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# Ordained Ministries

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# Ordained Ministries

*John St-Helier Gibaut*

This article treats ordained ministries in the historic church traditions, East and West, which engage the ecumenical conversations, explorations, and emerging consensus on church-dividing issues on Christian ministry. The topics in this article include the development of structures of ordained ministries and the emerging theologies of these ministries, as well as the roles of ordained ministers in the life of the Christian community. Using a chronological framework, the article begins with the earliest Christian ministries reflected in the New Testament, followed by the post-New Testament period to the First Council of Nicaea in 325. It then traces developments on ministry in the Western and the Eastern churches from the patristic era to the present time. Attention is given to reforms in ministries from the sixteenth-century reformation movements, including the Council of Trent. The article takes note of early twentieth-century developments, including the place of ordained ministries in the Ecumenical Movement, with developments in the theology of ministry in both multilateral and bilateral ecumenical dialogues. The article identifies historic and present differences, divergences, and church-dividing disagreements on ordained ministries, as well as the emerging ecumenical consensus. Specific attention in each historical era is given to the ordered ministries of women, and the contributions of ordained ministers to the lives of their communities.

**Keywords:** Ministry, Ordination, Ecclesiology, Ecumenism, The Christian church, Christian leadership, Church councils, Women in ministry, Episcopacy, Priests, Diaconal ministry

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# 1 Introduction

An encyclopaedia of Christian theology without an entry on ordained ministry is difficult to imagine. The contemporary ranks of theologians and faculties of theology rightly include both laypeople and ordained ministers as scholars and teachers. And yet, while students may or may not be studying theology with ordination in mind, the vast majority of ordained ministers will have had a formation in theology. With significant exceptions, the majority of theologians in Christian history have been ordained ministers. Moreover, the topic of ordained ministries is embedded in a variety of disciplines of Christian theology: pastoral theology, sacramental theology, liturgy, ecumenism, canon law, and especially ecclesiology.

The term 'ordained ministries' here refers to those offices and orders in the churches that are conferred publicly for a permanent ministry through authorized liturgical forms, such as prayer and accompanying liturgical gestures.

A theological and ecclesiological reflection on ordained ministry begins with the ministry or service or *diakonia* of the Christian community as a whole. Every baptized Christian is called to service and ministry in and for the church. In the Greek New Testament, the word *diakonia* – *minister* in Latin – means 'service' or 'servanthood'. As Jesus teaches in the Gospel of Matthew:

> Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant (*diakonos*), and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served (*diakonethenai*) but to serve (*diakonesai*) and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matt 20:26–28)

Or, as the Commission on Faith and Order asserts in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*:

> The Church was intended by God, not for its own sake, but to serve the divine plan for the transformation of the world. Thus, service (*diakonia*) belongs to the very being of the Church. (Commission on Faith and Order 2013: 33)

The term 'ordained ministry' designates those whose ministries serve, lead, and represent the church community in its proclamation of the gospel in mission, through liturgical presidency, pastoral care, teaching, and other conferred roles. Ordained ministry arises from, and is formally recognized by, the Christian community. The purpose of ordained ministries is to serve, enable, and lead the mission of the whole church.

The ‘whole church’ is vast. Current estimates suggest that in the early twenty-first century there are as many as 45,000 different churches around the world. Some are relatively small, regional, and more locally based. Some are part of regional or world communions of churches. The ministers and ministries that lead these churches are varied in terms of structure, deployment, theology, and ecclesiology. The scope of this article on ministry, however, is ordained ministry in the churches which are engaged in the ecumenical conversations, explorations, and emerging consensus on church-dividing issues related to Christian ministry. That is, those churches which engage in the global multilateral dialogue of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches, and the global Christian communions that are engaged with each other in bilateral theological dialogues. Both the multilateral and bilateral forums mandate levels of inclusivity, especially theological perspectives from the Global South as well as the Global North (see Ecumenism and Church Relations, sections 3 and 4).

Current confessional treatments of ordained ministry address theological understandings and deployment of ordained ministers in specific church traditions. An ecumenical perspective, however, requires the long lens of history in order to put particular ecclesiastical traditions of ministry in dialogue with the widest tradition, and thus with each other. Accordingly, this article treats ordained ministries genetically, that is, with reference to their origins and ongoing evolution from the New Testament to the present. The topics include the development of structures of ordained ministries, emerging theological understandings of ordination and ministry, contemporary issues around ordained ministries, as well as ecumenical developments on ministry and the unity of the church.

# 2 Ministries in the Bible

The New Testament provides indispensable evidence of the emergence of a variety of ministries in the earliest Christian communities. The biblical witness to the place of ministries in the church has been a touchstone for later Christian reflection, however differently the same texts have been interpreted.

## 2.1 Ancient Judaism

Prior to the ministries that emerged in the earliest Christian communities are the series of office holders and ministers in ancient Judaism. Jewish ministries provided the Christian community with precedent and language, and its models and theological vocabulary have shaped Christian understandings of ministry up to the present.

The tripartite offices of the Jerusalem temple – high priest, priest, and Levite – exerted strong theological influences on later Christian reflection on ordained ministry. However, the temple offices were not (as has been sometimes believed) a structural basis for the

threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon which emerged from the post-apostolic era in the Christian church.

The more complex and enduring influence of the Jerusalem temple for Christian reflection on ordained ministry has been the priestly service of offering sacrificial worship in the temple. The English word ‘priest’ derives from the Latin word *presbyter*, itself derived from the Greek word *presbuteros*, meaning ‘elder’. However, the Hebrew word for the person who offers a sacrifice is a *kohen*, which in Greek is a *hierous*, translated in Latin as *sacerdos*, which gives rise to the English word ‘sacerdotal’, linked with the verb ‘to sacrifice’. The Greek and Hebrew titles related to those who offer sacrifice in the temple bear no etymological connection to the current English word ‘priest’, which derives from the Old English *prēost*, a contraction of the word presbyter.

In the Letter to the Hebrews (4:14–16; 5:1–10), the death of Jesus as a sacrifice (*thusia*) leads to the understanding of Jesus as High Priest (*arche-hierous*) and priest (*hierous*) after the order of Melchizedek. As will be seen, much theological reflection in later Christian teaching and polemic revolved around the transfer of ‘priestly’ or ‘sacerdotal’ language to certain ordained ministries, particularly around the eucharistic presidency of bishops and later of presbyters.

The Hebrew Bible also witnesses to different kinds of leadership within ancient Judaism beyond the Jerusalem Temple, notably the prophets, teachers (rabbis), and elders (presbyters). The roles of the prophets are witnessed to in the various prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel. The second book of Kings identifies Huldah, the wife of Shallum, as a prophet (2 Kgs 22:14–20). The role of the prophet was to convey God’s will as a word to the people. As such, prophecy was a charismatic office which was recognized by the community, rather than appointed by the community. Although the term ‘rabbi’ is not used in the Hebrew Bible, rabbis were recognized by the first century in the common era as teachers, and thus they have been spiritual leaders in Jewish communities from ancient times to the present day. Jesus was called ‘rabbi’ throughout the Gospels. Lastly, there is the case of Moses’ appointment of the seventy elders, those who shared a governance role within the community (Num 11:16–25; cf. Exod 18). These ancient Jewish offices of community leadership were carried over into the nascent Christian church within the first century.

## 2.2 The Gospels and Acts of the Apostles

The gospel ministries of the twelve and the seventy-two apostles are associated with the ministry of Jesus. The numerical nature of these ministries is symbolically significant, pointing to the twelve tribes of Israel and the seventy(-two) elders appointed by Moses during the exodus. The later ministries of the seven, in the book of Acts, are the earliest ministries of the post-resurrection community.

From the patristic writers onwards, theologians from East and West have associated these three ministries of the twelve, the seventy-two, and the seven with the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. There is, however, no such association within the New Testament itself. After the appointment of the seven, Acts does not refer to the twelve again, but rather to ‘apostles’, which, by the inclusion of people like Paul and Barnabas, was an expanded understanding of apostolic ministry.

The Christian presbyterate, from the Greek term *presbyteros* meaning ‘elder’, reflects the inherited Jewish office of elder. Acts 15:4–6 refers to the gathering of the ‘apostles and the elders’ presided over by James, reflecting a Christian version of the Jewish Sanhedrin led by elders. Later, in Acts 20:17–18, 28, Paul’s discourse to the Ephesian elders uses the Greek terms *presbyteros* and *episkopos* synonymously. While the use of the terms elders (*presbyteros*) and overseers (*episkopos*) are significant here, nothing is said about their function. It may well be that they reflect ministries from the late first century, rather than the structures of the mid-first century.

## 2.3 The Pauline Epistles

The letters of Paul witness to a variety of ecclesial ministries, such as the list mentioned in the Letter to the Ephesians:

> He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (Eph 4:11–12)

These were itinerant ministers who established and sustained local Christian communities, as seen in the ministries of Paul and Barnabas. Significantly, Paul mentions a woman, Junia, as an apostle in the Letter to the Romans (16:7).

In only one instance does Paul refer to ‘bishops and deacons’ (*episkopois kai diakonois*), namely in his salutation to the church at Philippi (Phil 1:1). It is not clear here whether *episkopos* and *diakonos* refers to two distinct ministries or to a single group of leaders within the Philippian church. In the ancient Greek-speaking Gentile world, an *episkopos* or ‘overseer’ could refer to any role of oversight or supervision. Similarly, the term *diakonos* could refer to a variety of service functions, ranging from community officers to table servants. While the two terms are significant in so early a text as a genuine Pauline epistle, they ought not to be equated with the later and distinct offices of bishop and deacon. Their mention here, however, marks a continuity with the later bishops and deacons.

An important reference to a particular deacon appears in the last chapter of Romans. In Rom 16:1–2, Paul commends Phoebe the deacon to the Roman church:

> I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon (*diakonos*) of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord, as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well. (Rom 16:1–2)

This reference is also too early to be identified with the later diaconate, but it is significant that Paul identifies Phoebe as a Christian leader. It is also significant, and curious, that Phoebe in the Greek original is identified as a *diakonos* rather than the feminine *diakonissa*.

In the same chapter, Paul sends greetings to various members of the Roman community, including Andronicus and Junia (or Julia), who were with Paul in prison, and who were in Christ before Paul's conversion (Rom 16:7). Later Eastern Christian tradition teaches that Andronicus and Junia were early evangelists to the pagan world in the first century.

## 2.4 The Pastoral Epistles

The Pastoral Epistles (c. 80–100) offer important biblical evidence of further developments. They bear witness to a fluid use of both the ministries of the Jewish elder/presbyter as well as the Gentile bishop and deacon. First Timothy speaks of the office of bishop in some detail, referring to the bishop in the singular (3:1–7) as well as the work of the deacons in the plural (3:8–13). By the time of the Pastoral Epistles, bishops and deacons were in some places clearly distinct ministries. Yet 1 Timothy also refers to presbyters or elders (5:17–19). In the letter to Titus, the terms presbyter and bishop are applied to the same office holders:

> I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done and should appoint elders (*presbyteros*) in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless. (Tit 1:5–7)

First Timothy also witnesses in a lengthy description (5:3–16) to the early roots of the order of widows, whose ministries included prayer, good works, and hospitality.

## 2.5 What did Christian ministers do in this period?

The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers who appear in the Pauline letters were itinerant ministers, serving multiple Christian communities. They would have travelled around the eastern Mediterranean bringing the good news to people who had

never heard of Jesus Christ. They also would have assembled newly-converted Christians into a regularly-gathering community called an *ecclesia* or church, and would have baptized those who they converted. Continuing care of these emerging churches would have been exercised through personal visits and especially through letters/epistles. The existing letters of Paul to early Christian churches, for instance, became the earliest books of the New Testament.

The itinerant leaders also appointed local leaders, such as the bishops and deacons in some places, while in other places it was the presbyters. These local leaders were the ones most likely to have gathered the community together on the Lord's Day, and to preside at the Lord's Supper.

The ministries of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers began to disappear by the end of the first century. Their functions, however, were assumed by the local ministers: the bishops and deacons in the Gentile communities, and the presbyters in the Jewish Christian communities.

## 2.6 Summary

The New Testament authors do not offer a coherent description or theological understanding of the earliest Christian ministries. However, references to various ministries at different times and in different contexts are important witnesses to the emergence of what would become the distinctive ministries within the life of the church. First are the symbolic and numeric ministries of the twelve, the seventy-two, and the seven. These ministries are links with the ministry of Jesus, and, in the case of the seven, with the post-Pentecost church.

The permanent ministers in the Jewish Christian communities were the elders/presbyters. The Gentile communities were led by bishops and deacons. By the time of the Pastoral Epistles, there was a mixing of the Jewish and Gentile terminologies for the local ministries of bishops, deacons, and presbyters. In 1 Timothy, some Christian communities were led by a single bishop, who might also be called as a presbyter. In short, the later threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon is not found in the New Testament evidence, but its roots, terminology, and functions are there.

The New Testament witnesses to the ministries of women in the earliest Christian communities, represented by Junia the apostle, Phoebe the deacon, and the unnamed widows.

Later Christian reflection on ordained ministries affirms that the inherited structures of ordained ministry are evident in the New Testament. Some find in the New Testament the biblical warrant for the threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter, and deacon; others have

identified the pattern of ministry to be that of apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. The developments of Christian ministry in the first century are more complex.

Likewise, there is no warrant for understanding ‘apostolic succession’ as the twelve apostles appointing the first bishops of the church, who in turn appointed other bishops throughout history. A more helpful way to understand apostolic succession is within a broader ecclesiological horizon. As the Commission on Faith and Order has succinctly affirmed in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*:

> The primary manifestation of apostolic succession is to be found in the apostolic tradition of the Church as a whole. The succession is an expression of the permanence and, therefore, of the continuity of Christ’s own mission in which the Church as a whole participates. Within the Church the ordained ministry has a particular task of preserving and actualising the apostolic faith. (Commission on Faith and Order 1982: M 35)

# 3 Ministries from the post-New Testament period to the First Council of Nicaea

Post-New Testament authors from the end of the first century onwards witness to the continuing development of ministries within the ongoing and emerging Christian communities. Yet, by the end of this period, the threefold ministries of bishop, presbyter, and deacon reached a form recognized as normative to later generations of Christians, both East and West.

