

A Historical Digest on Women and the Diaconate

An Examination of How the Church Interpreted Scripture Regarding Deacons and Deaconesses Through History

**Prepared for the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North
America (RPCNA); Presented to the Presbytery of the Alleghenies**

November 2022

David Merkel

The Purpose of this Paper

The main purpose of this paper is to show how the formal roles women played in the church changed over time. This is motivated by what the RPTS professors asserted on the floor of Synod in 1888, when they confidently asserted that all churches had deaconesses since the apostolic era. They learned errors from other men who learned errors. Deaconesses first appeared in the Third Century AD. They were not peers of the deacons, typically not ordained, and they were modeled after the servant-widow of 1Tim 5, not 1Tim 3 or Ro 16. Only a tiny group of commentators¹ prior to AD 451 favored the interpretations used by RPCNA for female deacons, but even their deaconesses were not peers of the deacons. Post-Reformation, proponents of deaconesses mimicked that tiny group of commentators.

The early church viewed the deacons as male, citing Acts 6 and 1Tim 3. They viewed them as the successors to the Levites, and thus, they had to be male.

The results of this paper are summarized in the main paper "Women and the Diaconate," which stands on its own. This paper exists to flesh out the history section of that paper.

The Big Questions Regarding Deacons and Deaconesses as They Appeared in History

1. Were they ordained?
2. Were they modeled after 1Tim 3 or 1Tim 5? (Were there age limits? Did they only work with women? Did they have to be widows? Did they have to abstain from sex for the rest of their lives?)
3. Did they work with women only?
4. Were they peers with the deacons? Were they regarded as being in the same office?
5. Did many great theologians view the New Testament Diaconate as a successor office to the Levites of the Old Covenant, not meaning equivalence, but similarity of purpose?

The quick answers are: 1) Rarely, 2) 1Tim 5, 3) Yes, 4) No and No, 5) Yes.

Summary of Issues Affecting the Diaconate and the Church as a Whole

- Utter corruption of church offices by mid-third century. Pastors become bishops, modeled after high priests. Presbyters become priests. Deacons become servants of the bishop and lesser priests, and the office is a stepping stone to the priesthood.
- Though it was still one church, the Eastern and Western churches had different practices, and particularly with deaconesses, as the West generally didn't have them.
- Changes in mode of Baptism, and fewer converts, led to less need for deaconesses in the Eastern Church.
- Initially, widows as an order were often more prominent, whether there were deaconesses or not.
- The idea of celibacy as being a higher calling twisted married life, particularly for officers of the church, where eventually celibacy was required for ordained officers, and even some non-ordained servants of the church. This led to the creation of a non-ordained class of virgins. Given a number of scandals regarding virgins, monks, widows, etc., this eventually led to monasteries and cloisters, so as to separate them from the world, particularly the opposite sex. Where deaconesses existed in the Eastern Church they were eventually replaced by nuns.

¹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "School of Antioch." Encyclopedia Britannica, July 20, 1998.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/School-of-Antioch>.

Early Church History, before East and West Diverge

Shepherd of Hermas (c AD 90-100) – Vision 3-5

“Hear now with regard to the stones which are in the building. Those square white stones which fitted exactly into each other, are apostles, bishops, teachers, and deacons, who have lived in godly purity, and have acted as bishops and teachers and deacons chastely and reverently to the elect of God.”²

Note that the Shepherd of Hermas has the earliest list of offices outside of the Bible. Presbyters get mentioned in Vision 2-4.³ Also note that bishops, teachers, and deacons get mentioned twice, as the apostles are no more.

Clement of Rome (c AD 96) Clement to the Corinthians, section 42

“The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both therefore came of the will of God in the appointed order. Having therefore received a charge, and having been fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and confirmed in the word of God with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth with the glad tidings that the kingdom of God should come. So preaching everywhere in country and town, they appointed their firstfruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe. And this they did in no new fashion; for indeed it had been written concerning bishops and deacons from very ancient times; for thus saith the scripture in a certain place, ‘I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.’”⁴

The final quotation/allusion could refer to Isaiah 60:17b (I will also make your officers peace, And your magistrates righteousness.), Isaiah 66:21 (“And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites, says the LORD), or a conflation of the two. But that he considered the Old Covenant Scriptures to refer to deacons is notable. He viewed bishops as successors to the priests, and deacons as successors to Levites. As such deacons are male. This is one the earliest Christian writings that we have.

In other sections, he also mentions the following offices: presbyters, bishops and priests.⁵ If there had been deaconesses, Clement probably would have mentioned it. He was familiar with the Corinthian Church; his only extant epistle is to the Corinthian Church. It’s likely that he knew Peter, Paul, and maybe Phoebe. (Cenchrea is only a two hour walk from Corinth. It is also said that Phoebe visited the Roman Church with a copy of the Epistle to the Romans.) He writes with some detail about Peter and

² Unknown, “Shepherd of Hermas - Wikisource, the Free Online Library,” accessed October 4, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Shepherd_of_Hermas.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Clement of Rome, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume I: First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/First_Epistle_to_the_Corinthians.

⁵ Ibid. (Chapters 1, 44, 47, 54, and 57)

Paul's martyrdoms in Chapter 5. He cites the book of Romans at least four times in his letter (chapters 32, 35, 40, and 46).⁶ It's impossible he did not know about Phoebe.

This shows that the deacons were called Levites by Clement in the first century. Levites are male, so their deacons were male. That he does not mention any exception to this, it is likely that Phoebe was not a deacon or a deaconess.

Didache (c AD 100) Chapter 15:1-2

*Appoint for yourselves therefore bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved; for unto you they also perform the service of the prophets and teachers.*⁷

The word for men here is ἀνδρας, the exact same word as is used in Acts 6:3⁸. This is the earliest mention of the sex of deacons. This proves four things: 1) The writer of the Didache was using Acts 6:3 as a proof-text that they were deacons, and not some other office. 2) Deacons are male. 3) Deacons are important, mentioned in parallel with bishops. 4) In the early days, the offices were elected.

Pliny the Younger (c AD 113) Epistulae 10:96

The analogy of faith tells us that Scripture should interpret Scripture. But many commentators interpret Romans 16:1-2 through the lens of Pliny the Younger's letter to Emperor. (Examples would include: Alford, Barnes, Warfield, and many more.) They claim that they know there were deaconesses, because Pliny the Younger says so. Now, the Latin *ministrae* is as arguable as *diakonos* in the Greek. The semantic range is wide for both, and Pliny admits that he doesn't know much about Christianity. Pliny the Younger should have no impact on the interpretation of the Bible.

Here's what Pliny wrote:

*Quo magis necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quae ministrae dicebantur, quid esset veri, et per tormenta quaerere. nihil aliud inveni quam superstitionem pravam et immodicam.*⁹

We translate it:

I judged it so much the more necessary to extract the real truth, with the assistance of torture, from two female slaves who were styled servants, but I could discover nothing more than depraved and excessive superstition.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Joseph Barber Lightfoot and John Reginald Harmer, eds., *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987). Reprint of the original 1891 edition, page 234.

⁸ Ibid, page 224.

⁹ Gaius Plinius, "Pliny the Younger," accessed October 4, 2022, <https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/pliny.ep10.html>.

A more common translation is:

*I judged it so much the more necessary to extract the real truth, with the assistance of torture, from two female slaves, who were styled deaconesses: but I could discover nothing more than depraved and excessive superstition.*¹⁰

Here are several uses of ministrae, all from the same era in Roman history:

P. Ovidius Naso, Metamorphoses 9,324

*Dixit, et admonitu veteris commota ministrae
ingemuit. Quam sic nurus est adfata dolentem:*¹¹

*When she had ended the sad tale, she heaved
a deep sigh, in remembrance of her tried,
beloved servant; and her daughter-in-law
Iole kindly answered in these words:*¹²

Sextus Propertius, Elegies 3:6 (lines 15-18)

*tristis erat domus, et tristes sua pensa ministrae
carpebant, medio nebat et ipsa loco,
umidaque impressa siccat lumina lana,
rettulit et querulo iurgia nostra sono?*¹³

*Was the house sad, and her servants sad, carding thread, and she, herself
spinning among them, and pressing the wool to her eyes, drying their moisture,
and going over our quarrel in querulous tones?*¹⁴

M. Tullius Cicero, De Partitione Oratoria (section 78)

*Atque hae quidem virtutes cernuntur in agendo. 'Sunt autem aliae quasi
ministrae comitesque sapientiae; quarum altera quae sint in disputando vera
atque falsa quibusque positis quid sequatur distinguit et iudicat, quae virtus
omnis in ratione scientiaque disputandi sita est, altera autem oratoria.'*¹⁵

¹⁰ Gaius Plinius, "Pliny Book 10, Letter 96 (English)," accessed October 4, 2022,
<http://www.vroma.org/vromans/hwalker/Pliny/Pliny10-096-E.html>.

¹¹ P. Ovidius Naso, "Metamorphoses," accessed October 4, 2022,
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0959.phi006.perseus-lat1:9.324-9.417>.

¹² P. Ovidius Naso, "Metamorphoses," accessed October 4, 2022,
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0959.phi006.perseus-eng1:9.324-9.417>.

¹³ Sextus Propertius, "Elegies 3.6," accessed October 4, 2022,
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0620.phi001.perseus-lat2:3.6>.

¹⁴ "Sextus

Propertius (c.50 BC–c.15 BC) - The Elegies: Book III," accessed October 4, 2022,
<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/PropertiusBkThree.php>.

¹⁵ Marcus Tullius Cicero, Cicero, De Oratore ed. H. Rackham, vol. 349., "De Partiitione Oratoria" Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1942), p. 368.

*These virtues so far are displayed in action. But there are others which are so to speak the handmaidens and companions of wisdom ; of these one is displayed in debate, distinguishing truth from falsehood and judging the logical consequence of given premises—this virtue resides entirely in the method and science of debating; while the sphere of the other is oratory.*¹⁶

P. Ovidius Naso, Fasti 6 (lines 441-444)

*attonitae flebant demisso crine ministrae:
abstulerat vires corporis ipse timor,
provolat in medium, et magna 'succurrite!' voce
'non est auxilium flere' Metellus ait.*¹⁷

*Amazed the priestesses wept with streaming hair; fear had bereft them of bodily strength. Metellus rushed into their midst and in a loud voice cried, "Hasten ye to the rescue!"*¹⁸

The normal meaning of the word is servant, though the priestess reference from Ovid is interesting. Pliny was not familiar with Christians; we should not trust his judgment in the matter, much less let it modify our interpretation of Scripture.

There's one more reason to distrust Pliny. He tortured the slave girls to extract information from them. Hadrian succeeded Trajan as Emperor, and at that time it was still illegal to torture anyone but slaves for information (with a few exceptions, like treason). Citing Janne Pölönen in his work *Plebeians and Repression of Crime in the Roman Empire: From Torture of Convicts to Torture of Suspects* (page 228-229):¹⁹

*While it was legal to torture a citizen after condemnation if his crime was serious enough to merit a servile penalty, the underlying presumption of the Julian law is that none of the prohibited acts of public violence could take place until his guilt was established as a result of a fair trial. Whereas only slaves could be tortured as suspects about their own crimes, the basic rule remained constant at least from Augustus to Hadrian, albeit abused in maiestas²⁰ [DM: treason] inquisitions, that no free Roman citizen should be tortured before condemnation:
D.48.18.12: "Si quis, ne quaestio de eo agatur, liberum se dicat, diuus Hadrianus <res>cripsit non esse eum ante torquendum quam liberale iudicium experiatur."*

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 369.

¹⁷ P. Ovidius Naso, "Fasti, Book 6," accessed October 4, 2022, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0959.phi007.perseus-lat1:6>.

¹⁸ P. Ovidius Naso, "FASTI BOOK 6 - Theoi Classical Texts Library," accessed October 4, 2022, <https://www.theoi.com/Text/OvidFasti6.html>.

¹⁹ Janne Pölönene, *Plebeians and Repression of Crime in the Roman Empire: From Torture of Convicts to Torture of Suspects* (January 2004). *Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquite*, Vol. 51, pp. 228-229, 2004, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1331925>

²⁰ Unknown, "Law of Majestas - Wikipedia," accessed October 4, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_majestas.

“If someone, to avoid interrogation under torture, alleges to be free, the Divine Hadrian replied that he is not to be tortured before an action to determine his free status has been heard.”

One aspect of being an officer of the church is having sufficient freedom to pursue the task. The slave girls would not have had that freedom, and it's likely they weren't old enough as well. They may have been helpers of the church, but they certainly weren't deaconesses.

Ignatius of Antioch (c AD 115) from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Book 1

Letter to the Trallians, Chapter 7 (short version):

“He that is within the altar is pure, but he that is without is not pure; that is, he who does anything apart from the bishop, and presbytery, and deacons, such a man is not pure in his conscience.”²¹

Letter to the Philadelphians, Chapter 10 (short version):

“Since, according to your prayers, and the compassion which ye feel in Christ Jesus, it is reported to me that the Church which is at Antioch in Syria possesses peace, it will become you, as a Church of God, to elect a deacon to act as the ambassador of God [for you] to [the brethren there], that he may rejoice along with them when they are met together, and glorify the name [of God], Blessed is he in Jesus Christ, who shall be deemed worthy of such a ministry; and ye too shall be glorified. And if ye are willing, it is not beyond your power to do this, for the sake of God; as also the nearest Churches have sent, in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons.”²²

Letter to the Smyrnaeans chapters 12 and 13 (shorter version):

“The love of the brethren at Troas salutes you; whence also I write to you by Burrhus, whom ye sent with me, together with the Ephesians, your brethren, and who has in all things refreshed me. And I would that all may imitate him, as being a pattern of a minister [diakonias] of God. Grace will reward him in all things. I salute your most worthy bishop, and your very venerable presbytery, and your deacons, my fellow-servants, and all of you individually, as well as generally, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in His flesh and blood, in His passion and resurrection, both corporeal and spiritual, in union with God and you. Grace, mercy, peace, and patience, be with you for evermore!”²³

²¹ Ignatius of Antioch, “Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I, Letter to the Trallians, Chapter 7:45,” accessed October 4, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I.

²² Ignatius of Antioch, “Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I - Letter to the Philadelphians, Chapter 10,” accessed October 4, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_to_the_Philadelphians:_Shorter_and_Longer_Versions.

²³ Ignatius of Antioch, “Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I - Letter to the Smyrnaeans, Chapter 12,” accessed October 4, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_to_the_Smyrnaeans:_Shorter_and_Longer_Versions

I salute the families of my brethren, with their wives and children, and those that are ever virgins, and the widows. Be ye strong, I pray, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Philo, my fellow-servant, who is with me, greets you.”²⁴

Letter to Polycarp chapter 6 (shorter version):

“Give ye heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. My soul be for theirs that are submissive to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons, and may my portion be along with them in God! Labour together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; sleep together; and awake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God.”²⁵

Notes:

1. All the first names of deacons in the Epistles of Ignatius are male names. Burrhus was a deacon who was a close helper of Ignatius.
2. The view of Ignatius is that though the deacons are ruled by the bishops and presbyters, the members of the church are to be submissive to the deacons. This makes it unlikely that there could have been female deacons.
3. The hierarchy of the church is well-established hierarchy, which includes non-ordained virgins and widows who are not peers of the deacons.
4. At least at this point, clergy could have wives and children.
5. This is the same era as Pliny the Younger is ruling Pontus and Bithynia. That Ignatius does not mention the *ministrae* is significant, while he does mention virgins and widows. Ignatius would know a lot more about the practical structure of the church at that time than Pliny the Younger.

Polycarp (c AD 115) from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Book 1

In chapter 4 of Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians, this is said:

“Teach the widows to be discreet as respects the faith of the Lord, praying continually for all, being far from all slandering, evil-speaking, false-witnessing, love of money, and every kind of evil; knowing that they are the altar of God, that He clearly perceives all things, and that nothing is hid from Him, neither reasonings, nor reflections, nor any one of the secret things of the heart.”²⁶

²⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, “Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I - Letter to the Smyrnaeans, Chapter 13,” accessed October 4, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_to_the_Smyrnaeans:_Shorter_and_Longer_Versions

²⁵ Ignatius of Antioch, “Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I - Letter to Polycarp Chapter 6,” accessed October 4, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_to_Polycarp:_Shorter_and_Longer_Versions.

²⁶ Polycarp, “Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I - Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians, Chapter 4,” accessed October 4, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_of_Polycarp_to_the_Philippians.

And in chapter 5 -- The Duties of Deacons, Youths, and Virgins:

“Knowing, then, that “God is not mocked,” we ought to walk worthy of His commandment and glory. In like manner should the deacons be blameless before the face of His righteousness, as being the servants of God and Christ, and not of men. They must not be slanderers, double-tongued, or lovers of money, but temperate in all things, compassionate, industrious, walking according to the truth of the Lord, who was the servant of all. If we please Him in this present world, we shall receive also the future world, according as He has promised to us that He will raise us again from the dead, and that if we live worthily of Him, “we shall also reign together with Him,” provided only we believe. In like manner, let the young men also be blameless in all things, being especially careful to preserve purity, and keeping themselves in, as with a bridle, from every kind of evil. For it is well that they should be cut off from the lusts that are in the world, since “every lust warreth against the spirit;” and “neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God,” nor those who do things inconsistent and unbecoming. Wherefore, it is needful to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ. The virgins also must walk in a blameless and pure conscience.”²⁷

Four notes:

1. Widows are mentioned as an order.
2. Virgins are also mentioned, which is an example of what will morph into female monasticism.
3. There is not a hint of female deacons. Deacons are mentioned alongside the presbyters as those to which the saints must be subject “as unto God and Christ.” This means the deacons can’t be female.
4. This is the same era as Pliny the Younger is ruling Pontus and Bithynia. That Polycarp does not mention the *ministrae* is significant, while he does mention virgins and widows. Polycarp would know a lot more about the practical structure of the church at that time than Pliny the Younger.

Justin Martyr (c AD 155-157) – In Justin’s First Apology, Chapter 65 it reads,

“And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.”²⁸

There is a similar phrase in Chapter 67²⁹. It would not be possible for women to serve the Lord’s Supper, so it is likely the *diakonoí*³⁰ mentioned here are male.

²⁷ Ibid, Chapter 5.

