed be attributed to the accidents of history. This women were only doing their womanly duties when they came early to the sepulchre to anoint the body of the deceased. Hence they happened to discover the empty Tomb. But that the risen Lord appeared first to these women (Matthew. 28:9) and even commissioned them to tell his brethren cannot be construed as mere coincidence. It was the result of deliberate choice on his part. Thus these women disciples became the initial witnesses to the event which is the basis of all Christian preaching. Of course the male disciples did not believe their witness; they regarded what these women had to say as so many idle tales.\textsuperscript{14}

The above quote reveals clearly that, though we cannot say that the original apostolic preaching was based on the witness of the women, we can say that women shared with men in that witness.

Besides their witness on the resurrection of Jesus, Women also shared with the men in the effusion of the Spirit. It is true that it was only the twelve who were given the command to tarry in Jerusalem, but women such as Mary, Jesus' mother, as among those gathered with the Apostles in prayerful expectation when the spirit

\textsuperscript{14} Paul K Jewett, The Ordination of Women, p. 62

Tradition limits this statement only to men. The fact that Peter was the primary spokesman for the group, leads to the conclusion that only men spoke on this occasion. It would be wrong to ignore the fact that Peter explains what happened by quoting the prophet Joel,

I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17).\(^{35}\)

It would therefore be reasonable, to suppose that some of these very women may have received the spirit of prophecy and exercised the gift from the inception of the Christian church. We read that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). In the New Testament the devout Jewess Anna, who bore witness to the infant Jesus at the time of his presentation in the temple (Luke 2:36), is called a prophetess. To give the reader more insights on this issue of prophecy, Nancy has this to say,

...knowing as we do the dominant place of the male in the first-century Jewish society, especially in the synagogue, it can hardly be doubted that the use of the gift of prophesy by women in the early church was considered exceptional and in some sense problematical...The ambivalence that one feels in the New Testament data concerning women who exercised the Prophetic gift has been resolved by some interpreters by granting such women a very limited ministry.\(^{36}\)

She continues to quote Calvin who stated that even though these women could not hold any public office or even practice these gifts openly, God did guide and govern them to prophecy at homes or

\(^{35}\) Bible Acts 2:17

\(^{36}\) Nancy Hardesty, *Ordination of Women* p. 65
in some private place, without the common assembly.

This conclusion by John Calvin the great church historian, gives us a better conclusion of the true ministry of women and their great recognition by God even though disregarded by male. This also brings us to the conclusion that, if the peaceful revolution of building up Christ’s Kingdom is to be realized, women must be totally involved too.

ARGUMENTS BASED ON JESUS AND THE TWELVE DISCIPLES:

Arguments against ordaining women in the ministry, is often based to the fact that even Jesus himself did not choose any woman to be one of his disciples. His choice for his official followers as men is viewed as a precedent for the traditional male priesthood of the church. These arguments, however seem to leave much out of account. Theologians often times lead us to the idea that Jesus’ earthly ministry occurred in continuity with God’s work for and among the people of Israel as well as for the entire human race.

The appointment of the twelve should be looked at in the context of the Jewish religious thought of the first century. The number "twelve" is derived from the Old Testament idea of the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve serve as the fulfillment of the prophecy that the heir to David’s throne would bring back together the scattered tribes of Israel or Jacob. In connection with this, Urban Holmes in his recent book "The Future Shape of Ministry" asserts,

...the fact that Jesus did appoint the twelve (which is probably a historically accurate record) would have nothing to do with the establishment of an institutional Church as we know it, but would be an eschatological sign in anticipation
of the fulfillment of Israel in the Kingdom that was about to come, the twelve not functioning as Apostles but symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel on the day of the Lord.  

We should remember one possible reason for Jesus choosing the twelve. It is clear that the twelve had to work together as a team in close proximity. The Jewish society would not have tolerated the mixing of the races as well as the sexes. We should presume that all the disciples were married. For the sake of preventing such scandals as 'prostitution', that would have ruined his mission at the beginning, Jesus had to choose men alone.

