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UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

WHEN THE PRIEST BECOMES A WOMAN:
A PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF GENDER FOR THE CATHOLIC EUCHARIST

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF ARTS
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

BY

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OTTAWA, ONTARIO

APRIL 1990



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UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

For

Nancy U. Raab
and
Spencer O. Raab

PREFACE

Feminist scholarship in religious studies emerges out of the conviction that traditional methods of studying religion have been male-biased. Feminist scholars in various fields have pointed out the biased nature of all scholarly endeavors, including feminist ones. This claim is based on the premise that experience affects perception of reality. Thus, it would seem any feminist study of religious beliefs or practice should be prefaced by the author's own religious background.

Because the thesis is a study of the Catholic Eucharist, I would like to include the nature of my encounters with Catholic faith and doctrine. I am not Catholic. My religious upbringing is Presbyterian. In college I attended a non-denominational church organized by the University Chaplain--a Presbyterian minister. After college, I went to a seminary affiliated with the United Church of Christ. I considered ordination in that denomination, however, eventually decided against it.

My doctoral studies at the University of Ottawa initiated my interest in Catholicism. At first, I wanted to direct my thesis towards examining the relation between eating rituals and women's eating disorders. In the course of my research, I became interested in studying the Catholic Eucharist, and in what seemed to me to be a "reversal" of gender roles in this sacrament. From there, my interest expanded to include possible effects of a "re-reversal" of feeding and nurturing roles in the Eucharist, and to the contemporary debate over women's ordination to the priesthood.

Interviews with Episcopalians on the effects of women celebrants has recently sparked my interest in the Episcopal faith. For the past two years, I have irregularly attended Episcopal worship services. I have gone to only three or four Catholic masses in my lifetime. A main reason I refrain from attending more frequently is expressed throughout the thesis--the overarching male dominance in language, iconography, and leadership in the Catholic church. I am aware of this bias, and would be more interested devotionally in Catholicism if women were more included in the above respects.

There are advantages and disadvantages to being a non-Catholic woman writing about women and Catholicism. I have not experienced or wrestled with the Catholic faith in a personal manner, and perhaps this puts me at a disadvantage. Because I have not, however, I have a certain distance from the tradition, which may facilitate envisioning issues of women and Catholic leadership in a new light, and allow me to take a fresh, perhaps bolder approach.

I would like to thank the following individuals for their assistance with my writing and research: Naomi R. Goldenberg, Elisabeth J. Lacelle, Caryll Steffens, Ann Carr, Lawrence Sullivan, and the following Episcopal priests and laypersons--Rev. Bernard Brown, Rev. Chilton Knudsen, Rev. Don Melvin, Rev. Lionell Mitchell, Laurie Patton, Jean Pedderson, Rev. Joy Rogers, Rev. Michael Russell, Rev. Ellen Wondra, and Rev. Ruth Williams. I would also like to thank the School of Graduate Studies at the

University of Ottawa for providing me with an Entrance Scholarship during my first two years of study. I am grateful to Kevin Bruce for helping me prepare the final copy of the manuscript.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Introduction

The prohibition of women to ordained ministries in the Catholic Church has been and continues to be a pressing concern for feminist scholars in religion. While several key documents have been generated on the subject by the Vatican over the past fifteen years, it often seems the debate is at a standstill, and incapable of satisfactory resolution to both sides. Recent talks between Pope Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury, concerning reunification of the Episcopal and Catholic faiths, has again raised the issue of women priests. In one conversation the pope stated that women clergy had "seriously aggravated the differences" between the two traditions.¹ In addition, over the past few years a splinter group has formed within the Anglican Church of the U.S.A., advocating that Episcopalians return to more traditional styles of worship and leadership. Some individuals within this splinter group support turning over the 1976 canon which

¹"Anglican Archbishop Says Pope Should Lead Reunited Church," Chicago Tribune, 1 October 1989, sec. 1, 31.

permitted women's entrance to the priesthood.²

Thus, some of the gains women struggled so hard to achieve in the seventies are in danger of being lost. Because of this possibility, a fresh perspective to investigating the issues around women's ordination is in order. Two approaches being used to study gender-related concerns in the area of women and religion are appropriations of feminist theological study and psychoanalytic theory. Thealogy,³ or theories about goddesses, originated in the early nineteen eighties as a counterpart to theology, or theories developed by men about male gods. Feminist scholars such as Naomi Goldenberg and Emily Culpepper have encouraged use of the term to include a variety of types of investigation concerning women and spirituality.⁴ Some of the issues explored have been the importance of female symbols, language issues in the church, and women's political and psychological empowerment. Concern with gender⁵ is a theme which links theological exploration of

²"Episcopal Dissidents Set Up Group to Bar Female Priests," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 3 June 1989, sec. D, 6.

³"Thealogy" is defined in more depth at the end of Chapter Two.

⁴Naomi Goldenberg, Changing of the Gods - Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 96. Emily Culpepper, "Contemporary Goddess Thealogy: A Sympathetic Critique," in Shaping New Vision. Gender and Values in American Culture, ed. C. Atkinson, C. Buchanan, and M. Miles (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1987), 51.

⁵In the thesis, gender is defined as "practice organized in terms of, or in relation to, the reproductive division of people into male and female," R.W. Connell, Gender and Power. Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics (Stanford: Stanford

related topics.

Feminist appropriations of psychoanalytic theory have also centered on the motif of gender. An important direction various scholars have begun to pursue is the relationship between early unconscious processes and development of gender patterns in society. In addition to classical Freudian theory, three schools of thought have been helpful in this type of investigation: the work of Melanie Klein, object relations theory, and feminist psychoanalytic thought as it has emerged from France. Two focal points for study encompassed by these schools have been the child's experience of her or his maternal relationship prior to experience of the paternal relationship, and the child's acquisition of a sense of gender identity.

Gender is a central concern for Vatican officials in their continued refusal to ordain women to the priesthood. This concern is especially evidenced in the area of the sacraments, and particularly in the Eucharist. Liturgically and theologically, the Eucharist is a focal point for Catholic faith and doctrine. The significance of gender to the Eucharist is an area in which theological study and

University Press, 1987). Jane Flax describes the distinction between sex and gender as follows. "Sex," according to Flax, refers to anatomical differences between male and female. Alternatively, "gender" is a "consequence and symptom of particular, historical, and socially constructed cultures," Thinking Fragments. Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 24.

psychoanalytic thought can thus converge, and together further discussion on the debate over women priests in the Catholic church.

The thesis juxtaposes theological investigation with psychoanalytic theory to explore the significance of gender for the Catholic Eucharist. This exploration takes two directions. One is the current situation of men's dominance in consecrating the sacrament. The other direction is investigation of what is at stake for women, men, and the church if women could be priests. In the thesis, I use psychoanalytic thought both to further theological study of gender concerns in the Eucharist, and to add to discussion on the contemporary debate over Catholic women clergy. Through doing so, I hypothesize that psychoanalytic theory can contribute to theology and to the ordination debate in these two ways: 1) by providing an overall theory for better understanding the significance of gender concerns in the Eucharist, and 2) by augmenting and deepening theological literature through exploring the origins of gender issues in early childhood relationships.

I will provide a basic outline of the thesis. In Chapter Two, I provide a setting for discussion of the debate. I point out that not all Catholic women are in favor of female clergy; some feel women, as priests, would be co-opting themselves to an existing male, hierarchical system. Whatever their perspective, however, most women are interested in the

issues involved in the ordination debate, and particularly those of women and leadership. While women have been involved in such roles as deaconesses and women religious for many centuries,⁶ they remain unable to persuade the Vatican of the necessity to ordain women.

Vatican officials outline their reasons for refusing female priests in several documents that have appeared over the past fifteen years. Two of especial importance are the 1976 "Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood"⁷ and the 1988 Pastoral letter "On the Dignity and Vocation of Women."⁸ The Declaration lists six reasons against women priests: 1) church tradition, 2) the absence of women disciples, 3) the lack of ordained women among the apostolic community, 4) preservation of Christ's and the apostles' attitudes towards women, 5) the necessity for the eucharistic celebrant to physically resemble the historical Christ, and 6) the "fact" that women are not divinely called to the priesthood. The Pastoral letter includes many of these reasons as well, and in addition specifies that women have two "ordained" callings: virginity and motherhood. The letter uses Genesis chapters two and three to substantiate its claim,

⁶In addition, women since Vatican II have attained greater liturgical involvement in many parishes.

⁷Reprinted in Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration, ed. Leonard and Arlene Swidler (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 37-39.

⁸Reprinted in Origins. NC Documentary Service 18:17 (6 October 1988), 261-283.

and the claim that man is "head" and woman "help meet" in the divine order of creation. This latter assertion then becomes the backbone for Vatican arguments against women's taking a leadership role in the church.

Catholic women have in turn refuted Vatican objections prohibiting women priests. Arguments favoring women's ordination are offered from theological, ethical, and historical perspectives. Theologically, criticism of the objection that celebrants of the Eucharist must physically resemble Christ asserts that this presumption indicates only men are redeemed by Christ.⁹ Allowing only male celebrants suggests as well that Christ is actually present in the person of the priest during the act of consecration.¹⁰ Feminists argue that ethically, excluding women from the priesthood implies that women are inferior to men, and that it subordinates women to men in leadership roles. Finally, recent feminist historical scholarship has uncovered that women were very likely involved in early ministries of the church, including teaching, prophesying, and blessing the bread at the Eucharist.¹¹

⁹R.A. Norris, Jr., "The Ordination of Women and the 'Maleness of Christ,'" The Anglican Theological Review Supplementary Series 6 (June 1976), 69, 76, 78.

¹⁰John Austin Baker, "Eucharistic Presidency and Women's Ordination," Theology 88/725 (September 1985), 352, 355.

¹¹Barbara J. McHaffie, Her Story. Women in Christian Tradition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); Rosemary Radford Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, edited Women of Spirit. Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian

Episcopalian women faced similar arguments against women priests in their struggles for ordination in the nineteen seventies. Like Catholic women's struggle, the push for women's ordination in the Episcopal church was grounded in and given energy by the wider women's movement. A significant difference from the Catholic situation, however, is that several Episcopal bishops took initiative to "irregularly" confer ordination upon a handful of women deacons who asked to be ordained.¹² This event in turn gave these women power to celebrate the sacraments. While the irregular ordinations were afterwards declared invalid, as celebrants the women gained symbolic power--symbolic power that later translated into political power.¹³

Traditions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, In Memory of Her (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

¹²Heather Hyuck, "To Celebrate a Whole Priesthood: the History of Women's Ordination in the Episcopal Church," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1981), 248.

¹³In proceeding to celebrate mass, these women gradually gained enough political momentum to achieve official acceptance as priests. According to Hyuck, the symbol of a woman in a leadership role had a lot to do with their ability to gain this momentum.

In a personal conversation with Episcopal laywoman Jean Pedderson, Pedderson described the image of a woman celebrant as a signal that she is included in all aspects of church life. Pedderson indicated that women celebrants allow her to feel affirmed in who she is as a woman, and to feel included in the church on a "gut level." She stated that perhaps it is a "symbol thing:" that when she looks to the altar and sees a woman, she realizes there is really no aspect of the church where she cannot be a part. Conversation with Jean Pedderson (Chicago, Ill.: 11 July 1988). In another conversation, Rev. Vicki Smith indicated that women celebrants bring an image of "completeness" previously lacking in the

The Eucharist is thus a focal point for both Vatican objections to women clergy and Episcopalian women's ability to become priests. In the case of the Vatican, concern with the gender of the eucharistic celebrant has been a stumbling block prohibiting women from being ordained. For Episcopalians, gender acted as a powerful enabler in women's gaining the status of priests. These two themes--gender as stumbling block and gender as enabler--can serve as forays for further investigation of the relation between gender, the Eucharist, and the debate over women's ordination in the Catholic faith.

Psychoanalytic approaches to the Eucharist include those of Freud, appropriations of object relations theory, and that of the French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. Freud believed the Eucharist re-enacted a primal Oedipal drama, and that it expressed sons' emotions of aggression, guilt, and reverence toward their fathers. The act of eating the bread and drinking the wine of the Eucharist was, for Freud, an act of incorporating the father and a means of identifying with him.¹⁴ The idea of eating as incorporation is also found in other psychoanalytic understandings of the Eucharist. In an object relations view of this sacrament, for example, the moment of

church (Chicago, Ill.: 14 June 1988). I include additional experiences of Episcopal men and women in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

¹⁴Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo (1913)," vol. 13, The Pelican Freud Library, ed. James Strachey (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1985), 217.

partaking bread and wine is equivalent to incorporating the mother. This event replays infantile nurturing at the mother's breast; it also re-enacts early feelings of identification with her.¹⁵ Julia Kristeva expands upon this object relations understanding of the Eucharist, and postulates that the event evokes primal physiological and mental processes, prior to the advent of language.¹⁶

In contemporary ritual and practice, the Eucharist can only be celebrated by men. This masculine-dominated iconography facilitates worshippers' envisioning Freudian notions of aggression, guilt and reverence as these might be expressed in the father relationship. The fact, however, that maternal imagery is not equally represented in the figure of the celebrant is indeed significant. Due to the absence of women, males instead become symbols of maternal nurturing and feeding. This phenomenon, in effect, constitutes a gender reversal--or a male appropriation of female functions and roles.

I investigate the notion of gender reversal in the first section of Chapter Three. The hypothesis that gender roles are reversed in the Eucharist can be addressed from several angles. One is other instances of its occurrence in Christian

¹⁵Mary Ellen and Cheryl Linn Ross, "Mothers, Infants, and the Psychoanalytic Study of Ritual," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 9 (Autumn 1983): 26-39.

¹⁶Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 118-120.

heritage and ritual. In the Old and New Testaments, for example, God is portrayed as possessing such maternal qualities as birthing, suckling, and caregiving.¹⁷ In addition, Jesus had traditionally "feminine" qualities--for example, meekness, lowliness, and humility. Symbolically, to his disciples Jesus took on the role of mother, nurturer, caregiver. This role was adopted by several of the apostles in their interactions with new believers.¹⁸ In medieval monasticism, monks frequently used maternal metaphors to describe their role in relation to believers. Suckling, pregnancy, and giving birth were images sometimes used.¹⁹ In contemporary Catholicism, the sacrament of baptism is an instance of male appropriation of female functions--in this case giving birth. It seems the Catholic sacraments in general depict nurturing or caregiving activities being enacted by men.

Psychoanalytic thought facilitates exploration of possible reasons for gender reversal in the Eucharist. This is the focus of Chapter Four. Freudian theory is most helpful in its development of the notion of penis envy, or desire for gender reversal in women. For Freud, penis envy is an

¹⁷See the first section of Chapter Three for specific biblical references to these qualities.

¹⁸See, for example, 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, Hebrews 5:12, and 1 Peter 2:2.