## 3.1 The *Didache*

Written in Antioch (and thus an Eastern Christian text) in the late first century, the *Didache* – or the ‘Teaching of the Apostles’ – witnesses to the ongoing transition from the leadership of the itinerant ministries of apostles, prophets, and teachers to resident ministers, named in the *Didache* as ‘bishops and deacons’. However, the author of the *Didache* is more interested in the itinerant ministries, especially the prophets who are identified as presiders at the Eucharist.

In one instance, the *Didache* refers to bishops and deacons, with no reference to presbyters or elders: ‘Appoint for yourselves, therefore, bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord […] For they are also performing for you the task of the prophets and teachers’ (1965: 174).

This is evidence that the roles of the prophets and teachers were being assumed by the local bishops and deacons. As in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, *episkopos kai diakonos*

appear together here, with the same uncertainty as to whether the terms refer to two distinct ministries, or to a single group of leaders within the Antiochian church.

## 3.2 First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians

From the late first-century church in Rome, c. 95, 1 Clement deals primarily with ordained ministry. Clement himself was a Roman presbyter and may have been the head of the council of presbyters in the ancient Roman church. Like the *Didache*, 1 Clement discusses the ministries of *episkopoi kai diakonoi*, with the ongoing uncertainty as to whether these are two different ministries or one ministry (1965: 71–72).

Significantly, 1 Clement also mentions presbyters, and it is possible that the titles of bishop and presbyter are applied to the same ministers, and are used interchangeably. In other words, the 'bishops and deacons' are the 'presbyters'. Despite the lack of clarity in terminology, it is clear from 1 Clement that, at least in the Roman church and possibly in the Corinthian community, the principal leaders and ministers at the end of the first century are the 'bishops and deacons'/'presbyters'. It also is evidence of the blending of the Jewish Christian and the Gentile Christian structures of local ministries, at least terminologically. Thus 1 Clement witnesses to an early stage of what will become the classic threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon.

## 3.3 Ignatius of Antioch

The first indisputable evidence of a recognizable threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon is found in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, c. 110. Ignatius provides the first recorded evidence of the 'mono-episcopate', that is, a single bishop presiding over a local church, assisted by presbyters and deacons.

A noted feature of Ignatius' treatment of the threefold ministry is the typologies used in *Epistle to the Trallians* 3.1 (1964: 73). Here the bishop is likened to God the Father, the presbyters to the Apostles, and the deacons to Jesus. For Ignatius, the threefold ministry has become an ecclesiological priority.

It is noteworthy, however, that six of the seven letters of Ignatius refer to the bishop of the local church. The one exception is the church in Rome, which likely did not know the leadership of a single bishop at that time, and thus was likely led by a council of presbyters.

## 3.4 Justin Martyr

The significant mid-second-century witness to ordained ministry is the apologist Justin Martyr, a layperson writing from Rome. His *First Apology* was written in Greek to a broad

non-Christian readership to explain Christian faith and practice. As such, it contains valuable information on ordained ministries.

In his description of the Eucharist, Justin does not refer to the celebrant as a bishop or a presbyter, but by the more generic title of *proestos* or 'presider' (1948: 105). The deacons, however, are clearly distinguished as a distinct ministry. Justin's use of everyday language may have been employed to make the text more accessible to a non-Christian audience, or it may simply reflect the absence of the mono-episcopate in the Roman church at that time. Justin may also simply be aware that there was a variety of patterns of Christian ministry across the Roman Empire in the mid-second century, such as 'bishops and deacons', the mono-episcopate with presbyters and deacons, or the ongoing leadership of presbyters in some churches.

Despite the lack of precision about structures and nomenclature of second-century ministries, Justin unequivocally affirms the nexus between ordained ministry and eucharistic presidency.

## 3.5 Irenaeus of Lyon

Writing from a Greek-speaking context in Lyons, c. 180, Irenaeus of Lyon is a valuable source of developments in ordained ministry. In his *Adversus haereses*, Irenaeus demonstrates that the threefold structure of bishop, presbyter, and deacon has become normative (1974: 224–225). Irenaeus, however, appears to use the terms 'bishop' and 'presbyter' interchangeably. Closer reflection shows that, for Irenaeus, the bishop is *the* presbyter in succession to the apostolic college; from the bishop stem all the other presbyters in a church.

Irenaeus contributes to an emerging theological understanding of 'apostolic succession'. For Irenaeus, this succession is primarily one of authentic apostolic teaching, centred on the collective teaching of the bishops across the Christian world. Irenaeus contrasts this authentic episcopal teaching with the heretical teaching of the schismatic Christian communities, such as the Gnostics. For Irenaeus, the continuity of episcopal teaching and doctrine is a manifestation of the authentic succession from the apostolic church.

## 3.6 Tertullian

From North Africa, the late second-century theologian Tertullian (c. 160–220) is a significant source on early Christian ministry, and the first Latin author to address ministry. In addition to the threefold ministry, in Latin for the first time – *episcopus, presbyter, et diaconus* – Tertullian also mentions the ministry of *lector* or reader, one of the ministries that would later be among the minor orders.

In *On Baptism*, Tertullian reflects a new theological understanding of the bishop, namely as the ‘high priest’ in the Christian community (1890: 214). While this is a limited reference, it remains the first identification of episcopal ministry as ‘priestly’ in the sense of a sacerdotal minister, that is, one who offers a sacrifice, namely the Eucharist.

Tertullian is also the earliest witness of the use of the Latin word *ordo* and, with it, ‘ordination’. In the ancient Roman world, the term *ordo* was used to differentiate social classes, such as the patricians and the plebeians, as well as the members of the senatorial or equestrian ‘orders’, serving in positions of leadership in the Empire’s civil and military services. The use of the word *ordo* in the church, however, on the basis of the analogy with imperial Roman society, marks the beginning of a significant ecclesiological distinction between the churches’ ordained leaders and the communities of the baptized whom they served.

## 3.7 The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus

The earliest collection of liturgical rites is found in the *Apostolic Tradition* (AT), attributed to Hippolytus of Rome and conventionally dated c. 215. In addition to the liturgies of Christian initiation and the Eucharist, the AT includes the earliest extant ordination rites (1963: 2–33).

The AT includes ordination liturgies for bishops, presbyters, and deacons, who are all ordained through the liturgical gesture of the laying-on-of-hands and prayer. The AT also contains the liturgical appointments to the other ministries: confessors, widows, lectors, virgins, subdeacons, and those with the gift of healing. Appointments to these other ministries did not include the imposition of hands. While the ministry of teachers is not included in this list, it is mentioned many times within the AT’s lengthy three-year catechumenate. Notable is the mention of women in the ministries of widows and virgins. Equally notable is the absence of deaconesses in the AT, as they are reflected elsewhere in the third century, specifically in the *Didascalia apostolorum*, below (section 3.8).

The AT directs that bishops are to be ordained in the presence of other bishops, presumably from other local churches, as well as the local people and their presbyters and deacons. One bishop lays hands on the head of the candidate and says the ordination prayer. Among the images used to describe the ministry of the bishop in the AT ordination prayer is the sacerdotal ‘high-priesthood’ and ‘the spirit of the high-priesthood’.

The AT directs that, in the ordination of a presbyter, the presbyters as a college join with their bishop in the laying-on-of-hands on the new presbyter. This practice may reflect an earlier time in the Roman church when it was led by presbyters, and when it was the presbyters who laid hands upon the new member of their college. In the AT, only the

bishop lays hands on the deacon, which may reflect the earlier relationship between the *episkopoi kai diakonoi*.

The AT reflects the significance of the diaconate and the subdiaconate in the early church. In addition to assuming the care of the sick and the needy within the Christian community, deacons also fulfilled a series of liturgical tasks, most importantly with regard to Christian initiation, where adult candidates were immersed naked into the baptismal waters by the deacons.

## 3.8 The *Didascalia apostolorum*

The *Didascalia apostolorum* is an Eastern Christian text from Syria. It was written between the late second and early fourth centuries, but is generally dated c. 230, and may well be contemporary with *The Apostolic Tradition*, albeit from a different context. The *Didascalia* reflects the importance of the mono-episcopate in the local church and the qualities sought in bishops. It identifies the bishop as the head of the presbytery. The text uses imagery from the Trinity as a way of understanding the position and work of Christian ministers:

> But let him [the bishop] be honoured by you as [is God], because the bishop sits for you in the place of God All Mighty. But the deacon stands in the place of Christ, and you should love him. The deaconess, however, shall be honoured by you in the place of the Holy Spirit. But the presbyters shall be to you in the likeness of the apostles. (1979: 100)

The *Didascalia* suggests that, while the presbyters have a teaching role in the Christian community, they function as an ‘advisory board’ for the bishop. It is the bishops and the deacons and deaconesses who are the liturgical and pastoral leaders of the community.

The *Didascalia* is a significant witness to the diaconate of both men and women in the ancient Syrian church. The deaconesses attended to the pastoral needs of women in the Christian community. They had significant roles in the Christian initiation of women, including baptismal catechesis. At the baptisms of women, the deaconesses accompanied the naked female candidates into the baptismal pools for the water rite and the final anointing, as it would have been culturally inappropriate for male deacons to so serve women candidates. The *Didascalia* also reflects the ongoing ministry of widows.

## 3.9 Cyprian of Carthage

The mid-third-century North African theologian, Cyprian of Carthage (c. 210–258), provides evidence of further Western developments in the theology of ministry. With Tertullian, Cyprian reflects the emerging language of *ordo* drawn from Roman social ‘orders’ to distinguish the clergy from the laity. Cyprian reflects another borrowing from

Latin imperial practice: the ‘promotion’ from one Christian ministry to another. Cyprian uses the word *gradus* or ‘grade’ in relationship to ordained ministries, also borrowed from the Roman civil and military services, which entailed serial promotions from one grade to a higher grade. The *cursus honorum* – the ‘career of honour’ – was an effective way to test and train members of the Roman military and imperial bureaucracy. Applied to the ordained ministries of the church, a Christian minister would be ‘promoted’ from one ministry to a ‘higher’ one. For example, a successful deacon could be promoted to the presbyterate, or from the diaconate or the presbyterate to the episcopate.

By example, Cyprian notes the clerical career (*cursus*) of Cornelius, bishop of Rome (251–253). Cornelius was not made a bishop ‘suddenly, but was promoted through all the ecclesiastical offices’ and ‘ascended through all the grades of religion’ (1871: 629). Cyprian is an early witness to the beginnings of ordained ministry as an ecclesiastical career, reflecting the Roman military and civil *cursus honorum* with promotion from one order of Christian ministry to another. The influence of imperial processes on Christian ministry here is unmistakable.

## 3.10 Cornelius of Rome

The fourth-century *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–339) purports to contain a letter from Cornelius, bishop of Rome. The letter describes the organization of the church in the city of Rome in time of Cornelius: one bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two acolytes, and fifty-two exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers (1989: 216). It is the ordering that is remarkable here, namely the later major and minor orders of the later Western church. It also reflects the demise of the widows and virgins.

The seven deacons and subdeacons here reflect the seven districts for outreach to the poor and needy in the Roman Christian community, following the example of the seven in the Acts of the Apostles. Such was the importance of service or *diakonia* in ancient Rome and elsewhere that often it was the senior deacon who would be elected and ordained directly as the new bishop.

## 3.11 Ministries of women

From the Eastern church, the Syrian *Didascalia apostolorum* refers specifically to the ministry of deaconesses. Again, given social attitudes in the ancient church, the Eastern deaconesses ministered to other women and to children in pastoral contexts, and liturgically at baptisms of adult women. Within a trinitarian framework, the bishop represents the Father, the deacon the Son, and the deaconess the Holy Spirit. Presbyters, however, represent the very earthly apostles. The *Didascalia* also reflects the ministry of widows.

By contrast, the principal liturgical Western text on ministries in this period, the AT, witnesses to the women's ministries of widow and virgin, absent in Eusebius' later list of ministries. The AT does not mention the ministry of deaconesses. The first conclusive evidence of Western deaconesses appears in the early fifth century.

Within 'mainstream' or catholic Christianity, the ordered ministries of women are acknowledged, particularly the ministries of widows and virgins, and in the East, deaconesses. It must be noted, however, that within some heretical and schismatic Christian communities, such as the Montanists and other Gnostic communities, there is evidence of women serving as bishops and presbyters. Because these practices were associated with heterodoxy, they were habitually condemned by the catholic churches.

## 3.12 What did Christian ministers do in this period?

Evidence from the second and third centuries provide much more information about the life and work of ordained ministers. From the beginning of the second century, the primary ministers of the scattered churches were no longer the 'apostles and prophets, evangelist and teachers', but rather the evolving local ministries of bishops and deacons, or presbyters/bishops, or presbyters and deacons. The local churches were geographically based, meeting to celebrate the Eucharist and Christian initiation in the houses of the leaders. These 'house churches' interacted with other churches in neighbouring towns and villages, especially through the interactions of their bishops with one another. Bishops, as seen in the AT, assisted other local churches in the appointment or ordination of new bishops.

Bishops emerge as a ministry of unity within and beyond their local churches: the local bishop presided at the Sunday Eucharist and preached; the bishop presided over baptism with other ministers, especially deacons and deaconesses; the bishop restored sinners to the communion of the church; the bishop appointed all the other ministers in a local church. They supervised the ministries of the presbyters, deacons, deaconesses, widows and virgins, readers, doorkeepers, etc.