Theologically, the personal characteristics of Jesus and the twelve apostles are very significant. This is because they represent the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies made under the old covenant between God and his people Israel. However this should not stand as the determinant factor for our ministry in the New Israel. (By new Israel I refer to the new Church which erupted after the resurrection of Christ). Holmes urges caution in seeking models for ministry in particular elements of Jesus' earthly ministry,

...we should be careful about any argument concerning the nature of the church and the function of the ministry derived from the historical Jesus. It is with the resurrection event that the whole question becomes alive. For Paul and Peter as well as ourselves it is the central reality of our Christian faith. Jesus is raised and glorified, he is the "first fruits" of what we are and are not yet; and we are sent to make known the mystery of his person throughout the world until all be fulfilled in him.

Besides, the implications of Jesus' death and resurrection

37 Urban Holmes 111, The Future Shape of Ministry. p. 12
revealed it's new goal after sometime. At length it became clear to the early Christians that, in the new Israel the old theological differences between the Jews and the Gentiles, the slave and the free, male and female, were broken down. The old wall that distinguished membership in the body of Christ was now open to all. The former guiding, Jewish rules that had existed became powerless. The reconciling work of Christ enabled a gentile to deliver the message in the synagogue and be listened to by the Jews.

It is crucial that we understand the place of women before the birth of the messiah, their expectations by the society, and their daily treatment by the Jewish law. It is also very important to notice the great difference that comes along with eschatology. The new error of freedom for all. To illustrate further the true meaning of this Emily and Suzzane in their work, "Women Priests Yes or No", have this to say,

Before the birth of Christ woman was blessed as the mother of all living people. Her true and special priesthood was to bring into the world sons who would perpetuate the chosen people until the coming of the messiah. Her fruitness was a sign of the blessing of Yahweh.39

With the coming of the Messiah the place of woman changes. She no longer has a special priesthood in her role as the mother. Maternity in itself is no longer a vocation which immediates grace. The new priesthood involves more proclamation than childbearing as Paul explains,

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a

39 Emily and Suzzane, Women Priests, Yes or No? p. 69
written code skills, but the spirit gives life.

The issue of ordination should be viewed as partnership to fight a common enemy. Christians coot deny the fact that they are engaged in a spiritual warfare and not spiritual detente. This means that for any victory to be at sight, there need be enough squads at the frontier as well as on the back line.

As in all warfare, Christians need to have a common strategy. This will then be able to defeat the devil’s strategy which as stated by the bible is to divide and conquer. Men alone will loose if they are tricked into thinking equality of service is a chance to gain power, to push someone else out. Consequently we all win if we think of partnership in ministry as freeing us to maximize our individual opportunities to serve in God’s salvation army.

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY TODAY

The strong call for women to serve in the ministry is deeply based on the scripture. The scripture assures every christian that our new standing in Christ must destroy all division between believers (1 Cor. 12;12, Eph.2:11-22, Col: 3:9-11). This also gives them the assurance that they are all in him, members of one body, one temple of God, one diplomatic corps.

Secondly, the most important theological reason for opening door to the ministry of women is the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which was anticipated in the Old Testament in Exodus 19;6; Isa. 61:6 and now fully affirmed in the New Testament with the coming of the Messiah. Donald, G. Bloesch has this to say;

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40 Bible, N.I.V, 2cOR. 3:5-6.
The priesthood of all believers receded into the background in the patristic and medieval periods, but it was rediscovered by the early Luther and the Pietist Philip Spener, both of whom maintained that all Christians may speak in public assembly, all may hear confessions and give assurance of forgiveness, all may baptize and preside at the Lord’s supper in principle.41

Church History opens to the twentieth century the leadership of women in the Catholic Church. Despite the rampant sexism that pervaded the Catholic spirituality, many women attempted several high offices. Several of the women martyrs and confessors gained the name of "models of piety". It has been proved that there were women who, in their great desire to the reform of the church became critics and even counselors of the pope, Kings and even Emperors. Such women as Catherine of Sienna, and Teresa of Avila.