¹⁹Caroline Walker Bynum, Jesus as Mother (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982).

important aspect of girls' Oedipus complex, and to their later psychological development as women.²⁰ In general, Freud does not address the possibility that boys might envy women's anatomy or physiological functions. Several of his contemporaries, however, do address male envy of women, and male desire for gender reversal. Karen Horney, for example, acknowledges the desire for gender reversal in her male patients, and argues that men are jealous of women's ability to become mothers and nurse their infants.²¹ Contemporary psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim, through study of primitive male puberty rites, comes to the similar conclusion that men experience "vagina" envy.²²

Thus, one possible psychological reason for the Vatican's continued prohibition of women priests is men's envy of female biological processes of pregnancy, birthing, and suckling infants. Another reason could be fear of the power these processes grant women. Research into Freud's life, for example, indicates that Freud found women powerful and mysterious--particularly the figure of the mother. This motif can be seen especially in his dreams, in which maternal

²⁰Sigmund Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex (1924)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 7 (1977); "Some Consequences of the Anatomical Psychical Distinction Between the Sexes (1925)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 7.

²¹Karen Horney, Feminine Psychology (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co. 1967).

²²Bruno Bettelheim, Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954).

figures are in several cases depicted having control over life and death processes.²³ Melanie Klein, a follower of Freud, also offers insight on the perceived power of the mother. Based on the breast's ability to grant or withhold nurturance from the child, Klein asserts that infants fear the mother as the first castrator.²⁴ Klein's work is extended into the field of sociopolitical relations by psychologist Dorothy Dinnerstein. According to Dinnerstein, men's oppression of women is in reality an act of vengeance against the fear and anxiety they felt towards their mothers as infants.²⁵

Experiences of men and women in the Episcopal church further elucidate men's unconscious feelings about women priests. During Episcopal women's struggles for ordination in the seventies, several women had encounters with men that indicated objections beyond those based on tradition, scripture, and church authority. One priest explained that if men could not be mothers, women should not be allowed to become priests.²⁶ Another man dissented to women clergy on the grounds that women celebrants would alter images of

²³Sarah Kofman, The Enigma of Woman. Woman in Freud's Writings, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980).

²⁴Melanie Klein, "The Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict," in The Selected Melanie Klein, ed. Juliet Mitchell (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1986), 74.

²⁵Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur. Sexual Arrangements and the Human Malaise (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

²⁶From Hyuck, 20.

divinity.²⁷ A third priest indicated that women priests would raise issues of gender identity for him.²⁸

These objections from men seem to convey both envy of women's biological capacity to become mothers, and anxiety around possible effects women clergy would have on the church. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate these two concerns. The possibility of women becoming priests might be termed gender re-reversal, because it would entail a re-appropriation of women's capacities as creators and caretakers in the ecclesial realm. In terms of the Eucharist, in celebrating this sacrament women would be reclaiming their roles as feeders and nurturers. One avenue for exploration of gender re-reversal in the Eucharist might be the theological impact of women celebrants; another could be the effects of women clergy on worshippers' experience of the sacrament. These avenues are investigated in Chapters Three and Five.

Theologically, the Eucharist is a ritual of sacrifice. Several scholars question whether the Eucharist was always a sacrificial ritual;²⁹ other scholars explore whether the notion

²⁷From Hyuck, 60.

²⁸Personal conversation, Ellen Wondra (Chicago, Ill.,: 14 June 1988).

²⁹E.O. James, Christian Myth and Ritual. An Historical Study (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1965); Josef A. Jungmann, S.J., The Early Liturgy, trans. Francis Brunner, C.S.S.R. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959); Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, second ed. (London: Dacre Press, Adam and Charles Black,

of sacrifice might be linked to the male gender. Sociologist Nancy Jay, for example, traces the development of blood sacrifice alongside concomitant establishment of a male clerical hierarchy. Jay notes that childbearing women were always excluded from sacrificial rituals, and postulates the reason as men's attempt to find an equivalent to childbirth in sacrifice.³⁰

Psychoanalytic theory can also be helpful in understanding the relation between maleness and sacrifice. Freud, for example, makes associations between sacrificial rituals, the death instinct, and development of the Oedipus and castration complexes.³¹ The castration complex takes on particular importance in light of gender concerns, because, for Freud, it is experienced differently by girls and boys. Whereas girls, according to Freud, believe themselves already castrated, boys identify fear of castration with loss of the mother.³² I speculate in Chapter Five that perhaps the phenomenon of sacrifice is a re-enactment of loss brought about by the castration complex. If so, the pattern would be more familiar to boys than girls.

1945).

³⁰Nancy Jay, "Throughout Your Generations Forever: A Sociology of Blood Sacrifice," (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1981).

³¹Robert Bock, Sigmund Freud, (Chichester: Ellis Horwood Limited, 1983).

³²Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," 318.

The significance of gender to eucharistic theology can also be investigated by looking at theologies developed from female spirituality and experience. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow, for example, look at women's spiritual quest as it is expressed in women's literature.³³ Two recent attempts to develop gynocentric theologies--or theologies based on female experience--are made by Kathryn Rabuzzi and Catherine Keller.³⁴ Rabuzzi uses the notion of motherselfhood--the relationship between women of different generations--to explore a theology based on nurture and relationality. Keller in turn uses psychoanalysis to understand theology as a maternal matrix, or a web of connection.

Another important dimension of eucharistic theology is the symbol of the celebrant. Theologically, the celebrant is a representative of Christ. The Vatican's concern that the celebrant be male indicates the high degree, for them, to which the celebrant represents the historical Christ. Given this notion, it is likely female celebrants will influence both symbols of Christ and images of God. A female Christ,

³³Carol Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980); Judith Plaskow, Sex, Sin and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980).

³⁴Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi, Motherself. A Mythic Analysis of Motherhood (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988); Catherine Keller, From a Broken Web. Separation, Sexism, and Self (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986). Rabuzzi and Keller do not use the term "thealogy" to describe their work. I explain how I use "theology" and "thealogy" at the end of Chapter Two.

for example, can indicate to women that they are equally redeemed with men in the sight of God. In addition, feminine images of divinity--for example, God the Mother, Wisdom, or Sophia--allow women to see themselves in direct relation to the Godhead.

Theological study of female religious symbols indicates these symbols have a strong impact on women's self-identity, and perhaps also on women's position in society. Several feminist scholars have suggested that the two most prominent female symbols in Christian heritage--Eve and Mary--have in various ways contributed to women's subordinate position in the church.³⁵ Alternatively, some women are discovering that ancient goddess symbols can empower them in psychological and political ways which much traditional female imagery does not.³⁶

The symbol of the celebrant also plays an important role in psychoanalytic understandings of worshippers' experience of the Eucharist. Psychoanalytically, male celebrants

³⁵Rosemary R. Ruether, New Woman/New Earth. Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), Mary, the Feminine Face of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); Elaine Pagels, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent (New York: Random House, 1988); Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father. Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

³⁶Nelle Morton, The Journey Is Home (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985); Carol Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," in The Politics of Women's Spirituality, ed. Charlene Spretnak (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1982). Other resources on the power of ancient goddess symbols are found in Chapter Three.

represent father figures, while female celebrants portray maternal figures.³⁷ Freud believed these associations also hold true for images of divinity. Beliefs about God, according to Freud, are based on individuals' relationships with their fathers.³⁸ An object relations perspective, however, indicates that mothers also influence early representations of God, which extend to later spiritual experiences.³⁹

The time in infancy during which the mother is most formative to development can be termed the pre-Oedipal period. This stage has several common characteristics, which might in turn be applied to a psychoanalytic understanding of the Eucharist. One feature of the pre-Oedipal period is that it occurs very early in life, prior to the child's acquisition of language. The type of "memories"⁴⁰ women celebrants might evoke would thus be very early and primal, from a time when basic communication consisted of sounds and gestures. Another characteristic of this stage is that the child is dependent upon the mother for nurturance, shelter, and protection--in

³⁷See Part II for further exploration of this hypothesis.

³⁸Freud, "The Future of An Illusion (1927)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 12 (1985).

³⁹Ana-Maria Rizzuto, Birth of the Living God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁴⁰Throughout the thesis, I use the term "memory" to include experiences both accessible and inaccessible to linguistic expression. Since much of the pre-Oedipal period is pre-verbal, pre-Oedipal memory could consist of emotions, affects, and sensations.

essence for her or his entire being in the world. It is likely this early relationship is important for all later life experiences.

A child's most basic need is for food. Several object relations theorists focus on the infant's early encounters with the mother's breast (or primary food source), and on the impact these encounters have on later cultural experience. If the breast, for example, is always available to the infant when it⁴¹ desires it, the infant will very likely feel a sense of harmony with and connection to its food source. Perhaps the infant will also feel playful and creative in its interactions with the breast. These feelings of play and connection will in turn extend to the mother, and later to other individuals. In terms of the Eucharist, I speculate that female celebrants moreso than male celebrants would be likely to evoke early memories of maternal-infant connection and satisfaction. These memories could facilitate feelings of intimacy during the sacrament, and between worshippers, celebrant, and divinity.

It is also conceivable that an infant would experience occasional periods of hunger and denial, and times when the breast is unavailable to satisfy its needs. In those cases, the infant would likely feel angry towards the source of its denial, and would perhaps want to harm the breast. The infant

⁴¹For the purposes of the thesis, I use "it" to refer to "he or she," and "its" to refer to "her or his."

might also feel hostile towards its mother. If denial were to become a predominant aspect of an individual's pre-Oedipal memory, he or she as an adult might experience anxiety and aggression around satisfying basic needs. It is probable female celebrants would be more likely than male celebrants to facilitate early pre-Oedipal memories of anger and anxiety. As a result, it is possible some individuals' experiences of female celebrants would be negative.

Another important aspect of the pre-Oedipal period is that it is probably experienced differently by girls and boys. Girls, for example, tend to identify with their mothers, and likewise mothers with their female children. This identification results in girls feeling some degree of connection or merging with their mothers. Boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to distinguish themselves from their mothers, and to develop a sense of separateness and individuality. Mothers may help in fostering this sense of separateness by treating boys as different from themselves. In developing their own sense of identity, boys probably first come to know themselves as "not girls," and only later as boys.⁴²

⁴²Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering. Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1978), Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989). In Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory, Chodorow writes that her early writing implied that women's mothering was the cause of male dominance, and that she now argues that The Reproduction of Mothering traces one extremely important aspect of the relations of gender and the

If boys and girls tend to have different types of relationships with their mothers, it is possible female celebrants will affect men and women who partake of the Eucharist differently. Women, for example, may feel greater intimacy and identification with female celebrants than with male celebrants, while some men may become threatened by seeing a woman celebrate the Eucharist. Female celebrants may provide greater affirmation to women of their identities as women, while these same celebrants may cause some men anxiety, and may pose a threat to their gender identity.

Hence, one result of women's ordination to the Catholic church could be greater affirmation of women's being and place in the life of the church. I use psychoanalytic thought to make other contributions to theological study of the ordination debate as well. These contributions are discussed in Chapter Six. In particular, I point out possible origins of such notions as religious symbols, concepts of sacrifice, and themes of nurture and connection as these are present in the Eucharist. Psychoanalytic notions of God and celebrant as parent figures, for example, emphasize the psychological importance of the mother imago when women assume leadership roles. I also indicate through psychoanalytic theory the importance of female symbols for women's psyches, and particularly the symbol of the celebrant. Through looking at early childhood patterns, I demonstrate how psychoanalytic

psychology of gender (6).

thought furthers discussion on whether sacrifice is linked to the male gender. Through study of the infant-mother relationship, I hypothesize that themes of connection and nurture originate from a maternal matrix--and that these themes are later overlaid by paternal influences.

Thus, I use psychoanalytic thought to offer a basic theory for understanding gender reversal and re-reversal in the Eucharist. In terms of the larger ordination debate, I show how psychoanalysis can be used to speculate on reasons for gender reversal in this sacrament, and in turn for the Vatican's continued prohibition of women clergy. I do so through postulating that the roots of gender issues lie in early childhood relationships, particularly with the mother. I state that these issues frequently have to do with envy or fear of the differences between men and women, concerns of gender identity, and the power one sex has over the other early in life. While women may be the first controllers of the lives of males and females, psychoanalytic theory indicates that men may respond to this situation by taking power in political and ecclesial realms when adults. A psychoanalytic approach thus suggests that early childrearing patterns may be contributing to the prohibition of women priests. In turn, the possibility of women priests raises important issues for men and women about their relationships with female figures in religious and political positions of leadership.

Overview

A brief review of the development of psychoanalysis can clarify the nature of my approach. Psychoanalysis originated with the thought and work of Sigmund Freud. Freud's own understanding of what psychoanalysis was about evolved over the course of his lifetime, which spanned from 1856 to 1939. In 1920, in his essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud wrote of some of the changes he saw in his understanding of his own method:

Twenty-five years of intense work have had as their result that the immediate aims of psychoanalytic technique are quite other to-day than they were at the outset. At first the analysing physician could do no more than discover the unconscious material that was concealed from the patient, put it together and at the right moment, communi-cate it to him. Psychoanalysis was then first and foremost an art of interpreting. Since this did not solve the therapeutic problem, a further aim quickly came in view: to oblige the patient to confirm the analyst's construction from his own memory. In that endeavor the chief emphasis lay upon the patient's resistances: the art consisted now in uncovering these as quickly as possible, in pointing them out to the patient and in inducing him by human influence--this was where suggestion operating as 'trans-ference' played its part--to abandon his resistances.⁴³

Thus, for Freud, early psychoanalysis was chiefly concerned with uncovering the contents of the unconscious, and only later evolved into a technique which included exposing patients' defenses against repressed material. In the essay cited above, Freud goes on to discuss his discovery

⁴³Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," The Pelican Freud Library, ed. James Strachey, vol. 11 (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), 288.

of the repetition compulsion--the unconscious desire to repeat material that has been repressed. This discovery began for Freud a new avenue of investigation which, among other theoretical observations, led to his hypothesis of the death instinct.⁴⁴ The death instinct gave Freud insights into certain cultural themes such as war and religious rituals of sacrifice.⁴⁵ Freud's later works reflect his growing interest in applying psychoanalysis to institutional structures, and particularly to those associated with religion.⁴⁶

Freud's understanding of the Eucharist integrates his interest in rituals of sacrifice with his theories on the role of the unconscious in determining behavior. Freudian thought also addresses ways in which psychological development might affect experience of religious ritual. It does so primarily through study of the past, and, in particular, of the familial past of individuals.

In exploring individual histories, psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the role of a child's parents in influencing the course of its development. A psychoanalytic approach presumes that a child's first perceptions are of its parents, and that these perceptions in turn determine how the child comes to

⁴⁴This observation is made by Robert Bocock, Sigmund Freud (Chichester: Ellis Horwood Limited), 71.

⁴⁵Bocock, 72-73.