²⁸ Justin Martyr, “A Collection of Diglot Texts of Justin Martyr. - Biblical Criticism,” accessed October 4, 2022, <https://earlywritings.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=1874>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Irenaeus (C AD 175) Against Heresies, Book 1.13.5 from the Ante-Nicean Fathers, Book 1

“Moreover, that this Marcus compounds philters and love-potions, in order to insult the persons of some of these women, if not of all, those of them who have returned to the Church of God — a thing which frequently occurs — have acknowledged, confessing, too, that they have been defiled by him, and that they were filled with a burning passion towards him. A sad example of this occurred in the case of a certain Asiatic, one of our deacons, who had received him (Marcus) into his house. His wife, a woman of remarkable beauty, fell a victim both in mind and body to this magician, and, for a long time, travelled about with him. At last, when, with no small difficulty, the brethren had converted her, she spent her whole time in the exercise of public confession, weeping over and lamenting the defilement which she had received from this magician.”³¹

Against Heresies, Book 3.12.10

“And still further, Stephen, who was chosen the first deacon by the apostles, and who, of all men, was the first to follow the footsteps of the martyrdom of the Lord, being the first that was slain for confessing Christ, speaking boldly among the people, and teaching them, says...”³²

There are two points here: 1) at this point in time, some deacons still had wives with whom they lived, 2) Irenaeus viewed Acts 6 as the first deacons, thus showing that deacons are supposed to be male.

Clement of Alexandria (c AD late second to early third centuries) from the Ante-Nicean Fathers, Book 2

The Instructor, Book 3, Chapter 11

“Innumerable commands such as these are written in the holy Bible appertaining to chosen persons, some to presbyters, some to bishops, some to deacons, others to widows, of whom we shall have another opportunity of speaking. Many things spoken in enigmas, many in parables, may benefit such as fall in with them. But it is not my province, says the Instructor, to teach these any longer. But we need a Teacher of the exposition of those sacred words, to whom we must direct our steps.”³³

³¹ Irenaeus. n.d. “Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I: Against Heresies, Book 1.13.5” Wikisource. Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/IRENAEUS/Against_Heresies:_Book_I.

³² Irenaeus, Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I/IRENAEUS/Against Heresies: Book III/Chapter XII, Section 10 - Wikisource, En.wikisource.org. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/IRENAEUS/Against_Heresies:_Book_III/Chapter_XII. Accessed 5 October 2022.

³³ Clement of Alexandria, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Book II: Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, Book 3, Chapter 11.” Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_II/The_Instructor/Book_III.

Note that widows are highlighted next to the ordained offices.

Stromata Book 6:13

“Those, then, also now, who have exercised themselves in the Lord’s commandments, and lived perfectly and gnostically according to the Gospel, may be enrolled in the chosen body of the apostles. Such an one is in reality a presbyter of the Church, and a true minister (deacon) of the will of God, if he do and teach what is the Lord’s; not as being ordained by men, nor regarded righteous because a presbyter, but enrolled in the presbyterate because righteous. And although here upon earth he be not honoured with the chief seat, he will sit down on the four-and-twenty thrones, judging the people, as John says in the Apocalypse.”³⁴

This highlights the two main offices – presbyters and deacons. Note that righteousness is what is prized, not ordination.

Stromata Book 7:1

“Similarly, also, in the Church, the elders attend to the department which has improvement for its object; and the deacons to the ministerial. In both these ministries the angels serve God, in the management of earthly affairs; and the Gnostic himself ministers to God, and exhibits to men the scheme of improvement, in the way in which he has been appointed to discipline men for their amendment.”³⁵

Again, elders and deacons, and Clement of Alexandria has it right. The officers are male, and the elders deal with the spiritual matters, and the deacons with the temporalities of the church.

Tertullian (c AD late second, early third century) – On the Veiling of Virgins

It is not permitted to a woman to speak in the church; but neither (is it permitted her) to teach, nor to baptize, nor to offer, nor to claim to herself a lot in any manly function, not to say (in any) sacerdotal office. Let us inquire whether any of these be lawful to a virgin. If it is not lawful to a virgin, but she is subjected on the self-same terms (as the woman), and the necessity for humility is assigned her together with the woman, whence will this one thing be lawful to her which is not lawful to any and every female? If any is a virgin, and has proposed to sanctify her flesh, what prerogative does she (thereby) earn adverse to her own condition? Is the reason why it is granted her to dispense with the veil, that she

³⁴ Clement of Alexandria, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. II, The Stromata 6:13, or Miscellanies by Clement of Alexandria,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_II/CLEMENT_OF_ALEXANDRIA/The_Stromata,_or_Miscellanies/Book_VI.

³⁵ Clement of Alexandria, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. II, The Stromata 7:1, or Miscellanies by Clement of Alexandria,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_II/CLEMENT_OF_ALEXANDRIA/The_Stromata,_or_Miscellanies/Book_I.

may be notable and marked as she enters the church? That she may display the honour of sanctity in the liberty of her head? More worthy distinction could have been conferred on her by according her some prerogative of manly rank or office! I know plainly, that in a certain place a virgin of less than twenty years of age has been placed in the order of widows! Whereas if the bishop had been bound to accord her any relief, he might, of course, have done it in some other way without detriment to the respect due to discipline; that such a miracle, not to say monster, should not be pointed at in the church, a virgin-widow! the more portentous indeed, that not even as a widow did she veil her head; denying herself either way; both as virgin, in that she is counted a widow, and as widow, in that she is styled a virgin. But the authority which licenses her sitting in that seat uncovered is the same which allows her to sit there as a virgin: a seat to which (besides the "sixty years" not merely "single- husbanded" (women)--that is, married women--are at length elected, but "mothers" to boot, yes, and "educators of children;" in order, forsooth, that their experimental training in all the affections may, on the one hand, have rendered them capable of readily aiding all others with counsel and comfort, and that, on the other, they may none the less have travelled down the whole course of probation whereby a female can be tested. So true is; it, that, on the ground of her position, nothing in the way of public honour is permitted to a virgin.³⁶

Three notes: 1) Tertullian says women can't hold any sacerdotal office. That includes being a deacon. 2) The 60-year minimum restriction on the "order of widows" is mentioned here, and it seemed desirable enough to be in that order that woman younger than twenty applied for it. 3) Though not an office, the virgins took an oath of celibacy, to be married to Christ forever. You could call virgins and widows orders, but they weren't offices.

Anti-Marcion, The Prescription Against Heretics, Chapter 3 **from the Ante-Nicean Fathers, Book 3**

"But what if a bishop, if a deacon, if a widow, if a virgin, if a doctor, if even a martyr, have fallen from the rule (of faith), will heresies on that account appear to possess the truth?"³⁷

Look at the list of those in offices and orders. Deaconess is missing.

Against Heresies, Chapter 41

"The very women of these heretics, how wanton they are! For they are bold enough to teach, to dispute, to enact exorcisms, to undertake cures - it may be even to baptize. Their ordinations, are carelessly administered, capricious, changeable. At one time they put novices in office; at another time, men who are bound to some secular employment; at another, persons who have apostatized

³⁶ Tertullian, "On the Veiling of Virgins, Chapter 9," accessed October 5, 2022, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/on-the-veiling-of-virgins-de-virginibus-velandis-11399>.

³⁷ Tertullian, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume III, Anti-Marcion, The Prescription Against Heretics, Chapter III," accessed October 4, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_III/Anti-Marcion/The_Prescription_Against_Heretics/Chapter_III.

from us, to bind them by vainglory, since they cannot by the truth. Nowhere is promotion easier than in the camp of rebels, where the mere fact of being there is a foremost service. And so it comes to pass that to-day one man is their bishop, to-morrow another; to-day he is a deacon who to-morrow is a reader; to-day he is a presbyter who tomorrow is a layman. For even on laymen do they impose the functions of priesthood.”³⁸

Many of the church Fathers pointed to the fact that many heretical groups let women into “church” offices, and unstudied men as well.

Anti-Marcion Against All Heresies, Chapter 1

“A brother heretic emerged in Nicolaus. He was one of the seven deacons who were appointed in the Acts of the Apostles.”³⁹

Many of the early church Fathers thought that the Deacon Nicholas was the founder of the sect of the Nicolaitans mention in Revelation 2. Tertullian believed that the diaconate was created in Acts 6.

The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas – Deacons with male names Tertius and Pomponius are mentioned in sections 1.2, 2.2, and 3.2. A bishop and presbyter are mentioned in chapter 4.⁴⁰

On Exhortation to Chastity, Chapter 13 **from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Book 4**

“How many men, therefore, and how many women, in Ecclesiastical Orders, owe their position to continence, who have preferred to be wedded to God; who have restored the honour of their flesh, and who have already dedicated themselves as sons of that (future) age, by slaying in themselves the concupiscence of lust, and that whole (propensity) which could not be admitted within Paradise!”⁴¹

He’s speaking of all people, male and female, who renounce future sexual relations when they enter into an order or office of the church. Though at this time there was still clergy that were married, Tertullian thought the clergy should be celibate.

³⁸ Tertullian, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume III: Anti-Marcion, The Prescription Against Heretics Chapter XLI,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_III/Anti-Marcion/The_Prescription_Against_Heretics/Chapter_XLI.

³⁹ Tertullian, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume III, Anti-Marcion, Appendix: Against All Heresies I,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_III/Anti-Marcion/Appendix:_Against_All_Heresies/I.

⁴⁰ Tertullian, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume III The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_III/Ethical/The_Passion_of_the_Holy_Martyrs_Perpetua_and_Felicitas.

⁴¹ Tertullian, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IV, Tertullian, On Exhortation to Chastity: Chapter 13,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Tertullian:_Part_Fourth/On_Exhortation_to_Chastity/Chapter_13.

On Monogamy, Chapter 11

“Grant, now, that you marry “in the Lord,” in accordance with the law and the apostle - if, notwithstanding, you care even about this - with what face do you request (the solemnizing of) a matrimony which is unlawful to those of whom you request it; of a monogamist bishop, of presbyters and deacons bound by the same solemn engagement, of widows whose Order you have in your own person refused?”⁴²

Here again, the Order of Widows is mentioned along with the ordained offices. No deaconesses. An additional error the Church imbibed is the idea that it was a sin to marry after the death of your spouse.

De Fuga in Persecutione, part 11

“Thus ought every servant of God to feel and act, even one in an inferior place, that he may come to have a more important one, if he has made some upward step by his endurance of persecution. But when persons in authority themselves — I mean the very deacons, and presbyters, and bishops — take to flight, how will a layman be able to see with what view it was said, Flee from city to city?”⁴³

Tertullian viewed deacons, and presbyters, and bishops as the leaders of the Church. If they run in times of trouble, who will teach the members to flee persecution?

The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome (c AD 215-220)

Quoting from Martimort, Aimé Georges. *Deaconesses: An Historical Study*. He says:

‘Among other things, St. Hippolytus enumerated the various categories of membership in the Church of his day; he both described the nature of these categories of membership and made clear distinctions about how Christians were invested with various Church functions. First, there were the three clerical degrees for which the Holy Spirit was invoked, along with a laying on of hands: bishops, priests [DM: the text says “presbyters”] and deacons. Second, Hippolytus examined the case of confessors eligible to receive one of these three clerical degrees. Third, he described other groups in the Church (widows, lectors, virgins, subdeacons and those who possessed the power of healing), and to these he expressly forbade the laying on of hands. Out of these various groupings, there were only two composed of women, and they are the same two groupings we have already identified: widows and virgins. No rite at all was involved as far as virgins were concerned, nor were they distinguished in any special way: “Hands are not imposed upon a virgin [παρθένο]; her decision [υποαίρεσις] alone is what makes her a virgin.” As for widows, in addition to those assisted by the

⁴² Tertullian, “Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume IV, Tertullian: On Monogamy, Chapter 11,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Tertullian:_Part_Fourth/On_Monogamy/Chapter_11.

⁴³ Tertullian, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IV, Tertullian: De Fuga in Persecutione, Part 11,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Tertullian:_Part_Fourth/De_Fuga_in_Persecutione/De_Fuga_in_Persecutione.

*Church, there were others who were initiated into the group of widows and who occupied a special place, at least in the assembly:*⁴⁴

Quoting from Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, by Burton Scott Easton

9. But the deacon, when he is ordained, is chosen according to those things that were said above, the bishop alone in like manner laying his hands upon him, as we have prescribed. When the deacon is ordained, this is the reason why the bishop alone shall lay his hands upon him: he is not ordained to the priesthood but to serve the bishop and to carry out the bishop's commands. He does not take part in the council of the clergy; he is to attend to his own duties and to make known to the bishop such things as are needful. He does not receive that Spirit that is possessed by the presbytery, in which the presbyters share; he receives only what is confided in him under the bishop's authority.

For this cause the bishop alone shall make a deacon. But on a presbyter, however, the presbyters shall lay their hands because of the common and like Spirit of the clergy. Yet the presbyter has only the power to receive; but he has no power to give. For this reason a presbyter does not ordain the clergy; but at the ordination of a presbyter he seals while the bishop ordains.

Over a deacon, then, he shall say as follows:

*O God, who hast created all things and hast ordered them by thy Word, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom thou didst send to minister thy will and to manifest to us thy desire; grant [the] Holy Spirit of grace and care and diligence to this thy servant, whom thou hast chosen to serve the church and to offer in thy holy sanctuary the gifts that are offered to thee by thine appointed high priests, so that serving without blame and with a pure heart he may be counted worthy of this exalted office, by thy goodwill, praising thee continually. Through thy Servant Jesus Christ, through whom be to thee glory and honour, with [the] Holy Spirit, in the holy church, both now and always and world without end. Amen.*⁴⁵

By this point, the deacon was an aide to the bishop and presbyters (priests).

11. When a widow is appointed, she shall not be ordained but she shall be appointed by the name. If her husband has been long dead, she may be appointed [without delay]. But if her husband has died recently, she shall not be trusted; even if she is aged she must be tested by time, for often the passions grow old in those who yield to them.

The widow shall be appointed by the word alone, and [so] she shall be associated with the other widows; hands shall not be laid upon her because she does not

⁴⁴ Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), pp. 30-31.

⁴⁵ Hippolytus of Rome, "The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, Translated by Burton Scott Easton," accessed October 5, 2022, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/61614/61614-h/61614-h.htm#teh9>.

*offer the oblation nor has she a sacred ministry. Ordination is for the clergy on account of their ministry, but the widow is appointed for prayer, and prayer is the duty of all.*⁴⁶

Widows were an order with a holy purpose, but because nothing they would do was priestly, they were not ordained.

Refutations Book 7, Chapter 24:

*But Nicolaus has been a cause of the wide-spread combination of these wicked men. He, as one of the seven (that were chosen) for the diaconate, was appointed by the Apostles.*⁴⁷

He also viewed Acts 6 as the original creation of deacons meaning that they were male.

Refutations Book 9, Chapter 7:

*This one propounded the opinion, that, if a bishop was guilty of any sin, if even a sin unto death, he ought not to be deposed. About the time of this man, bishops, priests, and deacons, who had been twice married, and thrice married, began to be allowed to retain their place among the clergy. If also, however, any one who is in holy orders should become married, Callistus permitted such a one to continue in holy orders as if he had not sinned.*⁴⁸

I note this only to say that deacons had a serious office alongside the presbyters and bishops.

Origen (c AD Early-to-middle third century) Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew 14.2.22 from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Book 9

But, while dealing with the passage, I would say that we will be able perhaps now to understand and clearly set forth a question which is hard to grasp and see into, with regard to the legislation of the Apostle concerning ecclesiastical matters; for Paul wishes no one of those of the church, who has attained to any eminence beyond the many, as is attained in the administration of the sacraments, to make trial of a second marriage. For laying down the law in regard to bishops in the first Epistle to Timothy, he says, "If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. The bishop, therefore, must be without reproach, the husbands of one wife, temperate, sober-minded," (1Ti_3:1, 1Ti_3:2 etc.); and, in regard to deacons, "Let the deacons," he says, "be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well," (1Ti_3:12 etc.) Yea, and also

⁴⁶ Hippolytus of Rome, "The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, Translated by Burton Scott Easton," accessed October 5, 2022, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/61614/61614-h/61614-h.htm#teh11>.

⁴⁷ Hippolytus of Rome, "Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume V, Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies: Book VII, Part 24," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Hippolytus/The_Refutation_of_All_Heresies/Book_VII/Part_25.

⁴⁸ Hippolytus of Rome, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies: Book IX, Part 8," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Hippolytus/The_Refutation_of_All_Heresies/Book_IX/Part_8.

when appointing widows, he says, "Let there be no one as a widow under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man;" (1Ti_5:9) and after this he says the things superadded, as being second or third in importance to this. And, in the Epistle to Titus, "For this cause," he says, "I left thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city as I gave thee charge. If any one is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children, that believe" (Tit_1:5, Tit_1:6) - of course - and so on.⁴⁹

Origen views elders and deacons as male, the husbands of one wife, just as the widows were wives of one husband.

Commodianus (c AD 250) Instructions LXVIII. To Ministers. **from the Ante-Nicean Fathers, Book 4**

Exercise the mystery of Christ, O deacons, with purity; therefore, O ministers, do the commands of your Master; do not play the person of a righteous judge; strengthen your office by all things, as learned men, looking upwards, always devoted to the Supreme God. Render the faithful sacred ministries of the altar to God, prepared in divine matters to set an example; yourselves incline your head to the pastors, so shall it come to pass that ye may be approved of Christ.⁵⁰

LXIX. To God's Shepherds.

A shepherd, if he shall have confessed, has doubled his conflict. Moreover, the apostle bids that such should be teachers. Let him be a patient ruler; let him know when he may relax the reins; let him terrify at first, and then anoint with honey; and let him first observe to do himself what he says. The shepherd who minds worldly things is esteemed in fault, against whose countenance thou mightest dare to say anything. Gehenna itself bubbles up in hell with rumours. Woe to the wretched people which wavers with doubtful brow! if such a shepherd shall be present to it, it is almost mined. But a devout man restrains it, governing rightly. The swarms are rejoiced under suitable kings; in such there is hope, and the entire Church lives.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Origen. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IX, Origen's Commentary on Matthew: Book XIV, Chapter 22." Accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IX/Origen_on_Matthew/Origen%27s_Commentary_on_Matthew/Book_XIV/Chapter_22.

⁵⁰ Commodianus, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IV, Commodianus, The Instructions of Commodianus," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Commodianus/The_Instructions_of_Commodianus/Chapter_68.

⁵¹ Commodianus, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IV, Commodianus, The Instructions of Commodianus," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Commodianus/The_Instructions_of_Commodianus/Chapter_69.

LXXVIII. To the Pastors.

*Thou who seekest to feed others, and hast prepared what thou couldest by assiduously feeding, hast done rightly. But still look after the poor man, who cannot feed thee again: then will thy table be approved by the one God. The Almighty has bidden such even especially to be fed. Consider, when thou feedest the sick, thou art also lending to the High One. In that thing the Lord has wished that you should stand before Him approved.*⁵²

Commodianus was a Christian poet. These were the offices that he mentioned in his 80 poems. The office of deacon he viewed as belonging to men, and his words “Exercise the mystery of Christ, O deacons, with purity” sound much like 1Tim 3:9.