As strong women step out to be true apostles, we get new insights from their experiences. In answering the question why women want to be in the ministry, Patricia Aundry, an ordained minister, had this to say,

"The reason women want equal opportunity within the church, is that they want to fully experience that "being somebody" that we all are before God. They want earthly practice to conform to heavenly reality".42

By seeking to share equal opportunities in the church, women who are seeking to be ordained are motivated not by the ideology of feminism, but by a deep commitment to Jesus Christ.

In her work "Women and Church Leadership, Margaret Howe, 1982 discusses the ‘journey’ of women in the church from early history to

41 Donald G, Bloesch, p.48
42 Patricia Aundry, Neither Slave Nor Free. p.137.
the nineteenth century. She encourages an honest search for truth by examining the past and clarifying scriptural perspective on issues relating to women and church leadership. This literature is a call to women and men, laity and clergy to come to grips with the new directions in growth and maturity, asked the church equips itself for the years ahead. She expresses an invitation of everybody to consider the ramifications of mutual submission and sacrifice to God.

It the desire of every child of God, to fully participate in the ministry. This will include the redefining of the actual meaning of the term "disciple" and "servant". The call for every woman is to take Jesus as our model, to restore dignity to the down-trodden by giving them the assurance that they too are precious in God's sight.

One of the great church fathers, Tertullian is quoted stating that,

Women no longer need the former splendor of outward adornment because they are now clothed with the beauty and simplicity of christlike character."^{43}

It is true that the opening of the twentieth century are witnessing a movement among women that is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of mankind. It is worldwide and spontaneous, taking it's rise in the teachings of Jesus regarding the value of the human soul. This universal movement for women's enlightenment and emancipation has greatly contributed to the world wide extension and success of christian mission.

^{43} International Bible Encyclopedia, Volume v. p. 3103.
"The freedom wherewith Christ did set us free includes her complete liberation to equality of opportunity with man...the result of this latest evolution of Christianity will not only be a new womanhood for the race...but also new humanity in Christ." 44

Women who have obediently hearkened to the call have not only been successful in the ministry, but also have had great impacts in the lives of those they ministered to. Due to their availability, God is pleased to use them.

While it is true that there are denominations that have come to the realization of the great potential in the second sex, some are still in the debate. Among most of the western churches, women are more involved in church ministries than in the eastern countries.

Feminism movement, after sweeping around the western world have brought about equality of both sexes in all walks of life seems to have been the stepping stone for the Christian women to voice their concerns. Even though feminism lacks in its search for the physical equality of women to men, it's been known to include and speak for all women. Feminism has awakened the third world Christian woman. As the feminist woman claims her place in the office, the Christian woman also claims her position in the church.

The bottom line of women and ordination is deeply rooted in the word. As they understand that, it is not any person's right to

44 Ibid, p. 3104.
preach the gospel, whether they be men or women. Instead, the
ministry of the word is a privilege granted only by God. The task
that was given to the church is to recognize and certify the divine
call. It is the responsibility of the church to insist on the fact
that God may call women as well as men to the apostolic ministry.

Besides, the church should also fearlessly proclaim the
covenant of grace. This covenantal view is based on the great
promises of God to man. It is a promise that must be acknowledged
in faith and obedience. This covenantal grace is one in which
both the men and women live together, work together for God in a
lives dedicated to the glory of God. The woman’s place is viewed
not as an emancipation from her womanhood (as it is with feminism),
but as an elevation, as a fellow worker with man.
ORDAINING WOMEN IN THE SCRIPTURE HOLINESS CHURCH

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICAN CULTURE AND WOMEN

Oppression of women is universal. However the adamant, nature and degree of oppression, differs from one nation to another one church to another and from one ministerial job to another.

