



Chapter Title: Writings Opposed to Women's Ecclesiastical Duties

Book Title: Women in Early Christianity

Book Subtitle: Translations from Greek Texts

Book Editor(s): Patricia Cox Miller

Published by: Catholic University of America Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fgq5h.11>

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of man and woman, who filled with the Spirit Miriam, Deborah, Anna, and Huldah [see Exod 15:20–21; Judg 4:4; Luke 2:36–38; 2 Kgs 22:14–20], who did not judge it unworthy that your only-begotten Son should be born of a woman, who also in the tent of witness and in the temple appointed women as guardians for your holy gates; look now upon this woman, your servant, who has been chosen for the diaconate, and give her the Holy Spirit, and ‘purify her from every defilement of the flesh and spirit’ [2 Cor 7:1] so that she may worthily accomplish the work with which she has been entrusted, for your glory and the praise of your Christ, through whom be glory and adoration to you in the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.”

Writings Opposed to Women’s Ecclesiastical Duties

Presented here are representative examples of strictures against the performance of ecclesiastical functions by women, mainly functions pertaining to the priesthood.

Didascalia apostolorum 3.9

That a woman should baptize, or that one should be baptized by a woman, we do not recommend, for it is a transgression of the commandment, and a great danger to the woman who baptizes and to him who is baptized. For if it were lawful to be baptized by a woman, our Lord and Teacher himself would have been baptized by Mary his mother, whereas he was baptized by John, like others of the people. Do not therefore imperil yourselves, brethren and sisters, by acting contrary to the law of the Gospel.

Apostolic Constitutions 3.9.1–4

(1) And about a woman’s baptizing, we are informing you that there is no small danger to the women who attempt it. Therefore we do not advise it. For it is dangerous, or rather, it is illegal and impious. (2) For if “the man is the head of the woman” (1 Cor 11:3), he was chosen for

priesthood; it is not right to set aside the order of creation and leave what is chief to descend to the lowest part of the body. For woman is the body of the man, being from his side and subjected to him, from whom also she was separated for the sake of the production of children. He said, "For he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16). For the man is the ruler of the woman, since he is also her head. (3) And if in what came earlier we did not allow women to teach, how can we assent to their being priests, which is contrary to nature? For this is an error of Gentile atheism to ordain women as priests to the goddesses; it is not in the dispensation of Christ. (4) And also, had it been necessary for women to baptize, certainly the Lord would have also been baptized by his own mother, not by John, or when he sent us to baptize, he would have sent women with us as well for this purpose. But now, nowhere, neither by command nor in writing did he transmit this, since he knew the order of nature and the fittingness of things, being the Creator of nature and the Legislator of the arrangement.

Epiphanius, *Panarion* 79.2,3-4,1

In this passage, Epiphanius uses an attack on a group of women who were making offerings to the Virgin Mary as the occasion to discuss at length why women cannot be priests. For information on the specific group under attack, the Kollyridians, see Section V, "Marian Cult," below.

2,3 For to begin with, to whom is it not immediately obvious, <if he will> investigate the whole scope of the past, that their [i.e., the Kollyridians'] teaching and behavior are devilish, and their undertaking a deviation? Never at any time has a woman been a priest— (4) Eve herself, though she had fallen into transgression, still did not dare to undertake anything so impious. Not one of her daughters did, though Abel sacrificed to God at once, and, even though they were not accepted, Cain offered sacrifices before the Lord. Enoch pleased God and was translated. Noah made thank offerings to the Lord, as a token of gratitude, with the extra animals in the ark, in thanksgiving to the One who had preserved him. (5) The righteous Abraham offered God sacrifice, and Melchizedek the priest of God Most High. Isaac was pleasing to God, and Jacob made the best offering he could on the stone, by pouring oil from his flask. . . .

(6) And why name the throngs of those who sacrificed to God in the Old Testament? We find Ahitub sacrificing, and the sons of Korah, and the Gershonites and the Merarites, to whom the levitical order was entrusted. And the house of Eli, and his kinsmen after him in the household of Abimelech and Abiathar, Helkiah and Buzi, down to the high priest Joshua, and Ezra the priest, and the rest. And nowhere was a woman a priest.

3.1 But I shall go on to the New Testament. If it were ordained by God that women should be priests or have any canonical function in the church, Mary herself, if anyone, should have functioned as a priest in the New Testament. She was counted worthy to bear the king of all in her own womb, the heavenly God, the Son of God. Her womb became a temple, and by God's kindness and an awesome mystery was prepared to be the dwelling place of the Lord's human nature. But it was not God's pleasure [that she be a priest]. (2) She was not even entrusted with the administration of baptism—for Christ could have been baptized by her rather than by John. But John the son of Zacharias dwelt in the wilderness entrusted with baptism for the remission of sins, while his father served God as a priest and saw a vision at the time of the offering of incense.

3.3 Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, Thaddaeus, James the son of Alphaeus, Judas the son of James and Simon the Zealot, and Matthias who was chosen to make up the number of the Twelve—all these were chosen to be apostles and “offer the gospel” [Rom 15:16] <throughout> the world, together with Paul, Barnabas and the rest. And with James, the Lord's brother and the bishop of Jerusalem, [they were chosen] to preside over mysteries.

3.4 Successors to the episcopate and presbyterate in the household of God were appointed by this bishop and these apostles, and nowhere was a woman appointed. (5) Scripture says, “Philip the evangelist had four daughters which did prophesy” [Acts 21:9], but they were certainly not priests. And “Anna the daughter of Phanuel was a prophetess” [Luke 2:36], but not entrusted with the priesthood. For the words, “Your sons shall prophesy, and your daughters shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions” [Joel 3:1; Acts 2:17], required fulfillment.

3,6 <It is plain> too that there is an order of deaconesses in the church. But this is not allowed for the practice of priesthood or any liturgical function, but for the sake of female modesty, at either the time of baptism or of the examination of some condition or trouble, and when a woman's body may be bared, so that she will be seen not by the male priests but by the assisting female who is appointed by the priest for the occasion, to take care of the woman who is in need of it when her body is uncovered. For the ordinance of discipline and good order in the church has been protected with understanding and care, in proportion to our rule. For the same reason the word of God does not allow a woman "to speak" [1 Cor 14:34] in church either, or "bear rule over a man" [1 Tim 2:12]. And there is a great deal that can be said about this.

4,1 But it must be observed that the ordinance of the church required no more than deaconesses. It mentioned widows too, and called those of them who were still older, "elder," but nowhere did it prescribe "eldresses" or "priestesses." Indeed, not even the deacons in the hierarchy of the church have been commissioned to celebrate any mystery, but only to administer mysteries already celebrated.