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (c AD 250) from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Book 5

Cyprian often wrote letters addressed to the “Presbyters and Deacons.” His letters were often warm, asking the opinions of those whom he led.

Epistle 5, part 3

*For I am grieved when I hear that some of them run about wickedly and proudly, and give themselves up to follies or to discords; that members of Christ, and even members that have confessed Christ, are defiled by unlawful concubinage, and cannot be ruled either by deacons or by presbyters, but cause that, by the wicked and evil characters of a few, the honourable glories of many and good confessors are tarnished; whom they ought to fear, lest, being condemned by their testimony and judgment, they be excluded from their fellowship.*⁵³

Cyprian viewed both presbyters and deacons as rulers of the churches along with the bishops. Therefore deacons could not be female.

Epistle 30, part 5 (A letter from the presbyters and deacons at Rome to Cyprian)

*However, what you also have yourself declared in so important a matter, is satisfactory to us, that the peace of the Church must first be maintained; then, that an assembly for counsel being gathered together, with bishops, presbyters, deacons, and confessors, as well as with the laity who stand fast, we should deal with the case of the lapsed.*⁵⁴

Deacons sat in the councils of the Church in that era. What influence they had is an open question.

⁵² Commodianus, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IV, Commodianus, The Instructions of Commodianus,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Commodianus/The_Instructions_of_Commodianus/Chapter_78.

⁵³ Cyprian of Carthage, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Cyprian: The Epistles of Cyprian,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Epistles_of_Cyprian/Part_5.

⁵⁴ Cyprian of Carthage, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Cyprian: The Epistles of Cyprian,” accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Epistles_of_Cyprian/Part_30.

Epistle 61, part 4

And therefore you have acted advisedly and with vigour, dearest brother, in excommunicating the deacon who has often abode with a virgin; and, moreover, the others who had been used to sleep with virgins. But if they have repented of this their unlawful lying together, and have mutually withdrawn from one another, let the virgins meantime be carefully inspected by midwives; and if they should be found virgins, let them be received to communion, and admitted to the Church; yet with this threatening, that if subsequently they should return to the same men, or if they should dwell together with the same men in one house or under the same roof, they should be ejected with a severer censure, nor should such be afterwards easily received into the Church. But if any one of them be found to be corrupted, let her abundantly repent, because she who has been guilty of this crime is an adulteress, not (indeed) against a husband, but against Christ; and therefore, a due time being appointed, let her afterwards, when confession has been made, return to the Church.⁵⁵

Cyprian never mentions deaconesses, but he does mention widows, and here virgins. They viewed virgins breaking their celibacy vows even in appearance as a serious thing. Whether the deacon had sex with the virgin is not known, but even the appearance of the possibility got him kicked out of the church.

Epistle 64, part 3

But deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose apostles, that is, bishops and overseers; while apostles appointed for themselves deacons after the ascent of the Lord into heaven, as ministers of their episcopacy and of the Church. But if we may dare anything against God who makes bishops, deacons may also dare against us by whom they are made; and therefore it behooves the deacon of whom you write to repent of his audacity, and to acknowledge the honour of the priest, and to satisfy the bishop set over him with full humility. For these things are the beginnings of heretics, and the origins and endeavours of evil-minded schismatics; — to please themselves, and with swelling haughtiness to despise him who is set over them.⁵⁶

Cyprian also believed that the deacons were first created in the book of Acts, and that they were male leaders subject to the presbyters and bishops.

⁵⁵ Cyprian of Carthage, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Cyprian: The Epistles of Cyprian," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Epistles_of_Cyprian/Part_61.

⁵⁶ Cyprian of Carthage, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Cyprian: The Epistles of Cyprian," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Epistles_of_Cyprian/Part_64.

Treatise II — On the Dress of Virgins

Cyprian writes a long treatise on virgins, which mentions widows a few times, but never deacons or deaconesses. Anyone arguing that virgins in Cyprian's time might be female deacons or deaconesses has no evidence for it.⁵⁷

Treatise IX — On the Advantage of Patience, part 20

*It is patience, too, which assuages anger, which bridles the tongue, governs the mind, guards peace, rules discipline, breaks the force of lust, represses the violence of pride, extinguishes the fire of enmity, checks the power of the rich, soothes the want of the poor, protects a blessed integrity in virgins, a careful purity in widows, in those who are united and married a single affection.*⁵⁸

Again, there are virgins and widows, but no deaconesses.

Cornelius of Rome (c AD 251-253)

*"Forty-six priests, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, lectors and doorkeepers and more than fifteen hundred widows and dependent poor people".*⁵⁹

Note the well-developed church staff, and no deaconesses.

Alexander of Alexandria – (c AD 300) Epistles on the Arian Heresy II Epistle Catholic from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Book 6

This document was signed by all the presbyters and deacons of Alexandria and Mareotis. All 44 deacons had male first names.⁶⁰

Peter of Alexandria – (c AD 300) The Genuine Acts of Peter

Arius, in the meanwhile, having as yet been endowed only with the dignity of a Levite, and fearing lest, after the death of so great a father, he should nowadays be able to get reconciled to the Church, came to those who held the chief place amongst the clergy, and, hypocrite that he was, by his sorrowful entreaties and

⁵⁷ Cyprian of Carthage, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Cyprian: The Treatises of Cyprian," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Treatises_of_Cyprian/On_the_Dress_of_Virgins.

⁵⁸ Cyprian of Carthage, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Cyprian: The Treatises of Cyprian," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Treatises_of_Cyprian/On_the_Advantage_of_Patience.

⁵⁹ Unknown, "Pope Cornelius - Wikipedia," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Cornelius.

⁶⁰ Alexander of Alexandria, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VI: Alexander of Alexandria, Epistles on the Arian Heresy, Part 2," accessed October 5, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VI/Alexander_of_Alexandria/Epistles_on_the_Arian_Heresy/Part_2.

*plausible discourse, endeavoured to persuade the holy archbishop to extend to him his compassion, and to release him from the ban of excommunication.*⁶¹

Note that Arius was a Deacon/Levite, and much as Peter loved him, his heresy alienates him from the church.

This is the end of the section on the early church. There is not a hint of female deacons or deaconesses in the early church. Deacons were often called Levites. Levites were always male, thus Deacons were always male. That is due to the creational reason that men are to be leaders, not women. And the early church viewed deacons as leaders, even if subordinate to the bishops and presbyters.

⁶¹ Peter of Alexandria, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VI, Peter of Alexandria: The Genuine Acts of Peter," accessed October 7, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VI.

History of the Eastern Church

Teaching of the Apostles – Didascalia Apostolorum (c AD 225-350?) The writer(s) of this document are unknown. Dating is tough, but since the Apostolic Constitutions (c AD 385-390) borrows from this document, altering it in some places, it can't be older than that. The original Greek version is lost. The Syriac version has an interpolation in Book 3 mentioning Nestorians which dates some portions of the Syriac version in the fifth or even sixth centuries. Given the practice of most of the church did not mention deaconesses, it's hard to say how much influence this document had prior to the Apostolic Constitutions.

In terms of the offices of the church, Didascalia spends the most time on bishops (who are high priests), second most on deacons (who are helpers of the bishops), next most on elders, then widows, and least deaconesses. That said, Deaconesses get this high praise in Chapter 9:

*He governs in the place of the Almighty, but let him be honoured by you as God, because the Bishop sits for you in the place of Almighty God; but the Deacon stands in the place of the Christ; and ye should love him, but let the Deaconesses be honoured by you in the likeness of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, let the Elders be to you in the likeness of the Apostles, but Orphans and Widows be considered by you in the likeness of an Altar.*⁶²

This is over the top. But the Didascalia is not always consistent with offices, as it is here in the preface:

*We assert that every one shall stand and confess and believe in what has been allotted to him by God; that is to say, the Bishop as a shepherd; the Elders as teachers; the Deacons as ministers; the Subdeacons as helpers; the Lectors as readers; the Singers as psalmists with intelligence and with constancy; and that the rest of the populace should be hearers of the words of the Gospel according to discipline.*⁶³

No deaconesses, but there are subdeacons, lectors and readers.

Chapter Three has instructions for women, but also contains:

- The ordination of bishops, the election and ordination of elders and deacons
- Instructions to catechumens
- The number of elders (12), deacons (7), subdeacons (14), and widows (13).
- The discussion between the "Apostles" and a few others, which seems careless at points. Of note "Andrew" says "It would be very good, my brethren, that we should appoint women as Deaconesses."
- At what time Paul said we should pray.
- 27 commands of Addai the Apostle

⁶² Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* (London, England: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1903), p 48.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 1.

- 20 canons of the Apostles⁶⁴

The Didascalia is surprising in that it often places the power of deacons above the elders. From Chapter 11:

*Again, exhortation to Bishops and Deacons, that they govern justly, and that they be with one another in concord and love...*⁶⁵

If bishops and deacons govern, where are the elders? Then there is Chapter 12, where the deacons serve the Lord's Supper, and administer some discipline:

*Let a place be reserved for the Elders in the midst of the eastern part of the House, and let the throne of the Bishop be placed amongst them; let the Elders sit with him; but also at the other eastern side of the house let the laymen sit; for thus it is required that the Elders should sit at the eastern side of the house with the Bishops, and afterwards the laymen, and next the women: that when ye stand to pray the rulers may stand first, afterwards the laymen, and then the women also, for towards the East it is required that ye should pray, as ye know that it is written, "Give praise to God, who rideth on the heavens of heavens towards the East." As for the Deacons, let one of them stand constantly over the gifts of thankfulness (the Eucharist), and let another stand outside the door and look at those who come in; and afterwards when ye make offerings, let them serve together in the Church. And if a man be found sitting out of his place, let the Deacon who is within reprove him, and make him get up and sit in the place that befits him, for our Lord compared the Church to a fold.*⁶⁶

Chapters 14 & 15 dealt with widows modeled after 1Tim 5:9-10.

- 50-year age minimum
- Wife of one husband, who has since died
- A vow to not remarry
- Examples include the widow of Zarephath (1Ki 17:9), the widow at the Temple (Lk 21:2), and Anna (Lk 2:36).
- It lists the virtues that those of the Order of widows are to have
- She cannot teach, but she can answer questions, after thinking it through.
- Her chief duty is to stay home and pray "for those who give, and for the whole Church."
- Obey the Bishop, and do nothing without his consent.⁶⁷

There is a second class of widows and widowers that were wards of the church, and not officers. Elsewhere in the Didascalia orphans get added to that group, and the Bishop is supposed to provide for them.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 8-22.

⁶⁵ Ibid, P. 58-65.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 65-67.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 70-78.

The passage on widows is quite long, much longer than the one on deaconesses. And it has one extra surprise in chapter 15:

It is not permitted to a woman to baptize.

*We do not advise a woman to baptize or to be baptized by a woman, for that is a transgression of the commandments, and there is great danger to her who baptizeth and also to him who is baptized; for if it were lawful to be baptized by a woman, our Lord and Teacher would have been baptized by Mary His mother; but He was baptized by John, as also others of the people. Therefore do not bring danger on yourselves, brothers and sisters, acting beyond the law of the Gospel.*⁶⁸

This is fascinating, because in the Eastern Church, the main thing the deaconesses did was baptize naked women, and anoint their bodies with oil, and instruct them as to what it is to live a holy life. This is quite an inconsistent document.

There are two versions of chapter 16. They are different but say basically the same thing. Quoting in entirety the one that the translator thought was closer to the original:

Of the appointment of Deacons and Deaconesses, and of how it is fitting for them to conduct themselves in their service, without indolence of the mind nor license.

Therefore, O Bishop, appoint for thyself workers of righteousness and helpers, to help with thee to life, electing those who please thee from all the people (S. and appoint Deacons). The man who is elected is for many oversights that are required, but a woman for the service of the women; for there are houses where thou canst not send a Deacon to the women on account of the heathen. Send a Deaconess for many things. The office of a woman Deaconess is required, first, when women go down to the water, it is necessary that they be anointed by a Deaconess, and it is not fitting that the anointing oil should be given to a woman to touch; but rather the Deaconess. For it is necessary for the Priest who baptizeth, to anoint her who is baptized; but when there is a woman, and especially a Deaconess, it is not fitting for the women that they be seen by the men, but that by the laying on of the hand the head alone be anointed, as of old time the Priests and Kings of Israel were anointed. Thou also, in like manner, by laying on [thy] hand, anoint the head of in those who receive baptism, whether of men or of women, and afterwards, whether thou thyself baptize, or command the Deacon or the Elder to baptize, let it be a Deaconess, as we said before, who anoints the women. Let a man repeat over them the names of the invocation of the Godhead in the water. And when she that is baptized arises from the water let the Deaconess receive her, and teach her and educate her, in order that the unbreakable seal of baptism be with purity and holiness. Therefore we affirm that the service of a woman, a Deaconess, is necessary and obligatory, because even our Lord and Saviour was served by the hand of women deaconesses, who were Mary the Magdalene, and Mary (Cod. S. daughter) of James, the mother of Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children, with other women. This service of

⁶⁸ Ibid, 75.

*Deaconesses is necessary also to thee for many things, for in the houses of the heathen, where there are believing women, a Deaconess is required, that she may go in and visit those who are sick, and serve them with whatever they need, and anoint (S. wash) those who are healed from sicknesses.*⁶⁹

There are a few notable things here:

- The examples given do not include Phoebe, but instead Mary Madgalene, Mary of James, the mother of Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children, with other women. They were helpers, they did not hold an office.
- Her only stated task is to aid in the baptism of women, since it would not be fitting for a Male bishop, elder or deacon to immerse a naked woman in the water. The male officer would pray, placing his hand on her head through something that kept him from seeing her. Then the deaconess would baptize her (contra chapter 15), anoint her with holy oil, and briefly instruct her in how to be pure and holy.
- The deacon and deaconess were separate offices. Aside from baptism, they were only to minister to women.

The Didascalia is certainly an interesting book. It reads like someone, or different people over time, took a series of different documents, written by different people and agglomerated it into a document that was not entirely consistent. It's difficult to draw a firm conclusion from it, but it influenced later documents in the Eastern Church.

Council of Neocaesarea (c AD 315) – Canon 15

*“The deacons ought to be seven in number, according to the canon, even if the city be great. Of this you will be persuaded from the Book of the Acts.”*⁷⁰

Again the appeal to Acts 6 – which says deacons are male.

Council of Nicea (AD 325) – Canon 18 describes the hierarchy of the church. There are three classes of priests – bishops, who are superior to presbyters, who are superior to deacons. Canon 19 deals with Paulianists and deaconesses:

Concerning the Paulianists who have flown for refuge to the Catholic Church, it has been decreed that they must by all means be rebaptized; and if any of them who in past time have been numbered among their clergy should be found blameless and without reproach, let them be rebaptized and ordained by the Bishop of the Catholic Church; but if the examination should discover them to be unfit, they ought to be deposed. Likewise in the case of their deaconesses, and generally in the case of those who have been enrolled among their clergy, let the same form be observed. And we mean by deaconesses such as have assumed the

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 78-79.

⁷⁰ Council of Neocaesarea, “CHURCH FATHERS: Council of Neocaesarea (A.D. 315),” accessed October 5, 2022, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3803.htm>.

*habit, but who, since they have no imposition of hands, are to be numbered only among the laity.*⁷¹

Deacons are clergy; deaconesses are laity. They aren't in the same office as Nicea saw it.

Athanasius – (c AD mid-fourth century) In his Sermon to the Newly Baptized he says this:

*"You shall see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine, and placing them on the table."*⁷²

Though this is just a fragment, and the full document could not be found, this is yet more evidence that some serious theologians found Levites to be the predecessors to the deacons. The deacons would bring the elements of the Lord's Supper to the bishops and presbyters.

Testamentum Domini – Syriac (c AD 350-450) – This one is different. Instead of deaconesses, widows (Chapter 1.40)⁷³ have those duties for baptizing women. In (Ch 2.8), they get to "*prove the deaconesses*,"⁷⁴ teach the women who have not learned, and visit the sick (where the deacons would oversee her). In some ways this reads more like Titus 2. Bishops, presbyters and deacons are ordained, though deacons aren't priests in this. Widows don't have an age limit, but "*for a long time past she have abided without a husband*."⁷⁵ Both widows and deaconesses were not ordained.

What did deaconesses do then? (Ch 2.20)⁷⁶ "*Similarly if a woman be pregnant [and] sick, and cannot fast these two days, let her fast that one day, taking on the first [day] bread and water. And if she cannot come, let a deaconess carry [the Offering] to her.*" (Ch. 1.20)⁷⁷ "*Let the deaconesses abide beside the door of the Lord's house.*" This likely meant that they kept order over the women entering the church on the women's side of the church, as was common in other parts of the Eastern churches.

Again, the ministry was only to women. The unordained deaconesses could not approach the altar; the ordained deacons could with the bishop. The deacons and deaconesses were not in the same office.

Epiphanius Panarion (c AD 375)

79.3.6 [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 temporary care of the woman who needs it at the time when her body is uncovered. For the ordinance of discipline and good order in the church has been well protected with

⁷¹ Council of Nicea, "CHURCH FATHERS: First Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325)," accessed October 5, 2022, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3801.htm>.

⁷² Athanasius, Fragment from "Sermon to the Newly Baptized," accessed October 7, 2022, <https://classicalchristianity.com/2011/02/10/patristic-quote-of-the-week-11/>.

⁷³ James Cooper and Arthur John Maclean, The Testament of Our Lord (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), p. 105-107.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 124-127.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 134-135.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 64-65.

understanding, by the standard of our rule. For the same reason the word of God does not allow a woman “to speak” in church either, or “bear rule over a man.” And there is a great deal that can be said about this.⁷⁸

79.4.1 But it must be observed that the ordinance of the church required not only 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.⁷⁹

Epiphanius here is attacking the Collyridians, a group that worshipped Mary the mother of Jesus. As a result he takes on what is the proper role of women in the church. Deaconesses and widows were only there to aid women. Deacons had a larger role; they were clergy. He says the same in De Fide, his summary of Christian belief:

De Fide 21.10 Deaconesses are also appointed—only to assist women for modesty’s sake, if there is a need because of baptism or an inspection of their bodies.⁸⁰

From a letter sent from Epiphanius to John of Jerusalem:

“Numquam autem ego ordinavi diaconissas et ad aliénas misi provincias, neque feci quidquam ut ecclesiam scinderem.”⁸¹

“ I have never ordained deaconesses and sent them to other provinces, nor have I done anything to cause a schism in the church.”⁸²

Epiphanius knew that practices with deaconesses/widows varied a lot across the empire, so to keep the peace between himself and his fellow bishops, he did not let deaconesses of his bishopric go elsewhere.