Research shows that there is no other culture that is known of its silence as the African culture as a whole. Every activity that goes on among the people have to be culturally accepted and approved. Anything against the culture is termed to as a "taboo" (in other words an omen that could be a snare to the whole society).

The question at hand would be "who originated with the formation of all these cultures that seem to agree on the oppression of the second sex in the whole continent of Africa, in Kenya and in more inner circles in the Scripture Holiness Church?". Before we get into depth in answering this questions there would be few more things that need to be considered. This will be dealt with as this work progresses.

For so many decades women have been considered as assets by their male counter parts. They are highly regarded for keeping the economy going that is domestic economy, marketing as well as reproduction. They have never been offered or participated in any leadership training programs. It is quite sympathetic to state that, for the last two hundred years(before, during and after colonization), women were not given opportunities to think, make
decisions or even prove themselves capable in the presence of men.

The nineteenth century, turned out to be a decade for women. This is because the Kenyan woman could be heard and listened to even in politics. She could even risk to learn silently in the Theological Schools with men. This does not mean that the door to serve in the church is opened. She could secure a secular job where her wages would be minimal compared to that of the males.

The church which is supposed to be a refuge for the women, especially those who have come to appreciate who they are in Christ, does not give them any shelter to protect them. Most churches are a patriarchal power structure. Women cannot participate in any church activities. The ecclesiastical structure in the church which is male dominated, is a model of male-female oppression.

Women who were once valued in most African tradition religions as mediators, are now rejected and overlooked. On the other hand, African theology has almost fallen into idolizing African culture in an uncritical way. It is too busy concerned with the 'Culturization' of the gospel which is still patriarchal.

The issue for ordaining women is ignored and mostly referred to as "western". Most churches use the traditional understanding of theology where women have to be silent according to Saint Paul.

It is indeed the African belief that, the quiet life of a woman enables her to be used by gods to prophecy. However it should be noted that women have not been the leaders of these religions, they have played decisive symbolic and organization
roles. They are viewed as subordinate agents of higher supernatural and social forces.

Today the real struggle of every African woman is to re-examine the church’s teaching in light of people being full persons in Christ. Forsaking what is beyond the usual sex-status while reaching for equal partnership with men in following Christ into a renewed spirituality.

As part of this seeking women are breaking out from age-old patterns of the woman’s place and re-examining the old references that point about the nature of women.\(^4^5\)

According to Elizabeth, this is a new awakening of every African woman. It is a new beginning to find a new spirituality that is based on scripture yet based on open to a relationship of mutual responsibility between them and their male counterparts.

Their search is whether the Bible has been truthfully interpreted in relation to their identity. Their goal is have their women representatives in the church. Their desire is to reclaim their traditional powers but use them for the sake of extending the Kingdom of God. African women are turning their energies to a deep investigation of what the bible says about woman’s equal empowerment in God’s work of creation and redemption. Their prime interest is to portray the positive affirmation as ministers of the gospel.

**WOMEN IN THE SCRIPTURE HOLINESS CHURCH**

**BACKGROUND OF THE CHURCH**

Scripture Holiness church is a growing Armenian-Wesleyan

\(^{45}\) Florenza, Mary, *Women Invisible in Church and Theology.*
Like any other denomination it hailed from Europe. It was founded by European missionaries in the early 1920's. The church has thrived slowly under the leadership of one of it’s missionary founder who died in 1992. Nationwide, the church has been planted in many major cities of the country like Kisumu, Nairobi, Mombasa, and Nakuru. Each city composed of approximately one hundred members. Compared to other denominations which were born at the same time as Scripture Holiness Church, it would not be wrong to presume that this denomination has had about 0.5% growth in it’s membership.

The major discrepancies in this Church will be mentioned as we continue with this study. With such a little percentage in growth, the training of the lay leaders have been almost none due to lack of replacement during their duration of study. There has been a tremendous loss of the young people who are usually attracted to the more charismatic churches and the new age churches.