⁴⁶Some of these later works are "The Future of an Illusion (1927)," "Civilization and Its Discontents (1930)," and "Moses and Monotheism (1939)."

view the world. Freud believed that the child's initial relationship with its father laid the foundation for relationships with male figures in youth and adulthood.⁴⁷ Because he believed childhood conflicts with the father were not always resolved, Freud felt that neurotic expressions of the child-father relationship were often retained into adult life. He believed religion, for example, to be an expression of an individual's unresolved father complex. Freud clarifies this notion in "The Future of an Illusion:"

When the growing individual finds that he is destined to remain a child forever, that he can never do without protection against strange superior powers, he lends those powers the features belonging to the figure of his father; he creates for himself the gods whom he dreads, whom he seeks to propitiate and whom he nevertheless entrusts with his own protection. Thus his longing for a father is a motive identical with his need for protection against the consequences of his human weakness. The defence against childish helplessness is what lends its characteristic features to the child's reaction to the helplessness which he has to acknowledge - a reaction which is precisely the formation of religion.⁴⁸

Thus, for Freud, in reality God is a projection of the infantile father.⁴⁹ While Freud gives a good deal of attention to the father's influence on religion, he spends little time addressing the effects the mother figure might have on the formation of religious beliefs. In "Totem and Taboo" he does make two references to the existence of mother goddesses;

⁴⁷This is true particularly for male authority figures.

⁴⁸Freud, "The Future of An Illusion (1927)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 12 (1985), 204-205.

⁴⁹Freud, "The Future of An Illusion," 212.

however, Freud gives the reader the impression that goddesses are to be associated with a past era, and are not relevant to modern-day religion.⁵⁰

Via his notions on the Oedipus complex, Freud's thought aids in understanding possible reactions a male celebrant might elicit in the minds of participants in the Eucharist. Freud argues that both religion and primitive morality originate from the Oedipus complex. Understanding how he makes this link can perhaps aid in comprehending his approach to the Eucharist.

Freud in "Totem and Taboo" discusses the origins of morality in primitive totemic cultures. The totem, according to Freud, is for primitive peoples a substitute for the

⁵⁰Freud, "Totem and Taboo (1913)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 13, (1985), 211, 215. On page 211, Freud states: "I cannot suggest at what point in this process of development a place is to be found for the great mother-goddesses, who may have perhaps in general have preceded the father-gods. It seems certain, however, that the change in attitude to the father was not restricted to the sphere of religion but that it extended in a consistent manner to that other side of human life which had been affected by the father's removal--to social organization. With the introduction of father-deities a fatherless society gradually changed into one organized on a patriarchal basis." On page 215, he indicates: "...Divine figures such as Attis, Adonis and Tammuz emerged, spirits of vegetation and at the same time youthful divinities enjoying the favours of mother goddesses and committing incest with their mother in defiance of their father. But the sense of guilt, which was not allayed by these creations, found expression in myths which granted only short lives to these youthful favourites of the mother-goddesses and decreed their punishment by emasculation or by the wrath of the father in the form of an animal...The mourning for these gods and the rejoicings over their resurrection passed over into the ritual of another son-deity who was destined to lasting success."

father, and stemmed from an ancient Oedipal drama. That drama can be articulated as follows. Freud postulates the existence of a "primal" family, consisting of primal father, mother, and sons. In this family constellation, the sons wished to commit incest with their mother, but were prohibited from doing so by their father. Out of anger towards their father, the sons proceeded to kill him. Upon committing murder, however, they felt remorse and guilt, and decided to eat him.⁵¹ The sons then forbade murder of the father to happen ever again. Instead, they revered him as a totem figure.⁵²

This ancient sequence of events, according to Freud, marked the beginnings of morality - namely, they inaugurated the incest taboo and the prohibition of murder. Freud believed that primitive religion also developed from totemism, and thus from the Oedipal drama. Totems initially were looked to as protectors, and often took on the forms of animals. Eventually, the totem figure developed into a deity, which possessed the qualities of a loving yet punitive father. This is how religion, for Freud, essentially became based on a grand projection of the infantile father.⁵³

Religious rituals, according to Freud, are attempts to replay and resolve the Oedipus complex. He believed they are generally based on neurotic impulses, which manifest

⁵¹Freud, "Totem and Taboo," 217.

⁵²Freud, "Totem and Taboo," 207-210.

⁵³Freud, "Totem and Taboo," 209.

themselves as repeated ceremonies designed to atone for feelings of guilt.⁵⁴ The Christian Eucharist, in his view, is one such expression of these impulses. Freud maintains that the Eucharist originally developed from an ancient totem meal, during which the totem animal was ceremoniously killed and eaten. The totem meal re-enacted the primal sons' murder and incorporation of their father. He believed that over time, the hostile feelings associated with this act became more and more sublimated, while the affectionate feelings became more and more prominent. Freud believed that over time as well the figure of the son became substituted for that of the father. For Freud, this substitution eventually resulted in the motif of Jesus being sacrificed on the cross, and also the ritual of the Christian Eucharist. He argued, however, that the contemporary Eucharist continues to express a "fresh" elimination of the father.⁵⁵ The Eucharist as understood by Freud can be seen as marked by themes of killing, sacrifice, and sublimation of aggression.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Freud, "Obsessive Rites and Religious Practices (1907)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 13.

⁵⁵Freud, "Totem and Taboo," 217.

⁵⁶René Girard notes that at the core of the Oedipus myth as presented by Sophocles is the proposition that all masculine relationships are based on reciprocal acts of violence. He asserts that Freud was the first to maintain that all ritual practices and mythical implications have their origin in an actual murder. Violence and the Sacred, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 48. In The Scapegoat, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), Girard proposes that by rejecting guilt, Christ breaks

Psychoanalytic thought has taken various directions since Freud's death.⁵⁷ The various psychoanalytic schools which emerged have generally adhered to Freud's original emphasis

the mythic cycle of violence and the sacred. In his more recent work, Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987) Girard discusses the "scapegoating mechanism"--which he attributes to the foundation of religion and the restored moral order--as the way primitive societies dealt with "mimetic" conflict, or conflict arising from humans' attempts to differentiate themselves from one another. Julia Kristeva has indicated in Black Sun. Depression and Melancholia, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) that a number of commentators question Girard's theory that Christ abolishes sacrifice in Christian thought, and that Christ thus abolishes the very notion of the sacred (131).

Contemporary Freudian psychoanalysts interested in religious rites note the existence of themes of killing, sacrifice, and sublimation of aggression in the ritual of the Eucharist. They do not, however, generally acknowledge the historicity of Freud's version of the Eucharist's origin. Rather, contemporary analysts tend to view Freud's understanding of the ancient totem sacrifice as an example of a cultural expression of Oedipal dynamics.

Psychoanalyst Eli Sagan, for example, believes all rituals of sacrifice are a sublimated form of socialized aggression. He states that rituals of sacrifice such as the Eucharist can be traced back to primitive cannibalistic behavior. Sagan delineates three important characteristics of cannibal activity which lead him to make this hypothesis: 1)cannibalism is a direct expression of human aggression, 2)cannibals have an attitude of ambivalence--consisting of both reverence and hostility--toward the individual eaten, and 3)cannibalistic phenomena take place under the rubric of ritual. In Cannibalism. Human Aggression and Cultural Form (New York and London: The Psychohistory Press, 1974), xix. Sagan implies that the same three elements found in cannibalism are also present in the Christian Eucharist: Jesus is sacrificially killed yet loved, and the ritualized act takes on special significance. He indicates that today "we see in the...act of the eucharist only affectionate qualities," however, that they contain "expressions of the deepest, most primitive aggressive desires" (60).

⁵⁷A few examples of the directions his thought has taken are object relations theory, ego psychology, Kohutian self psychology, and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

on uncovering unconscious motivations for behavior, and on exposing resistances to repressed material. These two foci seem to make psychoanalysis a useful tool for studying possible unconscious reasons for the Vatican's prohibition of women priests. The psychoanalytic schools, however, do not all share Freud's understanding on the nature of religion or of religious ritual.

Feminist scholars, for example, are not in agreement about the usefulness of a psychoanalytic approach for feminist endeavor. In the area of religion, for example, certain feminist thinkers assert that psychoanalysis has been detrimental to the study of women. Theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether argues that psychoanalysis has been used to explain and justify the inferiority of women. Ruether writes:

The Freudian definition of women...turns out to be, in some ways, the psychoanalytic analogue of the religious myth of Eve as Adam's rib. It is not surprising, therefore, that Freudian psychoanalysts early began to concern themselves with trying to untangle the meaning of this myth. Freud himself recognized there was something peculiar about this story. Otto Rank proposed what was to become the orthodox Freudian explanation of it by suggesting that it really concerns the Oedipus incest story. The real meaning is the reverse of the overt story, concealing the desire of the infant to marry the mother. Eve is really Adam's mother.⁵⁸

For Ruether, the basic problem with Freudian theory--evidenced in the paradigm of the Eve story--is that it confuses social phenomena with biological innateness and

⁵⁸Rosemary Radford Ruether, New Woman/New Earth. Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation (New York: Seabury, 1975), 146.

normativity. In the Freudian explanation, Eve's birth from Adam is taken for granted, and is interpreted in terms of incest. Ruether insists that because of its use of this type of reasoning, psychoanalysis is to be categorized as the "enemy" of women.⁵⁹

Other feminist thinkers find Freud's theories concerning his women patients blatantly sexist. Mary Daly, for example, claims that Freud began a misogynistic therapeutic tradition of blaming both the patient and the mother for illness. She argues:

In his disgusting discussion of Dora, who suffered from "hysteria," he re-lays her experience of being sexually assaulted at the age of fourteen and pontificates upon what she should have experienced... Clearly, Freud assumes that any woman who "is approached," that is sexually accosted, should respond with uncontrollable visceral desire for the male who mauls and violates her...In this maze of obscene babble the great mind-shrinker announces that any woman who does not enjoy rape is hysterical.⁶⁰

Clearly, for Daly psychoanalysis is also to be considered woman's foe. If Ruether's and Daly's estimations of Freud are correct, it needs to be asked why feminists do not choose to dispense with a psychoanalytic approach altogether. I propose that despite its flaws, psychoanalysis can still serve three useful purposes in light of the goals of this study. These are: 1) an exploration of unconscious processes, 2) an attempt

⁵⁹Ibid., 148-149.

⁶⁰Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology, the Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 266-267.

to make a link between those processes and cultural life, and 3) a focus on issues related to gender. It seems the concern of psychoanalysis with gender illuminates and informs the other two purposes mentioned.

Recent feminist appropriations of psychoanalytic theory offer support for this proposal. Jane Flax, for example, believes that a psychoanalytic understanding of unconscious processes is necessary for studies of gender. She derives her position from her belief that the unconscious is where notions of gender identity originally develop. Flax states that early in life, gender issues are wrapped up with childhood concerns about differentiation:

Psychoanalysis provides essential insights into the problem of differentiation. In the therapeutic process and in psychoanalytic theory the abstract subject-object problem recurs on the individual and concrete level, above all, in the transference relationship central to psychoanalysis. The systemic use and exploration of transference (and counter-transference), and the focus on unconscious processes distinguish psychoanalysis from any other form of therapy. Since gender identity develops originally and most deeply through pre-verbal and nonrational experience, an understanding of unconscious processes is crucial for feminist theory.⁶¹

In addition to uncovering gender issues from early childhood, Flax indicates that feminist uses of psychoanalytic theory can illuminate the social construction of what has traditionally been considered "feminine" identity--

⁶¹Jane Flax, "Mother-Daughter Relationships: Psychodynamics, Politics, and Philosophy," in The Future of Difference, ed. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 22.

particularly through exploring early patterns of childrearing.⁶²

Another example of a feminist theorist who finds psychoanalysis helpful in understanding social processes is Iris Marion Young. For Young, one of the virtues of psychoanalysis is its ability to make connections between individual unconscious life and cultural symbolic life. Psychoanalysis links societal issues of gender to unconscious processes, and in turn is able to investigate those processes. Young explains:

As a category...gender differentiation is primarily a phenomenon of symbolic life, in both the individual consciousness and the general metaphysical framework and ideologies of a culture. Psychoanalytic theory of gender is the most adequate theory, because more than any other type of theory it can make the connections between individual affectivity, motivation, and desire, on the one hand, and the symbolic categories of culture, on the other...As a theory of symbolism, and of the unconscious mechanism of symbol substitution and transference, moreover, psychoanalysis can provide a framework for understanding the pervasiveness of gender meanings throughout a culture's categorical and symbolic systems.⁶³

⁶²Ibid., 23. In Thinking Fragments. Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West, Flax writes: "For all its shortcomings psychoanalysis presents the best and most promising theories of how a self that is simultaneously embodied, social, 'fictional,' and real comes to be, changes, and persists over time...Psychoanalytic theories also help us understand power in its noninstitutional forms--how relations of domination become woven into the fabric of the self and how desire and domination become intertwined" (16).

⁶³Iris Marion Young, "Is Male Gender Identity the Cause of Male Domination?" in Mothering. Essays in Feminist Theory, ed. Joyce Trebilcot (Totawa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), 135.

Hence, because psychoanalysis addresses the three purposes mentioned above--exploring the unconscious, making links between unconscious processes and cultural phenomena, and focusing on gender--psychoanalytic theory seems a useful tool in a psychological exploration of the debate over women's ordination. The next task is to decide which specific school or schools of psychoanalysis would be most appropriate for the purposes of the thesis.

Because women's ordination is a gender-related concern, it seems logical to look to those schools of thought which pay attention to women's psychology. Two such schools are object relations theory and recent French feminist psychoanalytic theory. Object relations theory originated in Britain, and developed under the auspices of such analysts as W.D. Fairbairn, Michael Balint, and D.W. Winnicott. This psychoanalytic school focuses on an earlier period of childhood than Freud did, and puts more emphasis on the child's relationship with her or his mother than does classical Freudian analysis. In addition, object relations theory begins with the idea that human beings begin their development in relation to other human beings--rather than in relation to the vicissitudes of their drives.⁶⁴

Two ways which object relations theory might be useful in feminist research are its focus on social interactions, and

⁶⁴Naomi Goldenberg, "The Return of the Goddess: Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Shift From Theology to Thealogy," Studies in Religion 16 (Winter 1987), 38-39.

its concern with the pre-Oedipal period of development.⁶⁵ Flax, for example, is interested in object relations theory because she believes it uncovers the most primitive roots of human beings and of society:

...I, like Chodorow, have found object-relations theory the most useful and suggestive form of psychoanalytic theory because it analyzes humans as they develop in and through social relations, and stresses the centrality of preoedipal experience.⁶⁶

Flax also finds object relations theory useful in correcting Freud's accounts of the psychological development of women, and in more adequately grasping the character of the pre-Oedipal period. In getting a better handle on this period, Flax believes object relations thought allows for a fuller understanding of the interaction of instinct and culture. It also, in her view, illuminates the need for integrating social and political factors into Freudian theory.⁶⁷

⁶⁵The pre-Oedipal period of development is considered to be prior to the Oedipal period. One major distinction psychoanalysts make between these two periods is that the mother is formative for development during the pre-Oedipal period, while the father is formative during the Oedipal stage.

⁶⁶Flax, "Mother-Daughter Relationships," 23. In Thinking Fragments, she states that object relations theory is important to the development of psychoanalysis, feminism, and philosophy, especially in its emphasis on preoedipal relations in the formation of a self, and on play as a source of knowledge (18-19).