⁷⁸ Frank Williams, The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III. De Fide, vol. 79., Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies (Boston, MA: BRILL, 2013), p. 639-640.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 640.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 679.

⁸¹ Hieronymus, “S. EPIPHANII AD IOANNEM Episcopum Ierosolymorum A Hieronymo Latine Reddita,” accessed October 6, 2022,

http://www.monumenta.ch/latein/text.php?tabelle=Hieronymus&rumpfid=Hieronymus,%20Epistulae,%203,%20%20%2051&level=4&domain=&lang=1&id=&hilite_id=&links=&inframe=1.

⁸² Andrew S. Jacobs, “Epiphanius of Cyprus, Letter to John of Jerusalem,” accessed October 6, 2022, <http://andrewjacobs.org/translations/epiphanius1.html>.

Canon 44 of St. Basil (c AD 375)

“A Deaconess who has been fornicating with a Grecian [DM: pagan] is admissible to communion, but to the offering she will be admissible in the seventh year, that is, if she lives in chastity. But a Grecian who after belief again indulges in sacrilege is returning to his vomit. We therefore no longer permit the body of the Deaconess to be put to carnal use, on the ground that it has been consecrated.”⁸³

As Martimort says:

“As Roger Gryson has pointed out, this fact alone proves that deaconesses were not a part of the clergy, because members of the clergy guilty of the same sin of unchastity were definitively reduced to the lay state; they were not, however, denied Communion since, according according to the law, “He will not take vengeance twice on his foes” (Nahum 1:9). Also, the punishment of the clergy being reduced to the lay state was perpetual, whereas the penances assigned to the laity were not perpetual.”⁸⁴

Apostolic Constitutions (c AD 380) – from the Ante-Nicean Fathers, Book 7

There are eight books inside the Apostolic Constitutions. The first six are a version of the Didascalia Apostolorum. Book Seven is partially based off the Didache, with some additional material added. The eighth is a combination of The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome and the Apostolic Canons, with some additional material added. This is a hodgepodge to say the least, and because of its diversity of authorship, it is highly cited by those favoring women deacons.

Book 2, Chapter 25 [2.25]:

“Those which were then first-fruits, and tithes, and offerings, and gifts, now are oblations, which are presented by holy bishops to the Lord God, through Jesus Christ, who has died for them. For these are your high priests, as the presbyters are your priests, and your present deacons instead of your Levites; as are also our readers, your singers, your porters, your deaconesses, your widows, your virgins, and your orphans: but He who is above all these is the High Priest.”⁸⁵

This section makes the case for the analogy of the Old Testament offices to those of the New Testament.

In 2.26 it gives the statement from the Didascalia:

“Let also the deaconess be honoured by you in the place of the Holy Ghost,” but then adds “and not do or say anything without the deacon; as neither does the Comforter say or do anything of Himself, but gives glory to Christ by waiting for

⁸³ Basil The Great, “Canons of the Holy Fathers,” accessed October 6, 2022, http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/canons_fathers_rudder.htm#_Toc78634056.

⁸⁴ Aimé Georges Martimort, Deaconesses (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), pp. 116-119.

⁸⁵ Unknown, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VII: Constitutions of the Holy Apostles,” accessed October 6, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VII/Constitutions_of_the_Holy_Apostles/Book_II/Sec._IV.

*His pleasure. And as we cannot believe on Christ without the teaching of the Spirit, so let not any woman address herself to the deacon or bishop without the deaconess." Women were not allowed to talk to the Deacons or the Bishop without the deaconess as an intermediary.*⁸⁶

In 2.57:

*"Let the deaconesses also stand at those of the women, like shipmen. For the same description and pattern was both in the tabernacle of the testimony and in the temple of God."*⁸⁷

They were supposed to keep the women orderly on their side of the church; seating was sex-segregated.

In 2.58 deacons were supposed to provide charity to men, and deaconesses to women.⁸⁸

In 3.7:

*"The widows therefore ought to be grave, obedient to their bishops, and their presbyters, and their deacons, and besides these to the deaconesses, with piety, reverence, and fear..." In this case, the widows are subject to the deaconesses.*⁸⁹

In 3.14: Deaconesses would distribute charitable funds to poor women. Deacons had a broader responsibility.⁹⁰

In 3.16: Bishops and Presbyters officiate at Baptisms, but deacons baptize men, and deaconesses baptize the women. (The same applies to the Book 3, Section 2 Preface)⁹¹

In 3.19: Deacons were the footsoldiers of the Bishop – his eyes and ears. Deaconesses would fulfill that role for the women only.⁹²

In 6.17:

*"Let the deaconess be a pure virgin; or, at the least, a widow who has been but once married, faithful, and well esteemed." Note that the deaconess had to be unmarried.*⁹³

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Unknown, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VII: Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," accessed October 6, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VII/Constitutions_of_the_Holy_Apostles/Book_II/Sec._VII.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Unknown, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VII: Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," accessed October 6, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VII/Constitutions_of_the_Holy_Apostles/Book_III/Sec._I.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Unknown, "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VII: Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," accessed October 6, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VII/Constitutions_of_the_Holy_Apostles/Book_III/Sec._II.

⁹² Ibid.

In 8.19-20:

Concerning a deaconess, I Bartholomew make this constitution: O bishop, thou shalt lay thy hands upon her in the presence of the presbytery, and of the deacons and deaconesses, and shall say: —

O Eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of man and of woman, who didst replenish with the Spirit Miriam, and Deborah, and Anna, and Huldah; who didst not disdain that Thy only begotten Son should be born of a woman; who also in the tabernacle of the testimony, and in the temple, didst ordain women to be keepers of Thy holy gates, — do Thou now also look down upon this Thy servant, who is to be ordained to the office of a deaconess, and grant her Thy Holy Spirit, and “cleanse her from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,” that she may worthily discharge the work which is committed to her to Thy glory, and the praise of Thy Christ, with whom glory and adoration be to Thee and the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen.⁹⁴

Was this set of deaconesses ordained? Yes, and this was rare. Note that none of the women cited were deaconesses – Huldah and Miriam were prophetesses, Deborah was a Judge, and Anna was a widow. Biblical rigor in interpretation is lacking here. Also note that the ordination of Deacons did not follow the same formula in 8.17-18⁹⁵ – there is the sense that a good deacon can get a higher office.

In 8.28:

“A deacon does not bless, does not give the blessing, but receives it from the bishop and presbyter: he does not baptize, he does not offer; but when a bishop or presbyter has offered, he distributes to the people, not as a priest, but as one that ministers to the priests. But it is not lawful for any one of the other clergy to do the work of a deacon. A deaconess does not bless, nor perform anything belonging to the office of presbyters or deacons, but only is to keep the doors, and to minister to the presbyters in the baptizing of women, on account of decency. A deacon separates a sub-deacon, a reader, a singer, and a deaconess, if there be any occasion, in the absence of a presbyter. It is not lawful for a sub-deacon to separate either one of the clergy or laity; nor for a reader, nor for a singer, nor for a deaconess, for they are the ministers to the deacons.”⁹⁶

Deaconesses may have been ordained in this rite, but they were not clergy, not of the same class as deacons. The Apostolic Constitutions were profligate with ordination, not only giving it to deaconesses, but also subdeacons and lectors.

⁹³ Unknown, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VII: Constitutions of the Holy Apostles,” accessed October 6, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VII/Constitutions_of_the_Holy_Apostles/Book_VI/Sec._III.

⁹⁴ Unknown, “Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VII: Constitutions of the Holy Apostles,” accessed October 6, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VII/Constitutions_of_the_Holy_Apostles/Book_VIII/Sec._III.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Apostolic Canons – (c AD 380-400) – It is a Syriac document that references the Apostolic Constitutions. Deaconesses are not mentioned in this document, but bishops, presbyters, and deacons are frequently mentioned as a group, and as part of the sacerdotal catalogue. Also mentioned are sub-deacons, readers, and singers. It has 85 canons, and declares that deacons are part of the clergy. That means they can't be women.⁹⁷

Theodosian Code (AD 390) CT 16.2.27 & 28

27.1. Restrictions are set for deaconesses. They must be 60 years old. She must entrust her estate and only live off of revenue, living modestly. She does not have the right to leave her estate to any church or member of the clergy, but must leave it for her surviving relatives.

28. Repeals portions of the previously mentioned law, allowing widows to leave their estates to the church or to individual clergymen.⁹⁸

This law makes explicit reference to the precept of 1 Timothy 5:9 that widows should only be enrolled if they are not less than sixty years of age—and deaconesses are, of course, assimilated to widows in this case.

Code of Justinian, Title 3.9

The Emperors Valentinian, Theodosius, and Arcadius to Tatian, Praetorian Prefect.

Let no woman, unless she has reached the age of fifty years, in accordance with the precept of the apostle, be admitted to the association of the order of deaconesses.

Given at Milan on the eleventh of the Kalends of July, during the Consulate of Valentinian, Consul for the fourth time, and Neotherius, 390.⁹⁹

Note that when Justinian collects what Valentinian decreed, he changes the age from sixty to fifty. It may have been that whoever was acting on Justinian's behalf in the early sixth century said "There's no way it would have worked at sixty. They never could have had sufficient deaconesses."

⁹⁷ Unknown. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VII: Constitutions of the Holy Apostles." Accessed October 6, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VII/Constitutions_of_the_Holy_Apostles/Book_VIII/The_Ecclesiastical_Canons_of_the_Same_Holy_Apostles.

⁹⁸ Aaron West, "Imperial Laws and Letters Involving Religion, AD 364-395," accessed October 6, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20081025063840/http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/imperial-laws-chart-364>.

⁹⁹ S. P. Scott, "The Code of Justinian : Book 1," accessed October 6, 2022, https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/CJ1_Scott.htm#3.

Theodore of Mopsuestia [ToM], Chrysostom, and Theodoret (c AD late fourth to mid-fifth centuries)

For advocates of deaconesses, here are your supporters. Theodoret interpreted Rm 16:1 as Phoebe being a deacon.

1. I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea, 2. That ye receive her in the Lord as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you, for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. 3. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus. *Cenchrea is a very large village of Corinth. Well then may we admire the power of the gospel, in that in so short a time it had filled with true godliness not the towns only but even the villages also; and so great was the body of the church at Cenchrea, as to have a woman acting as deaconess; and her a celebrated and illustrious person; for so largely did she abound in good works as to have obtained praises like the above from the tongue of an apostle; for she has been a succourer, says he, of many, and of myself also, by succour meaning, as I conceive, hospitality and kind attention. And he repays her with far greater honours in return; for she, it seems, received him into one house, and for a short time; that, it is plain, which he spent at Corinth; while he has opened the whole world to her, and in every land and sea is that woman become celebrated, so that not the Romans only and the Greeks have known her, but even every barbarian nation.*¹⁰⁰

Chrysostom says the following:

Chap. xvi. ver. 1. I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a deaconess (A.V. servant) of the church which is at Cenchrea. *See how many ways he takes to give her dignity. For he has both mentioned her before all the rest, and called her sister. And it is no slight thing to be called the sister of Paul. Moreover he has added her rank, by mentioning her being "deaconess."*¹⁰¹

Whatever ToM said about Phoebe is lost; only fragments remain from his Romans commentary.

On 1Ti 3:11, all three take the position that it is speaking about deaconesses. ToM and Chrysostom argued against the Order of Widows being the deaconesses or having any church function aside from receiving support.¹⁰²

But here are the problems with this, aside from the exegetical problems:

1. With the long history of what the church had said regarding deaconesses and widows, what were the deaconesses supposed to do? Existing well-known statements went to great lengths to specify what they thought the role of deacons and deaconesses should be. Given baptismal

¹⁰⁰ Theodoret, "Theodoret, Commentary on Romans (1840) Part 2," accessed October 6, 2022, https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/theodoret_commentary_on_romans_02.htm.

¹⁰¹ John Chrysostom, "St. John Chrysostom on Romans - Patristic Bible Commentary," accessed October 6, 2022, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/romans/st-john-chrysostom-on-romans>.

¹⁰² Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), pp. 116-119.

practices in the Eastern Church, you would think that would get a mention. Female deacons were an impossibility because deacons were priests, and no one in the church at that time would countenance that.

2. Their views don't get accepted by the Council of Chalcedon or Emperor Justinian. This could be because some of ToM's writings became viewed as precursors to the writings of Nestorius¹⁰³, and Theodoret's willingness¹⁰⁴ to try to reason with, rather than simply condemn the Monophysites, leading to a degree of doctrinal compromise. Both of them were condemned by the Church. ToM was condemned posthumously because his teachings aided Nestorius, and Theodoret spent most of the last ten years of his life under church sanction because his teaching compromised with the Monophysites.
3. Or, more likely, it was viewed as an unusual and novel interpretation of both texts, which aside from some heretics (see below at the Council of Chalcedon), was viewed as being out of accord with Scripture as a whole as regards the roles women can play in the Church.

Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)

*Canon 15 -- A woman shall not receive the laying on of hands as a deaconess under forty years of age, and then only after searching examination. And if, after she has had hands laid on her and has continued for a time to minister, she shall despise the grace of God and give herself in marriage, she shall be anathematized and the man united to her.*¹⁰⁵

Deaconesses are under the model of the widow here, with an age limit and perpetual virginity, lest they be anathema. The teachings of ToM, Chrysostom and Theodoret regarding deaconesses are condemned.

Enactments of Justinian (AD 534-554)

Novel 3, Chapter 1

*(1) Wherefore We order that not more than sixty priests, a hundred deacons, forty deaconesses, ninety sub-deacons, a hundred and ten readers, or twenty-five choristers, shall be attached to the Most Holy Principal Church, so that the entire number of most reverend ecclesiastics belonging thereto shall not exceed four hundred and twenty in all, without including the hundred other members of the clergy who are called porters.*¹⁰⁶

Even an Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire had a budget to keep. The rough numbers for each designation may give some idea of how important each function was. The order may give some idea as to how much support each one received.

¹⁰³ Unknown. "Theodore of Mopsuestia - Wikipedia." Accessed October 9, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_of_Mopsuestia.

¹⁰⁴ Unknown. "Theodoret - Wikipedia." Accessed October 9, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodoret#The_Nestorian_controversy.

¹⁰⁵ Council of Chalcedon, "Chalcedon - Canons of the 451 Council," accessed October 6, 2022, https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/chalcedon_canons.htm.

¹⁰⁶ S. P. Scott, "The Novels of Justinian : Novel 3 (Scott)," accessed October 6, 2022, https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N3_Scott.htm.

CHAPTER VI

CANDIDATES FOR DEACONESSSES WHO ARE UNDER FIFTY YEARS OF AGE SHALL NOT BE ORDAINED.

We desire that everything which We have decreed concerning ecclesiastics shall be observed with reference to deaconesses, and they shall not violate these provisions. In order for them to be ordained, they must be neither too old nor too young, and not liable to temptation, but they should be of middle age, and, in accordance with the sacred canons, about fifty years old, and, having arrived at that age, they shall be eligible to ordination, whether they are virgins, or have previously been married to one man; for We do not permit women who have contracted a second marriage, or who (as We have already stated), have led a vicious life, to be ordained, but they must be free from all suspicion in order to be admitted into the holy service of the Church, to be present in baptism, and assist in the celebration of the mysterious and sacred rites which form part of their duties. When, however, it is necessary for a woman under the age of fifty to be ordained a deaconess, ordination can be conferred upon her in some convent where she must reside; for she can by no means be permitted to mingle with men, or to live where she chooses, but by her withdrawal from society she must give evidence of her retirement and the simplicity of her life. Moreover, We are not willing that deaconesses who have once been ordained — whether they be either widows or virgins — to live with any of their relatives, or with such persons as they may select, for, under such circumstances, they will be liable to criticism, but they can either reside alone or with their fathers and mothers, children, or brothers, who are persons that if anyone should suspect them of criminality, he will be regarded as either foolish or impious. If any disparaging statement should be made with reference to any woman who desires to be admitted to the order of deaconesses, to the effect that she has lived with someone under an assumed name, and this should give rise to evil suspicions, the woman shall, by no means, be ordained a deaconess. And if she should be ordained, and then commit an act of this kind and cohabit with anyone under another name, she shall be expelled from the diaconate, and both the parties shall suffer the penalties prescribed by this law and others for persons of corrupt morals. All women who are ordained deaconesses must, at the time of their ordination, be instructed in the duties of their office, and have the precepts of the sacred canons communicated to them in the presence of the other deaconesses, in order that they may fear God and have confidence in their holy order; and they are hereby notified that if they should regret having received ordination, or, having abandoned their sacred office, they should marry, or choose any other kind of life, they will render themselves liable to capital punishment and the confiscation of their property by the holy churches or monasteries to which they are attached. Any persons who may be so bold as to marry or corrupt them shall, themselves, be liable to the penalty of death, and their property shall be confiscated by the Treasury. For if, by the ancient laws, capital punishment was inflicted upon virgins who permitted themselves to be corrupted, how much more reason is there for Us to impose the same penalty

*upon those who are dedicated to God; and why should We not wish that modesty, which is the greatest ornament of the sex, should be preserved, and be diligently practiced by deaconesses, in accordance with what is becoming to Nature and due to the priesthood?*¹⁰⁷

Notes:

- Deaconesses must be unmarried widows of one husband or virgins, and if they marry, it's not just excommunication, or anathema, it's death for them and their consort.
- The age limit common at that time to widows, 50, is seen as the norm for deaconesses.
- Their freedom of location is greatly diminished. If under the age of 50, they have to live in a convent/monastery. Over 50, they can live in a monastery, alone, or nuclear family. It's easy to see how this will eventually have nuns replace widows/deaconesses/virgins, as it happened over the next 500 years.
- The ministry is only to women, mostly to baptize.

Novel 123

CHAPTER XIII

CONCERNING THE AGE OF PRIESTS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY.

We do not permit anyone to be ordained a priest who is under thirty-five years of age, or to become a deacon or subdeacon under twenty-five, or a reader under eighteen years. A woman who is less than forty years of age, or who has married a second time, shall not be made a deaconess in the Holy Church.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCERNING DEACONESSSES.

*We, by no means, permit a deaconess to live with a man where there may be good reason to suspect that she is leading an immoral life. If a deaconess should disregard this warning, the prelate to whose authority she is subject shall notify her to send the man away from her house, and if she manifests any hesitation in complying with this notice, she shall be deprived of the exercise of her ecclesiastical functions, and her own emoluments, and shall be placed in a monastery to remain there all her life.*¹⁰⁸

Justinian's code for deaconesses followed the order of widows. They were called deaconesses, but they were not the peers of the deacons.

¹⁰⁷ S. P. Scott, "The Novels of Justinian : Novel 6 (Scott)," accessed October 6, 2022, https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N6_Scott.htm.