The few young people who are still in the church have been denied the proper training, theologically in fear that they might usurp the power from the older generation.

Women in the Scripture Holiness Church are no better off than they are in the society at large. The many problems that affect the lives of women in the society are also existent in the church. This is because the social customs and traditions prevalent in society have slowly seeped into church structures and into the minds of the members of the church. As a result there has been smothering and various distortions of God for women as written in
Kenyan society is hierarchical and male-dominated. The Christian population in Kenya is about 75%. The secondary position assigned to women in the churches is supported by existent cultural and social norms. Christian women are weighed down by wrongly interpreted or selective use of, biblical passages.

There has been very little number of women pursuing theological education. The few, do it without any church support or sponsorship. Most of them have to go through the additional burden of hunting for a job after the completion of their studies.

Existing so strongly is the wall of hostility between the sexes. These walls between the sexes need to be broken down and a new community built on oneness and love which we experience in our faith in Jesus the Christ. The doctrine of christ his person-hood, in which we believe, and the universality of christ’s redemption-should be the ground on which we build our faith.

The church in Kenya needs to recognize the personhood of Jesus Christ and the fact that christ is the representative human being for all people including the Kenyan women (Scriptural Holiness Church women). He is the one in whom all things are summed up (Eph. 1:10). And as Christians and imitators of christ, the church need to overcome the existent sexist biases and work towards the full incorporation of women into the life of the church.

The number of women in Scripture Holiness Church as compared to that of men is almost the same. However the number of women leaders or those who have been ordained is 0%. Women are viewed
as helpers when there is small or even major church projects. Once every year women are allowed to have "women Conference" which is a meeting that is supposed to enhance the place of women as subordinates in the church.

For the last sixty years there has only been one woman who have managed to go through Bible College training as well as Seminary training. The training of this individual, brought lot of controversy in the church. There was no church support available and it would not be wrong to state that it is one of the main reasons that brought the division of the church early 1994. The question of whether women should be ordained in Scripture Holiness Church is yet to be discussed. The question then remains; "Who will speak for the Scripture Women, Who is willing to open the motion, Who will even represent her in the motion?"

Finally, interpretation of scripture by men. To claim the inspiration of the scriptures is to believe that what the bible says is true-in other words is to believe that it is God’s written word to us. Interpretation involves explaining what this word means to us on a human level. As a result we leave some room for human error. Besides the theological interpretation of the Bible by other scholars, it is not hard to believe that the bible has sometimes been interpreted narrowly to support a private view or bias. The point at hand is what have been happening in the Scriptural Holiness church.

The passage from I Timothy 2:11-15 has been the single most effective weapon to keep women from active and even equal
participation in the church. It has been interpreted to mean everything from "women cannot teach adult males, that they cannot teach their own husbands to women cannot speak at all in the church". For many centuries it has been cited to prevent women from the pastorate, from taking any office in the church and even deny them access to the pulpit.

Another argument used, is the order of creation, that man must forever dominate woman because of some supposed fatal flaw within her that caused her to be deceived of which Scripture Holiness women are no exceptions.

Violating such clear biblical interpretations and warnings means excommunication from the church. It is seen as a step towards feminism which is considered to as compromising with the devil. It is also viewed as a step towards radicalism- whose goal is to change the society, and disrupt the ordained order by God. The true meaning of "christianity " is lost- that relationship between Jesus Christ and the believer. That denial of partnership between every human and God.


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**SCRIPTURE HOLINESS CHURCH IN THE EYES OF MEN**

Having looked at some of the major issues that lead to the failure of recognition of women in the Scripture Holiness Church, we raise the thought that, perhaps the major task in building this Church is the fundamental rethinking of the basic approaches to the theology of the church. Understanding the true meaning of priesthood of believers as expressed in the Bible will help the men to take seriously the efforts to let women lead some of the
offices. The realization of the able, talented and willing of some of the women to take the offices could lead to a new dawn of tremendous growth in this church.