⁶⁷Flax, "Mother-Daughter Relationships," 23-25. Some problems Flax has with object relations theory are that the mother never appears as a complex person in her own right - with her own processes that are not simply isomorphic to

Religious ritual is a particular sphere of social interaction which can perhaps be better understood using object relations theory. It is possible object relations theory can help expand, for example, traditional understandings of God and Christian spirituality, particularly as these are perceived in the Eucharist. One way in which it can do this is through facilitating exploration of the maternal origins of religious symbols and experience. Diane Jonte-Pace, for example, uses object relations thought to achieve the following three goals: 1)to illuminate the psychological origins of religious experience in the maternal-infant matrix, 2)to explore the pre-Oedipal origins of the image of God, and 3)to critique idealism and dualism in Western images of divinity.⁶⁸

Psychiatrist Ana-Maria Rizzuto also utilizes object relations theory to investigate the psychological origins of religious beliefs. Similar to Jonte-Pace, Rizzuto explores the emergence of God-representations in the pre-Oedipal period, and the role of the mother in the initial formation of those representations. Rizzuto hypothesizes that the child's relationship with its mother is the source of its

those of the child--and that there is in this theory the disappearance of many forms of desire, sexuality, and embodiment in both mother and child. Thinking Fragments, 19.

initial God-representation, which is later modified or reinforced by its relationship with its father. She explains:

In the first period of narcissistic relation to the object, the child needs the object to see him [*sic*] as an appealing, wonderful, and powerful child reflected in the maternal eye...From the point of view of our study this is the first direct experience the child has - very early in life - which is used in the formation of the God representation. The first integrated experience of oneself precedes, I suggest, the first integrated experience - and representation - of the mother...Later on, the experience is to be used directly in the first representation of God...⁶⁹

In terms of the Eucharist, object relations thought permits the ritual to be envisioned as a re-enactment of early infant-mother interactions, emerging from the pre-Oedipal period of development. Christ, God, and the symbol of the celebrant can be imaged in maternal terms.⁷⁰ Using solely object relations thought in religious investigations, however, has certain limitations. One weakness of many of the object relations theorists, for example, is their tendency to view motherhood as an ideal state⁷¹, and the pre-Oedipal period as a paradisiacal stage in childhood development. Jonte-Pace

⁶⁹Ana-Maria Rizzuto, Birth of the Living God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 185-186.

⁷⁰Mary Ellen and Cheryl Linn Ross, "Mothers, Infants, and the Psychoanalytic Study of Ritual, Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 9 (Autumn 1983): 26-39.

⁷¹This is not true of Melanie Klein's work. Klein is sometimes considered an object relations theorist, and sometimes treated independently. In this thesis she will be treated independently, for the reason that, like Freud, she believed feelings of love and hate were innate, and did not emerge as a result of interactions with individuals in the surrounding environment.

includes this point in her critique of object relations theory:

First, the mother remains an object of service whose desire is shaped by the child's need and whose subjectivity remains unexamined. Second, there is an underlying idealization and romanticization of motherhood...third, in the literature on pathology, we seem to find a reversal of this set of assumptions in a position that might be characterized as 'blaming the mother.'⁷²

Thus, while object relations theory can be useful in studying the debate over women's ordination to the priesthood, it needs augmentation in certain ways. In this regard there are at least two options. One is the thought of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. Klein's work addresses anxiety and aggression in the infant-mother relationship, and thus checks the tendency to portray the pre-Oedipal period too idealistically.⁷³ The other avenue is feminist psychoanalytic thought as it has emerged from France.

French feminist psychoanalytic theory developed in reaction to the work of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Lacan is especially noted for his re-interpretation of Freudian thought in terms of symbolism and language. Key issues for Lacan are the development of sexual difference, and

⁷²Jonte-Pace, 6.

⁷³Melanie Klein, Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945 (New York: Delacorte Press and Seymour Lawrence, 1975) and Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963 (New York: Delta Publishing Co., 1975); these works will be explored in the body of the thesis.

the "phallus" as the prime signifier of that difference.⁷⁴ French feminist thinkers such as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva in general follow Lacan in acknowledging the importance of symbolism and language to personality formation. Like Lacan, they focus on the development of sexual difference, however they do so from the standpoint of the pre-Oedipal period instead of the Oedipal. Because the French feminist psychoanalytic theorists provide additional dimensions to understanding the pre-Oedipal period to those offered by Kleinian and object relations thought,⁷⁵ it seems appropriate to include this school of thought in the study as well.⁷⁶

In the thesis, I will use psychoanalytic theory in the following ways. Freudian thought, for example, is employed to explore the affects of early relationships on experiences

⁷⁴Lacan used the term "phallus" instead of "penis," and interpreted the word in term of what the penis symbolizes. See Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 284, 287.

⁷⁵Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva are all interested in issues of sexual difference and differentiation. See, for example, Cixous and Catherine Clément's The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), Irigaray's Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), and Kristeva's "Women's Time," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 7 (Autumn 1981), 13-35.

⁷⁶A weakness Flax finds with much of the writing on difference is that it seems to assume and perpetuate a radical, even ontological rather than socially constructed disjunction between sign/mind/male and body/nature/female. Thinking Fragments, 178.

of religious ritual. While Freud's theory of the Eucharist --that it originated from a horde of sons eating their primal father--is both historically and anthropologically inaccurate, his idea that parental-child relationships impact cultural and religious phenomena remains sociologically and psychologically significant. In much the same way Freud envisioned God as a projection of the infantile father, the study explores the notion that religious symbols are informed by projections of parental figures.

I also use Freudian theory to investigate specific gender issues in the Eucharist. Freud's theories on penis envy, for example, offer a starting point for examining gender reversal in this sacrament. His associations among rituals of sacrifice, the death instinct, and the Oedipus and castration complexes facilitates hypothesis of links among sacrifice, hierarchy, and maleness. In addition, his discussion of bisexuality opens the door to exploring possible lessening of gender distinctions with the advent of women priests.

Since a Freudian understanding of the Eucharist is based on the father-child relationship, an object relations perspective is utilized to envision the Eucharist in terms of maternal themes. Object relations theory is further used to critique and extend Freud's understanding of women's psychological development, particularly as that understanding pertains to the debate over women's ordination in the Catholic church. Object relations perspectives on the pre-Oedipal

period of development, for example, illuminate possible experiences worshippers would have if the Eucharist were celebrated by women as well as men. An object relations approach also facilitates investigation of possible differences in the way this early time is remembered by males and females; it thus permits speculation on whether men and women might experience a woman celebrant differently. An additional point of investigation is found in extending object relations thought, to explore the importance of childrearing practices to cultural and religious phenomena.

Lacanian and French feminist approaches facilitate psychoanalytic investigation of such notions as sacrifice and the Oedipus complex from the perspective of symbolism and language. Lacan re-interpreted much of Freud's early work, de-emphasizing his biological approach. Instead, Lacan uses such Freudian notions as castration and penis envy to explain men's and women's symbolic sense of definition and place in modern society. His thought is particularly informative for the study in exploring symbolic implications of the psychoanalytic issues of separation and loss.

French feminist thought also aids in investigating motifs of separation and loss, and the role these motifs play in development of rituals of sacrifice. Cixous and Irigaray do so particularly through their critique of Lacanian theories of femininity and castration; Kristeva, through exploration of Old and New Testament taboos and sacrificial rituals. The

work of Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva as well make important contributions both to psychoanalytic perspectives on sexual difference, and to understanding the pre-Oedipal period of development. These contributions in turn fuel speculation on possible effects of women priests on eucharistic theology and experience.

The body of the thesis is divided into two Parts. Common motifs running through both are notions of gender reversal and gender re-reversal in the Eucharist. I use the term gender reversal to describe the manner in which the Eucharist is currently being celebrated in the Catholic church: that is, a situation in which men are appropriating women's traditional and physiological functions of feeding and nurturing. This idea is explored in detail in Part I. I use gender re-reversal in turn to envision the scenario that would be brought about by women's ordination to the priesthood. In this future possible scenario, women in effect would be reclaiming their feeding and nurturing roles, alongside men's still retaining these traditionally feminine capacities. Thus, re-reversal implies women and men being able to celebrate the Eucharist together--it does not suggest men would lose the ecclesial privileges they already have.

Part I of the thesis, "Contributions of Theology to the Significance of Gender For the Eucharist," focuses on ways feminist theological study can address the debate over women's ordination in the Catholic church, and, in particular, the

significance of gender for the Eucharist. I explore in this Part (Chapters Two and Three) ways in which gender concerns have been addressed by the Catholic church and by feminist scholars in various fields.

The question of sexual difference--innate versus socially constructed--is taken up for investigation in Chapter Two. This discussion then serves as background for exploring the possibility of re-reversal in the Eucharist. In Chapter Three, I look at possible changes in the Eucharist if women could be celebrants. First I review feminist study of symbols, and the importance of female symbols to women's political and psychological well-being. The symbol of a female celebrant is investigated, particularly in terms of how she might expand traditional images of God and Christ. Possible changes to eucharistic theology are also explored using a feminist theological perspective.

Part II, "Contributions of Psychoanalysis to Exploring the Significance of Gender For the Eucharist," attempts to broaden and deepen theological study of gender concerns in the Eucharist. In Chapter Four, psychoanalytic theory is used to postulate possible psychological reasons for the occurrence of gender reversal. These reasons are then extended to the Vatican's prohibition of women priests. In Chapter Five, I use psychoanalysis to explore gender re-reversal, from both theological and experiential perspectives. The first section is devoted chiefly to exploring the possibility that a

theology of sacrifice might be linked to the male gender. In the second section, I attempt to offer a psychoanalytic perspective on how worshippers' experience of the Eucharist might be affected by women celebrants.

I suggest in the concluding chapter ways in which psychoanalytic theory contributes to theological study of gender concerns in the Eucharist, and to the overall debate over women's ordination in the Catholic Church. I hypothesize that a psychoanalytic method complements disciplines being utilized by theological study, and that as such it can deepen current theological understandings of gender reversal and re-reversal in the Eucharist. A significant way this is being accomplished is through suggesting reasons for gender reversal in the Eucharist, and in providing a theory for looking at gender reversal and re-reversal. An additional way is through psychoanalytic speculation on the origins of such phenomena as religious symbols, notions of sacrifice, and motifs of nurturing and connection in the Eucharist. Another manner is through raising questions in relation to issues such as the following: 1)the role of contemporary childrearing practices in the Vatican's continued refusal to ordain women priests, 2)further implications of women priests for Catholic doctrine and practice, 3)possible negative reactions to female celebrants by both men and women, and 4)whether women priests would be beneficial to the church and to the overall feminist movement. I include in my discussion reflections by Episcopal

priests and laypersons on perceived differences brought about by women celebrants in the Episcopal faith.

PART I:
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THEALOGY TO EXPLORING
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER FOR THE EUCHARIST

CHAPTER 2

FINDING A FOCUS ON THE EUCHARIST IN THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE OVER WOMEN'S ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

A Review of the Debate Over Women's Ordination to the Priesthood

The subject of women and ministry is a burgeoning area within the larger discipline of women and religion. Women in ordained ministries, twenty years ago a rarity, today are in many denominations hardly viewed as unusual. The most recent mainline Protestant denomination to ordain women has been the Episcopal church. The governing body of this denomination first approved women for ordination in 1976. Recently, the Episcopal church appointed its first woman bishop.¹ This landmark event within the history of Christianity would seem to suggest that women are at last beginning to be treated as equals in the field of ordained ministries. In other denominations as well, while difficulties for women still exist in areas of job placement and promotion, it is not at all uncommon to find both women and men in positions of ministerial leadership.²

¹Barbara Harris was installed on February 11, 1989, as the first woman bishop of the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. Michael Hirsley, "First Woman Episcopal Bishop," Chicago Tribune, 12 February 1989, sec. 1, 3.

²George W. Cornell, "Women Find More Acceptance as Clerics," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 3 June 1989, sec. D, 6.

There are several groups in the Christian tradition, however, for which ordained ministry remains prohibitive to women. Included in these groups are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints.³ Included also are several fundamentalist denominations.⁴ In the United States and Canada the Roman Catholic Church is by far the largest tradition to still deny ordination to women.

It is significant that in the Catholic Church, women have a lengthy history of involvement in church ministries.⁵ Since Vatican II, women as well have made large strides in liturgical ministries, especially in the form of lay readers, altar girls, and in being able to distribute the Eucharist. Because they remain barred from the priesthood, however, women are prohibited from leading sacramental functions in the Catholic Church. In particular, it can be observed that the Vatican's refusal to allow women priests is punctuated by an overarching concern with gender. This concern is exemplified in reason number five of the 1976 "Declaration of the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood."

³Ibid.

⁴The Southern Baptists, for instance, still do not ordain women.

⁵Mary Jo Weaver, New Catholic Women. A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986). Weaver deals with this theme throughout her book.

This reason--that women cannot be ordained because they do not adequately represent Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist --is sometimes referred to as the "natural resemblance" argument. In the Declaration this argument runs as follows:

Having recalled the Church's norm and the basis thereof, it seems useful and opportune to illustrate this norm by showing the profound fittingness between the proper nature of the sacrament of the Order, with its specific reference to the mystery of Christ, and the fact that only men have been called to receive priestly ordination...The Christian priesthood is...of a sacramental nature: the priest is a sign, the supernatural effectiveness of which comes from the ordination received, but a sign that must be perceptible with ease...The same natural resemblance is required for persons as for things: when Christ's role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be this 'natural resemblance' which must exist between Christ and his minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man...the Incarnation of the Word took place according to the male sex: this is indeed a question of fact, and this fact, while not implying an alleged superiority of man over women, cannot be disassociated from the economy of salvation: it is, indeed, in harmony with the entirety of God's plan as God himself [sic] has revealed it...⁶

A more recent papal statement to contain a version of the natural resemblance argument is the 1988 Pastoral Letter "On the Dignity and Vocation of Women." This letter states that the sacrament of the Eucharist enacts a uniting of "masculine" and "feminine"--in which Christ is the "bridegroom," and the Church, the "bride:"⁷

⁶In Swidler, 43-44.

⁷Carl Jung, in his essay "Transformation Symbols in the Mass," assigns masculine and feminine imagery to the symbols

The eucharist is the sacrament of our redemption. It is the sacrament of the bridegroom and the bride. The eucharist makes present and realizes anew in a sacramental manner the redemptive act of Christ, who 'creates' the church, his body... Since Christ in instituting the eucharist linked it in such an explicit way to the priestly service of the apostles, it is legitimate to conclude that he thereby wished to express the relationship between man and woman, between what is 'feminine' and what is 'masculine,'... It is the eucharist above all which expresses the redemptive act of Christ, the bridegroom, toward the church, the bride. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the eucharist, in which the priest acts in persona Christi, is performed by a man.⁸

It is apparent from these two examples that Vatican officials are strongly concerned about the gender of the eucharistic presider. It is also important to note that in the Catholic church, presiding at the Eucharist is generally considered to be the priest's central liturgical function. Celebrating mass is the most frequently performed sacrament within the life of the Catholic faith, and is a duty from which non-ordained persons remain excluded. Thus, a profound consequence of the church's refusal to ordain women is their exclusion from consecrating the bread and wine at the Eucharist.