Associated with Christian catechesis and initiation, the bishop was the primary teacher within the local Christian community. Normally, but not exclusively, bishops in this period emerged as the formal teachers and definers of Christian theology, such as Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–c.107) and Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–c. 200). There were, however, notable exceptions. The North African theologian Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225) was either a presbyter or a layperson. The Alexandrian theologian Origen (c. 185–c. 254) was a presbyter. By contrast, the mid-second-century Roman apologist Justin Martyr (c. 100–c.165) was a layperson. The explications of the emerging Christian theology by the bishops (and others) were not just to articulate the developing consensus of faith of the church community;

bishops increasingly had to respond theologically to the propositions of many emerging heretical Christian communities.

The presbyters emerge as a collective ministry or ‘college’. They worked with the bishops, to whom they were the principal advisors. In the absence of a bishop, one of the presbyters would preside at the Sunday Eucharist. In some churches during this period, for instance the church of Alexandria, presbyters elected and ordained one of their colleagues as the next bishop.

One of the most important roles of Christian ministry in this period was ‘service’ or *diakonia* within the early Christian community and beyond. The churches’ *diakonia* became institutionalized fairly quickly, with the office of deacon assisted by the subdeacons, and deaconesses ministering to women and children. Deacons and deaconesses cared for the poor, the sick, and those in prison, in a society in which social service was absent.

The diaconal work was overseen by a senior deacon, who later would be styled as ‘archdeacon’. From early times, the deacons led the intercessions at the Eucharist as they knew who needed the prayer of the community. Significantly, the final words at the Eucharist were not the bishop’s blessing but the deacon’s dismissal of the community to love and serve the world.

There were other ministries that emerged in these early centuries whose significance may not be fully appreciated. The lectors or readers, for instance, proclaimed the scriptures when the community gathered for liturgical prayer, especially the Eucharist. The ancient lectors would also have kept the biblical books for safe-keeping in their homes during times of persecution. Many of the martyrs of these early centuries were unnamed lectors who refused to hand over the biblical books to the Roman authorities.

The widows, virgins, and deaconesses served the pastoral needs of women and children. The deaconesses in the Syrian churches have a catechetical and liturgical role in the baptism of women adult women.

## 3.13 Summary

By the beginning of the second century, significant ministries had disappeared, namely the itinerant apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers. The local ministries of ‘bishops and deacons’ and ‘presbyters’ remained. From the early second century, these ministries developed and spread across the whole Christian church in a relatively short time. At the beginning of the third century, a normative threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon was common to churches across the Christian world, and with it the mono-episcopate, that is, one bishop as the leader of one local church. By contrast, agreement

on the canonical books of the New Testament would not be achieved until the mid-fourth century.

In comparison to the New Testament and first-century evidence, from the beginning of the second century right up to the First Council of Nicaea (Nicaea I), the picture of what the ordained leaders did becomes clearer. The bishops emerge as the primary ministers of leadership and oversight of the growing Christian communities, often in times of persecution. They were the primary preachers and teachers, presiding at Christian initiation and the Eucharist.

The three diaconal ministries – deacon, subdeacon, and deaconess – along with the virgins and widows offered pastoral and practical support to those in need within the church community, with the deaconesses, virgins, and widows attending to children and adult women of the church.

In most places in this period, those who were discerned by their communities for ordained ministry were elected and appointed to one ministry for life. That is, a baptized person would be elected and ordained as the new bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, or lector, etc. There is also evidence in this period of Christian ministers being ordained to multiple ministries. Given the early churches' commitment to outreach and service, it was often a deacon who would be elected by the community to be the next bishop. In Rome, for instance, the senior deacon was the most likely candidate to be appointed as a bishop, whereas in other places, the natural candidates might have come from among the presbyters, or indeed, from among the baptized.

This period sees limited evidence of the beginning of sacerdotal/priestly language being applied to the Christian ministers, initially to bishops in relationship to eucharistic presidency. In subsequent periods, this theological direction would have an enormous impact on the theology and practice of Christian ministry, and also for ecclesiology. The instances of sacerdotal or priestly language, combined with the usage of the ancient Roman political concept of *ordo*, suggest that within the one ecclesial body of Christ there is a divide between the ordained and non-ordained people of God. Contemporary Christian traditions that employ terms such as 'orders', 'holy orders', and 'ordination' benefit from reflection on the original Roman political contexts that gave rise to such concepts and language.

# 4 From Nicaea I to Nicaea II

The convenient starting and ending points for a consideration of ordained ministries in this next period are the First Council of Nicaea, meeting in the Eastern Roman Empire in 325, and the Second Council of Nicaea (Nicaea II) in 787.

After the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity in 312, every aspect of the church's life was affected by its new relationship with the Roman Empire, particularly (and in long-lasting ways) Christian ministries. Christian ministers became a privileged class within the Empire, receiving salaries on the imperial scale; some bishops, for example, were being paid at the same rate as provincial governors. The churches began to receive a share of imperial taxation, gaining wealth, property, and political influence. Consequently, the political, social, and administrative roles of bishops required new criteria for both the preparation and appointment of bishops. The need to appoint worthy and competent candidates for all of the ordained ministries in this vastly different new context required new standard ways to discern, select, form, and appoint Christian minsters.

## 4.1 Councils and canons

While the Council of Nicaea, 325, is best known for its creed and theological judgments against Arianism, it also enacted twenty canons dealing with various issues of church law, discipline, and ministry. The Nicene canons on ordained ministries mark a new stage of development. For instance, Canon II forbade the ordination of the newly baptized as presbyters or bishops, a signal that this practice was taking place, while Canons IX and X reflect the need for the examination of candidates (Tanner 1990: 6, 10–11).

The Council of Sardica in 342 was convened to deal with theological issues, but also mandated a series of canons on ordained ministries. Canon XIII orders that no one can be ordained a bishop without lengthy service as a lector, deacon, and presbyter (Turner 1899: 472–474). Although the practice of sequential ordination was known in the earlier periods, this canon marks the first instance of sequential ordination being canonically mandated. The intent of the canon is to ensure a proper testing, formation, and selection of candidates for ministry.

Subsequent councils legislated on things like the minimum ages for ordained ministries, such as twenty-five for deacons. The minimum age for presbyters and bishops was thirty, the traditional age of Jesus when he began his ministry. Under the influence of monasticism, councils from the mid-fifth century began to legislate on clerical chastity for bishops, presbyters, and deacons.

## 4.2 Ordination liturgies

Unlike the pre-Nicene period, from which only one ordination rite – the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus – remains, many more manuscripts of ordination rites from both East and West from the fourth century onward have survived. The rites, within and between Eastern and Western Christianity, reflect both common developments as well as a lack of uniformity.

While the threefold order of bishop, presbyter, and deacon is consistent in both East and West, the number and the ordering of the minor orders remains fluid. Within the Western church in this period, there is liturgical evidence of the diaconate becoming a grade or step towards presbyteral or episcopal ordination, rather than a lifelong ministry. The Leonine Sacramentary is the first Western ordination rite to survive after the AT, created sometime between the sixth and seventh centuries (Mohlberg 1956: 118–122). It contains the prayer after the ordination of a deacon, that from the lower diaconal grade, the newly ordained deacon 'may be worthy to take up higher things', meaning either the presbyterate or the episcopate, or both. The Leonine ordination prayers employ different kinds of imagery to describe the various orders of ministry. In particular, the prayers for bishops continue to use and develop sacerdotal imagery, especially from the Levitical high priesthood.

## 4.3 Ordained ministries as a 'hierarchy'

A significant Eastern contributor to the theology of ordained ministries, for both East and West, is the anonymous early sixth-century theologian writing under the pseudonym of Dionysius the Areopagite. Central to Pseudo-Dionysius on ministry is the introduction of the term 'hierarchy', from the Greek *heiros* (sacred/priestly) and *arche* (rule). Accordingly, ordained ministers were understood as constituting a theologically sacred order, a hierarchy established by God on earth, corresponding to the angelic hierarchy in heaven. This theological construction sharply distinguishes the ordained from the laity. The Eastern appropriation of the language of 'hierarchy' is not dissimilar to the use of the Western *ordo*, with the ecclesiological consequence of a sharp distinction between Christian ministers and the baptized. Accordingly, within this framework, the ecclesiastical orders with the divine origins of the triad of bishop, presbyter, and deacon were not simply different functions within the Christian community but represented different realms of being Christian.

## 4.4 The minor ministries

In addition to development of the major orders of bishop, presbyter, and deacon, the present period is important for the emerging minor ministries, which are neither uniform nor finalized. Authors in this period, along the lines of the Pseudo-Dionysius, were fixated on numbers, especially the number seven, which were applied to the three major orders – bishops, presbyters, and deacons – and the varying quartets of minor orders. In the Eastern churches, the minor orders were those of lector and subdeacon, while in the West there is a wider variety, including doorkeeper, exorcist, and acolyte, as well as lector and subdeacon.

## 4.5 Monasticism and ordained ministries

This period sees another development that would have a profound effect on ordained ministries in both East and West, namely the beginnings of the association between ordained ministry and monasticism. While originally a lay movement, early Christian monasticism also included presbyters and deacons to provide for the liturgical needs of monastic communities. Within a short period of time from the fourth century, however, monastic practices, especially celibacy, began to define the lives of non-monastic clergy.

The continuity of married bishops survived well into the early fourth century. However, under the influence of monasticism, the preference in both East and West was towards celibate bishops. Despite canonical legislation insisting on a celibate clergy in the West, a married parish clergy remained a reality in Western Europe well into the twelfth century.

A similar trend is also seen in Eastern Christianity, with an increasing emphasis on monastic bishops, with the ordination of monks in major and minor orders. In the East, however, parish presbyters remained married with children, and have remained so to the present time.

## 4.6 Ministries of women

Significantly, in this period the widows and virgins are no longer mentioned among the minor ministries, as they could not be part of the clerical cursus or sequential ordination.

Eastern liturgical rites from this period, preeminently *The Apostolic Constitutions*, a late fourth-century text from the Syrian tradition, witness to the ongoing ministry of deaconesses. Here, the ordination of deaconesses includes prayer and the laying of the bishop's hands on the candidate, a liturgical gesture used in the ordinations of bishops, presbyters, and male deacons (*The Apostolic Constitutions*: 20.3).

There is no evidence of deaconesses in the Coptic and the Ethiopian churches. While there are uncertain Armenian references to women who had a role in baptism from the fourth to the eighth centuries, the first textual evidence of deaconesses in the Armenian church only appears from the ninth century.

Conclusive evidence of Western deaconesses appears only in the early fifth century, albeit in a negative context. The Fourth Council of Orange (441) notes that deaconesses are not ordained, which admits that there were deaconesses, whether they were technically ordained or not. A possible explanation is that Western widows were the equivalent of the Eastern deaconesses (Macy, Ditewig and Zagano 2011: 13–14). There is further, but limited, evidence of women deacons in the early medieval church, including remarkable deaconesses such as Radegund of Poitiers (c. 520–587), sometime queen of the Franks and later abbess of Holy Cross Abbey at Poitiers.

When candidates for baptism were adults, especially in East, deaconesses were the only socially-appropriate ministers to assist in the baptisms of adult women who, as noted above (section 3.8), would have been naked as they were immersed in the baptismal font and anointed. Deaconesses were also still responsible for the catechetical preparation of women for Christian initiation.

Augustine's teaching on original sin in the early fifth century, however, led fairly quickly to the normative baptism of newborn babies by local presbyters at any time in the year. The lengthy catechumenate for adult candidates, noted in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus and elsewhere, was ended, along with the preeminence of Easter as the baptismal day, pre-baptismal teaching, and the personal connection with the local bishop. The changes in baptism affected both male and female deacons, but especially the deaconesses who were no longer necessary in a baptismal process which no longer included adult women.

## 4.7 Sequential ordination

As seen in the previous period, sequential ordination certainly took place in the pre-Nicene period, as well as the older practice of direct ordination.

From the fourth century, however, the earlier practices were increasingly being manipulated by the unworthy, the incapable, and the ambitious, especially those who desired to become bishops because of the new civil and political status of the episcopate. As noted above, the way to discern, test, and train candidates for ordained ministry was to adopt the practice from the imperial military and civil service, namely a sequence of offices or grades for training and testing. The process that was reflected in limited ways in the pre-Nicene period became normative from the fourth century, and is reflected in the canons of various councils such as Nicaea I, the Council of Sardica, and beyond.

Despite the mandated practice of sequential ordination in this period, exceptions abounded. For example, in the West, Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310–c. 367) was a married layperson when he was ordained a bishop in c. 353. Ambrose of Milan (c. 339–397) was a catechumen and thus not baptized when he was elected a bishop in 374; contemporary evidence indicates that he was baptized on one Sunday and ordained directly to the episcopate on the next (Gibaut 2000: 138–142). Augustine of Hippo (354–430) was baptized in 387, ordained a presbyter in 391, and later a bishop in 395. In the church of Rome from the fourth to the seventh century, a significant number of bishops continued to be elected and ordained directly from the diaconate. For example, Popes Leo the Great (440–461) and Gregory the Great (590–604) were ordained as bishops from the diaconate without ever having been presbyters.

The same fluidity is seen in the Eastern churches at this time. Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373) was ordained from the diaconate to the episcopate in 328. Gregory of Nazianzus

(329–389) was ordained a presbyter in 367 then bishop in 372. Basil of Caesarea (c. 330–379) was ordained as a deacon in 362, then bishop in 370. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–c. 395) was a lector when he was ordained a bishop in 372. John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) was made a lector, then ordained a deacon, presbyter, and bishop. Nectarius of Constantinople (d. 397), like Ambrose of Milan, was not baptized when elected as a bishop; he was baptized and then ordained as a bishop in 381.

## 4.8 What did Christian ministers do in this period?

After the conversation of Constantine in 312 and the legalization of Christianity 313, every aspect of the Church's life and mission was altered; this is especially evident in development of ordained ministries. Bishops, for example, went from being the leaders of small persecuted communities to well-trained and well-paid administrators of multiple parishes within a much larger geographical area called *diocese*, a Greek imperial term for a territorial province. As the bishops became significant Roman civic leaders, they were effectively co-opted into the imperial bureaucracy.