It is important to notice that, for the last seventy years, even with their struggle, women have remained entangled in the traditions, inspite of their desire and attempts to fight the cold war to be free in serving Christ. It is dawning on men that the long period of oppression is over. The New regime of recognizing women’s full potential and putting it into visible practice has come.

The rising number of the young women, who have forcefully fought their ways through theological training, can only be engaged in revolutionary activities such as working with the destitute and the marginalized if not with the secular sectors.

The major concern is, if the church symbolizes the presence of christ, how is it going to carry out the message under male predominance. Christianity has come as a mixed blessing for the scripture holiness church woman. To some extent, it has brought liberation from the tight bars of African tradition that underlines the fact that a woman’s place and duty is around her family. Today women can freely leave their homes on sunday mornings.

**WHAT IS THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM**

In Christianity, women can be classified into the empowered and the depowered women. The empowering and the depowering of women have taken place not only in the strictly religious sphere, but also in society, culture, tradition and even in laws. It would not
be incorrect to say that religion has been the major course and the conditioner besides being the legitimizing factor behind all this.

As mentioned previously in this work, the Old Testament women fall in the category of the empowered women. The New Testament women become empowered with the coming of the messiah. The scripture Holiness church women fall in the second category of the depowered women. They are known to struggle in all walks of life: socially, politically and even religiously as they sincerely such for the truth and their place in the truth.

There is absolutely no way that we can refer to the problems in most of the African Churches and in this point Scriptural Holiness Church without looking into details some of the African traditions that have stood as a hindrance for a long time.

The church is still suffering from "cultural alienation". evangelization by the first missionaries was that of cultural domination other than of cultural change. Some of the 'ill' dos and donts in most cultures were not addressed. Evangelization, with the expectation of change of heart should have resulted to change of understanding the difference between the scripture and the African practices. It would not be wrong to state that some of the bible verses seemed to fit well with the culture.

The same tread that colonization took was closely followed by the missionaries which was later instilled into the nationals heart. Hence even to this day, colonization is still fresh in peoples mind. Evangelization, then seems to have failed due to the fact that it did not reach to the core. Due to the traditional rule
that the place of woman is home, and for man outside the home, the first converts, just like the Jewish society were men.

They became well versed with the Bible, could read and interpret it well to their wife at home. 1 Tim. 12-15 and Gen. 2 became more meaningful and even made the scripture holiness women content in their place, her identity, her talents and her willingness to participate in church activities, were being totally rejected and neglected.

Today he education her service has to be re-evaluated before she gain any position in the church.

The usual cry by the leaders of the church, is that by ordaining women in the church they will disrupt the order and destroy the society. The implication is always that changes made by moves towards involving women in the ministry and especially by giving them the same positions as men, will be destructive changes. The threat is that all will come trembling down.

Indeed it is often quoted that women are the keystone in the arch of civilization, that they are gentle, and healing besides their restraining ways that help men not to break the cultural rules. The conclusion to this is that women, the glue of the society, must firmly stay in place.

The main concern is, how will the church thrive and even successfully reach the lost souls if in itself there is the sin of discrimination? What body can work to full potential if half its members are bound with ropes and blinders so that full motion and vision are impossible?
The body which is the church has bound its women in this way. Is there not room in God's church for all the members to use everything He has given them?

CHRISTOLOGY FROM SCRIPTURAL HOLINESS WOMEN

Due to her failure of being accepted in the church as leaders, the well versed woman of Scripture Holiness church has come up with their own christology. Instead of seeking for some help from the outside the church, she has decided to go back to the Bible which she also refers to as 'return to the Historical Jesus'. Understanding the real meaning of Jesus' humanity, his actions and his divinity, and his message of love and salvation and his mission.

The denial for her to serve her risen savior in full rights have led the Scripture Holiness woman to come up with a new understanding of the doctrine of christology. Her enquiry into the significance of Jesus for her faith. By asking herself who Jesus is, what he did and the goal of his mission has brought a new insight to her close relationship with him.