For the purposes of this study, it is advantageous to choose a narrower topic for investigation within the larger

of the elements. The ritual of the Eucharist, for Jung, unites masculine and feminine energies, and in doing so achieves wholeness or totality. In Psychology and Religion West and East, vol. 11, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 201-296.

⁸"On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," 279.

issue of women's ordination. Gender is of central concern not only to the Vatican's notion of priesthood, but also to its conception of the eucharistic presider. In consequence, it seems an exploration of the significance of gender to the Eucharist can help in the overall effort to further discussion on women priests in the Catholic Church. The exploration can both include discussion of the current male-dominated Eucharist, and implications for the nature and practice of the rite if it were performed by men and women.

Before beginning to investigate the significance of gender to the Eucharist, it is important to get some background on the issues involved in the modern debate over women's ordination in the Catholic church. Therefore, in this section, I will give an overview of the nature of some of the arguments put forth for and against permitting women to be clergy. In doing so, I will provide a survey of contemporary literature on this topic.⁹

The struggle for ordination has been a major issue within the Catholic feminist movement. It should be mentioned at the outset, however, that not all Catholic feminists--and certainly not all Catholic women--are in favor of Catholic women clergy. Some women, for example, feel that admitting women to the priesthood would be a negative step for the larger feminist movement. In general, women who take this

⁹Most of the literature on women's ordination to the priesthood has been written since 1970. See the list of Sources Consulted.

position argue that women's ordination would be a form of co-optation, to the existent patriarchal system. These women tend to argue that, instead of pushing for ordination, a more suitable feminist endeavor might be breaking down the present clerical caste system.¹⁰

Feminists who favor ordaining women in turn respond that allowing women to be priests in fact would be helping to break down the masculinist, hierarchical nature of the priesthood. Catholic feminist theologian Ann Carr, for example, takes this position:

The ordination of women need not mean admission to the clerical caste, as some fear, or as the defensive jokes and cartoons--ridicule of the issue--suggest. Rather it would further the transformation of the priesthood...The priesthood would no longer be a male-dominated club with restricted membership, a bureaucratic hierarchy, but an open, collegial, spiritual service of unity.¹¹

Catholic feminists still appear to be divided on this issue.¹² It cannot be denied, however, that women's desire for leadership roles in the Catholic church is strong, and that this desire continues to grow.

Historically, particular Catholic women have been struggling for Catholic ordination since the early nineteenth hundreds. The movement for women clergy may have originated

¹⁰Ann Carr addresses this issue for Catholic feminists in Transforming Grace. Christian Tradition and Women's Experience (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988).

¹¹Carr, 40.

¹²Conversation with Paula Kleine-Kracht, sister in the Ursuline community (Chicago, Ill.: 20 February 1989).

from the Saint Joan's Alliance, a group formed in 1911 to work for women's suffrage.¹³ This organization has been actively petitioning for women's ordination since the early nineteen sixties.¹⁴ The rising feminist consciousness of the sixties led another group of women to form the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, whose specific purpose was to examine women's status within the church. Ordination has been one of the issues under examination.¹⁵ In addition, a third group of women, known as the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), which emerged from the Leadership Conference, has begun to discuss the question of women priests.

These different groups in various ways put pressure on the Vatican to open for discussion the issue of women clergy. In 1976, the Vatican made an official response to this pressure. The document containing the response, the "Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood," offers six reasons for the continued prohibition of women clergy:

¹³Antoinette Iadarola, "The American Catholic Bishops and Woman: From the Nineteenth Amendment to ERA," in Women, Religion and Social Change, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Ellison Banks Findly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 466.

¹⁴Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Roman Catholic Story," in Women of Spirit. Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 374.

¹⁵Weaver, 114.

- 1)The Church's Constant Tradition¹⁶: the Catholic church has never felt that priestly or episcopal ordination can validly be conferred on women.
- 2)The Attitude of Christ: while Christ was sympathetic towards women, he did not call any women to become part of the twelve disciples.
- 3)The Practice of the Apostles: the apostolic community remained faithful to the attitude of Jesus towards women, and did not confer ordination upon any prominent woman of the Gospels.
- 4)Permanent Value of the Attitude of Jesus and the Apostles: the practice of the church has a normative character, which involves preserving an unbroken tradition throughout the history of the church.
- 5)The Ministerial Priesthood in the Light of the Mystery of Christ: when Christ's role in the Eucharist is to be expressed sacramentally, there would not be a "natural resemblance" between Christ and his minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man.
- 6)The Ministerial Priesthood Illustrated by the Mystery of the Church: the priesthood is a calling, and women are not called to it.

These six reasons justifying women's continued exclusion from the priesthood represent the kinds of arguments given by

¹⁶I use capital letters in stating these arguments to conform to their structure in the Declaration.

those opposed to Catholic women clergy. On the other side of the debate, arguments favoring women's ordination tend to fall into one of three main categories: or, theology, ethics, and history. I suggest that a review of the nature of the arguments in each category can in turn more clearly elucidate the Vatican's objections.

Theologically, one argument against ordaining women as priests is that they do not adequately represent Christ in the ritual of the Eucharist. Critique of this argument has been made on basically two grounds: 1)the doctrine of salvation it conveys, and 2)its identification of the priest with Christ. Generally, the first criticism runs that making the premise that the eucharistic celebrant must be of the same gender as Christ distorts the Christian doctrine of salvation. Catholic scholar R.A. Norris, for example, contends that the Vatican position on women priests essentially denies the universality of Christ's redemption. Norris states that Jesus' maleness is not a necessary factor for the meaning of "God-with-us"---and to make it so would subject the divine to the limitations of the created world. In addition, Norris points out that because both men and women were baptized by Christ, both sexes were saved by Christ. Thus, both men and women, in his view, are capable of representing Christ in the role of the priest.¹⁷

¹⁷R.A. Norris, Jr., "The Ordination of Women and the 'Maleness of Christ,'" The Anglican Theological Review Supplementary Series 6 (June 1976), 69, 76, 78.

Criticism of the Vatican objection to women priests on the grounds of identity asserts that the Vatican position borders on equating the eucharistic celebrant with Christ. It can perhaps be speculated that this position has roots in a theological development in medieval Catholicism, which held that the priest actually became Christ during the moment of consecration.¹⁸ Scholar John Baker, for example, notes this belief in medieval Catholicism. Baker maintains that to continue to confine the eucharistic presider to someone of the same gender as Christ runs the risk of claiming that Christ is present and active in the person of the presider--a claim which, he contends, has no basis in Catholic teaching.¹⁹

The medieval notion that the priest becomes Christ during the consecration of the mass may have roots in Thomistic theology. This possibility is also suggested by the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA)--a research team which has studied issues relating to ordination. Regarding women's ordination, Sara Butler (on behalf of the CTSA) states:

...What is in question is not whether women are capable of imaging the male Christ in the eucharistic ministry. Rather, the question is whether any priest has the function of directly representing Christ.²⁰

¹⁸Caroline Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast. The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987), 57.

¹⁹John Austin Baker, "Eucharistic Presidency and Women's Ordination," Theology 88/725 (September 1985), 352, 355.

²⁰Sara Butler, Proceedings of the Second Conference on the Ordination of Roman Catholic Women, New Woman. New Church.

Butler disagrees with Thomistic doctrine, and states instead that the only way the priest should be said to "represent" Christ is as "Head of the Church." In this capacity, Butler finds women and men equally capable.²¹

Arguments for women's ordination from an ethical perspective treat the issue of women's overall subordination in the Catholic Church. While the Vatican maintains that women are in no way inferior to men, feminists in turn argue that to exclude women from the priesthood does in fact imply women's inferiority, and that it results in women's subjection. Feminists arguing from an ethical stance also assert that women should fight against being shackled into stereotypes of "womanly" virtues, roles, and functions--in which they are frequently put by the Catholic church. Instead, they claim, women should be encouraged to strive for leadership positions in which they have powers of decision-making, and in which they can learn to take responsibility for themselves as human agents.²²

Lastly, from a historical perspective, feminist scholars refute the Vatican's claim that women were not normative in the early ministries of the church. These scholars contend that, on the contrary, women very likely functioned in the

New Priestly Ministry, ed. Maureen Dywer (Baltimore, M.D.: The Conference, 1980), 121.

²¹Ibid., 121.

²²Carr, 58.

capacities of apostles,²³ teachers, and prophets. Feminist historical research suggests that in addition, women were known to have blessed the bread at the Eucharist, and that they provided leadership in early Christian "house churches."²⁴ Regarding house church leadership, historian Barbara McHaffie writes: "In the New Testament women are not only described as the patronesses of house churches but also as their leaders."²⁵

Like McHaffie, noted feminist New Testament scholar Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza indicates that women were active in house church ministries. In addition, according to Schüssler-Fiorenza, women were known to have worked with Paul as missionaries and as prophets in early Christian assemblies. Her research also shows that women participated in early church leadership as widows, deaconesses, and teachers.²⁶

Schüssler-Fiorenza states that the reason women were able to take on leadership roles in the early church was the

²³They were not called such, however.

²⁴"House church" is a term used by Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza to describe the nature of early Christian gatherings. These gatherings, she states, were believed to have taken place in individual homes, and were believed to have centered around a Sunday evening meal. "'You are not to be called Father:' Early Christian History in a Feminist Perspective," Can We Always Celebrate the Eucharist?, Concilium 152 (New York: Seabury), 7-8.

²⁵Barbara J. McHaffie, Her Story. Women in Christian Tradition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 25.

²⁶Schüssler-Fiorenza, In Memory of Her (New York, Crossroad, 1983), 160-184.

egalitarian nature of Jesus' message. Early Christian texts, in her view, illuminate the tension between egalitarianism and a tendency towards patriarchal solidification:

Early Christian writings were shaped by a struggle - between opposing groups over the equality of women...The texts written to justify male leadership record the sad demise of the original Christian vision of oneness in Christ. Those that transmit remnants of the egalitarian tradition remind the mainstream church that the community founded by Jesus was meant to be one of mutual service of brother and sister, not one made in the image of society where some "lord it over" others.²⁷

Feminist historical scholarship such as Schüssler-Fiorenza's calls for re-evaluation of the argument that women were not involved in leadership roles in the early church. Her scholarship thus brings into question the legitimacy of the Vatican's refusal to ordain women on the basis of "tradition"--on what was normative for the early church.

Upon reviewing the arguments for women's ordination, it seems significant that feminist objections to the Vatican Declaration refute the majority of reasons given for the Catholic church's continued refusal to ordain women. It would seem that the Vatican in actuality has little grounds on which to continue to prohibit women priests. Yet it continues to prohibit them.

Comparing the Contemporary Debate with Women's Struggle for Ordination in the Episcopal Church

Perhaps some insight can be gained on the issue by

²⁷Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Word, Spirit, and Power: Women in Early Christian Communities," in Women of Spirit, 57.

looking at the history of women's struggle for ordination in the Episcopal church. The Episcopal or Anglican church is generally thought to be closest to Roman Catholicism in its theology, liturgy, and church structure. Theologically, there is a wide divergence amongst Episcopalians both regarding the nature of the Eucharist, and the role of the celebrant. High Anglicans --frequently referred to as "Anglo-Catholics"--for example, generally believe in transubstantiation.²⁸ High Anglicans also tend to hold that the eucharistic celebrant directly represents Christ at Calvary. In contrast, low Anglicans lean towards believing in consubstantiation, and that the priest is a representative of the community rather than of Christ per se.²⁹

It is significant, however, that both high and low Anglicans are part of the same Episcopal hierarchical structure--consisting of a lineage of archbishop, bishops, priests, and laypersons. This structure closely models that

²⁸The doctrine of transubstantiation states that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are in some manner literally transformed into the body and blood of Christ. This is the Catholic theological understanding of the Eucharist. Consubstantiation, the view held by most Protestant denominations, maintains that Christ is present in the sacrament, however, that his presence is largely symbolic. The bread and wine are not believed to be transformed into Christ's actual body and blood.

²⁹This is a more Protestant understanding of the Eucharist, and of the role of the celebrant.

of Roman Catholicism.³⁰ It also seems significant that Episcopal women have only recently been allowed to perform sacramental functions in the life of the church.³¹ Because of these similarities between the Episcopalian and Roman Catholic faiths, I propose making a comparison between the two: in particular, I suggest comparing research on the effects of women celebrants in the Episcopal tradition, with the hypotheses arrived at through psychoanalytic study of the Catholic Eucharist. Through doing so, I hope to provide greater support for the validity of the conclusions deduced through psychoanalytic theory.³²

In order to be able to compare women's situation in the Episcopal church with the current Catholic debate over women priests, it seems appropriate to review the history of the women's ordination movement in the Episcopal church. It is important to note that after centuries of an all-male priesthood, women finally won the struggle for ordination in the Episcopal church. It is generally agreed upon that the

³⁰One major exception is that the highest office in the Catholic faith is that of the Pope, whereas the highest rank in the Episcopal church is held by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

³¹Women have been allowed to become priests since 1976, when the General Convention of the Episcopal church in the U.S.A. approved women's ordination. Episcopal women can now be ordained in Canada, the United States, and New Zealand. They remain barred from ordination, however, in other nations of the world--including England. Michael Hirsley, "Episcopalians Facing Long Trip," The Chicago Tribune (15 July 1988), section 2, 5.

³²I will make this comparison primarily in Chapter Six.

movement for ordination among Episcopalian women emerged as part of the larger struggle for sexual equality within the church. Its inception may have been fuelled by a three-pronged crisis in the nineteen sixties, comprised of the following elements: 1)the decline of deaconesses, 2)decreasing numbers of lay professional workers, and 3)difficulties in getting women on the Executive Council and other church boards.³³ This crisis, according to historian Heather Hyuck, resulted in two important changes in church law on the status of deaconesses:³⁴ 1)mandatory celibacy was no longer enforced, and 2)the language of the installation of deaconesses was changed from "appointed" to "ordered."³⁵

Suzanne Hiatt in 1971 became the first woman in the United States to be ordained to the diaconate under the new canon. It may have been largely under her leadership that the movement for women's ordination surfaced and grew to large proportions.³⁶ An important aspect of Hiatt's work was networking among women around the country who were interested

³³Heather Hyuck, "To Celebrate a Whole Priesthood: the History of Women's Ordination in the Episcopal Church," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1981), 11, 14.

³⁴Ibid., 16-17.

³⁵This language change is significant in that it gave deaconesses the same ecclesial status as male deacons. Becoming a deacon is a necessary requirement for eligibility to the priesthood. Being "ordered" to the diaconate meant that women, similar to their male colleagues, were only one step away from becoming priests.

³⁶Personal conversation, Ellen Wondra (Chicago, Ill.: 14 June 1988).

in being ordained. By 1973, several groups in support of women's ordination had been formed, among them the Episcopal Women's Caucus, Women's Ordination Now (W.O.N.), and the National Coalition for Women's Ordination to the Priesthood and Episcopacy.³⁷

Then, in 1974, a series of "irregular" ordinations occurred. On July 29, eleven women were ordained to the priesthood without prior diocesan approval. Other irregular ordinations followed.³⁸ Although the ordinations were declared invalid by the reigning council of bishops, the women ordained proceeded to celebrate the Eucharist in public places. This action was significant in that it gave them symbolic and political power.³⁹ People could see women functioning as priests, even though the bishops had declared they were not. As one woman priest put it: "They simply took the authority, and they [the Church] simply had to come round."⁴⁰

On September 16, 1976, the sixty-fifth General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. voted to affirm the right of "fit and qualified" women to be admitted to the priesthood.⁴¹ The first ordination of women clergy took place

³⁷Hyuck, 98.