¹⁰⁸ S. P. Scott, "The Novels of Justinian : Novel 123 (Scott)," accessed October 6, 2022, https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N123_Scott.htm.

The Trullan Synod (AD 692)

Summarizing a few of their canons:

16 – Declares that the seven men in Acts 6 were deacons, but not deacons as they understood them in AD 692, instead they were “those to whom a dispensation was entrusted for the common benefit of those that were gathered together, who to us in this also were a type of philanthropy and zeal towards those who are in need.”

40 – “For it is written in the divine Apostle that a widow is to be elected in the church at sixty years old: but the sacred canons have decreed that a deaconess shall be ordained at forty, since they saw that the Church by divine grace had gone forth more powerful and robust and was advancing still further, and they saw the firmness and stability of the faithful in observing the divine commandments.” The deaconess is still modeled after the widow, with a minimum age set to fit current conditions. At this point, the deaconess is said to be part of the monastic life. Canons 40-49 all deal with aspects of monastic life.

45 – Talks about women’s monasteries. The choice to enter the monastery is honored, but it is also irreversible. In Canon 46 it says you can’t leave under ordinary circumstances, except with permission of the superior, and “with some old women who are eminent in the monastery, and at the command of the lady superior.”

48 – Quoting in entire: “The wife of him who is advanced to the Episcopal dignity, shall be separated from her husband by their mutual consent, and after his ordination and consecration to the episcopate she shall enter a monastery situated at a distance from the abode of the bishop, and there let her enjoy the bishop's provision. And if she is deemed worthy she may be advanced to the dignity of a deaconess.”¹⁰⁹

The main upshot from this is that monasticism was replacing the offices/dignities that women previously held in the Eastern Church. And deaconess as a title could be awarded to the wives of bishops who separated from them, entering the monastic life.

The Byzantine Liturgy for the Ordination of Deaconesses

The earliest complete ritual for ordaining deaconesses in the Eastern Church is found in the Barberini Greek manuscript 336,¹¹⁰ dated around AD 790. The ordination ceremonies for deacons and deaconesses had some similarities, but the differences were significant.

¹⁰⁹ Council of Trullo, “CHURCH FATHERS: Council in Trullo (A.D. 692),” accessed October 6, 2022, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3814.htm>.

¹¹⁰ Unknown, “Manuscript Barberini Gr. 336 – Women Deacons,” accessed October 6, 2022, <https://www.womendeacons.org/rite-manuscript-barberini-gr-336/>.

1. Some of the language for the deacon's ordination comes from First Timothy 3, and indirectly mentions Acts 6. Not so for the deaconess. They do mention Phoebe was a deaconess.
2. The Deacon would assist in serving the Lord's Supper. Not so for the deaconess.
3. The Stole, the Deacon's distinctive garment, was given to both of them. The deacon wore it prominently. On the deaconess, it was obscured under a common women's scarf.
4. The charge given in the prayer is more significant and distinct for the deacon versus the deaconess.

As Martimort summarizes:

*"However solemn may have been the ritual by which she was initiated into her ministry, however much it may have resembled the ritual for the ordination of a deacon, the conclusion nevertheless must be that a deaconess in the Byzantine rite was in no wise a female deacon. She exercised a totally different ministry from that of the deacons."*¹¹¹

Disappearance of Deaconesses in the Eastern Church

Deaconesses in the Eastern Church flourished in their sex-segregated tasks during the period where there were still a great number of adult female converts. When the number of adult female converts dropped to nearly nothing so did the need for deaconesses, and what few remained retreated into convents along with the virgins/widows/nuns. Many of the leaders of the convents received the ceremonial title of deaconess. Two last comments from Martimort:

*"Deaconesses served, in other words, as the hegumenēs [leaders] of convents, just as they did in the Eastern churches that had grown up inside the Roman Empire."*¹¹²

*"Even though it is not always easy to fix the exact date of its desuetude in the various churches, it does seem pretty clear that, by the end of the tenth or eleventh centuries, deaconesses had pretty much disappeared in the East, even though the memory of them continued, anachronistically, to be revived in the recopying of liturgical books, and—in a defective and imprecise fashion—in the tradition of the canonists."*¹¹³

So, the Eastern Church had deaconesses that were used for ministry to women only, often with a minimum age limit. This was not universal. Egypt, Ethiopia, Armenia, Georgia and the Maronites did not have deaconesses.¹¹⁴ The main Greek-speaking areas had them, as well as Persian and Syriac-speaking areas, particularly among the Monophysites. This does not give a lot of evidence for the deaconesses being peers of the deacons, much less being in the same office from a historical standpoint.

¹¹¹ Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 156.

¹¹² Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 164.

¹¹³ Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), pp. 182-183.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 174-183.

History of the Western Church

As noted in the main body of the paper, those that translated the Bible into Latin used different words to describe Phoebe in Romans 16:1 (“in ministerio”) versus Philippians 1:1 (“diaconis”) and 1Timothy 3 (“diaconos”, “diacones”). It is therefore no surprise the Western Church almost never had deaconesses, much less female deacons.

Ambrosiaster (c AD 366-384) from his Commentary on 1Tim 3:11:

“Because he has instructed that only a holy person can be made a bishop, and the same holds for a deacon, Paul does not want the congregation to be any different from them, particularly as the Lord said: Be holy even as I am holy. Thus he wants even the women (who appear to be inferior) to be blameless, so that the church of God may be pure. The Montanists seize on this verse to fall into error on the ground that because Paul mentions women immediately after deacons, they too ought to be ordained as deaconesses. They defend their position with vain presumption, even though they know that the apostles chose seven deacons. How could it be that no suitable woman was found, when we read that there were holy women among the eleven apostles? But since heretics like to fill their minds with the words and not with the meaning of the law, they use the apostle's words to contradict the apostle's meaning, so that where he orders a woman to keep silence in church, they say the opposite and even claim the authority of ministry (for women).”¹¹⁵

And his Commentary on Romans 16:1-2:

16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a minister of the church at Cenchreae, 16:2 that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints and help her in whatever she may require of you. In fact, she herself has also helped many, myself as well.

The apostle commends Phoebe, who is on her way, as a mutual sister, that is, as a sister from the law. To show that he has good reason to recommend her, he says that she is a servant of the church of Cenchreae. Because she was helpful to many, he says that she deserves to be assisted in her journey. Moreover, to persuade them that she is to be received without fail and helped in whatever she requires, should she come, he attests that she was helpful even to himself, to show that just as he is a person of greater importance than the others, the service due to her should all the more be rendered in love.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Ambrosiaster, Commentaries on Galatians--Philemon ed. Gerald Bray, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p. 128.

¹¹⁶ Theodore S. De Bruyn, David G. Hunter, and Stephen A. Cooper, Ambrosiaster's Commentary on the Pauline Epistles: Romans, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 41 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017).

Here are the main points:

1. Ambrosiaster, a presbyter in the late fourth century, stated that the Montanists were the ones that originated the idea that 1Timothy 3:11 referred to female deacons.
2. He alludes to Acts 6 as being determinative that deacons were males.
3. He thought deacons had some degree of authority, so women could not fill the office of deacon.
4. He also uses his version of the Old Latin *"in ministra"*¹¹⁷ to describe Phoebe. The word *"diaconis"* existed at this time, and along with the Old Latin texts chose a more general purpose word for helping. Ambrosiaster is the only textual variant in the Old Latin corpus regarding Romans 16:1-2, using *"in ministra"* instead of *"in ministerio."*

Pelagius (c AD 390-418) Commentary on Romans 16

Romans 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe, your sister. Although the text of the letter is, as it were, already finished, he has attached this material below for the purpose of commendation and greeting, as is his custom. Who is in the service of the church which is in Cenchrea. As even today women deaconesses who live in the east are known to minister to their own sex in baptism. Or: In the ministry of the word (cf. Acts 6:4), for we find that women taught privately, as for example Priscilla, whose husband was called Aquila (cf. Acts 18:1-3, 24-6).¹¹⁸

Martimort wrote:

'And his gloss on 1 Timothy 3:11¹¹⁹ reads as follows: "He commands that women should be chosen in the same way as deacons. It should therefore be understood that he was speaking of those women who, even today in the East, are called deaconesses [quas adhuc hodie in Oriente diaconissas appellant]." Farther on in his commentary he wrote apropos of the "vidua eligatur" of 1 Timothy 5:9¹²⁰ (page 879 second volume page 494): "Tales voluit eligi diaconissas, quae omnibus essent exempla vivendi."¹²¹

Translation of the last bit: "the widow should be elected" of 1 Timothy 5:9 "He wanted such deaconesses to be chosen, who were all examples of [proper] living." He believed that the widows of 1Timothy 5:9 were also deaconesses.

Pelagius was a notable proponent of deaconesses. This probably did not endear the concept to the rest of the Western Church.

¹¹⁷ Ambrosiaster, "Ambrosiaster on Romans- Latin - Patristic Bible Commentary," accessed October 6, 2022, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/romans/ambrosiaster-on-romans--latin>.

¹¹⁸ Pelagius, "Pelagius's Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans," accessed October 6, 2022, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z0z1WvscKkkGr7nX-p5vj7DRYUSmhs4Csfm0aF_RsyY/edit?pli=1.

¹¹⁹ Pelagius, Pelagius's Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul ed. J. Armitage Robinson, vol. 2., Texts and Studies Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature 9 (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967), p. 487.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 494.

¹²¹ Aimé Georges Martimort, Deaconesses (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 192.

Jerome and Augustine (c AD Late Fourth & Early Fifth Centuries)

Martimort wrote: *"There is yet another curious fact to be cited: St. Jerome, a man who traveled widely in the East and knew it well, to my knowledge nowhere ever spoke about deaconesses, not even in his letter 52 to the priest Nepotian¹²², to whom he indicated the proper attitude to adopt toward virgins and widows."*¹²³ Deaconesses were not mentioned.

But Martimort is not fully accurate here. Jerome never wrote anything on whether there should be deaconesses or not. He did carry on correspondences with some women in the Eastern Church who were called deaconesses, notably Salvina¹²⁴, who was (or became) a deaconess in Chrysostom's bishopric. Section 7 of this letter is too long to cite in full, but he refers to widows 20 times in the letter (which Salvina was), and refers to 1 Timothy 5 six times, and 1 Timothy 3 not at all. Jerome firmly believed in consecrated servant widows. Here is a key passage:

*1 Timothy 5:9-10 Here you learn the roll of the virtues which God requires of you, what is due to the name of widow which you bear, and by what good deeds you can attain to that second degree of chastity which is still open to you. Do not be disturbed because the apostle allows none to be chosen as a widow under threescore years old, neither suppose that he intends to reject those who are still young.*¹²⁵

He never called Salvina "deaconess." Jerome in his translation of the Vulgate for all of the key passages dealing with deacons left the Old Latin translations untouched. He could have translated the Greek to reflect the views of Chrysostom, or the others of the Antiochan School¹²⁶, but he did not.

Jerome, Epistle 146

*"In fact as if to tell us that the traditions handed down by the apostles were taken by them from the old testament, bishops, presbyters and deacons occupy in the church the same positions as those which were occupied by Aaron, his sons, and the Levites in the temple."*¹²⁷

Note that Jerome took the analogy of the offices of the Old Testament to those of the New Testament very seriously. The whole letter is replete with logic like that. The citation was the closing summary of the argument.

¹²² Jerome, "CHURCH FATHERS: Letter 52 to Nepotian," accessed October 6, 2022, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001052.htm>.

¹²³ Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 192.

¹²⁴ Jerome, "CHURCH FATHERS: Letter 79 to Salvina," accessed October 6, 2022, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001079.htm>.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "School of Antioch." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 1998. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/School-of-Antioch>.

¹²⁷ Jerome. "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Series II, Volume VI, The Letters of St. Jerome: Letter 146." Accessed October 7, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Nicene_and_Post-Nicene_Fathers:_Series_II/Volume_VI/The_Letters_of_St._Jerome/Letter_146.

Augustine also did not write about deaconesses. But here are two articles where he speaks of widows and virgins (male and female) -- *Of Holy Virginity*¹²⁸ & *Of the Good of Widowhood*¹²⁹. If there had been deaconesses, it would have been easy to slip a mention in. After all, he talks about widows in the piece on virgins, and virgins on the piece on widows.

Being two of the great scholars of the era, it would be a notable oversight to not mention deaconesses, had they existed in the Western Church.

Council of Nîmes (396)

Canon 2

*"It has also been suggested by some persons that, contrary to the apostolic church order, – unheard of until this time! – women have been admitted to the levitical [= diaconal] ministry I don't know in what place. This, however, is something church order does not allow because it is indecent. And since such an ordination has been performed against reason, it should be undone. Moreover, steps should be taken to ensure no one else will anymore presume to do such a thing."*¹³⁰

This council may have been protesting what the Montanists did, or perhaps what the Eastern Church was doing. Reading through the Latin, they were concerned in all seven of their canons regarding "officers" from other bishoprics coming in and spreading disorder. (Also note: that they used the term "Levitical" for diaconal. The website cited made that interpolation.)

Council of Orange (411) Canon 26:

*"In no way whatsoever should deaconesses ever be ordained. If there already are deaconesses, they should bow their heads beneath the blessing which is given to all the people."*¹³¹

This was in the section dealing with officers and marriage, also widows and virgins.

Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua— This was a canonical compilation from southern Gaul, made between 442 and 506, by Gennadius of Marseilles with who wanted to reform the church.

99. When a holy virgin (sanctimonialis virgo) is offered to a bishop for consecration, let her be decked in such vestments — which she will wear forever — as are appropriate for her pious profession (professioni et sanctimoniae aptis).

¹²⁸ Augustine. "CHURCH FATHERS: Of Holy Virginity." Accessed October 6, 2022.

<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1310.htm>.

¹²⁹ Augustine. "CHURCH FATHERS: Of the Good of Widowhood" Accessed October 6, 2022.

<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1311.htm>.

¹³⁰ John Wijngaards, "Canons of the Synod of Nîmes," accessed October 6, 2022,

<https://www.womendeacons.org/minwest-canonsof-nimes/>.

¹³¹ Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 193.

*100. Widows and sanctified women (sanctimoniales) [DM: nuns] who are chosen (eliguntur) for the ministry (ad ministerium) of baptizing women shall be so instructed for the office that they might teach openly and correctly (aperto et sano) uneducated and rustic women who are close to the time of baptism in how they should respond to the questions of the baptizer and how they should live after baptism has been received.*¹³²

There is no mention of deaconesses in this document; it does cover virgins, nuns, and widows. The latter two have a limited ministry to women only.

Council of Epaone (517) Canon 21:

Viduarum consecrationem, quas diaconas vocitant, ab omni regione nostra penitus abrogamus, sola eis paenitentiae benedictione, si converti ambiunt, imponenda.

*We completely abrogate the consecration of widows, which they call deacons from all over our country, only the blessing of penance should be imposed on them, if they desire to be converted.*¹³³

Here they argue against the validity of widows being deacons.

The Synod of Orleans (533) forbade ordaining deaconesses:

Canon 17. Faeminae, quae benedictionem diaconatus hactenus contra interdicta canonum acceperunt, si ad coniugium probantur iterum devolutae, a communione pellantur. Quod si huiusmodi contubernium ab episcopo cognito errore dissolverint, in communionis gratiam acta penitentia revertantur.

Canon 17: "Women who have so far received the ordination [lit. blessing] to the diaconate against the prohibitions of the canons, if it can be proved that they have returned to matrimony, should be banned from communion. But if they have given up this living together after they have acknowledged their error in front of the bishop, let them return to the grace of communion after fulfilling a penance."

Canon 18. Placuit etiam, ut nulli postmodum faeminae diaconalis benedictio pro conditionis huius fragilitate credatur.

*Canon 18. "It has pleased us to decree that from now on the diaconal ordination [lit. blessing] should not be imparted to any woman, because of the weakness of her [female] condition [= nature]."*¹³⁴

¹³² Geoffrey Koziol and Norman Underwood, "(PDF) The Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua and Canons of Selected Councils of the Gallic and Early Frankish Church," accessed October 6, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/35327382/THE_STATUTA_ECCLESIAE_ANTIQUA_AND_CANONS_OF_SELECTED_COUNCILS_OF_THE_GALLIC_AND_EARLY_FRANKISH_CHURCH.

¹³³ Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 197.

Canon 17 says if a woman has been illegally ordained as a deaconess, then if they marry they will be excommunicated, unless they repent to the bishop. Canon 18 appeals to Creation, saying women should not be deaconesses, given that they are women, and thus should not be ordained.

Second Council of Tours 567

Nam si inventus merit presbiter cum sua presbiteria aut diaconus cum sua diaconissa, aut subdiaconus cum sua subdiaconissa, annum integrum excommunis habeatur et depositus ab omni officio clericali.

For if a presbyter with his own wife is found, or a deacon with his wife, or a subdeacon with his wife, he is to be excommunicated for a whole year and deposed from all clerical office.¹³⁵

One more challenge in all of this, is that words meaning deaconess sometimes meant the wife of a deacon, with parallels to sub-deacons and presbyters. This makes it difficult to tell if a woman mentioned as a diaconissa was a deaconess or a deacon's wife. Fortunately, presbyteria or presbyterissa is always an elder's wife. But given the lack of support for deaconesses in the Western Church, it is more likely that they were wives of deacons.

¹³⁴ John Wijngaards, "Canons of the Second Synod of Orléans," accessed October 6, 2022, <https://www.womendeacons.org/minwest-canons-second-synod-orleans/>.

¹³⁵ Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 201.

The Church until the Reformation

This is where the information gets spotty. Most books on the topic just skip to the Reformation era. Martimort's book does not skip it, and the following is a summary of the relevant points of the last three chapters. During this era, the following things happened:

- The lack of adult females to baptize shrinks deaconesses to zero in the East.¹³⁶
- Monasticism slowly absorbs all women who want to dedicate their lives to God, whether deaconesses, widows, virgins, etc.¹³⁷
- Abbesses would sometimes receive "deaconess" as an honorary title. That happened occasionally to wives of the priestly class cloistered in monasteries, and occasionally noble women.¹³⁸
- To the extent deaconesses are mentioned at all, there is no mention of what they do.
- There is some evidence for women called deaconesses in Greek-influenced areas of Italy in the seventh and eighth centuries, but what these women were or did is an open question.¹³⁹
- With the multiplicity of offices in the Roman Church, scribes copied out all manner of services to invest people into offices/dignities. That included deaconesses occasionally. Whether those compilations were ever used is another question.¹⁴⁰

With certainty we can't identify deaconesses in the pre-Reformation Church that were peers of the deacons. It is difficult to identify any deaconesses with certainty in the Eastern Church post-AD 1000. Those arguing for female deacons are pursuing an innovation that did not exist in the historical records of the Church, broadly construed.