In this period, the bishops remained the primary teachers and definers of Christian faith and theology. It was the bishops who gathered for local councils and the seven ecumenical councils from Nicaea I to Nicaea II. Notable Western episcopal theologians in this era were Ambrose of Milan (c. 339–397), Augustine of Hippo (345–430), and Gregory, Bishop of Rome (c. 540–604). Notable Eastern episcopal theologians of this era were the Egyptian Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373), the notable Greek theologians Gregory of Nazianzus (329–389), Basil of Caesarea (c. 330–379), Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–c.395), and Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444), monk and Archbishop of Thessaloniki, and many others.

Presbyters were some of the most significant theologians in this period. The Western biblical scholar and translator Jerome (c. 342–c.420) was a presbyter. Notably, two of the major heretical theologians of this era, Arius (d. 336) and Pelagius (c. 354–418), were both presbyters. There were significant theologians who were deacons, such as Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306–373) and John Cassian (c. 360–c. 435).

Until the early fifth century, bishops remained the primary celebrants of baptism at Easter, when the vast numbers to be baptized were still adults. While bishops would have continued to baptize some children, the unique link between the bishop and baptism was effectively lost in both East and West, with presbyters baptizing new-born infants throughout the year. In the Western church, the bishops continued to administer the final anointing of Christian initiation to baptized children years later, which later took the name 'confirmation'. By contrast, in the Eastern churches – Byzantine, Egyptian/Ethiopian, Syrian, and Armenian – presbyters conferred the whole of the rite of Christian initiation (see Baptism, especially section 4.3).

The older house-churches became parishes within dioceses. The parish churches were led by presbyters, and assisted by deacons, deaconesses and subdeacons, and the minor orders. In this period the presbyters became the normative presiders at Christian initiation, the Eucharist – including preaching – and other sacraments in the parish churches, which in previous eras were episcopal roles. Thus the earlier roles of bishops in the experience of most Christians devolved to the presbyters.

Again, with the rapid shift to infant baptism in the early fifth century, the liturgical role of deacons and deaconesses at baptism decreased as adults were no longer candidates. Given the historic link between the baptism of adult women and deaconesses, this new context became one of decline for the order of deaconess. Despite the loss of its role in Christian initiation, the male diaconate remained a significant ministry in the fourth century. The administrative work of deacons identified them as candidates for the episcopate.

While Christian monasticism has its origins in the pre-Nicene period, it flourished from the fourth century onwards. While originally a lay movement, the monasteries in this period included significant numbers of ordained monastic ministers. The monastic clergy would become compelling models for Christian ministry as a whole, especially, as noted above, the requirement of celibacy.

A different expression of episcopal ministry in this period is seen in the Ethiopian church. While the traditional beginning of Christianity in Ethiopia is associated with the preaching of the Ethiopian eunuch evangelized by Philip (Acts 8), Ethiopia was evangelized by Coptic missionaries from 329, who established a vibrant church-life in the region. Until 1947, however, the Ethiopian church had only one bishop for the entire territorially vast church. This one bishop, always an Egyptian Copt, was appointed and ordained by the Patriarch of Alexandria. It was the one bishop who ordained all the clergy for the whole region. Local Ethiopian church leadership was effectively exercised by local monastic leaders.

## 4.9 Summary

The new relationship between Christianity and the Roman Empire established by Constantine had consequences for every aspect of Christian life, including ordained ministries. While the ministries were those received from the pre-Nicene period, the process of inculturation marked a number of developments. In East and West, the diocese rather than the house-church became the basic unit of the local church, enhancing the administrative, pastoral, and liturgical responsibilities of bishops. As the Western Roman Empire declined from the early fifth century, Western bishops acquired more significant civic roles as well, as the older imperial administration had effectively disappeared across

Western Europe. The effects of the spread of Islam would affect Eastern Christian life, and its ordained ministries, as seen in the next section.

Significantly, this period sees the beginnings of ordained ministry as an 'honourable career' – a *cursus honorum* – and with it, the use of one ministry to test and train candidates for 'higher' ministries, following the proven practice of imperial Roman military ranks and political orders.

The limited third-century notion that Christian ministers constitute an order or *ordo* in the church, in the Roman civic sense of the word, became normative from the fourth century. The earlier understanding that Christian ministers were sacerdotal or priestly, especially bishops and later presbyters, also became normative. These two developments in the theology of ministry effectively delineated two kinds of Christians: lay and ordained. In this context, Pseudo-Dionysius' understanding of hierarchy and Christian ministry further highlighted the ecclesiological gulf between the baptized and the clergy.

# 5 From Nicaea II to the Great Schism

The turn of the ninth century, after the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, marked a decline in the relationship between Eastern and Western churches that would culminate in the Great Schism of 1054 between the Orthodox East and the Catholic West. The beginning of decline in ecclesial relations was due to the vastly different cultural contexts of the Byzantine Empire in the East and the early medieval church in the West. There were disputes over territory, theology, and ministries, including the Western claims about the primacy of the Bishop of Rome.

## 5.1 Western medieval feudalism and ordained ministries

With roots in the late eighth century, from the mid-tenth century, associated with the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Otto the Great (912–973), Western bishops and their dioceses were increasingly subsumed as integral parts of the medieval feudal system. For instance, episcopal nominations – as distinct from ordination to the episcopate – were made by feudal lords (emperors, kings, dukes, counts, etc.). One of the strategic qualities of bishops in the feudal world was the fact that they were celibate, and thus, unlike the lay nobility, would never have sons to inherit episcopal dioceses and associated feudal lands. While bishops continued to ordain presbyters, it was the feudal nobility who appointed the local clergy to the various parish churches within their domains. As such, parish clergy were accountable to the feudal nobility rather than the diocesan bishop. This development further diminished the ministry of Western bishops within their dioceses.

Additionally, feudal rulers took an unprecedented and contested role in the ordination of bishops by conferring liturgical signs of the episcopal office to new bishops, particularly

the episcopal ring and pastoral staff, ecclesial symbols that the ordaining archbishop canonically and liturgically ought to have conferred. Not dissimilar to the co-option of clergy into the late Roman Empire, the medieval practice of feudal rulers conferring ecclesial signs was an expression of the normative place of the church and its bishops in the feudal system. For ecclesiastical reformers, the practice of lay leaders conferring signs of ecclesial ministry on bishops was intolerable. The blending of civil and ecclesiastical leadership led to a crisis in the Western church known as the 'investiture controversy'.

## 5.2 Developments in the Eastern churches

By contrast, with the rise of Islam across the Middle East from the early seventh century and the beginnings of the decline of the Eastern Empire, Eastern Christians – Coptic, Syrian Armenian, and Byzantine – and their ordained leaders entered into long and protracted periods of hardship, persecution, and decline. Following the tradition of the first three centuries of the church, Eastern bishops, presbyters, and other ministers, as well as monks and nuns, were leading and caring for persecuted communities of Christians.

Monasteries were moved from urban centres into the safety of the wilderness. The local parish churches, with their presbyters, deacons, and the minor orders were crucial to the survival of Christianity in the Middle East.

## 5.3 Ministries of women

This period sees a significant decline in the role of deaconesses in both East and West. There had been a decline in the West already, beginning in sixth century; by the tenth century the deaconesses have disappeared, but are not entirely forgotten. The tenth-century Romano-Germanic Pontifical, for instance, contains ordination liturgies of ministers from the minor orders to the major orders of subdeacon, deacon, and presbyter, as well as the consecration of bishop. Significantly, it also includes a liturgy for the ordination of a deaconess – '*ad diaconam faciendam*' – which included the bishop laying hands on the head of the deaconess, as well as conferring a deacon's stole (Vogel 1963: 54–59). The liturgy for the ordination of the deaconess is followed by a liturgy for the consecration of widows. The existence of both these liturgies for women in this ninth-century Romano-Germanic Pontifical, when there is no evidence of either of these ever taking place at that time, may reflect a studied liturgical conservatism and thus a memory to the earlier centuries of the Western Church when women were ordained to the orders of widow and deaconess.

By the end of this period, the ministry of the deaconesses had also ceased in the Byzantine churches. However, in Armenia, outside the Byzantine empire, there is evidence of the ordination of deaconesses from the ninth century. These deaconesses were members of women's monastic communities, where they proclaimed the gospel at the

Eucharist, preached, and were present at the baptisms of women (Oghlukian 1994: 14–15). By contrast, there is no evidence of deaconesses in the Byzantine church again until the early twentieth century, nor of Coptic deaconesses until the late twentieth century.

## 5.4 What did Christian ministers do in this period?

New cultural and political developments redefined the social and political roles of ordained ministries in both East and West. In the West, the clergy were increasingly enmeshed in the feudal structures, while in the East the clergy were leading their communities in contexts of persecution and instability.

In both East and West, parish communities were led by presbyters who presided at Christian initiation, the Eucharist, and the pastoral rites of the churches. In the East, the Eucharist continued to be celebrated on Sundays and holy days. In the West, however, the Eucharist was being celebrated daily by both monastic and parochial presbyters, increasingly alone or with a small community who seldom received the sacrament. This development signalled eucharistic presidency as the primary function of presbyters. Whereas in the earlier periods the episcopate was understood as the sacerdotal or priestly minister, at this time both bishops and presbyters were understood as sacerdotal. In the lives of the laity, the presbyters were the primary priests.

In the West, Christianity was expanding westward and northwards, with missionary bishops leading the way, such as Patrick (mid-fifth century to mid-sixth century), Willibrord (c. 658–739), and Willehad (730–789). The brothers Cyril (c. 827–885) and Methodius (c. 815–885) were both accomplished Eastern theologians, as well evangelists to the Slavic peoples; Methodius was an archbishop and Cyril a presbyter.

Ordained ministers were the primary theologians in this era. Noted Western episcopal theologians of this period include as Amalarius of Metz (c. 780–850), Hincmar of Reims (806–882), and Gerbert of Aurillac – later Pope Sylvester II (c. 946–1003). Significant presbyters were theologians, such as the Anglo-Saxon Bede the Venerable (c. 672–735), and the Frankish theologians Paschasius Radbertus (785–865) and Ratramnus (800–868). The leading theologian of the Carolingian renaissance was Alcuin of York (c.735–804), a deacon and later Abbot of Marmoutier Abbey.

The primary Eastern theologians in this era were ordained. John Scholasticus (c. 503–579) was Patriarch of Constantinople. Photios the Great (c. 810–893), the premier Byzantine scholar of the ninth century, was for most of his life a layperson until his tumultuous tenure as Patriarch of Constantinople from 858, not to mention his direct ordination to the episcopate without any intervening ordinations. Among the noted Eastern presbyter-theologians are John of Damascus (c. 675–749) and Theodore the Studite (759–826), both monks.

## 5.5 Summary

This period does not see significant developments in the structures and theology of ordained ministry in either East or West. How the ordained were deployed in new contexts is significant, such as the relationships of Christian ministers to the emerging feudal structures in the West, and the roles for Eastern clergy where Christian communities were living under Islamic rule.

The threefold ministries of bishop, presbyter, and deacon were common to both East and West. A significant development in this period is the decline of the diaconate of women in both East and West, with the exception of the Armenian church. Between East and West there remained differences in the number of minor orders, but no serious disputes on this topic.

# 6 From the Great Schism to the eve of the Reformation

In this next period, from the Great Schism of 1054 to the beginnings of the Western Reformation from 1517, the theology and praxis of ordained ministries in the Eastern churches remained stable. In the West, however, there was considerable theological development on ordained ministries, specifically on the distinctions between the episcopate and the presbyterate.

## 6.1 The Eastern churches under the Ottomans

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Middle Eastern birthplace of Christianity had become Muslim territories, with the Eastern Christians a significant but persecuted community. Under Ottoman rule, the Eastern churches acquired some level of security within the Ottoman Empire as an autonomous self-governing religious community styled a ‘millet’, which existed from 1300 to 1923. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Patriarch of Constantinople became the religious and administrative leader of the Byzantine churches, styled the ‘Greek Orthodox nation’ which encompassed all the Eastern Orthodox subjects of the empire. It provided some protection and some autonomy within what was otherwise a hostile political context. While the oppressive millet system bears no relationship to the feudal context of the Western church, like feudalism it did confer a certain civil status to Eastern clergy, especially the archbishops and bishops.

## 6.2 Theological developments on the episcopate and presbyterate

From the second-century *Apostolic Tradition* onwards, an increasingly significant image for the ministry of the bishop was drawn from the imagery of the Levitical priesthood, of which

Christ is the High Priest. As the Eucharist became primarily understood as a sacrifice, its celebrant – the bishop then later the presbyter – became primarily understood as a *sacerdos* or priest rather than pastor or teacher.

In later Western medieval sacramental theology, however, the 'priestly' or sacerdotal celebrant was no longer identified with the episcopate but the with presbyterate. Bishops were understood as priestly because of their earlier ordinations as sacerdotal presbyters. While the different minor and major orders of the church were increasingly described in relationship to the Eucharist, the episcopate was understood in relationship to leadership and governance within an ongoing feudal context. It was an open theological question whether the episcopate was even part of holy order in the way that the presbyterate was, as the episcopate was not primarily directed to eucharistic presidency but to governance. Scholastic theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, maintained that the sacrament of ordination did not include the episcopate. From the Western medieval ordination rites until the reforms following the Second Vatican Council, the liturgy for consecration of a bishop was not within the ordination liturgies with presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, and the other ministries, but rather within the non-sacramental rites for the installations of abbots and abbesses, the coronation of monarchs, etc.

The Western medieval theology of the episcopate had further consequences. For example, the threefold major orders were identified as presbyter, deacon, and subdeacon, with the four minor orders of acolyte, exorcists, lector, and doorkeeper adding up to seven orders. The subdiaconate was moved from minor order to a major order, thus maintaining the numeric threefold major orders. Given that *sacramentally* there was no distinction between a Western bishop and a presbyter, there were instances in the late medieval church of monastic presbyter-abbots who, with papal permission, ordained monks in their monasteries as subdeacons, deacons, and presbyters (Crumb 1963: 1–9). As Kenan Osborne summarizes:

> A debate arose among the theologians and the Church lawyers on the 'power to ordain'. It became quite an open question, and one finds in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries priests ordaining to the priesthood. This could only happen if the presbyter was seen as the apex of the priesthood. (Osborne 1988: 193)

The Western medieval identification of the presbyter as the primary sacerdotal or 'priestly' minister stands in contrast to ongoing Eastern and the earlier Western patristic and early medieval theologies of ministry. While in the Eastern churches presbyters conferred the final baptismal anointing, there is no evidence of presbyters in the West conferring confirmation.