³⁸Another irregular ordination took place, for example, on September 7, 1975, in Washington, D.C.

³⁹Hyuck, 141, 248.

⁴⁰Personal conversation, Ellen Wondra.

⁴¹Norene Carter, "The Episcopalian Story," in Women of Spirit. Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian

on January 1, 1977. More recently, the Episcopal church appointed its first woman to the episcopacy.⁴²

An advantage which Episcopalian women had that Catholic women in the nineteen nineties do not to the same degree is that the Episcopal movement for women's ordination was given energy from the wider women's movement. Episcopal women's groups gained some of their strength and momentum from consciousness-raising and other feminist groups who were strongly advocating women's rights.⁴³

In turning to the arguments Episcopal women faced in their fight for ordination, there seem to be strong similarities to those currently being given by Vatican officials against Catholic women clergy. In this way, perhaps, Episcopalian and Catholic women have faced similar

Traditions, 364.

⁴²Barbara Harris was appointed bishop on February 11, 1989. This action stirred up considerable controversy among both clergy and laypersons, for several reasons. One is that a priest is generally required to have been ordained for 10 years before being eligible for the episcopacy. Harris had been a priest for only 8 years. Other reasons for controversy were that she was divorced, and that she had no college degree. Yet another reason for opposition is that bishops have the power to confer ordination on deacons seeking the priesthood. Some opponents asserted that when women gain power to ordain other women, the number of women priests will mushroom, and become out of [men's] control. Michael Hirsley, "A Bishop-elect Stirs Religious Rift," The Chicago Tribune (7 October 1988), sec. 2, 8. Richard N. Ostling, "The Bishop Is a Lady," Time (26 December 1988), 81.

⁴³It is possible that the recent federal decision to permit state regulations on abortion rights--which has many women bonding together in protest--will in turn provide energy for other aspects of the struggle for women's rights.

battles.

Similar to Catholicism, the reasons most frequently given against Episcopal women's ordination seem to be centered around tradition, scriptures, and male and female roles. If the arguments are explored further, however, other underlying reasons for the church's objections can be found--these related to such factors as women's biology, images of God, and women's "validity" as priests. One male priest, for example, objected to women clergy on the grounds that if men could not be mothers, women should not be allowed to be priests.⁴⁴ Another issue often raised in relation to women's biology is: What if the priest is pregnant? Can she still celebrate the Eucharist?⁴⁵

Objections based on the image of God illustrate anxiety regarding the symbolic implications of female celebrants for images of divinity. Episcopal bishop C. Kilmer Myers, for example, argues that "...such ordination and consecration [of women] flies against fundamental imagery of Holy Scripture;" his objection, he states, entailed "basically a theological question pertaining to the Christian doctrine of God."⁴⁶ To

⁴⁴From Hyuck, 20.

⁴⁵In this question can be seen an implicit separation of sexuality and spirituality. Pregnancy results from having sexual relations; the eucharistic celebrant, in contrast, goes through a ritual of cleansing and purification prior to consecration of the elements--in which it is assumed sexuality is not a part.

⁴⁶From Hyuck, 60.

provide another example, David Stuart (writing under a pseudonym) indicates that "to change the sex of the priest had to be done for greater reasons than a contemporary movement for raising women's consciousness."⁴⁷

The objection that women were not valid priests is based on the argument that they do not fit the qualifications for ordination. Canonically, there are three requirements that must be met for a deacon to be ordained: 1)proper intention (i.e., to be ordained), 2)proper form (found in The Book of Common Prayer), and 3)proper matter. Proper matter usually refers to the fact that the ordinand is a qualified deacon at the time of ordination. In the case of women, however, some opponents argued that women were "improper matter"--that is, that it was "physically and sacramentally impossible for a female to be ordained to the priesthood."⁴⁸

The arguments used against Episcopal women's ordination are instructive in that these arguments are still used to prevent women from becoming priests. While the more commonly given objections are based on scripture, tradition, and authority, less covert arguments against women clergy have to do with factors such as women's physiological capacities, the

⁴⁷From Hyuck, 22.

⁴⁸Hyuck, 126. Ellen Wondra has also pointed out this objection. Rosemary Ruether observes that the roots of this argument date back to Thomas Aquinas, who believed that women were an inferior form of humanity. Rosemary Ruether, "Women in the Image of God," lecture given at Calvert House, University of Chicago Student Catholic Center (Chicago, Ill.: 30 November 1988).

effect of women celebrants on the image of God, and deep-seated prejudices that women are not quite equal to men.

In order to further discussion on the significance of gender to the Eucharist in the Catholic church, I suggest first turning to a theological approach, and then to psychoanalytic theory. Some Episcopal men's objections to women celebrating the Eucharist indicate the potential for female celebrants to expand images of Christ and God. Feminist scholars in religious studies are beginning to make an important theological shift in this direction, to include women in understandings of divinity and humanity. To mark their methodology apart from traditional⁴⁹ modes of doing theology, some of these scholars have begun to refer to their work as "thealogy," and to themselves as "thealogians."⁵⁰

Both Naomi Goldenberg and Emily Culpepper discuss the origins of the term "thealogy." Goldenberg writes:

In Greek, theos is the word for a masculine god. Thea is the word for "goddess" and is a more appropriate root for a term referring to theories of feminist witchcraft. The word theology has also come to be used exclusively in regard to Christian god-talk. The advent of witchcraft, with its colorful goddess-talk, requires a new term. I hope witches and scholars of feminist religion will adopt my suggestion and name themselves thealogians.⁵¹

⁴⁹Traditional in this context refers to male-oriented.

⁵⁰In the book "thealogy" will be used to refer to feminist work being done in religious studies, while "theology" will refer to traditional approaches used to describe religion.

⁵¹Naomi Goldenberg, Changing of the Gods - Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 96.

Culpepper in turn indicates:

'Thealogy' is a word that quite a few feminists began to use in the 1970's. I first imagined it myself while writing one of my Th.D. General Exams at Harvard Divinity School. In the white heat of exam writing, I realized that Goddess theory of contemporary feminists was not adequately named by the conventional term theology, based as it was on the Greek theos, which is masculine for 'god.' Furthermore, most feminists interested in Goddesses are women who strongly reject western patriarchal theology. To call Goddess theory by the name theology, then, would erase one of the primary motivations of these women. Making a new word from the Greek feminine form, thea, is therefore doubly in keeping with the developing analysis of radical feminism.⁵²

In the next chapter I will use feminist theological endeavor to investigate the significance of gender to the Eucharist. In doing so, I will address the notion of gender reversal in the Eucharist, the question of sexual difference as it pertains to theology and religion, and possible experiential and theological differences in the Eucharist that would be brought about by women priests. Because gender difference is not only an issue amongst scholars in religion, but is also a concern for the wider feminist movement, I will include in my discussion a review of feminist positions on sexual difference.

⁵²Emily Culpepper, "Contemporary Goddess Thealogy: A Sympathetic Critique," in Shaping New Vision. Gender and Values in American Culture, ed. C. Atkinson, C. Buchanan, and M. Miles (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1987), 51.

CHAPTER 3
EXPLORING WAYS THEALOGY CAN ADDRESS GENDER ISSUES
IN THE EUCHARIST

Background on the debate over women's ordination to the priesthood in the Catholic church indicates the gender of the eucharistic presider is an important aspect of the Vatican's refusal to allow women to be clergy. Research in Chapter Two pointed out that the Vatican's observation that women cannot adequately symbolize Christ's maleness at the altar is at the heart of their refusal. The nature of this refusal seems to imply that, for church officials, Christ's gender is an essential part of the nature and experience of the Eucharist.

Before proceeding to further investigate gender concerns in this sacrament, it is helpful to look at the meaning of religious symbols, and especially at the theological significance symbolized by male and female celebrants. A basic understanding of the nature of religious symbolism might aid in investigating the current situation in the Catholic Eucharist, and in exploring what is at stake if women could be ordained. Hence, in the first section of this chapter, I will focus on the meaning of gendered symbols; this section will be followed by critical examination of the Vatican's claim that perhaps gender is an essential part of the nature

and experience of the Eucharist.

Exploring the Significance of Religious Symbols

Historically, symbols are an important part of Christian liturgical worship. Catholicism in particular is replete with images of the faith: icons of Mary and Christ generally adorn the altar, and in many parishes iconography depicting apostles and saints heralds the adjoining walls and ceiling.¹ This iconography serves to highlight persons and events which the church considers important to its religious life and heritage.

The figure of the celebrant is an important symbolic aspect of the mass. The significance of symbols has been addressed by scholars in almost every discipline. Symbols have meaning on many levels of reality--including psychological, spiritual, and social. Symbols as a referent for reality are of particular interest and concern to scholars in religious studies. Historian of religions Mircea Eliade, for example, indicates that symbols reveal the deepest aspects of reality--those which defy any other means of knowledge.² Similarly, for theologian Paul Tillich, symbols express humanity's "ultimate concern." Tillich states that symbols

¹This iconography is especially prevalent in many eastern European churches and monasteries. I spent a summer travelling through Yugoslavia, and much of that time was spent viewing elaborate icons and frescos in churches built from the seventh through fifteenth centuries.

²From Myths, Rites, Symbols. A Mircea Eliade Reader, vol. 1, ed. Wendell C. Beane and William G. Doty (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 88.

open up dimensions of reality which are otherwise closed, and unlock similar dimensions of the soul.³

Scholars in religious studies have a particular interest in looking at anthropological understandings of symbols. Anthropological understandings of symbols offer perspective on their social context, and on the relation between symbols and the environment. Most anthropologists would agree that symbols help shape and are shaped by their surrounding social milieu. Victor Turner, for example, defines symbols as "dynamic entities," which are patterned by events and informed by human intercourse. For Turner, symbols function to mediate for persons between ideals and actions in social fields.⁴ He indicates that symbols seem to be a product of social conditions.⁵

Another anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, offers the following famous definition of symbol:

...a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [sic] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.⁶

³Paul Tillich, "Symbols of Faith," in Religious Language and the Problem of Religious Knowledge, ed. Ronald E. Santoni (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1968), 136-137.

⁴Victor Turner, Dramas Fields, and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), 96.

⁵Ibid., 141, 153.

⁶Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

According to Geertz, religious symbols have particular importance for anthropological study. One function of sacred symbols, in his view, is to synthesize a people's ethics. Sacred symbols both induce certain dispositions in human beings, and formulate general ideas of order. For those for whom they are resonant, he states, religious symbols are felt to "sum up the way the world is."⁷ He indicates that they function like genes--providing a blueprint from which external processes are given definite form.⁸

Geertz' definition of symbol points to the important relation between symbols and the social reality they symbolize. For Geertz, religious symbols function as a "copy" for existing social reality. In this sense, it seems symbols can play an important role in determining particular social realities. I suggest that religious symbols can serve at least three functions regarding social situations: they can help to transform them, they can serve to perpetuate them, or they can simultaneously transform and perpetuate a given environmental milieu.

It seems that most frequently, religious symbols act to perpetuate an already existing social milieu. For example, male imagery for God and Christ, I propose, serves to perpetuate male domination in positions of church power and leadership. Several feminist scholars have noted a similar

⁷Ibid., 127.

⁸Ibid., 92.

correlation between male gods and men having political power. Naomi Goldenberg, for example, writes that images of God dictate who will feel worthy in society, who will be respected, and who will gain easy access to the material goods of culture.⁹ In addition, authors Cady, Ronan, and Taussig assert that the exclusively male religious symbol system serves to reinforce male domination on all levels of society. One way they indicate that this happens is the implication of solely male imagery that men's domination is divinely ordered and sustained by God.¹⁰

If male religious symbols serve to reinforce male domination, as Goldenberg and Cady et al suggest, it is important to ask what political messages female symbols in Christian heritage offer society. Do female symbols add to and perpetuate women's subordination, or, can they help women feel more empowered as women and as human beings? It seems women have received and continue to receive mixed messages from feminine Christian imagery.

By far the two most prevalent female images of women in Christian history are Eve and Mary. It is to be remembered from the biblical story in Genesis that Eve was responsible for eating from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good

⁹From Nelle Morton, The Journey Is Home (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 194.

¹⁰Susan Cady, Marian Ronan and Hal Taussig, Sophia. The Future of Feminist Spirituality (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 83.

and evil, and for tempting Adam to eat of it also.¹¹ As a result of her action, both Adam and Eve were banned from the paradisiacal Garden of Eden, and were sentenced to punishments to be carried out through their descendants. Eve's particular punishment, it will be remembered, was to suffer pain during childbirth, and to be subject to her husband.¹²

A good deal of feminist literature has been written about Eve, and about the negative connotations her image evokes for modern women.¹³ Eve, for example, is often considered responsible for the fall of humanity. She is also frequently associated with such negative connotations as weakness, lust, and greed. In addition, God's punishment for Eve is one of the reasons sometimes given for women's continued subjection to men.¹⁴

In contrast to Eve, Mary is yoked with no husband, and

¹¹This story is found in Genesis 3.

¹²Genesis 3:16 informs us: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

¹³See, for example, Bernard Prusak, "Woman: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin? Pseudipigraphal Myth and Christian Origins;" Rosemary R. Ruether, New Woman/New Earth. Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation, 72; Kim Chernin, Reinventing Eve. Modern Woman in Search of Herself (New York: Harper and Row, 1987); Elaine Pagels, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent (New York: Random House, 1988). In Carnal Knowing. Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), Margaret Miles states that Eve provided an important rationale for the treatment of women in patriarchal societies (86-87).

¹⁴This is true moreso in certain fundamentalist denominations than in the Catholic church.

at no time in her life disobeys God. Mary is viewed by many Catholics as Eve's "redemptress"--a fount of purity and virtue. A sign of God's favor towards Mary is her chosenness to be the mother of God's son. Mary in turn submits to God's will in this and in all other of God's requests of her. She remains a virgin--pure and holy in the sight of God. Some women find Mary a very powerful help in their struggle to live a good Christian life. They are able to draw upon Mary's strong faith, her ability to put her will aside in favor of God's, and especially on her emotional strength during the time of her son's crucifixion.¹⁵ Other women, however, find Mary's qualities rather limited, and argue that her submission to a male God is merely another expression of women's submissiveness to men in society.¹⁶ Thus, while Mary is an empowering figure for some women, for others she represents "women defanged and declawed...now sanctified for our compliance with men's wishes."¹⁷

Thus, it can be seen that the two most popular images of women in Christian history include negative undertones--some of which are that women should be subordinate to men, should

¹⁵Much of this information was obtained from students in my Introduction to Religion class at DePaul University (Chicago, Ill.: Spring 1989).