Thomas Aquinas (c AD 1259-1273) – Commentaries on Romans 16 and First Timothy 3

On Romans 16:1-2 (sec. 1194):

Third, from her pious activity, when he says: who is in the ministry of the church that is in Cenchreae, a port city of the Corinthians, where some Christians were gathered whom this woman had served, just as it was said of Christ himself (Luke 8:3) that certain women provided for him out of their means. And about the widow to be enrolled 1 Timothy says: if she has shown hospitality and has washed the feet of the saints (1 Tim 5:10).¹⁴¹

Aquinas was looking at both the Latin Vulgate and a Greek translation as well (sec. 1195).¹⁴² Thus he was not just looking at the Vulgate's "in ministerio," in describing Phoebe. He knew the Greek text said "diakonon." He viewed Phoebe as a helper, much as the women who accompanied Jesus were. Finally, he hints that Phoebe might have been a widow when he cites 1 Timothy 5:10.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 183.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 182-183.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 201, 205-206.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 202-205.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 207-216.

¹⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas, "Aquinas Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans," accessed October 7, 2022, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Rom.C16.L1.n1195>, sec. 1194.

¹⁴² Ibid, sec. 1195.

On 1 Timothy 3:11 (Sec. 115, 116, 118)

115. Then when he says, the women in like manner, he shows how they should be characterized: first, he gives his instruction; second, the reason, at for they who have ministered well.

In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows how they should have been characterized in regard to their wives, which they had in the early Church, and he speaks on behalf of that state; second, in regard to their children, at who rule well their children.

In regard to the first he does two things: first, he describes what their wives should be; second, how they should be in regard to them, at let deacons.

116. Of their wives he requires four things, namely, chastity, modesty, sobriety, and faithfulness.

He says, therefore, in like manner; as he said of deacons, so of women he says that they should be chaste: a holy and shamefaced woman is grace upon grace (Sir 26:19). Likewise moderate in speech, not slanderers: if a serpent bit in silence, he is nothing better who backbites secretly (Eccl 10:11). And sober, which is the most brilliant of a woman's ornamentation: in like manner women adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety (1 Tim 2:9). Faithful in all things, both to God in regard to the true faith, and to their husbands.

118. But the Cataphrygians [DM: Montanists] said that since deacons must deal with women in their ministrations, let women be ordained to sacred orders. But it should be noted in the law some women are sometimes called deaconesses, not because they have this order, but by reason of some other office they render the Church; as in Greek a minister is called a deacon.¹⁴³

Note how Aquinas recognizes that what is grammatically correct could be “The wives” or “The women,” but says the correct interpretation is “The wives (of the deacons).” Then he explains why those four virtues are needed. In section 118, he shows that he knew of other opinions on the matter, but that deaconess was a title given as an honorific for service. The most common example was doing a great job as an abbess.

¹⁴³ Thomas Aquinas, “Aquinas Commentary on Paul’s First Epistle to Timothy,” accessed October 7, 2022, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~1Tim.C3.L2.n115.6>, sections 115, 116, and 118.

So from the Early Church to the later Eastern Church, how did deacons and deaconesses vary?

1. Deaconesses stem from 1Tim 5, Deacons from Acts 6, and 1Tim 3.
2. Deaconesses have an age requirement, deacons generally do not.
3. Deacons can marry, deaconesses can't.
4. Deaconesses must submit to the deacons.
5. Deacons were always ordained. Some deaconesses eventually were ordained in the Eastern Church, but that was eventually abandoned.
6. Deacons were part of the clergy; deaconesses were not. Deacons ministered to all; deaconesses ministered to women only.

Yes, deaconesses existed, but they were not deacons in the Eastern Church.

Reformation Era

In the Reformation Era, those that favored deacons faced a challenge, as the State wanted to solve poverty problems. From Van Dam's book *The Deacon*:

The deacon had his own office from God that he had to fulfill. It was restoring the deacon to his original calling that proved to be the most difficult. Although Luther wanted deacons to function on the model of Acts 6, it was the civil authorities who ended up organizing relief for the poor. The same happened in Huldrych Zwingli's city, Zurich. Even Martin Bucer in Strasbourg and John Calvin in Geneva were unable to restore the diaconal office to its rightful biblical place in the congregation because government took on the role of providing for the needy. It was especially Calvin, however, who led the way to eventually restoring the diaconate according to the biblical model.¹⁴⁴

Since the office of deacon had been so warped for so long the civil magistrates assumed the functions of deacons in terms of poverty relief.

Martin Luther

Though he wasn't able to achieve it in his lifetime, Luther had the right view of the diaconate. From [*The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*](#):

And the diaconate is the ministry, not of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present practice, but of distributing the church's aid to the poor, so that the priests may be relieved of the burden of temporal matters and may give themselves more freely to prayer and the Word. For this was the purpose of the institution of the diaconate, as we read in Acts 5 [6:1–6].¹⁴⁵

He didn't get the chapter right, and the translator helpfully filled in the correct verses, but Luther knew that the diaconate was established in Acts 6, showing that deacons are male. In another part of *The Babylonian Captivity*, he criticizes the ambiguous concept of deacons in the Roman church – are they priests, laity, or something else?

But what is to be done with the deacons and subdeacons, who are neither laymen nor priests?¹⁴⁶

If deaconesses existed at this time, it would have been a perfect spot to mention them, because in many ancient church documents, when subdeacons get mentioned, deaconesses also get mentioned.

¹⁴⁴ Cornelis Van Dam, *The Deacon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016) p. 101-102.

¹⁴⁵ Martin Luther, "THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH," accessed October 6, 2022, <http://www.onthewing.org/user/Luther%20-%20Babylonian%20Captivity.pdf>, 66.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 7.

Martin Bucer

In 1533, partially in response to the troubles that the church at Strasbourg was having with Anabaptists, Bucer proposed church reforms. The first draft contained the following:

“It was also suggested that, following the example of the primitive church, deacons and deaconesses should be elected to care for the sick and the needy.”
“The mention of deacons is significant as an example of Bucer’s use of the Apostolic church as a guide and standard.”¹⁴⁷

This didn’t make it into the final draft of what would become the *16 Articles*. Like Calvin at Geneva and the Westminster Divines, their efforts at reform would have to be approved by the civil magistrates. Given the arguments that would come to the city council [the “Rat”], it is possible that he could not be too distinct about offices in the church and their authority. They held a type of Synod meeting to finalize the *16 Articles*.

In the course of the preparation of materials on the Synod, he designated the three major offices of the later congregational church: the ministers, the deacons, and the elders. Drawing on the experience of the early church, he justified the calling of the synod on the grounds that similar gatherings of the clergy and the elders had been held in early times to subdue the sects. He was careful in his draft to explain his use of the term “elders,” stating that they were to be differentiated from the preachers, whose function was to proclaim and interpret the Gospel, while the elders’ task was pastoral, to protect and lead God’s people so they would be piously taught and live blessed lives.¹⁴⁸

The final version of the 16 Articles and the Tetrapolitan Confession¹⁴⁹ were approved by the Synod in 1533 and the Rat in 1534. The 16 Articles had much to say about ministers (pastors, episcopi), but had just passing mentions to elders and deacons. Bucer didn’t get everything he wanted in the process, and was all undone when Strasbourg joined the Schmalkaldic League. That said, in some smaller cities, Bucer’s ideas were taken up more fully:

“In 1535 Capito [an associate of Bucer] drew up an ecclesiastical constitution for the Frankfurt Magistrat. In substance it was close to the Strasbourg ordinance, except that the Kirchenpfleger [churchwardens] were called “elders” and a specific provision was made for deacons.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform, a Study in the Process of Change* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 210-211.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 215-216.

¹⁴⁹ Unknown. “CONFESSION OF THE FOUR CITIES STRASBURG, CONSTANCE .” Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://apostles-creed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/tetrapolatan-strasbourg-swabian-confession.pdf>.

¹⁵⁰ Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform, a Study in the Process of Change* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 226.

But most crucial of all he had an impact on a fellow reformer who would go on to have a greater impact in reforming church government, John Calvin.

“In Geneva, Calvin carried out the division of functions between the four officers – ministers, teachers, elders, and deacons – which Bucer had proposed.”¹⁵¹

John Calvin

1Timothy 3:11

Likewise the wives He means the wives both of deacons and of bishops, for they must be aids to their husbands in their office; which cannot be, unless their behavior excel that of others.¹⁵²

This is the correct interpretation of the passage, or the wives of elders and deacons, have nothing to say to them: “you must be this righteous, or your husbands may not be officers of the Church.”

Romans 16:1

He first commends to them Phoebe, to whom he gave this Epistle to be brought to them; and, in the first place, he commends her on account of her office, for she performed a most honorable and a most holy function in the Church; and then he adduces another reason why they ought to receive her and to show her every kindness, for she had always been a helper to all the godly. As then she was an assistant of the Cenchrean Church, he bids that on that account she should be received in the Lord; and by adding as it is meet for saints, he intimates that it would be unbecoming the servants of Christ not to show her honor and kindness. And since it behooves us to embrace in love all the members of Christ, we ought surely to regard and especially to love and honor those who perform a public office in the Church. And besides, as she had always been full of kindness to all, so he bids that help and assistance should now be given to her in all her concerns; for it is what courtesy requires, that he who is naturally disposed to kindness should not be forsaken when in need of aid, and to incline their minds the more, he numbers himself among those whom she had assisted.

But this service, of which he speaks as to what it was, he teaches us in another place, in 1Tim 5:9, for as the poor were supported from the public treasury of the Church, so they were taken care of by those in public offices, and for this charge widows were chosen, who being free from domestic concerns, and cumbered by no children, wished to consecrate themselves wholly to God by religious duties, they were therefore received into this office as those who had wholly given up themselves, and became bound to their charge in a manner like him, who having hired out his own labors, ceases to be free and to be his own master. Hence the Apostle accuses them of having violated their faith, who renounced the office

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 228.

¹⁵² John Calvin, Commentary upon the First Epistle to Timothy, vol. 21., Calvin’s Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003), p. 87.

*which they had once undertaken, and as it behooved them to live in widowhood, he forbade them to be chosen under sixty years of age, (1Tim 5:9) because he foresaw that under that age the vow of perpetual celibacy was dangerous, yea, liable to prove ruinous. This most sacred function, and very useful to the Church, when the state of things had become worse, degenerated into the idle order of Nuns; which, though corrupt at its beginning, and contrary to the word of God, has yet so fallen away from what it was at its commencement, that there is no difference between some of the sanctuaries of chastity and a common brothel.*¹⁵³

Phoebe might have been a widow, a non-ordained deaconess, but not a deacon.

Acts 6:3

*Therefore, brethren, look out. Now we see to what end deacons were made. The word itself is indeed general, yet is it properly taken for those which are stewards for the poor. Whereby it appeareth how licentiously the Papists do mock God and men, who assign unto their deacons no other office but this, to have the charge of the paten and chalice. Surely we need no disputation to prove that they agree in no point with the apostles. But if the readers be desirous to see any more concerning this point, they may repair unto our Institution, chapter 8. As touching this present place, the Church is permitted to choose.*¹⁵⁴

1Timothy 5:9

Let a widow be chosen. He again points out what kind of widows should be taken under the care of the Church; and more clearly than he had formerly done. Not under sixty years of age First, he describes the age, sixty years; for, being supported at the public expense, it was proper that they should have already reached old age. Besides, there was another and stronger reason; for they consecrated themselves to the ministry of the Church, which would have been altogether intolerable, if there were still a likelihood of their being married. They were received on the condition that the Church should relieve their poverty, and that, on their part, they should be employed in ministering to the poor, as far as the state of their health allowed. Thus there was a mutual obligation between them and the Church. It was unreasonable that those who were under that age, and who were still in the vigor of life, should be a burden to others. Besides, there was reason to fear that they would change their mind and think of being married again. These are two reasons why he does not wish any to be admitted "under sixty years of age."

Who hath been the wife of one man As to the desire of marrying, that danger had been sufficiently guarded against, when a woman was more than sixty years old; especially if, during her whole life, she had not been married to more than one

¹⁵³ John Calvin, Commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans, vol. 19., Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003), p. 542-544.

¹⁵⁴ John Calvin, Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles, vol. 18., Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003), p. 234-235.

*husband. It may be regarded as a sort of pledge of continence and chastity, when a woman has arrived at that age, satisfied with having had but one husband. Not that he disapproves of a second marriage, or affixes a mark of ignominy to those who have been twice married; (for, on the contrary, he advises younger widows to marry;) but because he wished carefully to guard against laying any females under a necessity of remaining unmarried, who felt it to be necessary to have husbands. On this subject we shall afterwards speak more fully.*¹⁵⁵

The Scriptures Calvin brings out for Phoebe are those of the widow, in 1 Timothy 5. The age limit of sixty is prominent, mentioned three times.

Romans 12:8

Or he who gives, let him do so in simplicity, etc. From the former clauses we have clearly seen, that he teaches us here the legitimate use of God's gifts. By the μεταδιδούντοις, the givers, of whom he speaks here, he did not understand those who gave of their own property, but the deacons, who presided in dispensing the public charities of the Church; and by the ἐλούντοις, those who showed mercy, he meant the widows, and other ministers, who were appointed to take care of the sick, according to the custom of the ancient Church: for there were two different offices, — to provide necessities for the poor, and to attend to their condition. But to the first he recommends simplicity, so that without fraud or respect of persons they were faithfully to administer what was entrusted to them. He required the services of the other party to be rendered with cheerfulness, lest by their peevishness (which often happens) they marred the favor conferred by them. For as nothing gives more solace to the sick or to any one otherwise distressed, than to see men cheerful and prompt in assisting them; so to observe sadness in the countenance of those by whom assistance is given, makes them to feel themselves despised.

*Though he rightly calls those προϊστάμενους presidents, to whom was committed the government of the Church, (and they were the elders, who presided over and ruled others and exercised discipline;) yet what he says of these may be extended universally to all kinds of governors: for no small solicitude is required from those who provide for the safety of all, and no small diligence is needful for them who ought to watch day and night for the wellbeing of the whole community. Yet the state of things at that time proves that Paul does not speak of all kinds of rulers, for there were then no pious magistrates; but of the elders who were the correctors of morals.*¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ John Calvin, Commentary upon the First Epistle to Timothy, vol. 21., Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003), p. 128-129.

¹⁵⁶ John Calvin, Commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans, vol. 19., Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003), p. 462-463.

Calvin had deaconesses, but not female deacons. Looking at Romans 12:8: “he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” he saw two classes of deacons – those that gather and give, and those that show mercy. From the *Institutes* 4.3.9:

*The care of the poor was entrusted to the deacons. However, two kinds are mentioned in the letter to the Romans: "He that gives, let him do it with simplicity; . . . he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness" [Rom. 12:8, cf. Vg.]. Since it is certain that Paul is speaking of the public office of the church, there must have been two distinct grades. Unless my judgment deceive me, in the first clause he designates the deacons who distribute the alms. But the second refers to those who had devoted themselves to the care of the poor and sick. Of this sort were the widows whom Paul mentions to Timothy [1 Tim. 5:9-10]. Women could fill no other public office than to devote themselves to the care of the poor. If we accept this (as it must be accepted), there will be two kinds of deacons: one to serve the church in administering the affairs of the poor; the other, in caring for the poor themselves.*¹⁵⁷

He was willing to use women as unordained acolytes to the deacons, to aid in the personal ministry to those who were sick or otherwise troubled, but he left the management of that ministry to the deacons. He did not put women in a role that was even remotely authoritative.

He viewed Acts 6:3 as the creation of deacons, and that they were male. 1Timothy 3:11 describes the wives of both elders and deacons, and he was brief in his rendering, as if there could not be an alternative interpretation. (In the *Institutes* he cited Chrysostom 40 times, Theodoret 9 times, and ToM not at all. It's likely he knew what they thought in the matter.) He thought of Phoebe as a helper, and perhaps a servant-widow. His deaconesses were modeled not after the modern concept held by the RPCNA of Phoebe, but rather after the servant-widows described in 1Timothy 5:9. (cf. *Institutes* 4.3.9, 4.4.1, 4.4.5, 4.5.15 and 4.19.32)¹⁵⁸

The First Book of Discipline (AD 1560) adopted by the Church of Scotland

The First Book of Discipline listed deacons as officers of the church, gave them one-year, re-electable terms. The deacons were responsible for the treasury of the church. They were responsible to the ministers and elders. The deacons had a role in the judgment of public offenses of church members, alongside the elders and ministers. Once a year, an elder and a deacon were to report on *“the life, manners, study, and diligence of their ministers”*¹⁵⁹ of their congregation to the superintendent of the diocese. They were allowed to read the Scriptures in the assembly if they are asked to, and are capable.

¹⁵⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 21., Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 1061-1062.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 1061-1062, 1068-1069, 1072-1073, 1097-1098, 1479-1480.

¹⁵⁹ Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. “The First Book of Discipline.” Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/important-documents/the-first-book-of-discipline-1560/>.

The Second Book of Discipline¹⁶⁰ (AD 1578) adopted by the Church of Scotland

The Second Book of Discipline listed deacons as officers of the church, and once elected, gave them an office for life. The deacons would care for the “ecclesiastical goods.” They were responsible to the ministers and elders. They were not a part of the session or presbytery.

It’s interesting to see how quickly the Church of Scotland adopted governance structures that became classic Presbyterianism. And there were no women in office under either book of discipline.

Theodore Beza (AD 1581) / Belgic Confession (AD 1561, English 1564)

If you look at the Belgic Confession article 30 in English, French, or Dutch, the phrase, “By these means every thing will be carried on in the Church with good order and decency, when faithful men are chosen, according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul to Timothy.” where it says “men,” it is an arguable word in English, and it is genuinely generic in Dutch and French. But when Beza translated it into Latin a few years after the original was published in French, he translated it this way:

*Hac quidem ratione, rite omnia & ordine gerenturin Ecclesia , cum viri fideles eligentur , juxta regulam ab Apostolo Paulo in sua ad Timotheum Epistola, praescriptam.*¹⁶¹

In English: For this reason, indeed, all things will be done in the right and order of the Church, when faithful (male) men will be chosen, according to the rule prescribed by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to Timothy.

Beza used “viri” meaning males. That doesn’t mean that they meant “males” in the other translations, much as it was unthinkable for reformed Christians at that time to admit females into any ordained office. This is more of a statement about how Beza viewed the offices of the church. And he viewed 1 Timothy 3 as being male officeholders only.

But if you consider Belgic Confession article 31, it talks of the election of officers. It would be unthinkable in the sixteenth century for females to vote or to have them stand for an office. That’s why the generic was used in Dutch and French. There was no reason to write otherwise. Thus they viewed deacons as male.