We will briefly look at some of the solutions that she has come up with after examining and doing a thorough diagnosis on Jesus' life.

CHRIST’S MESSAGE

His message was inclusive- it included what others had not included, what others had not taught and clearly interpreted what the Kingdom of God was like. It also included the character of
God's reign here on earth and in heaven. It showed preference to the outcasts, the low in-status, the poor, the rejected ones, sinners and women. To Jesus, they were the last who had become first; the humble who had become exalted.

As they focus on Jesus' treatment on women, they realize that his attitude towards women and treatment of them was the most uncommon even for a "good" Jew of his day. He treated them with deep respect and just as men he entitled them to the life in abundance. He recognizes their ability to learn Torah just as men and affirmed their trustworthiness and capability to be his disciples, witnesses, missionaries, and apostles.

As a result of learning this from Jesus' ministry, the scripture Holiness woman is elevated to the truth and the reality that she also, is entitled not only to the office of discipleship, but also to the higher office in leadership. The old cultural chains break loose. She humbly, but with authority stands to claim her position in the church refuting "the tradition of men".

CHRIST'S MISSION

The core of the message of Jesus is in his mission. The death of Jesus is not only a redeeming event to a scripture Holiness church woman but also revelatory. The details of his death is revealed in the love for all mankind. To the weakest, to the rejected and to the women. It opens up a hope and a future through the most negative side of history. It elevates the forgotten ones. It brings them to a position where no human efforts can. It quickens their hearts and mind to be in the service for the Lord.
It is a call for service to those who hearken to the master.

Jesus did not ignore women but took them into his fold and made certain that the men around were aware. His saving act was extended to both men and women, that was his mission on earth.

In the present life of the church, women have a vital role to play. They have a renewing force. They have reached a deeper understanding of what true mission is. They are redefining the old patriarchal law of leadership to the new messianic one. Without the desire to usurp the power from the male leaders, they are entering into the new realization of leadership but yet with a servants heart.

**TAKING ACTION**

After looking into details some of the major hindrances that the Scripture Holiness church women face today, we then ask ourselves, "what should they do next?"

It is the time that they should take action as christian change agents with humility. Humility means to be humble before God so that he empowers them to do his work effectively. They need to be aware of their strengths and use them to their advantage. Instead of using their long time oppression to run away, they should be able to face conflict. They should realize that they are also included in the mission of winning souls to the kingdom.

They need to understand their motivation and goals as co-creators with God. They should exercise their gifts, rise above the cultural and traditional oppression. They should be able to challenge men as the woman in matthew 15:21-28. A woman who
realized her share in the kingdom in spite of her nationality as a Phoenician.

Just like the twelve disciples of Jesus who chose autonomy when they were called from among the lowly in status, Scripture Holiness church need to "leave their nets and neighbors" to be obedient to a high call. Their duty as disciples is to teach the new disciples all that Christ has commanded them it is "Christ’s command".

The church as a whole, should realize their call as not to Lord over the oppressed but to practice servanthood. The foot-washing of his disciples, was a call to the disciples to be servants. It was a warning to them not to conform to the world in their actions. The major issue was on authority-Jesus’ main concern was for the proper structuring of the Christian communities. It was a warning against the worldly desire to substitute individual leadership for consensual decision making. This is the point the Scripture Holiness Church has missed.

THE TURNING POINT

The scripture is very open on how the present church of Christ should be organized. The book of Acts 2:17-18 opens a new era of the church. It is an era of non-discrimination. Prophet Joel had anticipated a new age when God’s presence would become universally available in the intimacy of each believer’s life. The words of Joel have the force of both an explanation for the exhilarating occasion and of a program for the newly born church.