¹⁶Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father. Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 49-50.

¹⁷Hunter College Women's Studies Collective, Women's Realities, Women's Choices. An Introduction to Women's Studies (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 31.

deny their sexuality, and are inherently sinful. Other feminine images in the Christian tradition also seem to offer mixed messages to modern women who are seeking to empower themselves. In the Christian scriptures, for example, there are portrayals of both strong and submissive female figures. Strong women in the Old Testament include Ruth, follower of Naomi, Deborah, the judge, and Esther, savior of a nation.¹⁸ In the Old Testament there are also examples of women who submit to men--such as Jephthah's daughter, who allows herself to be given as a human sacrifice because of a vow her father made.¹⁹ In the New Testament, the messages regarding women are also mixed. Some feminist scholars speculate that women played a strong role in early Christian communities.²⁰ There were, however, no official women disciples or apostles, and, unfortunately, most of the stories about prominent women are

¹⁸In The Book of Ruth, Naomi decides to follow her mother-in-law back to Bethlehem rather than remarry and stay in her native land. In Judges 4 and 5, Deborah is praised as a wise judge. The Book of Esther describes how Esther becomes queen and persuades King Ahasuerus not to kill the Jews in their land.

¹⁹This is pointed out by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Woman's Bible, in Women and Religion. A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought, ed. Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, and London: Harper and Row, 1977), 219-220.

²⁰See, for example, Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, In Memory of Her (New York: Crossroad, 1983); Rosemary Radford Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, eds., Women of Spirit. Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Barbara J. McHaffie, Her Story. Women in Christian Tradition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

excluded from the Christian canon.²¹

It might be hypothesized that images of strong and powerful women in turn reinforce qualities of strength and empowerment in the psyches of the women who read or hear about them. Similarly, images of women as weak and subordinate may bring out qualities of weakness and submission in the minds of certain women.²² It might further be theorized that there is a connection between negative images of women in Christian heritage, and the fact that for most of its history, women have lacked leadership power in the church.²³

It is thus possible to ask: have women lacked power because the existent symbol system has not permitted it? Alternatively, would there be more empowering feminine symbols if women had more power? One way to begin to explore this issue is to look to the past, to possible situations where women might have had political power. A thorough investigation of this topic is beyond the scope of this

²¹Discussion on women's early leadership in the Eucharist follows later in this chapter. Literature about women which is excluded from the Christian canon includes the Gospel According to Thecla, and certain Gnostic texts.

²²Psychoanalytically, certain women would be more subject than others to messages that they are weak--particularly those with weak mother figures. The impact of the mother figure on childhood development is discussed more fully in Part II.

²³Evidence of women's lack of leadership power can be seen in the fact that for most of Christian history, women have not been able to celebrate the sacraments, be ordained as priests, or hold ecclesial offices such as bishop, cardinal, or pope.

study.²⁴ One way to address the topic from the standpoint of theological scholarship, however, is to look at the relation between women and power in ancient goddess-worshipping cultures. The relationship between goddess symbols and ancient women's position in society will perhaps help to answer the two questions at the beginning of this paragraph, and to begin to shed light on the impact of women celebrating the Eucharist.

Goddess worship took place thousands of years prior to the life of Christ, and previous to the conception of most male gods. For very ancient cultures, the earth mother was worshipped as the primary deity. Some scholars speculate that the earth mother was the first deity ever revered and worshipped.²⁵ The earth mother²⁶ reigned over all vegetation, crops, and fertility. Scholars claim that later, her qualities became split into separate goddess figures, who were in turn worshipped as having particular helpful and protective features. The prehistoric Greek goddesses illustrate one way in which different goddess images came to embody distinct

²⁴It is perhaps more in the scope of a study on history, or political or social theory.

²⁵Erich Neumann, The Great Mother. An Analysis of the Archetype, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955). See also Elinor W. Gadon, The Once and Future Goddess (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989). Gadon creates the history of goddess representations in a variety of cultures, from prehistoric to present.

²⁶Or, there may have been earth mothers.

characteristics.²⁷

In many of the prehistoric cultures who worshipped goddesses, descent was matrilineal--or through the mother. There is controversy over whether any of these cultures were matriarchal--that is, ruled by women.²⁸ Speculation exists that the ancient Minoans on the island of Crete may have lived under matriarchal rule. Regardless of the truth of this speculation, there is general agreement that the Minoans were matrilineal, and that they worshipped goddesses as their primary deities.²⁹

Some scholars hypothesize that women were politically

²⁷A wealth of literature exists on appropriation of Greek goddess imagery for modern women. Included are Carol Christ, The Laughter of Aphrodite. Reflections of a Journey to the Goddess (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); Christine Downing, The Goddess: Mythological Images of the Feminine (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Charlene Spretnak, The Politics of Women's Spirituality; Jean Shinoda Bolen, Goddesses in Everywoman. A New Psychology of Women (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Sylvia Perera, Descent to the Goddess. A Way of Initiation for Women (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981); Starhawk, The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979); Naomi Goldenberg, Changing of the Gods - Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979); Weaving the Visions. New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality, ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (New York: Harper and Row, 1989); Barbara C. Walker, The Skeptical Feminist: Discovering the Virgin, Mother, and Crone (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).

²⁸See, for example, Appendix II, The Politics of Women's Spirituality.

²⁹See Marymay Downing, "Prehistoric Goddesses: The Cretan Challenge," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 1/1 (Spring 1985), 7-22; Marija Gimbutas, The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe 7000 to 3500 BC: Myths, Legends and Cult Images (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, reprinted 1989).

powerful in societies in which goddesses were worshipped as the primary deities. These scholars suggest that, historically, matrilineal cultures were supplanted by patrilineal ones, and at the same time male gods took the place of female goddesses. They also theorize that goddess symbols might in some way be related to women's ability to achieve and maintain power.³⁰

Whether or not matriarchal cultures existed, modern women are discovering that ancient goddess symbols can indeed aid them in important psychological ways. Several feminist scholars have begun to investigate the affects on women of imaging a female goddess instead of a male god in worship or time of need. Carol Christ, for example, suggests that Greek goddesses provide much more healthy images for women than do male gods. In particular, she finds four aspects of goddess symbolism important for contemporary women's spirituality: 1)affirmation of female power, 2)affirmation of the female body, 3)affirmation of the female will, and 4)affirmation of women's bonds and heritage.³¹

Referring to divinity as "God the Mother," or "Goddess" can perhaps empower women in ways that calling God "Father" cannot. One way in which it can do so is by allowing women

³⁰The Politics of Women's Spirituality, for example, has as its central theme the relation between female symbols and political empowerment.

³¹Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess" in The Politics of Women's Spirituality, 74.

to directly identify with the divine, rather than having to do so through the "glasses" of male experience. Nelle Morton, for example, notes that direct identification with divinity evokes feelings in women of independence, belonging, and identity. She writes:

Now, call on 'God the Mother' or 'Goddess.' What happens? For women she appears. She says your life is sacred gift. Pick it up. Receive it. Create it. Be responsible for it. I ask nothing in return. It is enough that you stand on your own feet and speak your own word. Celebrate the new Creation that is you. Move in the new space--free. The response from women who have become aware is an overwhelming sense of acceptance and belonging and identity.³²

Thus, it seems referring to goddesses rather than gods affects women's psyches in positive psychological ways. It might be speculated that these positive effects will in turn facilitate women's being able to work for and attain greater political power in both church and society.

The current situation in the Catholic Eucharist allows only for male description of divinity, and permits only men to symbolize Christ at the altar. This is interesting given the fact that the Eucharist is essentially a feeding ceremony, with the celebrant functioning as the preparer of the meal. Because women are traditionally feeders and caretakers in the domestic realm,³³ it seems unusual for only men to be able to symbolize these functions in the rite of the Eucharist. In

³²Morton, 143.

³³I explore this idea more fully in the next section of this chapter.

the next sections I will proceed to explore the phenomenon of men serving as feeders and caretakers in more detail. I will also investigate other possible instances of men taking on female functions and roles in Christian ritual and heritage. Finally, I will study the possibility of female representation in the Eucharist, and the possibility of referring to goddesses rather than (or in addition to) gods in this most important Catholic rite.

Hypothesizing the Occurrence of Gender Reversal
in the Eucharist

That the Eucharist is a ritual of feeding is not difficult to ascertain. To all appearances, the rite consists of the priest saying a blessing over portions of bread and wine, followed by his distributing them to worshippers to partake. Feeding imagery is found in the eucharistic prayer recited during the mass:

He always loved those who were his own in the world. When the time came for him to be glorified by you, his heavenly Father, he showed them the depth of his love. While they were at supper, he took bread, said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying: 'Take this all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you.' In the same way, he took the cup, filled with wine. He gave thanks, and giving the cup to his disciples, said: 'Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, this blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all men [sic] so

that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.³⁴

The fact that the mass is a ritual around food is not what makes it unusual. Feeding rituals are not exclusive to Christianity, nor are they a recent phenomenon. Rites centered around a meal are replete in Christianity's Jewish heritage, and can also be found in more ancient traditions.³⁵ What is unusual about the Eucharist can be seen, I suggest, in light of women's role in feeding rituals in contemporary society.

The issue of women and food can be explored from at least two directions. One is to look at women's traditional role in the kitchen. Whether by choice or by default, it still seems true that women do most of the preparation and serving of meals in North American societies. Feeding the family remains a tradition which is passed down from mother to daughter--in much the same way the custom of childrearing is

³⁴"Celebration and Renewal: The Catholic Mass," in Ways of Being Religious. Readings for a New Approach to Religion, ed. Frederick J. Streng, Charles L Lloyd, Jr., and Jay T. Allen (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), 125-126.

³⁵The ancient Aztecs, for example, used to offer images of dough to their deities and then eat them. In W. Arens, The Man-Eating Myth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). Carol Christ has written about feeding rituals surrounding contemporary goddess worship. See Christ, The Laughter of Aphrodite. Reflections of a Journey to the Goddess (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987). In addition, during Jewish holidays such as Rosh Hashanah and Passover, meals are very important. Gillian Feeley-Harnick, in The Lord's Table (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), and Thierry Maertens, O.S.B., in A Feast in Honor of Yahweh, trans. Kathryn Sullivan O.S.B. (Notre Dame: Fedes Publishers, Inc., 1965) address the importance of food to Christianity's heritage.

still passed down from mother to daughter.³⁶ These patterns may be changing to some extent, as a greater percentage of women enter the work force. However, it is significant to note that most women remain concerned about issues relating to food more than most men are,³⁷ and that most women still "bake the bread that the men win."

The topic of women and food can also be looked at in terms of women's physiological capacity to feed. Besides their traditional role in the kitchen, women throughout the world serve as the first biological nurturers. Only women are capable of breastfeeding. If men choose to take part in feeding their small children, they must obtain milk for them either through their female partner, or through another source external to themselves. It must be granted, of course, that

³⁶Nancy Chodorow investigates the perpetuation of this custom in The Reproduction of Mothering. Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1978), and in Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

³⁷A wealth of literature, for example, exists on the contemporary epidemic of eating disorders and compulsive eating. See, for example, Kim Chernin's The Obsession. Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), Susie Orbach's Fat is a Feminist Issue (New York: Berkley Books, 1978) and Hunger Strike (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1986), and Hilde Bruch's Eating Disorders. Obesity, Anorexia Nervosa, and the Person Within (New York: Basic Books, 1973) and The Golden Cage. The Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). Two books that discuss eating disorders in relation to religion are Rudolph Bell's Holy Anorexia (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985) and Caroline Walker Bynum's Holy Feast and Holy Fast. The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987).

not all women breastfeed their children. It is only through modern technology, however, that parents have the option of feeding their infants milk which does not come from a woman's breast.

Since it cannot be denied that women are the first nurturers of life, and that they continue to serve a nurturing role for men, women, and children, the fact that only men may consecrate the bread and wine at the Eucharist seems to constitute a gender reversal--or a male appropriation of women's biological and social roles.

In order to understand gender reversal in the Eucharist, it is helpful to explore other possible instances in the Christian tradition in which men have appropriated women's biological functions or social role. In this regard, there are at least three places where other instances of this occurrence might be found. These are scriptures, Christian history, and contemporary practice and ritual.

An initial look at Christian scriptures portrays God in primarily masculine terms, with chiefly masculine attributes. Particularly in the Old Testament, God is Lord, king, warrior, judge, and vanquisher.³⁸ If a closer look is taken at the scriptures, however, this male God can be found to also

³⁸Rosemary Radford Ruether, in Sexism and God-Talk (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), and Carol Christ, in "Symbols of Goddess and God in Feminist Theology," The Book of the Goddess. Past and Present, ed. Carl Olson (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 231-251, are two examples of feminist scholars who address masculine metaphors for God.

possess maternal qualities. These qualities include functions of birthing, suckling, and caregiving. In the book of Deuteronomy, for example, an analogy is made between God's protection and that of a mother eagle watching over her nest:³⁹

As an eagle stirreth up her nest,
fluttereth over her young,
Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them,
Beareth them on her wings,
so the LORD alone did lead him,
And there was no strange god with him. Deut. 32:11-12

The writer of Isaiah on several occasions also refers to his God using maternal imagery. One of these is his description of God's calling him forth from the womb:

Listen, O isles, unto me;
And hearken, ye people, from afar;
From the bowels of my mother
hath he made mention of my name. Isaiah 49:1

Slightly later in the same chapter, Isaiah tells of the comfort he gains in the fact that, like a mother who will not forsake her child, God will not forget him:

But Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me,
and my lord hath forgotten me.
Can a woman forget her suckling child,
that she should not have compassion on
the son of her womb?
Yea, they may forget,
Yet I will not forget thee. Isaiah 49:14-15

A third instance in which Isaiah uses maternal metaphors to describe his relationship with God is found in chapter sixty-six:

That ye may suck, and be satisfied

³⁹All biblical references are to the Authorized (King James) version of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968).

With the breasts of her consolations;
 That ye may milk out, and be delighted
 for thus saith the LORD,
 Behold, I will extend peace to her
 like a river,
 And the glory of the Gentiles like a
 flowing stream:
 Then ye shall suck,
 Ye shall be borned upon her sides,
 And be dandled upon her knees.
 As one whom his mother comforteth,
 So will I comfort you;
 And ye shall be comforted
 in Jerusalem. Isaiah 66:11-13.

In the New Testament, maternal imagery is often applied to Jesus. Jesus throughout much of the scriptures is depicted as having traditionally feminine qualities--such as meekness, lowliness, and humility. In addition, symbolically, Jesus took on the role of a mother. He fed his people, had disciples who followed him around the way children might, and was generally thought to be very nurturing and compassionate.⁴⁰ In Matthew 23:37, for example, Jesus is compared to a mother hen who longs to gather her chicks under her wing:

O Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

It is interesting to note that many of Jesus' apostles seem to have adopted his maternal attitudes in their interactions with new believers. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, for example, the apostle Paul describes his relationship with the Corinthian church as one of mother and babe:

⁴⁰See Caroline Walker Bynum, Jesus as Mother (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982).

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet are ye able.