Wesel / Netherlands

Quoting from the OPC Report of the Committee on Women in Church Office (which summarizes it well):¹⁶²

When the Prince of Sedan, for example, turned Reformed in 1559, he established the 'Sisters of Mercy' with formerly monastic revenues. Similarly in La Rochelle there was a deaconesses' house. Women in these Protestant Orders lived

¹⁶⁰ Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. “The Second Book of Discipline.” Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/important-documents/the-second-book-of-discipline-1578/>.

¹⁶¹ Belgic Confession, “Corpus Et Syntagma Confessionum Fidei (containing Belgic Confession in Latin),” https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_WMnGwo1dryQC/mode/1up, p. 141.

¹⁶² OPC Committee on Women in Church Office, “Report of the Committee on Women in Church Office,” accessed October 7, 2022, https://www.opc.org/GA/women_in_office.html

communally by an agreed upon order or rule. They were not bound by lifelong vows, but for however long they were part of the movement they devoted themselves to the care of the sick, the aged, and the poor. Aspects of the French and Walloon diaconate influenced the Dutch Reformed tradition (CRC Report 32, p. 506).¹⁶³

In 1556 the Reformed leaders in Amsterdam designated twelve deaconesses to run a home for aged women, an orphanage, and to do a form of house visitation two by two and to report anything needing their attention to the Amsterdam deacons. These were elderly women of proven Christian virtue. As in France, however, the deaconesses of Amsterdam seem to have been an institution which was not part of, yet which was in some sense under the direction of, the consistory (Report 32, p. 508).¹⁶⁴

The Convent of Wesel, 1568, chaired by Datheen, marks the generally accepted point of departure for the shaping of the Dutch church order. Formulations from earlier Walloon assemblies gave way for various reasons to those of Wesel and subsequent gatherings. Wesel's nineteen statements on deacons included such positions as defining the office as a ministry of mercy, recognizing Calvin's two types of deacon, and allowing local latitude on many issues related to implementing the office. Because of its significance for today's discussion of women in office, Wesel's provision for women deacons is noteworthy. It allowed that where appropriate, older women of proven and honorable behavior could, following apostolic example, be appointed as deacons.

It is important to note that Wesel defined consistory as elders and pastors. Thus the gathering that admitted women to the full diaconate excluded them from the consistory, which by definition excluded all deacons (Report 32, p. 509).¹⁶⁵ In the church of Wesel four women were elected by the presbyters and ordained for the period of one year. Problems arose when married women (not only widows), and some of them even younger than sixty years of age, also were elected, this being contrary to what Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 5:9. When the matter was brought to the Synod of Middleburg in 1581, it was decided not to introduce women into the office of deacon 'for the sake of several inconveniences,' except in times of danger, e.g. plagues (CRC Report 39, p. 580).¹⁶⁶

J. L. Schaver in The Polity of the Churches (Vol. I, Chicago, Church Polity Press, 1947, p. 144) comments on the reception of the office of deaconess in the Netherlands. "In the time of the Reformation the Reformed churches of the Netherlands for a short while favored the instituting of the office of deaconess, but already in 1581 they decided not to introduce it. On the whole, Reformed churches in the Netherlands favor the employment of women in support of the

¹⁶³ CRC Synod. "CRC Acts of Synod 1981."

<https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1981agendaacts.pdf>, p. 506.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 508.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 509.

¹⁶⁶ Seems to be a document of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, not the CRC.

deacon's office when this is needed, but they are opposed to placing women in official service."¹⁶⁷

Similar to the Ancient period, the brief period in which Reformation churches ordained women as deaconesses reveals:

*(a) A clear distinction of the role and office of "deaconess" from that of "deacon";
(b) That the church had second thoughts about ordaining women to this office."¹⁶⁸*

Perhaps if this had been modeled after the order of widows, it might have worked. Oddly, this led to a redefinition of Consistory to be Pastors and Elders, when it previously included Deacons.¹⁶⁹ The diaconate lost out on being in the consistory on the experiment of including women.

John Smyth (c AD 1608 Also from the OPC Report)¹⁷⁰

In the seventeenth century, the Baptist John Smyth classified deaconesses and widows in the same office and admitted only women over 60. These were ordained and took a vow of celibacy. Their duties were visiting the sick and poor (CRC Report 32, p. 504).¹⁷¹

This was modeled after the order of widows.

The Form of Presbyterian Church Government (1645) adopted by the Church of Scotland, which says of deacons:

*THE scripture doth hold out deacons as distinct officers in the church.
Whose office is perpetual. To whose office it belongs not to preach the word, or administer the sacraments, but to take special care in distributing to the necessities of the poor."¹⁷²*

To back up their statement, they cited: Phil. 1:1, 1 Tim. 3:8-15, and Acts 6:1-4.

¹⁶⁷ J. L. Schaver, "The Polity of the Churches, Volume 1," accessed October 7, 2022, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015008573902&view=1up&seq=150>, p. 144.

¹⁶⁸ OPC Committee on Women in Church Office, "Report of the Committee on Women in Church Office," accessed October 7, 2022, https://www.opc.org/GA/women_in_office.html

¹⁶⁹ CRC Synod. "CRC Acts of Synod 1981." <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1981agendaacts.pdf>, p. 510.

¹⁷⁰ OPC Committee on Women in Church Office, "Report of the Committee on Women in Church Office," accessed October 7, 2022, https://www.opc.org/GA/women_in_office.html

¹⁷¹ CRC Synod. "CRC Acts of Synod 1981." <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1981agendaacts.pdf>, p. 502.

¹⁷² Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. "The Form of Presbyterian Church Government." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/important-documents/the-form-of-presbyterial-church-government/>.

The Westminster Assembly (1643)

From George Gillespie's notes:

Deacons

That the Scriptures do bold out deacons as distinct officers in the church, Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 8.

It belongs to the office of a deacon to take special care in distributing to the necessity of the poor, proved, Acts vi. 1-4.

That the office of a deacon is perpetual.

That 1 Tim. iii. 8-15 ; Acts vi. 1-4, shall be brought to prove it.

That it doth not pertain to the office of a deacon to preach the word, or administer the sacraments.

Widows

*That widows, which we read of 1 Tim. v. 3, and elsewhere, are included under the name deacons.*¹⁷³

This summarizes all of the actions taken with respect to deacons and widows at the Westminster Assembly. This gives all of the basics, but Wayne Spear ably describes what happened with more detail.

One of the few church governmental matters decided as "jus divinum" by the Westminster Assembly was the office of deacon.¹⁷⁴

*'...the Assembly at this point rejected a compromise and voted approval of the declaration "That the office of a deacon is perpetual." After a Christmas recess (which the Scots vigorously condemned because of their rejection of special holy days), the Assembly voted that 1 Timothy 3:8-15 and Acts 6:1-4 should be brought as proofs of the proposition.*¹⁷⁵

'After what Lightfoot describes as "a long and large debate," the Assembly voted a negative statement, "that it doth not pertain to the office of deacon to preach the word, or administer the sacraments."

No other work of the deacon was proposed to the Assembly, so the decision of December 15, 1643, became the Assembly's one positive pronouncement of the

¹⁷³ George Gillespie, Notes of Debates and Proceedings of the Assembly of Divines and Other Commissioners at Westminster, Feb. 1644 to Jan. 1645 ed. David Meek (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd, 1846), p. 5.

¹⁷⁴ Wayne R. Spear, Covenanted Uniformity in Religion, Kindle Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013), location 5151.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, location 2695.

*nature of the deacon's work: "It belongs to the office of a deacon to take special care in distributing to the necessity of the poor, proved, Acts vi. 1–4."*¹⁷⁶

"The Assembly still had before it another proposition from the Second Committee, "That widows, which we read of, I Tim. v. 3, and elsewhere, are included under the name deacons." This came up for discussion on December 28 and 29, 1643.

*When it came to a vote, the Assembly was evenly divided: the proposition passed by just one vote. Had Lightfoot been present, the outcome would have been different, for he strongly opposed the proposition; but, as he said, "It was my unfortunacy to be called into the city before it came to the vote." In the next session, there was a long debate on Romans 16:1–2 as a proof text, which ended in a negative vote, and the Assembly went on to other matters. In the process of editing, the only significant change that was made in the section was that this reference to widows was quietly dropped. Although technically this amounted to changing a previous vote of the Assembly, it was not objected to, undoubtedly because of the divided opinion in the Assembly when the proposition was originally passed. As far as can be determined, the existence of deaconesses in the church was no more than a matter of theory, even for the advocates of their inclusion.*¹⁷⁷

*"In the Assembly's debate on the office of deacon, Alexander Henderson exerted his influence in a rather surprising way. He had formerly been a leader in efforts at compromise and was successful in negotiating agreements on the teacher and elder which came short of asserting a jus divinum for those officers. The same issue came up with regard to the deacon, and Herbert Palmer proposed a compromise patterned after what had just been passed about the ruling elder. For reasons that are not recorded, Henderson adamantly refused to compromise and insisted that the Assembly declare the office of deacon to be perpetual in the church."*¹⁷⁸

In short, the Westminster Assembly established the office of deacon firmly. It was "jus divinum." It was less broad than taking care of the church's temporalities; they were to take care of the poor.

As for female deacons or deaconesses, there was no debate on that. The only question was whether there should be servant-widows or not. And that passed, but at the end nobody objected when it was edited out.¹⁷⁹

The passages that they based their conclusion on were Acts 6:1-4, 1Tim 3:8-15, 1Tim 5:3 and Php 1:1. They decided against Romans 16:1-2. In short, they concluded that deacons were male, and that servant-widows would be a good idea, but Phoebe wasn't a deacon.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, location 2713.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, location 2719.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, location 2790.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, location 2744.

John Gill (Early to mid-1700s) Exposition of the Bible on Isaiah 66:21

“and for Levites, saith the Lord; this still more clearly shows that the prophecy belongs to the Gospel dispensation, and is to be understood figuratively and spiritually; for none but those of the tribe of Levi could be taken for Levites in a literal sense; but here Gentiles are said to be taken for such, and design men in Gospel churches. The Levites, as their name signifies, were such as were “joined” to others; they ministered to the priests, and assisted them, and had the charge of the temple, and the vessels of it, to whom deacons now answer; who are helps and assistants to the ministers of the word: their business is to serve tables, and to take care of the secular affairs of the church; so that this is a prophecy of the churches in the latter day being truly organized, and filled with proper officers, as well as with numerous members.”¹⁸⁰

Gill recognized Levites as predecessors to deacons. So did RPCNA pastors James Willson in 1841¹⁸¹, and J.B. Johnston in 1849¹⁸². Both good to read, but too much to fit in here.

As the Concept of Deacons Fragmented

As Protestantism fragmented, so did the concept of deacons. There were five different ways the office went:

- Deacons execute mercy, and take care of the church’s temporalities
- Being a deacon is the path to Priest/Pastor
- Trustees take the place of Deacons (not unique to the RPCNA)
- Deacons become the Elders
- Nonexistence

With this much disarray, which still exists today, there was still room for more disarray, in this case regarding “deaconesses.”

Theodor Fliedner¹⁸³ – Deaconess Movement (AD 1836-1864 and beyond)¹⁸⁴

Fliedner was a Lutheran Pastor in the state Church of Prussia, who was failing in the city of Kaiserwerth, and went off to seek donations to support his efforts. In the process, he met Anabaptists who had deaconesses, and was impressed with the concept of how women could work to better the lot of the poor.

¹⁸⁰ John Gill, “Isaiah 66:21 - Meaning and Commentary on Bible Verse,” accessed October 7, 2022, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/isaiah-66-21.html>.

¹⁸¹ James McLeod Willson, *The Deacon: An Inquiry into the Nature Duties and Exercise of the Office of Deacon in the Christian Church* (Philadelphia, PA: William S. Young, 1841). Especially note the economic functions of the Levites for the Assembly on p. 74. Much like deacons.

¹⁸² J. B. Johnston, “Terms of Communion,” *The Covenanter* 4, no. 9 (March-June 1849): 225-229, 257-262, 289-299, 321-335, accessed October 7, 2022. (Especially p. 322.)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MTyDZ4_JocPj5ub6CqiWIS2Rr1LnZ7jL/view

¹⁸³ Unknown. “Theodor Fliedner - Wikipedia.” Accessed October 9, 2022.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor_Fliedner.

¹⁸⁴ Jeannine E. Olson, *One Ministry Many Roles* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), pp. 201-234.

He set up a series of charitable efforts using single women that he called “deaconesses.” It resembled a convent (“Mother House”), with significant differences:

- If one of the “deaconesses” decided to marry, she could leave and do so.
- They lived in the world, and made an effort to do good and change the world.

Now, they weren’t truly “deaconesses.” They weren’t part of a congregation. They did not report to deacons or a session. It was like a parachurch organization, and somewhat similar to Roman Catholic religious orders.

Did they do good things? Yes. Was it a part of the church? Only in the broadest sense. Was it successful? Yes. Did it make the concept of the deaconess popular? Yes. Did it corrupt the concept of the Biblical deaconess (if there was such a concept)? Yes. Church offices are tied to local congregations, and this was the work of one man, Theodor Fliedner, who eventually resigned his pastorate to further the works of his “deaconesses.”

And where did they create their second “mother house?” It was in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1849. A Lutheran Pastor named W. A. Passavant¹⁸⁵ was enamored with Fliedner’s efforts, and paid Fliedner enough that agreed to start the second deaconess mother house in Pittsburgh. Both the hospital and orphanages they set up had some success, beginning with foreign deaconesses but it seems Passavant was not skilled at attracting local women to become deaconesses¹⁸⁶, and so it did not do as well as other deaconess mother houses. Unlike a Catholic order of nuns, roughly half of the sisters would marry and leave.

Did the Pittsburgh Mother House have an impact on the RPCNA regarding deaconesses? Probably not, but who knows?

Episcopal Church Promotes Deaconesses 1850-1970

After Fliedner, the second main force promoting deaconesses was the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church as they admired Fliedner’s deaconess houses for the social good they did. Thus after 1850, a scads of works were written promoting deaconesses, mostly in the Episcopal Church. The writings of the Episcopalians had a significant impact on many Bible commentaries, which spread the idea of deaconesses to evangelicalism more generally. Here are a few of the more significant ones:

- The Proceedings of the Church Congress of 1862.¹⁸⁷
- Deaconesses, J. S. Howson, 1862¹⁸⁸
- Women’s Work in the Church by John Malcolm Ludlow, 1865¹⁸⁹

Where they differed with Fliedner, was that they thought deaconesses should be parts of churches and specific congregations. As they made their arguments, a few of them cited these works from the period 1650-1850, notably:

¹⁸⁵ George Henry Gerberding, *Life and Letters of W. A. Passavant, D. D.* (Greenville, PA: The Young Lutheran Company, 1906), pp 180-261.

¹⁸⁶ Jenny Wiley Legath, *Sanctified Sisters* (New York City: NYU Press, 2019), pp. 19-20.

¹⁸⁷ Unknown. *Report of the Proceedings of the Church Congress of 1862*. London, England: John Henry and James Parker, 1862.

¹⁸⁸ J. S. Howson, *Deaconesses* (London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862).

¹⁸⁹ John Malcolm Ludlow, *Woman’s Work in the Church* (London, England: Alexander Strahan, 1865).

- De Diaconis & Diaconissis Veteris Ecclesiae Liber Commentarius, Casparis Zieglieri, 1678¹⁹⁰
- The Antiquities of the Christian Church, Joseph Bingham, 1708¹⁹¹
- Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus, John Caspari Suiceri, E Patribus Graecis, 1728¹⁹²
- An Historical Dictionary of All Religions from the Creation of the World to this Present Time, Thomas Broughton, 1742¹⁹³
- Introduction to the New Testament, John David Michaelis, 1793¹⁹⁴

They also frequently cited Pliny, the Apostolic Constitutions, Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret, as did the four works cited above. They cited some other sources as well, but none that have not been covered by this paper.

In other words, the entirety of the argumentation regarding 1Timothy 3:11 and Romans 16:1 relies on a tiny minority of commentators from the School of Antioch¹⁹⁵, who had the same interpretive method for those passages as did Pelagius and the Montanists. As mentioned above, none of their contemporaries adopted their novel interpretations, and were roundly rejected at the Council of Chalcedon, which favored the deaconess view that was similar the office of widow.

The Bishop of the Diocese of Maryland ordained a deaconess in 1855. The Bishop of London ordained a deaconess in 1862, a few other bishops followed in 1885-1887, and the General Convention followed as a whole in 1889. But the deaconesses were not considered the equivalent of deacons until 1970.¹⁹⁶

From The Authorized Version to the Revised Version¹⁹⁷

The third main force for deaconesses was the Revised Version changing the word “Wives” in 1Ti 3:11 to “Women.” While grammatically correct, it was wrong contextually, as the behavior of the wives of officers was not addressed elsewhere in First Timothy 3. Also, the lesser virtues fit the wives of officers, not those who would be female peers of the male deacons.

¹⁹⁰ Casparis Zieglieri, “De Diaconis & Diaconissis Veteris Ecclesiae Liber Commentarius,” accessed October 7, 2022, https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_QZ6FIVkHjWoC. There is an English translation available: Caspar Ziegler, The Diaconate of the Ancient and Medieval Church (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2015).

¹⁹¹ Joseph Bingham and Richard Bingham. *Origines Ecclesiasticae: Or, The Antiquities of the Christian Church, and Other Works, of the Rev. Joseph Bingham* (United Kingdom: W. Straker, 1845).

¹⁹² Joh. Caspari Suiceri, *Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: R & J Wetstenios & Gul Smith, 1728).

¹⁹³ Thomas Broughton, *An Historical Dictionary of All Religions, from the Creation of the World to This Present Time, Etc* (London, England: T. Osborne & J. Shipton, 1742).

¹⁹⁴ John David Michaelis, *Introduction to the New Testament* (F. C. & J. Rivington, 1793).

¹⁹⁵ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. “School of Antioch.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 1998.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/School-of-Antioch>.

¹⁹⁶ Episcopal News Service, “Timeline of Deaconesses in the Episcopal Church,” accessed October 8, 2022, https://episcopalnewsservice.org/wp-content/themes/ens_v2/timelines/timeline-1/timeline-assets/timeline.html#vars!date=1844-05-21_13:28:09!

¹⁹⁷ Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *On a Fresh Revision of the English New Testament* (London, England: MacMillan & Co., 1871).

Feminism

The fourth main force for deaconesses was rising feminism in the civil sphere and the church. Examples: Wyoming granting women the right to vote in 1869¹⁹⁸, which started the move to full suffrage for women in the US. Women were increasingly going to the mission fields not as wives, but as missionaries. Also, those arguing for deaconesses after the Synod of 1888 appealed to the idea of progress in giving women a greater role in the church.¹⁹⁹ The deaconess movement of Fliedner's made great strides across the world, cresting in the early 20th century. But they weren't deaconesses, much less female deacons. Nonetheless the Deaconess Movement created an aura of sympathy for the concept of deaconesses with all of the good that they did. And that likely had an impact on the RPCNA in 1888.