In the new age the spirit will make himself available
abundantly and universally. This incorporates "everybody". A case in point would therefore be that racial distinctions are and should be irrelevant in the church. It is crucial to notice that, since the spirit is given to "all flesh" both men and women become recipients. This in turn leads us to the conclusion that they all will have the access to the prophetic ministry. The former disparities between men and women will be abolished. This gift will authenticate the person whom God is using as his mouthpiece. The sex difference is made irrelevant in the church. Your young men shall see visions, and your daughters shall prophecy.\(^{46}\)

The scripture Holiness church should give a second thought to this verse. Peter’s restatement of prophet Joel’s prophecy should be allowed to govern our understanding of relationships within the church. Therefore the practice of sex discrimination in the church is sinful. The church should realize that there should be a unique christian unity which can only be achieved despite diversity of race, class and sex. It should be a new opening of the former slammed doors to the women.

**THE REMEDIES FOR THE CHURCH**

Scripture Holiness Church, need to come together as one; members of the same family, with a common goal to fight the common enemy the devil. This unity and oneness can only be achieved if the people (especially the men who have been leaders of offices since this church was founded) will be willing to give up their traditions.

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\(^{46}\) Bible N.I.V Joel 2:15-20
Scripture Holiness Church should go back to the roots of the words and begin recognize the potential, talents and the real meaning of what unity in the church should be like. If the men leaders in the church could be open to the works of the Holy Spirit in both the young men and women who are finishing their theological studies, the harvest would increase two-fold.

The church should satan as the instrument that God can use to train young men and women to theological schools rather than being the hindrance. It should also be willing to accommodate these young men and women in the offices.

The older men in the offices who still hold onto the traditions, strongly opposing the ordination of women, should revise the book of Joel. Women in the church should stand for their rights in the church in the name of Christ as prove to the men that they are also included in the "great commission". Besides they should not be afraid to exercise their gifts and talents of leadership.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters the meaning of ordination have been discussed in regard to Jewish treatment of women, Jesus’ treatment of women, St Paul’s treatment of women and finally treatment of women in the scripture Holiness Church.

THE MEANING OF ORDINATION

The biblical meaning of the word "ordination" is mainly the laying on of hands. In the Old testament, the laying on of hands was mainly secluded for some chosen tribes, the Aaronic and the levites respectively. This was usually confined to men and not women.

However, even with the laying on of hands there were quite a number of women who were used of God. Deborah the prophetess, Esther and even Miriam.

The meaning of 'Ordination ' changes in the new testament with the coming of the messiah. To set a good example of how the kingdom of God was like, he involves even women in the ministry.

THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A detailed reflection of the place of women in the old testament is given. Women as Nazarites as well explained in the book of Numbers 6:2.

Women as counselors in 2 chronicles 34:22, women in courts (Gen 3:6-13, women as judges (Judges 4:4), women as priests Judges 13:13-14), and finally women as leaders (Esther 4:14)
THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The place of the typical Jewish woman in the religion of Judaism was discussed mentioning the rabbi prayer.

Secondly, the so-called "problem passages" by Saint Paul were tackled. It was because of the social problem in the churches that led Paul to forbid women not to talk in church. He made it clear that this was his command. Later in his ministry, Paul involves so many women who make his ministry a great success.

Thirdly, a thorough outlook on Jesus and women is studied. He opens a new era for every woman regardless of their race or color. The promise of the Holy Spirit is for all. Women are seen very active in preaching the gospel.

TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN THE SCRIPTURE HOLINESS CHURCH

Overlooking of women in the scripture Holiness church have been because of the African tradition. However through their competency with men academically, scripture Holiness women have proved themselves capable of holding offices in the church.

Time has come when the church should give a careful thought on what the scripture says when it talks about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to sons and daughters. The church should realize that we are all fighting a common enemy. In Christ there is no male or female, Jew or Gentile.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

There remains much yet to be done for a complete study of the role of women in the church particularly on the subject of ordination. There should be a more thorough study especially on
the role of women in the African Churches and the hindrances to their total involvement in the ministry. A systematic study on the role of women in the African Traditional religions would be beneficial.
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