In the East, however, the relative places of bishops and presbyters remained as they were in classic antiquity, with no corresponding innovations around the theology and structure of ministry as experienced in the West.

## 6.3 Ministries of women

While there were no Western deaconesses in this period, the few references in the later medieval sources signal that a diaconate for women existed at least in the memory of the medieval church until the twelfth century (Macy, Ditewig and Zagano 2011: 15–17).

In this era, the Byzantine churches had ceased ordaining women to the diaconate altogether. By contrast, in the Armenian Apostolic Church there is continuing evidence of the ordination of monastic women as deaconesses (Oghlukian 1994: 14–15).

## 6.4 What did Christian ministers do during this period?

While Eastern bishops had a role within the Ottoman millet system, their episcopal roles within their dioceses remained stable. In the Western churches, bishops had a role within medieval feudal societies. While in their dioceses the bishops ordained presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, and those in the minor orders, they did so at the behest of the feudal nobility. Bishops continued to preside at the baptism and the Eucharist not on account of their episcopal ordinations but rather because of their prior ordination to the presbyterate, regarded as highest ‘priestly’ office. Monastic and parish presbyters were practically – and theologically – the primary ordained ministers.

Parish presbyters, East and West, remained the primary ordained ministers in the lives of most Christians in this period, baptizing newborn babies, absolving sinners, anointing the dying, burying the dead, preaching to the best of their abilities, and celebrating the Eucharist. Western bishops continued to confer the sacrament of confirmation whenever they were able to visit towns and villages, which seems to have been rare. By contrast, for centuries Eastern presbyters continued to preside at the entire rite of initiation.

The roles of presbyters in the Western monasteries was significant, as the Eucharist was celebrated, privately, multiple times throughout the day, including Sundays and feast days. The monastic communities included deacons, subdeacons, and those in the minor orders.

The role of presbyters in the medieval Western church was enhanced following the establishment of the mendicant orders which emerged from the early thirteenth century, specifically the Dominican and Franciscan friars. The mission and preaching of the mendicant presbyters were significant in the lives of ordinary Western Christians, much to the consternation of the parish clergy. The mendicant orders emerged at around the same time as the new medieval universities were being established, where they played pivotal roles as theologians, such as the Franciscans Bonaventure (1121–1274), John Duns

Scotus (1265–1308), and William of Ockham (1287–1347), as well as Dominican scholars such as Albertus Magnus (c. 1200–1280) and the pre-eminent medieval theologian, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

The Western Church in this era produced exceptional episcopal theologians such Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1033–1109), Peter Lombard the Bishop of Paris (1096–1160), Ivo the Bishop of Chartres (c. 1040–1142), and Stephen Langton the Archbishop of Canterbury (1150–1228).

The Eastern Church in this period had significant ordained theologians who tended to be monastic and episcopal. John XI Bekkos (c. 1225–1296) was a Patriarch of Constantinople. Gregory Palamas (c. 1296–1359) was a monk and later Archbishop of Thessaloniki. Gennadios Scholaris (1400–c. 1473) was Patriarch of Constantinople. Mark of Ephesus (1392–1444) was the Archbishop of Ephesus.

Like the Eastern Church, the Western Church knew married parish priests for centuries. From the early thirteenth century, however, monastic celibacy was imposed on Western parish clergy. In part this was to deal with certain abuses, such as the sons of priests inheriting parishes, especially in a feudal context. It was equally linked to priestly purity in relationship to daily eucharistic presidency.

## 6.5 Summary

This period witnessed significant changes in Western theology and deployment of ordained ministries. Of note is the theological shift from understanding the episcopate as the primary sacerdotal/priestly minister to the presbyterate. The identification of the subdiaconate as a major order preserved a numeric threefold ministry, but is otherwise an innovation. By the late medieval period, the Western and Eastern churches could no longer claim to share a common theology of ordained ministries.

Theological affirmations of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, and its presider as a sacerdotal minister, set the agenda of much of the Reformation debates on ordained ministries. The late Western medieval emphasis on the presbyterate would influence the reforms of Christian ministry in the sixteenth-century Reformation movements in a decidedly ‘presbyterian’ direction.

Eastern churches remained under the Ottoman Empire as oppressed minorities. Orthodox parish communities were led by presbyters who presided at Christian initiation, the Eucharist, and the pastoral rites of the churches (see Orthodox Pastoral Theology). The role of the bishops – theologically and pastorally – remained recognizable within the ancient Christian tradition.

# 7 From the Reformation to the early twentieth century

The series of Western reform movements in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had profound impacts on every aspect of church life, and in long-lasting ways on ordained ministries. The renewal of ordained ministry was on the agenda of every reforming movement, including the Council of Trent (1545–1563). The major theologians of the Reformation consistently looked to the New Testament for authentic models and structures of ordained ministries.

## 7.1 The Lutheran Reformation

Martin Luther was an Augustinian friar and presbyter before the Reformation began in 1517. His theological starting point – that salvation is a gift of God to be received by faith alone – had implications for all aspects of Christian life, including ordained ministries.

For Luther, whatever appeared to be a ‘work’ or human effort to effect salvation was rejected. Thus, the inherited understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice was rejected as a ‘work’. Consequently, if the Eucharist may not be understood as sacrificial, then its celebrant cannot be understood as sacerdotal. This pivotal insight would be shared by other Reformation traditions and marked a departure from the inherited Western sacramental theology of both the Eucharist and ordination.

In terms of a sacerdotal understanding of ministry, Luther identified the theological character or quality of priesthood/*sacerdos* not with the ordained but with all the baptized. Thus, the clergy are not given a sacramental quality or character in ordination that is not already given to every Christian in baptism. For Luther, ordination was not a sacrament, although formal appointment to office included election, examination, liturgical prayer, and the laying-on-of-hands; for Luther all of these were laudable apostolic customs to be retained.

In German states, no pre-Reformation bishops were willing to support the Reformation, and thus did not ordain clergy for the newly reformed churches. As a late-medieval thinker, Luther would have agreed that sacramentally there was no distinction between bishops and presbyters. Further, Luther knew of the late-medieval ordinations conferred by abbots who were presbyters. Thus, Luther had no theological difficulty in supporting the practice of presbyters ordaining new pastors for the Lutheran communities. Oversight of the work of the pastors was exercised by superintendents at the regional level. Despite the etymological correspondence between the Latin *superintendens* and the Greek *episcopos*, Lutheran superintendents were not a different order of ministry, nor were they understood to be the successors of the medieval bishops.

The Lutheran Reformation in some countries, however, did retain the ministries of bishops and presbyters in continuity with the medieval bishops, especially where the Reformation was a more conservative one, such as the Church of Sweden. Within the Lutheran tradition, from the beginning there have been different patterns of ordained ministries, reflected in the contemporary communion of churches in the Lutheran World Federation.

## 7.2 Anabaptists

The emerging Anabaptist movements from the early 1520s in Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands lived in contexts of persecution from other churches, notably those shaped by the Reformation. These small communities were often without church buildings and rejected any association with the state. Anabaptists did not have a paid, trained, and professional clergy. Anabaptist leaders – styled as ministers, elders, shepherds, or bishops – earned their living and dressed like everyone else in the community.

Among the Anabaptist movements, from the sixteenth century the Mennonite tradition has known various patterns of ministry, such as bishops/elders, preachers, deacons and deaconesses, and elders. There were diverse ways of appointing ministers, such as simple election, or appointment by liturgical prayer with the laying-on-of-hands.

In the Netherlands there is evidence of Mennonite women in the late sixteenth century serving the sick and the poor as deaconesses. Many of these deaconesses lived in community with one another. Like deaconesses of the early church, their ministry was to women and children. With the full immersion of adult candidates for baptism, deaconesses again had a role in the baptisms of women.

## 7.3 The Genevan Reformation

From 1536, the Genevan Reformation gave rise to the family of churches known as ‘Reformed’. This tradition owes its particular direction to the vision of John Calvin, a layperson. Calvin’s starting point on ministry was not the inherited seven-fold medieval orders and bishops, but rather Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians: ‘He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry […]’ (4:11). The permanent biblical ministries for Calvin were the pastors and teachers, which included the functions of the apostles, prophets, and evangelists. Calvin understood the New Testament titles of bishop, pastor, and minister to refer to a single ministry of word and sacrament. Calvin later added two lay ministries: the elders who took part in governance, and the deacons who engaged in charitable work and assisted the pastors. With Luther, Calvin rejected eucharistic sacrifice, and thus any sacerdotal understanding of ordained ministers who presided at the Lord’s Supper. With other Reformation traditions, Calvin abolished clerical celibacy.

The fourfold ordering of ministries – pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons – became one of the most enduring and influential of the Reformation far beyond Geneva. By contrast, in Scotland, John Knox, a disciple of Calvin, introduced a revised ordering of ministries of the newly-reformed Church of Scotland that departed from the Genevan model significantly. The 1560 Scottish Book of Discipline sets out a revised Reformed model: superintendents, ministers, doctors, elders, and deacons. Superintendents were regional ministers. In Hungary, however, for contextual reasons arising from its location in the Ottoman Empire, the Reformed Church has retained the office of bishop from the sixteenth century to the present.

Like the Lutheran churches, the churches shaped by John Calvin and the Genevan Reformation have from the sixteenth century lived with different patterns of ministry, reflected in the contemporary churches that belong to the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

## 7.4 The Council of Trent

While the Council of Trent (1545–1563) was the principal vehicle of the Counter-Reformation, it was very much an agent of reform and renewal within the Roman Catholic Church. A significant instance of the Council's reform agenda is seen in the area of ordained ministry.

The twenty-third session of the Council dealt with the sacrament of orders. It affirmed the medieval understanding of the presbyterate as the sacerdotal ministry. It affirmed sequential ordination through the minor and major ministries, with the medieval ordering of presbyter, deacon, subdeacon identified by the Council as 'from the very beginning of the church'. It condemned the loss of the major and minor orders in the churches shaped by the Reformation.

A significant reform of Christian ministry by the Council was around the formation of presbyters. Trent created seminaries for the formation and academic training of clergy within all dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church. Trent provided a new timetable for sequential ordination through the minor orders to the diaconate, linked with the seminary curriculum.

The Council accented the place of preaching in the life of the church. It further identified preaching as the primary task of bishops.

## 7.5 The Church of England

The reforms of ministry in England were relatively conservative. The threefold major ministry was restored as bishop, priest, and deacon, as warranted in scripture. The English reformers retained the historic succession of bishops from the medieval episcopate. The

minor orders were abolished, although for pastoral reasons the ministry of reader was retained. With the continental reforms, clerical celibacy was abolished and married parish priests became normative.

While the late medieval understandings of eucharistic sacrifice were rejected by the English reformers, the eucharistic rite in *The Book of Common Prayer* retained a limited use of sacrificial language. For the second order of ministry, the drafters of *The Book of Common Prayer* used the common English contraction of the Latin *presbyter* – priest – for the second order of ministry.

Anglicanism evolved into a global communion of churches from the seventeenth century. Fundamental to the communion between the Anglican dioceses across the world has been the mutual recognition of threefold ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons.

## 7.6 Methodism

The Methodist tradition began in the 1730s as a renewal movement within the Church of England, led by John Wesley, a priest. Gradually the Methodist movement became a distinct church with its own patterns of ministry. In England, Methodist leadership was exercised by conferences and their presidents, and locally by the ministry of elders.

When the movement spread to the American colonies in 1784, a new model of Methodist ministry evolved, that of superintendents and elders. While as a priest of the Church of England, John Wesley ordained the first superintendents, later called bishops, for the American church. This development represents another Western expression of episcopal ministry.

Methodism has evolved from its beginnings as a family of churches with different patterns of ministry, which is a characteristic of the churches of the contemporary Methodist World Conference.

## 7.7 Ministries of women

A recovery of women's ministries in the churches shaped by the Reformation began with the Mennonite communities in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century, especially the recovery of the office of deaconess. This ministry of Anabaptist women continued well into the twentieth century, and thrived as Anabaptist communities from Europe arrived in North America. The communities of deaconesses were often dubbed as 'Mennonite nuns'.

From the mid-nineteenth century there was a recovery of ministries of women by other churches shaped by the Reformation, and in particular the recovery of deaconesses. The first were the German Lutheran deaconesses, founded at Kaiserwerth in 1836. These deaconesses engaged in three areas of ministry: care of the sick and the poor, teaching,

and parish ministry. They were active in Germany, but also in the German missions in the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere.

The Kaiserwerth model inspired other churches shaped by the Reformation to restore deaconesses: the Nordic Lutheran churches, the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and beyond, as well as the Anglican and Methodist churches. Some churches ordained women as deaconesses in liturgies that were indistinguishable from the ordination of male deacons, while other churches did not consider the appointment of a deaconess as ordination. The deaconess movement was not only a recovery of a ministry for women, but also a significant recovery of *diakonia* as a missiological imperative for the churches.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the ordination of women to presbyteral ministries of word and sacrament began within the churches shaped by the Reformation. American Methodists began to ordain women to this ministry in 1880, and Presbyterians in the USA in 1893.

## 7.8 Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century bilateral conversations on ministry

In 1817, the Prussian Union of Churches brought together the Lutheran and Reformed communities into a single state church with a common liturgy. Effectively, Lutheran and Reformed ministries in Prussia were reconciled by the creation of the new church.