Conclusion

Were the deaconesses of the early church or the Reformation ever the same class as deacons? No. Did they only serve women? Yes. Were they ordained? Rarely, and even then, not with the same seriousness as for deacons. Did they serve in the diaconate along with the deacons? Exceedingly rarely.

The actions of the Synod of 1888 were radical, regardless of their intentions. They were trying to add women to an office they had almost never occupied in recorded church history. When many Christian groups were creating "deaconesses," they incautiously created female deacons, which had no support from Scripture, and scant support from Church History.

We need to stop "backing and filling" for the incautious errors of the Synod of 1888. They acted without due deliberation, and did not send it down in overture because it might lose. There were far more ruling elders that did not go to Synod, and it could have been rejected, ignoring the "sentimental overflow" of the Synod of 1888. The Synod of 1888 made no substantial case for female deacons, and rammed through female deacons given the shortness of time in the closing minutes of the Synod of 1888.

Given that deacons stem from the Levites, they are male. Given that the church has broadly recognized Acts 6 as the founding of deacons, deacons are male. God has not given us any sign principally that regular ecclesiastical offices are open to women, since they were not open to women in the Old Testament. As such we should reject female deacons, and focus the formal service of women in the church to being unordained aides to the deacons.

¹⁹⁸ Unknown, "History of Wyoming - Suffrage - Wikipedia," accessed October 7, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Wyoming#Suffrage.

¹⁹⁹ D. B. Willson, "Should a Woman be Ordained a Deacon?" *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* 26, no. 11 (1888): 405-406. Kennedy and Stevenson, "Women and the Deacon's Office," 383-394.

Bibliography

Alexandria, Alexander of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VI: Alexander of Alexandria, Epistles on the Arian Heresy, Part 2." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VI/Alexander_of_Alexandria/Epistles_on_the_Arian_Heresy/Part_2.

Alexandria, Clement of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Book II: Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, Book 3, Chapter 11." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_II/The_Instructor/Book_III.

Alexandria, Clement of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. II, The Stromata, or Miscellanies by Clement of Alexandria." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_II/CLEMENT_OF_ALEXANDRIA/The_Stromata,_or_Miscellanies/Book_VI.

Alexandria, Peter of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VI, Peter of Alexandria: The Genuine Acts of Peter." Accessed October 7, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VI.

Ambrosiaster. "Ambrosiaster on Romans- Latin - Patristic Bible Commentary." Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/romans/ambrosiaster-on-romans--latin>.

Ambrosiaster. Commentaries on Galatians—Philemon, Edited by Gerald Bray. Ancient Christian Texts. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Antioch, Ignatius of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I - Letter to the Philadelphians, Chapter 10." Accessed October 4, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_to_the_Philadelphians:_Shorter_and_Longer_Versions.

Antioch, Ignatius of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I - Letter to Polycarp Chapter 6" Accessed October 4, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_to_Polycarp:_Shorter_and_Longer_Versions.

Antioch, Ignatius of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I - Letter to the Smyrnaeans, Chapters 12 & 13." Accessed October 4, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_to_the_Smyrnaeans:_Shorter_and_Longer_Versions.

Antioch, Ignatius of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I, Letter to the Trallians, Chapter 7:39-41." Accessed October 4, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I.

Aquinas, Thomas. "Aquinas Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Rom.C16.L1.n1195>.

Aquinas, Thomas. "Aquinas Commentary on Paul's First Epistle to Timothy." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~1Tim.C3.L2.n115.6>.

Athanasius. Fragment from "Sermon to the Newly Baptized." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://classicalchristianity.com/2011/02/10/patristic-quote-of-the-week-11/>.

Augustine. "CHURCH FATHERS: Of the Good of Widowhood" Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1311.htm>.

Augustine. "CHURCH FATHERS: Of Holy Virginity." Accessed October 6, 2022.
<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1310.htm>.

Belgic Confession. "Corpus Et Syntagma Confessionum Fidei (containing Belgic Confession in Latin)." https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_WMnGwo1dryQC/mode/1up.

Bingham, Joseph., Bingham, Richard. *Origines Ecclesiasticæ: Or, The Antiquities of the Christian Church, and Other Works, of the Rev. Joseph Bingham* United Kingdom: W. Straker, 1845.

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "School of Antioch." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 1998.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/School-of-Antioch>.

Broughton, Thomas. *An Historical Dictionary of All Religions, from the Creation of the World to This Present Time, Etc.* London, England: T. Osborne & J. Shipton, 1742.

Calvin, John. *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*. Vol. 18. *Calvin's Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003.

Calvin, John. *Commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans*. Vol. 19. *Calvin's Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003.

Calvin, John. *Commentary upon the First Epistle to Timothy*. Vol. 21. *Calvin's Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Vol. 21. *Library of Christian Classics*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960.

Carthage, Cyprian of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Cyprian: The Epistles of Cyprian." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Epistles_of_Cyprian.

Carthage, Cyprian of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Cyprian: The Treatises of Cyprian." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Cyprian/The_Treatises_of_Cyprian.

Chrisman, Miriam Usher. *Strasbourg and the Reform, a Study in the Process of Change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967.

Chrysostom, John. "St. John Chrysostom on Romans - Patristic Bible Commentary." Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/romans/st-john-chrysostom-on-romans>.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Cicero, De Oratore, "De Partitiōne Oratoria"* Edited by H. Rackham. Vol. 349. *Loeb Classical Library*. Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1942.

Commodianus. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IV, Commodianus, The Instructions of Commodianus." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Commodianus/The_Instructions_of_Commodianus.

Cooper, James, and Arthur John Maclean. *The Testament of Our Lord*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902.

Council of Chalcedon. "Chalcedon - Canons of the 451 Council." Accessed October 6, 2022.
https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/chalcedon_canons.htm.

Council of Neocaesarea. "CHURCH FATHERS: Council of Neocaesarea (A.D. 315)." Accessed October 5, 2022. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3803.htm>.

Council of Nicea. "CHURCH FATHERS: First Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325)." Accessed October 5, 2022. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3801.htm>.

Council of Trullo. "CHURCH FATHERS: Council in Trullo (A.D. 692)." Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3814.htm>.

CRC Synod. "CRC Acts of Synod 1981." <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1981agendaacts.pdf>.

De Bruyn, Theodore S., David G. Hunter, and Stephen A. Cooper. Ambrosiaster's Commentary on the Pauline Epistles: Romans. Writings from the Greco-Roman World 41. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017.

Episcopal News Service. "Timeline of Deaconesses in the Episcopal Church." Accessed October 8, 2022. https://episcopalnewsservice.org/wp-content/themes/ens_v2/timelines/timeline-1/timeline-assets/timeline.html#vars!date=1844-05-21_13:28:09!

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. "The First Book of Discipline." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/important-documents/the-first-book-of-discipline-1560/>.

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. "The Second Book of Discipline." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/important-documents/the-second-book-of-discipline-1578/>.

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. "The Form of Presbyterian Church Government." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/important-documents/the-form-of-presbyterial-church-government/>.

Gerberding, George Henry. Life and Letters of W. A. Passavant, D. D.. Greenville, PA: The Young Lutheran Company, 1906.

Gill, John. "Isaiah 66:21 - Meaning and Commentary on Bible Verse." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/isaiah-66-21.html>.

Gillespie, George. Notes of Debates and Proceedings of the Assembly of Divines and Other Commissioners at Westminster, Feb. 1644 to Jan. 1645. Edited by David Meek. Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd, 1846.

Gibson, Margaret Dunlop. The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac. London, England: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1903.

Hieronymus. "S. EPIPHANII AD IOANNEM Episcopum Ierosolymorum A Hieronymo Latine Reddita." Accessed October 6, 2022. http://www.monumenta.ch/latein/text.php?table=Hieronymus&rumpfid=Hieronymus,%20Epistulae,%203,%20%20%2051&level=4&domain=&lang=1&id=&hilite_id=&links=&inframe=1.

Howson, J. S. Deaconesses. London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862.

Irenaeus. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Book I: Against Heresies, Book 1.13.5" Wikisource. Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/IRENAEUS/Against_Heresies:_Book_I.

Irenaeus, Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I/IRENAEUS/Against Heresies: Book III/Chapter XII. - Wikisource, En.wikisource.org. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/IRENAEUS/Against_Heresies:_Book_III/Chapter_XII. Accessed 5 October 2022.

Jacobs, Andrew S. "Epiphanius of Cyprus, Letter to John of Jerusalem." Accessed October 6, 2022. <http://andrewjacobs.org/translations/epiphanius1.html>.

Jerome. "CHURCH FATHERS: Letters of St. Jerome." Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001.htm>.

Jerome. "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Series II, Volume VI, The Letters of St. Jerome: Letter 146." Accessed October 7, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Nicene_and_Post-Nicene_Fathers:_Series_II/Volume_VI/The_Letters_of_St._Jerome/Letter_146.

Johnston, J. B. "Terms of Communion." *The Covenanter* 4, no. 9 (March-June 1849): 225-229, 257-262, 289-299, 321-335. Accessed October 7, 2022. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MTyDZ4_JocPj5ub6CqiWIS2Rr1LnZ7jL/view

Kennedy, James and T. P. Stevenson. "Women and the Deacon's Office." *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* 26, no. 11 Pittsburgh, PA: Myers, Shinkle & Co., 1888, 383-394.

Koziol, Geoffrey, and Norman Underwood. "(PDF) The Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua and Canons of Selected Councils of the Gallic and Early Frankish Church." Accessed October 6, 2022. https://www.academia.edu/35327382/THE_STATUTA_ECCLESIAE_ANTIQUA_AND_CANONS_OF_SELECTED_COUNCILS_OF_THE_GALLIC_AND_EARLY_FRANKISH_CHURCH.

Legath, Jenny Wiley. *Sanctified Sisters*. New York City: NYU Press, 2019.

Lightfoot, Joseph Barber. *On a Fresh Revision of the English New Testament*. London, England: MacMillan & Co., 1871.

Lightfoot, Joseph Barber, and John Reginald Harmer, eds. *The Apostolic Fathers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987.

Ludlow, John Malcolm. *Woman's Work in the Church*. London, England: Alexander Strahan, 1865.

Luther, Martin. "THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH." Accessed October 6, 2022. <http://www.onthewing.org/user/Luther%20-%20Babylonian%20Captivity.pdf>.

Martimort, Aimé Georges. *Deaconesses*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986.

Martyr, Justin. "A Collection of Diglot Texts of Justin Martyr. - Biblical Criticism..." Accessed October 4, 2022. <https://earlywritings.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=1874>.

Michaelis, John David. *Introduction to the New Testament*. F. C. & J. Rivington, 1793.

Naso, P. Ovidius. "FASTI BOOK 6 - Theoi Classical Texts Library." Accessed October 4, 2022. <https://www.theoi.com/Text/OvidFasti6.html>.

Naso, P. Ovidius. "Fasti, Book 6." Accessed October 4, 2022. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0959.phi007.perseus-lat1:6>.

Naso, P. Ovidius. "Metamorphoses." Accessed October 4, 2022.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0959.phi006.perseus-eng1:9.324-9.417>.

Naso, P. Ovidius. "Metamorphoses." Accessed October 4, 2022.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0959.phi006.perseus-lat1:9.324-9.417>.

Olson, Jeannine E. One Ministry Many Roles. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1992.

OPC Committee on Women in Church Office. "Report of the Committee on Women in Church Office." Accessed October 7, 2022. https://www.opc.org/GA/women_in_office.html.

Origen. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IX, Origen's Commentary on Matthew: Book XIV, Chapter 22." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IX/Origen_on_Matthew/Origen%27s_Commentary_on_Matthew/Book_XIV/Chapter_22.

Pelagius. "Pelagius's Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans." Accessed October 6, 2022.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z0z1WvscKkkGr7nX-p5vj7DRYUSmhs4Csfm0aF_RsyY/edit?pli=1.

Pelagius. Pelagius's Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul, Edited by J. Armitage Robinson. Vol. 2. Texts and Studies Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature 9. Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967.

Plinius, Gaius. "Pliny the Younger." Accessed October 4, 2022.
<https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/pliny.ep10.html>.

Plinius, Gaius. "Pliny Book 10, Letter 96 (English)." Accessed October 4, 2022.
<http://www.vroma.org/vromans/hwalker/Pliny/Pliny10-096-E.html>.

Pölönen, Janne, Plebeians and Repression of Crime in the Roman Empire: From Torture of Convicts to Torture of Suspects (January 2004). *Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquite*, Vol. 51, pp. 217-257, 2004, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1331925>

Polycarp. "Ante-Nicene Fathers/Volume I - Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians, Chapters 4 & 5." Accessed October 4, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_of_Polycarp_to_the_Philippians.

"Propertius, Sextus (c.50 BC–c.15 BC) - The Elegies: Book III." Accessed October 4, 2022.
<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/PropertiusBkThree.php>.

Propertius, Sextus. "Elegies 3.6." Accessed October 4, 2022.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:latinLit:phi0620.phi001.perseus-lat2:3.6>.

Rome, Clement of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume I: First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/First_Epistle_to_the_Corinthians.

Rome, Hippolytus of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume V, Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies: Book VII, Part 24." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Hippolytus/The_Refutation_of_All_Heresies/Book_VII/Part_25.

Rome, Hippolytus of. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume V, Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies: Book IX, Part 7." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_V/Hippolytus/The_Refutation_of_All_Heresies/Book_IX/Part_8.

Rome, Hippolytus of. "The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, Translated by Burton Scott Easton." Accessed October 5, 2022. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/61614/61614-h/61614-h.htm>.

Scott, S. P. "The Code of Justinian : Book 1." Accessed October 6, 2022. https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/CJ1_Scott.htm.

Scott, S. P. "The Novels of Justinian: Novel 3 (Scott)." Accessed October 6, 2022. https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N3_Scott.htm.

Scott, S. P. "The Novels of Justinian: Novel 6 (Scott)." Accessed October 6, 2022. https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N6_Scott.htm.

Scott, S. P. "The Novels of Justinian : Novel 123 (Scott)." Accessed October 6, 2022. https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N123_Scott.htm.

Schaver, J. L. "The Polity of the Churches, Volume 1." Accessed October 7, 2022. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015008573902&view=1up&seq=150>.

Spear, Wayne R. Covenanted Uniformity in Religion, Kindle Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013.

Suiceri, Joh. Caspari. Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus. Amsterdam, Netherlands: R & J Wetstenios & Gul Smith, 1728.

Tertullian. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume III, Anti-Marcion, The Prescription Against Heretics, Chapters 3 & 41." Accessed October 4, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_III/Anti-Marcion/The_Prescription_Against_Heretics/Chapter_III.

Tertullian. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume III, Anti-Marcion, Appendix: Against All Heresies I." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_III/Anti-Marcion/Appendix:_Against_All_Heresies/I.

Tertullian. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IV, Tertullian: De Fuga in Persecutione, Part 11." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Tertullian:_Part_Fourth/De_Fuga_in_Persecutione/De_Fuga_in_Persecutione.

Tertullian. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume IV, Tertullian, On Exhortation to Chastity: Chapter 13." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Tertullian:_Part_Fourth/On_Exhortation_to_Chastity/Chapter_13.

Tertullian. "Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume IV, Tertullian: On Monogamy, Chapter 11." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_IV/Tertullian:_Part_Fourth/On_Monogamy/Chapter_11.

Tertullian. "On the Veiling of Virgins, Chapter 9." Accessed October 5, 2022. <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/on-the-veiling-of-virgins-de-virginibus-velandis-11399>.

Tertullian. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume III The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_III/Ethical/The_Passion_of_the_Holy_Martyrs_Perpetua_and_Felicitas.

The Great, Basil. "Canons of the Holy Fathers." Accessed October 6, 2022. http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/canons_fathers_rudder.htm#_Toc78634056.

Theodoret. "Theodoret, Commentary on Romans (1840) Part 2." Accessed October 6, 2022. https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/theodoret_commentary_on_romans_02.htm.

Unknown. "Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume VII: Constitutions of the Holy Apostles." Accessed October 6, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_VII.

Unknown. "CONFESSION OF THE FOUR CITIES STRASBURG, CONSTANCE ." Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://apostles-creed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/tetrapolatan-strasbourg-swabian-confession.pdf>.

Unknown. "History of Wyoming - Suffrage - Wikipedia." Accessed October 7, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Wyoming#Suffrage.

Unknown. "Law of Majestas - Wikipedia." Accessed October 4, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_majestas.

Unknown. "Manuscript Barberini Gr. 336 – Women Deacons." Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.womendeacons.org/rite-manuscript-barberini-gr-336/>.

Unknown. "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Series II, Volume XIV: Apostolic Canons." Accessed October 6, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Nicene_and_Post-Nicene_Fathers:_Series_II/Volume_XIV/Additional_Canons_4/Part_2.

Unknown. "Pope Cornelius - Wikipedia." Accessed October 5, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Cornelius.

Unknown. "Shepherd of Hermas - Wikisource, the Free Online Library." Accessed October 4, 2022. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Shepherd_of_Hermas.

Unknown. "Theodor Fliedner - Wikipedia." Accessed October 9, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor_Fliedner.

Unknown. "Theodore of Mopsuestia - Wikipedia." Accessed October 9, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_of_Mopsuestia.

Unknown. "Theodoret - Wikipedia." Accessed October 9, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodoret#The_Nestorian_controversy.

Van Dam, Cornelis. *The Deacon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016.

West, Aaron. "Imperial Laws and Letters Involving Religion, AD 364-395." Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20081025063840/http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/imperial-laws-chart-364>.

Wijngaards, John. "Canons of the Second Synod of Orléans." Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.womendeacons.org/minwest-canons-second-synod-orleans/>.

Wijngaards, John. "Canons of the Synod of Nîmes." Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.womendeacons.org/minwest-canons-of-nimes/>.

Williams, Frank. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III. De Fide*. Vol. 79. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies. Boston, MA: BRILL, 2013.

Willson, D.B. "Should a Woman be Ordained a Deacon?" *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* 26, no. 11 Pittsburgh, PA: Myers, Shinkle & Co., 1888, 394-407.

Willson, James McLeod. *The Deacon: An Inquiry into the Nature Duties and Exercise of the Office of Deacon in the Christian Church*. Philadelphia, PA: William S. Young, 1841.

Ziegler, Caspar. *The Diaconate of the Ancient and Medieval Church*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2015.

Ziegleri, Casparis. "De Diaconis & Diaconissis Veteris Ecclesiae Liber Commentarius." Accessed October 7, 2022. https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_QZ6FIVkHjWoC.