In the late nineteenth century, there were informal conversations between some English Anglicans and some Roman Catholics about the mutual recognition of one another's ministries. The result was a formal decision from the Roman Catholic Church in 1896, the apostolic letter of Pope Leo XIII, *Apostolicae curae*, which declared that all Anglican ordinations from the sixteenth century were 'absolutely null and utterly void'. While this instance of one church formally denouncing the ordinations of another is unique, in practice it occurred regularly between the churches shaped by the Reformation, notably by episcopal churches towards non-episcopal churches.

Soon after, the Church of Sweden and the Church of England began to explore the possibility of a full communion agreement, leading to a formal commission of the two churches in 1909. While there was agreement on the mutual recognition of one another's bishops and priests, a sticking point was the place of the diaconate, which no longer existed in the Swedish church. In the end it was regarded as a point of difference rather than a disagreement.

## 7.9 What did Christian ministers do in this period?

Despite the tremendous change and diversity that resulted from the Reformation, including diverse theologies of ministry and sacraments, Christian ministers from the sixteenth century onward continued to serve within their parishes or congregations in the traditions begun by the bishops and deacons/presbyters from the earliest house-churches: leading local Christian communities, preaching and teaching the gospel, presiding at baptism, caring for the sick, the dying, and the bereaved. Despite the best intentions of the major sixteenth-century Reformers, the Eucharist was not celebrated weekly in parishes and congregations, but normally only four times a year.

A significant change at the Reformation was the recovery of married clergy, and the emerging role of clerical spouses and the families of Christian ministers. The place of married parish clergy had never ceased in Eastern Christianity.

One of the common insights of the wider Western Reformation was the need of thorough formation for candidates for ordained ministry, both in the Roman Catholic Church as well as in the churches shaped by the Reformation. This was the era of the printing press – the new information technology – resulting in new and heightened levels of literacy that made such academic study of theology possible at a larger scale. These developments signalled a different kind of preparation for ministry from that of the late medieval church, whether of the seminary model initiated by the Council of Trent, or the university models of the churches shaped by the Reformation.

In the churches shaped by the Reformation, the Bible was being translated into the various European languages, with a fresh appreciation of the Hebrew Bible as well as the Greek New Testament, rather than the inherited Latin Bible, the Vulgate. The place of vernacular Bibles for teaching and preaching offered unparalleled levels of biblical literacy for Christian ministers and their communities.

Roman Catholic ministry continued in the same ways in parish settings. The place of the weekly Sunday Eucharist was more fundamental to Roman Catholic communities than those of the Reformation. New religious orders within the Roman Catholic Church gave wider scope to ordained ministry, e.g. the work of presbyters of the Society of Jesus, the Capuchin Friars, the Oratory of St Philip of Neri, the Augustinian Recollects, etc.

The beginnings of European colonialism coincided with the divisions of churches of Europe, now exported around the world. With the expansion of European Christianity, the clergy of the divided European churches became pastoral leaders to colonial communities. They also became missionaries and evangelizers to Indigenous communities around the world, often with disastrous effect. A related issue has been the collusion of the churches and their ministers in the mistreatment of enslaved peoples, particularly those trafficked from West Africa to Europe and to the Americas.

The theologians from the sixteenth century to the early twentieth century were largely ordained ministers amongst the churches shaped by the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Churches, Byzantine and Oriental.

From the Lutheran tradition, Martin Luther was a former priest and later pastor (1483–1546). By contrast, Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), one of the architects of the Reformation, was a layperson. Significant ordained theologians of the Lutheran tradition in this period are Andreas Osiander (1491–1556), priest and later pastor, and Philipp Spener (1635–1705), who inspired the Pietist movement. A significant nineteenth-century theologian was Peter Christian Kierkegaard (1805–1888), a Danish bishop.

From the Reformed tradition, the premier theologian John Calvin was never ordained. Subsequent Reformed theologians were pastors, such as Martin Bucer (1489–1551), Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), John Knox (1514–1572), Richard Baxter (1615–1691), and Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1838).

From the Anglican tradition, Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), Archbishop of Canterbury, was the architect of *The Book of Common Prayer*. The premier theologian of the Elizabethan era was Richard Hooker (1554–1600), a priest. The Caroline Divines of the seventeenth century included bishops such as Lancelot Andrews (1555–1626) and John Cosin (1594–1672). The nineteenth-century theologians of the Evangelical Movement included the ordained, such as Charles Simeon (1759–1836), a priest, and Bishop Henry Ryder (1777–1836). The theologians of the Oxford Movement tended to be priests, such as John Keble (1792–1866) and Edward Pusey (1800–1882).

Methodist ministers in this era were active as theologians, including John Wesley (1703–1791), George Whitefield (1714–1770), and Thomas Coke (1747–1814), who was first Methodist bishop in the USA. Helenor M. Davisson, the first woman to be ordained a deaconess in the Methodist Church USA (1823), is noted among nineteenth-century Methodist theologians.

The Tridentine and post-Tridentine theologians of the Roman Catholic Church were almost exclusively ordained, such as Desiderius Erasmus, priest (c. 1466–1536), Gasparo Contorini the Bishop of Belluna (1483–1542), Reginald Pole the Archbishop of Canterbury (1500–1558), Cornelius Jansen the Bishop of Ghent (1510–1576), and Robert Bellarmine SJ, the Archbishop of Capra (1534–1621). Many of the Roman Catholic theologians in this era were ordained members of the new religious orders, especially from the Society of Jesus. Among the episcopal theologians of the First Vatican Council (1869) were Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler (1811–1877), Marionite archbishop Boutros Boustani (1819–1899), and Federico Zinelli (1805–1879), who drafted the chapter on papal infallibility, *Pastor aeternis*.

While contemporary Orthodox theologians were largely episcopal, there were significant presbyter theologians, such as Paisius Wieliczkowski (1722–1794) and Gavrilo Stefanović (1680–1749). Among the episcopal theologians of this era were Gabriel Severus the Metropolitan of Philadelphia (c.1540–1616), Chrysanthus Notaras the Patriarch of Jerusalem (c. 1655–1731), Plato II the Metropolitan of Moscow (1737–1812), and Porphyrius Uspensky (1804–1885), the auxiliary bishop of Chigirin.

## 7.10 Summary

The four centuries of this section are the most consequential in terms of developments of Christian ministry. This period reflects little consensus on Western understandings of bishops. New and differing patterns of ministry were established in churches shaped by the Reformation. In this period, a common ministry of word and sacrament was effectively lost within Western Christianity, with further estrangement between Eastern and Western churches.

A direction quickly reflected in all the Reformation traditions was the abolishment of mandatory clerical celibacy, and a sign of support for the Reformation was for pastors to be married. A visual sign of support for the Reformation is seen in the contemporary portraits of Reformed clergy across the spectrum, namely a propensity for the clergy to be bearded, in defiance of the medieval practice that clergy be clean-shaven and tonsured (The Church Mouse 2022: 66–70).

A common renewal across the divisions was the deliberate training and forming of Christian ministers through the Roman Catholic seminaries and the universities and theological faculties of the churches shaped by the Reformation. New learning was exponentially supported by the printing press and the rise of literacy for Christian ministers and their congregations.

# 8 The first wave of the Ecumenical Movement to the eve of the Second Vatican Council

The 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, just prior to the First World War, is identified as the beginning of the modern Ecumenical Movement. During the conference, the spectacle of Christian disunity was identified as a block to authentic evangelism. Inspired by the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, the Faith and Order movement has from 1910 onwards pursued Christian unity on the basis of resolving church-dividing issues around the ‘faith’ (theology and doctrine) and ‘ordering’ of the churches (ecclesiology and ordained ministries).

The experience of Christian nations slaughtering one another in the First World War galvanized churches after 1918 to become agents of peace and reconciliation. Moreover,

to some, European Christian disunity was perceived as a factor that led to Christian nations being at war with one another. Healing Christian disunity became a priority, including church-dividing issues around ordained ministries.

## 8.1 Ecumenical reflection on Christian ministry

The first Faith and Order World Conference was held in Lausanne in 1927. It included significant delegates of churches from around the world. While the Roman Catholic Church was absent, there was a high representation from the Orthodox churches and the churches shaped by the Reformation to identify and address the dividing issues of faith and order.

Issues around theology, doctrine, and the 'faith' of the church were much easier to discuss in 1927. By contrast, the orderings of the churches and their differing theologies and structures of ministries have been a more a more long-term challenge.

## 8.2 Multilateral conversations on ordained ministries: United and Uniting churches

After the First World War there were fresh impetuses to create new united churches around the world in response to the urgency for Christian unity inspired by the Edinburgh Conference. In different parts of the world, separated churches in the same region – invariably those shaped by the Reformation – began to come together to form new united churches. A constant issue was the mutual recognition of one another's ministries. For the churches that took the step towards church union – especially the Presbyterian/Reformed, Congregational, and Methodist churches – recognition of one another's ministries of word and sacrament was achieved. Anglican churches were often present at the beginning of such conversations, but were not able to take the next step around mutual recognition of ministries which could not include the historic episcopate.

Plans of union that included the historic episcopate and the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons were much easier for Anglican churches. The first example is the Church of South India (CSI), inaugurated in 1947 after decades of study and debate within the Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches in South India. The result was the new united church, which included the threefold ministry of deacons, presbyters, and bishops within the historic episcopate. The bishops of the new church were elected and ordained from among the existing Anglican bishops and priests, and from the ordained ministers from Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches. There was a mutual recognition of one another's ministries, and no re-ordination. Since 1948, the Church of South India has been a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (later the World Communion of Reformed Churches), and the World Methodist Conference. While many Anglicans outside India hailed the achievement of the Church of

South India, it was only recognized as a member church of the Anglican Communion in 1967, when all serving CSI presbyters and deacons had been ordained by bishops in the historic episcopate. The Church of South India remains the iconic example of the mutual recognition and reconciliation of ordained ministries.

## 8.3 Bilateral conversations on ordained ministries

Bilateral conversations between two separated churches have also produced fruit. After years of cooperation and mutual goodwill with the Anglican Communion, a number of Orthodox patriarchates issued statements recognizing Anglican ordinations as valid: Constantinople in 1922, Jerusalem and Cyprus in 1923, Alexandria in 1930, and Romania in 1936. These recognitions were not the fruit of ecumenical dialogue but were internal decisions of the various patriarchates, and did not lead to a full communion agreement.

The Church of Sweden and Church of England reached an agreement which led to full communion in 1922, based on the mutual recognition of one another's ministries, particularly bishops in historic episcopal succession from 1909. By the same process, the Church of England and the Church of Finland entered into full communion in 1934, followed by the Estonian and Latvian Lutheran churches in 1938. It was the mutual recognition of one another's bishops and clergy that made possible these Anglican–Nordic Lutheran bilateral agreements of full communion.

After decades of conversation, the 1931 Bonn Agreement established a relationship of full communion between the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht and the Church of England, and later the Anglican Communion. The agreement was fifty years in the making, and hinged principally on the mutual recognition of the 'validity' of one another's ordinations, and thus the interchangeability of ordained ministries.

## 8.4 Ministries of ordained women

Within the churches shaped by the Reformation, a significant development in the twentieth century was the ordination of women to presbyteral ministries of word and sacrament, as distinct from the ministries of deaconesses. For example, the new United Church of Canada ordained the first woman as a minister of word and sacrament in 1936. Nordic Lutherans followed suit from the late 1940s. The Church of Scotland began to ordain women in 1949, and the Church of Sweden ordained its first female priest in 1958.

There was an instance of the ordination of a woman as an Anglican priest during the Second World War as an emergency measure during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. In 1944 the Bishop of Hong Kong ordained a deaconess, Florence Li Tim-Oi, to the priesthood to care for Anglicans in Macau. In 1948 the Lambeth Conference condemned

this development as ‘against the tradition and order and would gravely affect the internal and external relations of the Anglican Communion’ (Lambeth Conference 1948: Res.113).

Within Eastern Christianity in the early twentieth century there are limited but significant instances of the recovery of deaconesses. St Nectarios of Aegina (1846–1920), while Metropolitan of Pentapolis, ordained two women as deaconesses in 1911. Melitios Metaxakis (1871–1935), later Ecumenical Patriarch, is reported to have ordained deaconesses. These ordinations, however significant, remain isolated instances (Melling 2001: 157–158). Again, the Armenian Apostolic Church has had a continuous ministry of deaconesses since the ninth century within women’s monasteries in Armenia.

## 8.5 What did Christian ministers do in this period?

Christians in this era would have encountered ordained ministry in their local congregational or parish contexts. Ordained leaders led their communities in worship, especially Christian initiation, the Eucharist, and other regular liturgical prayer. They taught and preached, and offered pastoral care to the sick and the bereaved. Ordained ministers were also members of monastic and religious communities.

Ordained ministers served as chaplains during the two World Wars and other theatres of conflict. Clergy have served as chaplains in hospitals, schools, prisons, and other settings.

A significant change within the Oriental Orthodox churches occurred in 1948 when the Ethiopian Church became an autonomous church, no longer under the canonical authority of the Coptic Church and patriarch. The new autonomous church created five dioceses, each served by Ethiopian bishops. The first Ethiopian to be elected as Abuna or Patriarch was in 1951. The experience of episcopal ministry changed significantly within the new diocesan contexts.

Ordained ministers continued to be the primary theologians at this time: Reinhold Niebuhr was a pastor and Reformed theologian (1892–1971); Karl Barth, also from the Reformed tradition, was a pastor (1886–1968), and Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor (1906–1945). From the Anglican tradition, George Bell was a bishop (1883–1958), Frank Leslie Cross (1900–1968) was a priest, as was Austin Ferrer (1904–1968), and William Temple was Archbishop of Canterbury (1881–1944).

Significant Roman Catholic theologians in this period were priests, such as Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, a Dominican (1877–1964), Pierre Teihard de Chardin (1881–1955), Romano Guardini (1885–1968), Ronald Knox (1888–1957), Charles Journet (1891–1975), and Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk and priest (1915–1968).

Priests are among the significant Orthodox theologians of this period, such as Serge Bulgakov (1871–1944), Gala Galaction (1879–1961), Pavel Florensky (1882–1937), and

Nikolay Afanasiev (1894–1966). Within the Armenian Apostolic Church in this period, it is important to note the theological contribution of Catholicos Karelian I (1867–1952). Within the Coptic Church, it is important to note Habib Girgis, a deacon (1918–1951).

## 8.6 Summary

As in the previous eras, most ordained ministers continued to serve and lead parish or congregational communities. They were also significant teachers and theologians in this era. Many ordained ministers were beginning to serve as chaplains in hospitals, to members of the military, and in other arenas beyond the parishes and congregations.

Within the first half of the twentieth century, the churches shaped by the Reformation were ordaining women to the presbyteral ministries of word and sacrament.

Theologies and structures of ministry were on the agenda in the early years of the Ecumenical Movement in an effort to reconcile and recognize one another's ministries as part of the journey towards full Christian unity.

# 9 The second wave of the Ecumenical Movement to the present

The second wave of the Ecumenical Movement is associated with the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II, 1962–1965). The Council fully committed the Roman Catholic Church to the ecumenical endeavour as a vibrant partner in both multilateral and bilateral ecumenical dialogues. Subsequent ecumenical reflection on issues of ordained ministries has been consequential both internally within the Roman Catholic Church and externally in the work of its series of international bilateral dialogues mandated by the Second Vatican Council. In 1968, the Roman Catholic Church also became a full member at the multilateral level of the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order.

## 9.1 Roman Catholic reforms on ministry

The Second Vatican Council launched a significant renewal and reform of ordained ministries that were enacted in 1972 in the apostolic letter of Pope Paul VI, *Ministeria Quaedam*. The ancient minor orders of doorkeeper, exorcist, and subdeacon were abolished, with only the lector/reader and the acolyte remaining; significantly, the major orders were restored to the pre-medieval triad of bishop, presbyter and deacon. Further, the Council restored the episcopate as the primary sacerdotal ministry, which is shared with the presbyters, and not the other way around.

In the spirit of the Decree on Ecumenism, the Roman Catholic Church entered fully into the Ecumenical Movement, including, as noted above, full membership from 1968 in the multilateral table of the Commission on Faith and Order. Although the Roman Catholic

Church is not an official member of the World Council of Churches, it works closely with the Council at all levels. The Roman Catholic Church also committed itself to resolve its historic disagreements with other Christian churches, those shaped by the Reformation as well as with the Orthodox churches, both Eastern and Oriental. The way forward was through a series of bilateral theological dialogues, which inevitably included issues around ministry. The churches who were in dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church soon found themselves in bilateral dialogues with one another. Ordained ministries have been on the agenda of all the bilateral dialogues.

## 9.2 Ministries of ordained women

The deaconess movement in the churches shaped by the Reformation declined from the mid-twentieth century due to a variety of factors, but especially the ordination of women as ministers, pastors, priests, and bishops. From the 1960s, the ordination of women has been widely accepted in the churches of the Reformed, Methodist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, United and Uniting churches, and some evangelical and Anabaptist churches. The churches of the Anglican Communion began to ordain women to the diaconate – as opposed to the ministry of deaconess – and presbyterate on varying timelines from the 1970s, and as bishops from the late 1980s. The Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht have ordained women to the diaconate and the presbyterate, but not to the episcopate. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge disagreements and indeed divisions within these same church families over the ordination of women. There are disagreements within some conservative Protestant, evangelical, and Pentecostal churches around women in ordained leadership and ministries.

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1976 declaration, *Inter Insigniores*, effectively closed the question of the ordination of women as bishops and priests in the Roman Catholic Church, followed by Pope John Paul II's 1994 apostolic letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, stating that the Church has no authority to ordain women to the priesthood.

Under the pontificate of Pope Francis, the question of the ordination of women to the diaconate has been raised at the highest levels, particularly through two commissions to explore the possibility of female deacons in 2016 and 2020. To date, nothing has changed. The supporting historical and theological work produced by scholars such as Phyllis Zagano remain as comprehensive resources (Zagano 2016).

In the Orthodox Church, reflection on the ordination of women to the diaconate has borne fruit. The international meetings of Orthodox women in 1976 and 1984 called for conversations about the ordination of deaconesses. The Inter-Orthodox Consultation meeting in Rhodes in 1988 supported the restoration of deaconesses. In recent years there have been limited instances of monastic women being ordained as deaconesses. For instance, Archbishop Christodoulas, when he was Metropolitan of Volos, ordained a

nun as a deaconess in 1986. In 2008, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece announced its decision to restore the diaconate to women. In 2016, the (Eastern Orthodox) Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa announced his decision to ordain women to the diaconate. In 2017, he ordained five deaconesses in Congo, with more deaconesses in 2018 in Sierra Leone. There are hopes that the diaconate for women will be revived in the Orthodox Church more widely, with promotion and support of organizations such as the St Phoebe Centre for the Deaconess, as well as St Catherine's Vision, both located in the USA.

Within Orthodox theological circles, there has also been theological reflection on the ordination of women to the presbyterate. A recent instance is the 2020 publication, *Women and Ordination in the Orthodox Church: Explorations in Theology and Practice* (Thomas and Narinskaya 2020).

Within the Oriental Orthodox churches there have been developments. In 1981, Pope Shenuda authorized the creation of deaconesses within the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt and in the diaspora, particularly in North America and Australia. These deaconesses function as a religious order, rather than a strictly monastic order. Their ministries are pastoral and educational, and largely directed towards women and children. The ordination of Coptic deaconesses, however, does not include the laying on of hands, which remains only for deacons, priests, and bishops.

As noted, the Armenian Apostolic Church has had a continuous ministry of deaconesses from the ninth century, limited to monastic women. In September 2017, however, the Armenian Archbishop of Tehran ordained a deaconess who was not a nun, but a medical doctor and married, to serve as a 'parish' deacon (Tchilingirian 2018).

## 9.3 The Commission on Faith and Order (WCC)

Ordained ministries have long been on the agenda of the Commission on Faith and Order, most significantly in its two convergence texts: *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM) in 1982, and *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (TCTCV) in 2013.

BEM's treatment on ministry is grounded on its sections on baptism and Eucharist. It begins with an ecclesiological reflection on the calling of the whole people of God. The mission of the church requires Christians who are publicly and permanently responsible for pointing to the community's dependence on Jesus. Such ministers provide a multiplicity of gifts and are a focus of unity, and are thus constitutive for the life and witness of the church (1982: M 8). Just as Christ appointed apostles, Christ continues to choose and call Christians to ministry (1982: M 11). They are charged with the responsibility to assemble and build up the body of Christ, in which the Eucharist is the visible focus of the communion between Christ and the church (1982: M 13–14).

BEM reflects an ecumenical convergence on the Reformation disagreement on the sacerdotal or priestly understanding of ministry. It affirms the unique priesthood of Christ, and then the derivative priesthood of the church as a whole. From this ecclesiological principle, BEM affirms that the priesthood of the ordained is related to both the priesthood of Christ and of the priesthood of the church. Thus, ordained ministers 'may appropriately be called priests because they fulfil a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful' (1982: M 17).

BEM addresses the structures of ordained ministry and commends to the churches the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons as an expression of the unity the churches seek, as well as a means for achieving it (1982: M 21). BEM goes on to reflect on the concept of *episkopé*, associated first with the ministry of the apostles, and then to bishops. BEM identifies *episkopé* as an ecclesiological category:

> The Church as the Body of Christ and the eschatological people of God is constituted by the Holy Spirit through a diversity of gifts or ministries. Among these gifts a ministry of *episkopé* is necessary to express and safeguard the unity of the body. Every church needs this ministry of unity in some form in order to be the Church of God, the one body of Christ, a sign of the unity of all in the Kingdom. (BEM 1982: M 23)

BEM identifies all ministries, but particularly ministries of *episkopé*, as 'personal', 'collegial', and 'communal' (1982: M 6). This ecumenical usage of *episkopé* provided new language to describe ordained leadership in the churches that went beyond the binary categories of episcopal/non-episcopal. BEM challenges the churches to recognize that the practice of the succession of bishops is a way to recognize a continuity in apostolic faith, worship, mission, and *episkopé* in churches that have not retained the historic episcopate. Likewise, churches that do not have bishops in their polity are encouraged to recognize that *episkopé* is already being exercised in different ways in their communities.

On the succession of the apostolic tradition, BEM draws attention to apostolic faith, the proclamation and fresh interpretation of the gospel, the celebrations of baptism and the Eucharist, the transmission of ministry, communion in prayer, love, and suffering, service to the sick and the needy, and the unity among the local churches (1982: M 34).

On the issue of apostolic succession of ministers, BEM speaks of the 'succession in apostolic tradition', which is found in the apostolic tradition of the church as a whole; a succession of ministry is a powerful expression of the continuity of the church as a whole (1982: M 35).

BEM underlines the necessity of a mutual recognition of ordained ministries for the unity of the church, and is clear that such mutual recognition will require changes:

> In order to advance towards the mutual recognition of ministries, deliberate efforts are required. All churches need to examine the forms of ordained ministry and the degree to which the churches are faithful to its original intentions. Churches must be prepared to renew their understanding and practice of the ordained ministry. (BEM 1982: M 51)

BEM addresses the ministries of women and men in the church, and affirms:

> Where Christ is present, human barriers are being broken […] A deeper understanding of the comprehensiveness of ministry which reflects the interdependence of men and women needs to be more widely manifested in the life of the Church. (BEM 1982: M 18)

This inclusive statement is directed, however, to ministries arising from baptism. On the ordination of women, BEM notes that 'the churches draw different conclusions as to the admission of women to the ordained ministry' (1982: M 18). The lengthy commentary on the ordination of women concludes:

> The discussion of the practical and theological questions within the various churches and Christian traditions should be complemented by joint study and reflection within the ecumenical fellowship of all churches' (BEM 1982: Commentary M18).

Unlike the sections on baptism and Eucharist, BEM's treatment on ministry received the most mixed reception in the official responses of the churches. However, where BEM's work on 'ministry' was most conspicuously received was in the churches' global and regional bilateral dialogues, where it bore much fruit. BEM's teaching on ministry, especially in the historical episcopate, shaped the 1992 Porvoo full communion agreement between the Anglican churches in the British Isles and Ireland, and the Nordic Lutheran churches. The agreements between Lutherans and Anglicans/Episcopalians in the USA (1999) and Canada (2001) were likewise dependent on BEM.

Faith and Order's 2013 convergence statement, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (TCTCV), is an ecclesiological text that treats ordained ministries within this particular context. Published twenty years after BEM, TCTCV harvests the responses to BEM on ministry, as well as the insights of the international bilateral agreements since 1982, especially as they pertain to ecumenical and ecclesiological issues on ministry, including the influence of BEM itself. The Commission on Faith and Order observes:

> Ecumenical dialogue has repeatedly shown that issues related to ordained ministry constitute challenging obstacles on the path to unity. If differences such as those relating to the priesthood of the ordained prohibit full unity, it must continue to be an urgent priority for the churches to discover how they can be overcome. (Commission on Faith and Order 2013: 45)

TCTCV takes the reflection on the ministry of oversight/*episkopé* to new directions for Faith and Order, namely towards a universal ministry of primacy associated with the Bishop of Rome (2013: 55, 56, 57). And so Faith and Order asks:

> If, according to the will of Christ, current divisions are overcome, how might a ministry that fosters and promotes the unity of the Church at the universal level be understood and exercised? (Commission on Faith and Order 2013: 57)

## 9.4 The Leuenberg Agreement, 1973

Working closely with the Commission on Faith and Order were members of the European theological dialogues between Lutheran, Reformed, United, and Methodist churches, with the pre-Reformation Waldensians and the Czech Brethren. The goal was to establish a full communion agreement, achieved in the Leuenberg Agreement in 1973.

The Leuenberg process led to the healing of historic disagreements in Europe, and to the creation in 1996 of the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), in which these churches mutually recognized one another as churches. Unlike the United and Uniting churches, however, the CPCE churches retained their separate historic identities (CPCE 1973: note 43).

One of the significant consequences of both the Leuenberg Agreement and CPCE has been the mutual recognition and the sharing of the ordained ministries between the churches.

## 9.5 Western bilateral dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church

The most substantive bilateral discussions on ordained ministries with the Roman Catholic Church have been those with the Lutheran World Federation, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Methodist Council, and the Anglican Communion. The results of these dialogues have been brought together in Cardinal Walter Kasper's *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (2009). Ordained ministry is treated within the third and longest section of the book, within

ecclesiology and missiology. *Harvesting the Fruits* acknowledges that 'Ministry in the Church is one of the most discussed and – despite many new insights and convergences – one of the enduring controversial issues in ecumenical dialogue' (Kasper 2009: 99).

However, the four bilateral partners of the Roman Catholic Church, and with each other, have identified significant convergences on ordained ministries. All four dialogues affirm an ecclesiology of communion/*koinonia*, and the place of the mission of the whole church as necessary convergences in order to discuss ordained ministries. The four bilateral dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church differ from one another on questions of structure, especially the place of bishops. The same differences are also raised by Lutherans, Reformed, Methodists and Anglicans in their bilateral dialogues with one another, especially around episcopacy. While not all four partners name ordination as a sacrament, all have identified convergences on the constitutive elements of ordination: it is celebrated through the laying-on-of-hands, prayer, and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, and within the community which gives its assent to the candidate. It is the living Christ who bestows ministry in the community.

While disagreement on the nature of episcopacy remains, the ecclesiological principle of *episkopé* as the exercise of oversight is affirmed in the dialogues. Moreover, *episkopé* is identified as an instrument of communion or *koinonia*. Following BEM, the ministries of *episkopé* are described as exercised in personal, collegial, and communal ways in the life of the churches, connected with the laity in structures of synodality and collegiality.

While most of the national churches of the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the Anglican Communion, and the World Communion of Reformed Churches have welcomed the ordination of women, *Harvesting the Fruits* signals this development as a partial obstacle to unity, specifically between the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, no doubt because of the significant convergences already identified on the presbyterate and the episcopate.

## 9.6 Orthodox bilateral dialogues with Western churches

From the 1920s onwards, the Orthodox churches have been active contributors in the search for Christian unity. They have been vital participants in the Commission on Faith and Order from the beginning, and welcomed bilateral dialogues with Western churches, both the Roman Catholic Church and the churches shaped by the Reformation.

The Orthodox–Roman Catholic dialogue completed its agreed statement on 'The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church' in 1988. This agreement on ordained ministries needs to be read in the light of its earlier work on ecclesiology, Eucharist, sacraments, and the unity of the church. The major disagreement in this text is the question of primacy in general, and the primacy of the Bishop of Rome in particular.

The International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue (ICAOTD) gave particular attention to ordained ministries in its 2006 Cyprus Agreement (CA), 'The Church of the Triune God'. CA outlines a number of lay and ordained ministries – including the diaconate – that may include women and men. The disagreements between Anglican and Orthodox are on the ordination of women to the ministries of the presbyterate and the episcopate. And yet in its conclusion on the ordination of women, the ICAOTD states:

> Given that there is no conciliar teaching on the priestly ministries of women, we need to consider the extent to which our differences on this matter constitute heresies which justify division among Christians. (CA 2006: VII.38.iii)
>
> If the ordination of women does not constitute a heresy, we need to ask to what extent the ordination, or non-ordination, of women affects our communion with one another. If our differences on this matter can be contained within Christian communion (koinonia), then we must ask what might be the next steps along the path to unity between Anglicans and Orthodox. (CA 2006: VII.38.iv)

The Lutheran–Orthodox Theological Commission published its Common Statement on 'The Mystery of the Church: Ordained Ministry/Priesthood' (OM/P) in 2017. It was the final topic in a series of agreed statements from 2000 onwards on ecclesiology, sacraments, salvation, Eucharist and ecclesiology, and mission. OM/P begins with a quotation from the 2000 Agreed Statement on Word and Sacraments: 'we affirm together that the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments by the ordained ministry in the church are among the most important marks of the church' (2017: I.1.1).

OM/P was able to affirm much in common. Both Lutherans and Orthodox affirm BEM's insight that the church requires oversight exercised 'personally, collegiality and communally'. For Lutherans, there is a flexibility in how these three functions are structured in the different churches. The Orthodox identify the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon as given by Christ, and thus unchangeable.

On apostolic succession, the Orthodox identify the unbroken succession of ordination from the Apostles as essential. Lutheran members of the dialogue would welcome the historic episcopate for the sake of love and good order, not because its ministries are defective without it.

The unresolved issue in OM/P is the ordination of women. The Orthodox members of the dialogue state: 'It has been the unanimous consensus of the Church, everywhere, always, and by all, that only men can serve in the Ordained Ministry' (2017: A.51). The Lutheran decisions to ordain women emerge from the evidence of women in ministry in the churches mentioned in the New Testament. While the 'priesthood of all believers' is

distinguished from the ordained ‘priesthood’, for Lutherans anyone who is baptized may be called to ordination. The text concludes: ‘At present, Orthodox and Lutherans recognize that the issue of the ordination of women separates them’ (2017: C.61.14).

## 9.7 The renewal of the diaconate

An instance of renewal in many Western churches has been the recovery of the diaconate as a full and equal order of ministry. Moreover, *diakonia* is identified a constituent element of the mission of the church. (For an in-depth treatment of this renewal in Protestantism, see Protestant Recovery of Deacons and Deaconesses.)

A direction from the Second Vatican Council to renew the diaconate included the possibility for married men to be ordained as permanent deacons. These initiatives identify the distinctive role of the deacon in the church as much more than a stage towards the presbyterate.

Other churches have also established a permanent diaconate, particularly Anglican, Methodist, and Lutheran churches. Questions around the recovery of a permanent diaconate raise both theological and pastoral issues about the ongoing practice of the ‘transitional’ diaconate for those candidates for presbyteral ministry.

*Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* spends little time on the ministry of deacons, as it has not been an historic church-dividing issue. And yet BEM does reflect a wider renewal of the diaconate: ‘Deacons represent to the Church its calling as servant in the world’ (1982: M 31). The commentary notes the recovery of the diaconate in the churches as a ministry in its own dignity. The diaconate may signal a way forward to unity: ‘As the churches move closer together there may be united in this office ministries now existing in a variety of forms and under a variety of names’ (1982: M Commentary 31). Faith and Order reflection has identified the distinctive ministry of the deacon with the ecclesiological recovery of *diakonia* as a permanent characteristic of the church.

The inclusion of women as deaconesses within Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches signals a different kind of renewal of the diaconate. Such a direction from the Roman Catholic Church would give a similar signal. The presence of women in the diaconate may lead to a profound renewal of the church and its mission/*diakonia*.

## 9.8 Ethical issues around Christian ministry

Recent decades have witnessed a series of ethical issues centred around Christian ministers that will shape perceptions, selection, and training of clergy for decades.

If the marriages of the ordained were an ethical issue for the churches shaped by the Reformation, the divorces and remarriages of clergy, especially in the churches shaped

by the Reformation, have been contemporary challenges for those churches. Whether the divorced and remarried may remain within the clergy is an ethical issue for many churches.

Both the ordination and non-ordination of women remains an ethical issue within many churches, as well as a theological and ecclesiological issue. The inclusion or exclusion of the members of the LGBTQ+ communities as ordained ministers, especially those who are married, has become an acute ethical issue around ordained ministry and the churches.

A tragic ethical issue in many churches at the present time is the scope of pastoral and criminal abuse of children and vulnerable people perpetrated by ordained ministers. The extent of the abuse by members of the clergy has signalled a crisis for the churches. A related issue is the failure of the churches to respond adequately to the disclosures of abuse. Safeguarding training and criminal record checks of Christian ministers have become standard practices in many parts of the world.

The far-reaching consequences of abuse perpetrated by Christian churches and their ordained ministers against Indigenous peoples around the world, especially Indigenous children, and the historic collusion of the churches and their ordained ministers in colonialism – especially slavery – will have far reaching consequences on the perception of ordained ministries in the decades to come.

## 9.9 What are Christian ministers doing in this time?

In the current era, local congregations and parishes continue to be the primary locus for the exercise of ordained ministry. In the Global North, many local Christian communities have become smaller due to the demographics of serious decline in Christian affiliation. In many contexts Christian ministers may be serving a number of small communities. Some communities no longer have resident ministers.

A significant global recovery for many of the churches shaped by the Reformation has been the weekly celebration of the Eucharist, shaped by the modern liturgical movement, and a reception of the multilateral and bilateral dialogues on Eucharist and ministry.

In many parts of the world, pastoral formation for Christian ministry has focused not just on Christian theology and ecclesial polities, but on a significant formation in pastoral studies, often informed by the human sciences. In many parts of the world, theology and pastoral studies are taught ecumenically, with a mutual reception of pastoral practices, as well as a sense of pastoral collegiality beyond one's own church community. Whereas formation for ministry was once for people in their early twenties, candidates for theological formation and ordination often tend to be older, especially in the Global North.

Beyond parishes and congregations, Christian ministers can be found working as professionally-trained chaplains in hospital and other clinical settings, as well as in prisons, industries, airports, and the military.

In many places, Christian ministers are ‘bi-locational’, that is, working as Christian ministers while also working in other settings. Other ministers are ‘non-stipendiary’, serving local churches without any payment.

In contexts where Christianity is illegal, marginalized, or discriminated against, Christian ministers work hard to support their communities, often at the cost of their own lives, a tradition that goes back to the early centuries of the church. In other contexts, Christian ministers have been agents of social justice, embracing theologies of liberation.

At a time of accelerating technology, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, Christian ministers have made use of the new opportunities to create and sustain online ministry, if not online communities.

Christian ministers in this period continue to be theologians and teachers across the churches, East and West. Ordained Lutheran theologians in this period include Paul Tillich (1886–1965), Frank Senn (b. 1943), Antje Jackelén the archbishop of Uppsala (b.1955), André Birmelé (b. 1947), and Kenneth Mtata (b. 1971). Among the Reformed tradition are Frère Roger of Taizé (1915–2005), John McIntyre (1916–2005), and Lukas Vischer (1926–2008). Susan Durber has been the Moderator of the Commission on Faith and Order and is a current president of the WCC. Methodist theologians in this era who are ordained include Geoffrey Wainwright (1939–2020), Jacquelyn Grant (b. 1948), Wesley Ariarajah (b. 1941), and Tom Greggs, local preacher (b. 1980). Among the ordained Anglican theologians are Desmond Tutu, archbishop (1931–2021), N. T. Wright, bishop (b. 1948), Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury (b. 1950), and Emily Awino Onyango, from the Diocese of Bondo. Among the significant Anglican priests who are theologians are Paul Avis (b. 1947), Sarah Coakley (b. 1951), Charlotte Methuen (b. 1964), and Marianela de La Paz Cot.

The ordained are among the major Roman Catholic theologians in this period. They include Henri de Lubac SJ, cardinal (1896–1991), Karl Rahner SJ (1904–1984), Yves Marie Congar (1904–1995), Johannes Willebrands, cardinal (1909–2006), Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, Pope (1927–2022), Gustavo Gutierrez OP (b. 1928), Walter Kasper, cardinal bishop (b.1933), Hans Kung (1928–2021), and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988).

Most modern Orthodox theologians are priests rather than bishops. For instance, Georges Florovsky (1893–1979), Dimitru Stăniloae (1903–1993), John Myendorff (1926–1992), Alexander Schmemann (1921–1983) Andrew Louth (b. 1944), and John Behr (b. 1966)

are priests. Among the number of episcopal theologians, of note are Metropolitan Kallistos Ware (1934–2022) and Metropolitan John Zizioulas (1931–2023). Amongst the significant Oriental Orthodox ordained theologians of this period are Pope Shenouda III (1923–2012), Metropolitan Bishoy of Damietta (1942–2018), Catholicos Aram I (b.1947), Baby Varghese (b.1953), Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Coorilos (b.1965), and Shahe Ananyan (b.1982).

While this article is about ordained ministries, it is important to recognize the place of baptized Christian who are not ordained – or not canonically able to be ordained – but who are significant leaders in scholarship, theological education, church leadership, and ecumenical dialogue.

### 9.10 Summary

The second phase of the Ecumenical Movement generated more theological reflection on ordained ministries than any other era in the history of Christianity. While the goal of a reconciled and mutually-recognized ministry has not yet been achieved, the level of theological reflection on ministry has been significant, and in some instances has borne much fruit. This is seen especially within the churches shaped by the Reformation, and in achievements such as the United and Uniting churches, full communion agreements such the Leuenberg Agreement, or Anglican–Lutheran and Methodist–Anglican agreements in different parts of the world. Historic church-dividing issues on ordained ministry in the multilateral and bilateral dialogues have not been dealt with in isolation but within the wider context of ecclesiology, and especially mission.

In many parts of the contemporary church, the work of Christian ministers continues the life and work of their ancient forebears, another kind of ‘apostolic tradition’. An enduring inheritance for ordained ministry from the first century to the present day is the deep nexus between Christian liturgy, ministry, and mission.

## 10 Conclusion

There has never been a time in the life of the church where there has not been some expression of ecclesial ministry, from the embryonic ministries in the New Testament onwards. What would become the classical structure of ministry – bishop, presbyter, and deacon – emerged across the ancient churches by the end of the second century. This development happened without the benefit of a normative ecclesiology, a theology of ministry, central structures, conciliar decisions, or theological dialogue. What would become the threefold ministry emerged before the closing of the canon of the New Testament, and more than a century before the first ecumenical council in 325. As these ministries were further delineated and evolved, different theologies of ministry attached themselves to the particular offices and their exercise.

Until the sixteenth-century Reformation, both Eastern and Western churches shared the same historic ministries, despite differences such as the number of minor orders or married clergy, or the theological distinctions between bishops and presbyters. In the Reformation, with the new or revised patterns of ordained ministry, ecclesial ministries ceased to be mutually recognized and became concrete markers of the abnormal state of Christian disunity. Yet the journey of Christian unity in the past century has seen unprecedented theological reflections on ministry in order to heal the experience of Christian disunity. Ordained ministries, and the theologies and practices that accompany them, have been the topics of sustained theological and historical study within the conversations and dialogues of the Ecumenical Movement.

New issues around ordained ministries such as the ordination or non-ordination of women, and, more recently in some Western traditions, the inclusion of members of the LGBTQ+ community, have become new dividing issues within and between churches. Ethical issues have surfaced in all Christian traditions in one way or another that have included historic and current issues involving Christian ministers. In many parts of the church, churches and their ministers experience moral and legal issues that can only be healed by working, growing, and repenting together.

Beyond the scope of this article are the new Christian contexts that have evolved in the past two centuries, such as the Stone-Campbell Movement in the early nineteenth century in the USA, or the Salvation Army from the mid-nineteenth century in the United Kingdom, and the emergence of the evangelical and Pentecostal churches in both the Global North and the Global South. Within African Christianity, for instance, there are unique expressions of church life and ministry under the umbrella of the Organization of African Indigenous Churches, founded in 1978. African-initiated churches, such as the Kimbanguist Church or the Church of the Lord (Aladura), reflect enculturated models of leadership rather than the inherited colonial European structures. In the future, the structures of leadership and ministry in the more recent churches will need to be on the ecclesiological agenda of broader multilateral and bilateral conversations.

In light of the growing consensus on ecclesiology, ordained ministries have been the fruitful topic of theological and ecclesiology work, especially by ecumenical theologians and the multilateral and bilateral dialogues, regionally and globally. As the Commission on Faith and Order has stressed in TCTCV:

> Ecumenical dialogue has repeatedly shown that issues relating to ordained ministry constitute challenging obstacles on the path to unity. If differences such as those relating to the priesthood of the ordained prohibit full unity, it must continue to be a priority for the

> churches to discover how they can be overcome. (Commission on Faith and Order 2013: 45)

## Attributions

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## Further reading


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