Hebrews 5:12 and 1 Peter 2:2 expand upon the metaphor of the apostles giving new Christians milk, or of their weaning them onto solid food:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. Heb. 5:12

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. 1 Pet. 2:2

Thus, in the Christian scriptures, references are found both to a male God with nurturing qualities, and to individual men with maternal attributes. A look at Christian history suggests that the apostles were not alone in utilizing maternal metaphors to describe their relationship with believers. A group of individuals who used similar metaphors are the medieval monastics. Medieval historian Caroline Walker Bynum indicates that Bernard of Clairvaux, for example, frequently referred to himself as a mother:

Bernard of Clairvaux, whose use of maternal imagery for male figures is more extensive and complex than that of any other twelfth-century figure, uses 'mother' to describe Jesus, Moses, Peter, Paul, prelates in general, abbots in general, and, more frequently, himself as abbot. To Bernard, the maternal image is almost without exception elaborated not as giving birth or even as conceiving or sheltering in a womb, but as nurturing, particularly suckling. Breasts, to Bernard, are a symbol of the pouring out towards others of affectivity of instruction and almost invariably suggest to him a discussion of the duties of prelates or abbots. Bernard not only

develops an elaborate picture of the abbot... as mother...stating repeatedly that a mother cannot fail to love her child; he also frequently attributes maternal characteristics, especially suckling with milk, to the abbot when he refers to him as father.⁴¹

Bynum observes that whereas Bernard was fascinated with suckling, other twelfth century writers focused on other aspects of maternity. Gueric, abbot of Igny, for example, emphasized images of the womb and pregnancy. Alternatively, Adam, abbot of Perseseigne, preferred imagery centered around the pains of labor.⁴²

A further illustration of gender reversal in medieval piety is seen in the way priests viewed the Eucharist. Gender reversal in the medieval Eucharist took place on two levels. One was that male priests performed the task of consecrating and feeding. The second level was that many of the priests actually viewed themselves as women. Bynum writes:

Much of the priest's role and about the theology of imitatio Christi in the later Middle Ages involves a reversal of cultural assumptions about gender. On the one hand, of course, given the symbolic patterns, the priest was 'male' and the communicant 'female;' the priest was God and the recipient human...But, in another sense, as I have demonstrated, God's dying body was female--a birthing and lactating mother--and the priest was female too. He was Mary, for in his hands, as in her womb, Christ was incarnate; he was preparer and distributor to recipients who ate. In the central moment of the mass the male celebrant waited, ready to care for and distribute a heavenly food, a vulnerable body, provided for by a father-mother God for the benefit of

⁴¹Ibid., 115-116.

⁴²Ibid., 211.

human children.⁴³

Turning to contemporary Catholic practice and ritual, other sacraments in addition to the Eucharist seem to demonstrate male appropriation of female functions. The rite of baptism, for example, is essentially a birthing ceremony. The baptized individual, upon conclusion of the ritual, is said to be "born in Christ," or "born again." In the Catholic faith, baptism can only be performed by a male priest. Yet it is significant that biologically, the same priests who baptize have never nor will ever be able to give birth themselves. In contrast, the sex excluded from performing baptisms--women--remain the progenitors of the world's children.

Thus, it seems possible to say that in prohibiting women from celebrating the sacraments, the church effects a gender reversal--it attempts to appropriate women's physiological functions while at the same time disconnecting them from actual women. In the process of carrying out gender reversal, the church conveys the unspoken assumption that these functions are holy when performed by men, whereas they remain ordinary--or even profane--when ritualized by women. Catholic writer Christine Gudorf claims that gender reversal occurs in six of the Catholic sacraments:⁴⁴

For Baptism, Reconciliation, Anointing, and Eucharist,

⁴³Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 285.

⁴⁴The seventh sacrament is ordination.

the human activities they imitate are clearly female activities. Only women give birth. Throughout history women have been and continue to be the chief gatherers, preparers, and servers of food. Similarly, women have historically been designated the round-the-clock caretakers of the sick and dying and the preparers of bodies for burial. Especially since the Industrial Revolution in the West, women have been responsible for monitoring and reconciling relationships around them, for mediating between fathers and children, among children, and between other estranged parties in their vicinity.

Yet the six Catholic sacraments modelled on these largely female activities can only be administered by men.⁴⁵

Surveying gender reversal in Christian heritage and ritual has indicated that it is a surprisingly widespread phenomenon. In the scriptures, in history, and in contemporary worship, there are numerous examples of men's appropriation of maternal functions. If women were to become priests, they would in effect be re-appropriating for themselves their traditional functions as feeders and caretakers. As priests, women would have authority to administer the sacraments. They would be able to preside over church ceremonies of birthing, feeding, and caretaking. The Eucharist, if celebrated by women, would perhaps constitute a re-reversal of traditional roles of feeding and nurturing in the ecclesial realm.

One of the first questions to be raised upon consideration of gender re-reversal is this: What difference, if any, would women priests make to the worship and theology of the Eucharist? This question brings up the larger issue

⁴⁵Christine E. Gudorf, "The Power to Create: Sacraments and Men's Need to Give Birth," Horizons 14/2 (1987), 299.

of differences in the way men and women think, act, or are perceived, and how these differences would affect the celebration of the ritual. In the remainder of the chapter, I will explore the question of biological and cultural differences between men and women--including the issue of sexual difference as it relates to matters of religion and theology--and the significance of sexual difference to the Eucharist if celebrated by women.

Investigating the Notion of Sexual Difference
in Religion and Theology

It is interesting to note that the Vatican seems to imply there are tangible differences between men and women, to the extent that women are incapable of celebrating the sacrament of the Eucharist. These differences, for Vatican officials, apparently go beyond mere facts of anatomy. Perhaps the official Catholic position on sexual difference can best be illuminated by looking at the Vatican notion of "complementarity." Complementarity refers to the idea that men and women have different roles to perform within church and society, and that these roles naturally "complement" one another.

Complementarity, for Vatican officials, seems to suggest that each sex has separate, predetermined functions. Sara Butler, for example, writes of complementarity:

This 'two nature' vision of humanity sees in the division of male and female a distinction which is the foundation of unique roles which are not

interchangeable. Men and women, according to this dual model of anthropology, are ordained to complement one another. Together, they are in the image of God.⁴⁶

The Vatican asserts that the concept of two human natures has a clear basis in scripture--particularly chapters two and three of the book of Genesis. Genesis two, for example, contains the story of the creation of human beings, including the creation of woman as a "help meet"⁴⁷ for man:

And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. Gen. 2:18

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the LORD God had taken out of man, made he into a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Gen. 2:20-23

Genesis chapter three relates the myth of Adam and Eve. According to the story, upon Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, God decrees that Eve's husband shall rule over her:

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in

⁴⁶Butler, 122.

⁴⁷Judith Plaskow offers an interesting interpretation of the how the first Eve--called Lilith--viewed her role as help meet. "The Coming of Lilith: Toward a Feminist Theology," in Womanspirit Rising. A Feminist Reader in Religion (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 206-207.

sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. Gen. 3:16

For the Vatican, Genesis chapters two and three indicate that men's and women's roles are determined by the "revealed order of creation" as found in the Bible. Feminist theologian Ann Carr notes this association:

The idea of complementary roles and functions of women is understood to be founded in the revealed structures of creation presented in the Bible. Thus the goal of ecclesial and social life is to call for a 'harmonious complementarity,' in the words of Paul VI, rather than a 'levelling uniformity' between the sexes.⁴⁸

Vatican officials further explain that, as expressed in church and social life, women's role manifests itself in either virginity or motherhood. If women are called to the latter, their place resides in the home. If to the former, women are permitted to perform "helping" functions--such as ministering to the sick, engaging in missionary work, and assisting men in their functions as priests. Men's role in church and society, on the other hand, for the Vatican expresses itself in terms of "headship." Headship allows men to take leadership roles in the church, and includes such ecclesial positions as priest, bishop, cardinal, and pope.⁴⁹

Hence, it seems Vatican officials make the argument that women are unqualified for the priesthood because of their

⁴⁸Carr, 49.

⁴⁹"On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," 273-277.

femininity. In the minds of these officials, to allow women to be ordained constitutes a transgression of what women were divinely created to be. In the 1988 Pastoral letter on women, Pope John Paul II expresses his fear lest women in their struggle for equality become too "masculinized," and thus overstep their created nature:

Consequently, even the rightful opposition of women to what is expressed in the biblical words 'he shall rule over you' (Gn. 3:16) must not under any condition lead to the masculinization of women. In the name of liberation from male 'domination,' women must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine 'originality.'⁵⁰

Thus, the official Catholic position on sexual difference concedes there are innate distinctions between males and females, which in turn determine men's and women's respective vocations. It might be predicted that Catholic feminist thinkers would view the Vatican's stance on sexual difference with some disfavor. It also might be expected they would be suspicious of the notion that men and women have unique and distinctive resources. Ann Carr is an example of such a thinker. She writes:

While there are no longer assertions of the inferiority of women in Christian ecclesiastical or theological discourse, many official Catholic documents affirm a dual anthropology, the complementarity or 'different but equal' status of men and women as inherent in nature, in the created order, and therefore as part of the divine plan...The dual anthropology emphasizes the unchanging structures of nature and views revelation, tradition, theology and ethics as

⁵⁰"On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," 269.

past-oriented: what is, has been given in nature by God and must not be changed.⁵¹

Women within the larger feminist movement have had mixed reactions to the idea that women are inherently different from men. Some fear that acknowledgement of sexual difference contributes to women's subordination, by stereotyping women in certain roles and not others. Other women applaud women's differences, and find them a source of empowerment. The history of the feminist movement seems to demonstrate a shift from denial of female difference, to recognition and affirmation of it. I suggest reviewing this history can better clarify the range of issues Catholic women face today.

In the early seventies, feminist theorists such as Kate Millett and Shulamith Firestone were opposed to the idea of emphasizing differences between the sexes. These theorists argued that, historically, sexual oppression has been based on socially constructed differences between men and women. They asserted that an important distinction needed to be made between biological sex and sociological gender. Hester Eisenstein outlines this position in her introduction to The Future of Difference:⁵²

Drawing upon the findings of researchers into the origins of 'core gender identity,' they

⁵¹Carr, 125.

⁵²The Future of Difference, ed. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1985), is a collection of articles dealing with the theme of difference between the sexes, and its psychological, social, and political implications.

argued that gender is a learned, or acquired fact of social life, subject to conditioning and reinforcement in the early months of childhood. Further, they pointed to the degree of social pressure exerted throughout the lifecycle to produce behavior considered appropriate to one's gender. The time and energy spent in teaching girls and boys to act like a 'lady' or a 'man,' respectively, belied the notion that these qualities were either inbred or natural.⁵³

In terms of gender, feminist focus during this period was on the idea that women were no different from men, and thus were qualified to do anything men could do. Where differences did exist, there was an attempt to minimize them as much as possible. Firestone, for example, called for the "abolition of pregnancy," and advocated that reproductive technologies be developed enabling the genesis of test tube babies.⁵⁴ Sexual difference was labelled politically dangerous, and feminists instead advocated some form of androgyny.⁵⁵

By the mid-seventies, this trend in feminist thinking had gradually changed. There began to be a shift from trying to reduce or deny sexual difference, to exploring the resources of female difference for women's own struggle for liberation. Theorists began to find positive value in qualities that women

⁵³Hester Eisenstein, "Introduction," in The Future of Difference, xvi.

⁵⁴Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex. The Case for Feminist Revolution (New York: Bantam Books, 1970).

⁵⁵Carolyn Heilbrun's Reinventing Womanhood (New York: Norton, 1979), and Toward A Recognition of Androgyny (New York: Norton, 1982), for example, outline the merits of androgyny between the sexes.

have historically carried. Adrienne Rich, for example, focused on the nurturing aspects of motherhood, and on its potential to heal ancient Western dualisms.⁵⁶ Dorothy Dinnerstein in turn investigated the dangers of mothers serving as sole caretakers of children.⁵⁷ Sociologist Nancy Chodorow also addressed early childrearing practices, particularly as a source of nurturing patterns perpetuated in the female character.⁵⁸ During this period, psychology, and especially psychoanalysis, became important tools for study of sexual difference. Eisenstein observes this switch in thinking from that of the early seventies:

This focus upon women - what Gerda Lerner has called a 'woman-centered analysis' - gradually produced a change in attitude toward the value of women's differences from men. Originally seen as a source of oppression, these were now beginning to appear, on the contrary, as a source of enrichment. Writing in 1976, Jean Baker Miller sought to show that the very psychological qualities evoked by the oppression of women could represent a means of increasing women's strength. To be sure, she argued, women have been taught to be passive. But they have also learned to be nurturing, affiliative, and cooperative - in short, to be endowed with more truly human qualities than are men as currently

⁵⁶Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born. Motherhood as Experience and Institution (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co, 1976).

⁵⁷Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur. Sexual Arrangements and the Human Malaise (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

⁵⁸Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering. Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1978).

socialized.⁵⁹

This woman-centered approach led feminists to reject notions of androgyny, and rather to emphasize the transformative possibilities of traditionally female values. Instead of minimizing women's differences from men, theorists began to explore the notion of "true womanhood." Femininity came to be affirmed rather than denied.

Feminist discussion of sexual difference continued into the eighties. Theorists in this decade generally acknowledged that differences between men and women exist, and that some historically female qualities have societal value. Current discussion on the issue has tended to center around what some of these qualities are, and on whether they are innate or are culturally derived. I will look at these two concerns in turn.

Feminist social theorists generally concur that women value personal relationships more than men, and that women put more emphasis on developing a style of personal nurturance. Men, on the other hand, tend to emphasize individuality, and on securing a separate identity--usually based on a career or some external source.⁶⁰ Carol Gilligan and Martha Long Ice are examples of thinkers who offer support for this hypothesis.

⁵⁹Eisenstein, "Introduction," in The Future of Difference, xviii.

⁶⁰These hypotheses are being made about the majority of Western white men. Men of other races and areas of the world may undergo different types of sociological and psychological development.

Gilligan's studies show that men tend to see themselves in terms of individual identities, whereas women see themselves in relation to others, and particularly as caretakers. Gilligan proceeds to investigate how this difference in worldview affects men's and women's ethical positions. In In a Different Voice, she critiques psychologist and moral theorist Lawrence Kohlberg's six stages of moral development, and claims that his framework does not adequately account for women's ethical development. According to Kohlberg, the highest stage of moral development is being able to act on the basis of principles. Both Gilligan's and Kohlberg's studies show, however, that women are less likely than men to make decisions based on principles, and that women more frequently take into account individual situations. From this data, Kohlberg comes to the conclusion that women are less morally developed than men:

Prominent among those who thus appear to be deficient in moral development when measured by Kohlberg's scale are women, whose judgments seem to exemplify the third stage of his six-stage sequence. At this stage morality is conceived in interpersonal terms and goodness is equated with helping and pleasing others...Kohlberg and Kramer imply that only if women enter the traditional arena of male activity will they recognize the inadequacy of this moral perspective and progress like men toward higher stages where relationships are subordinated to rules (stage four) and rules of universal principles of justice (stages five and six).⁶¹

⁶¹Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 18.

Gilligan speculates that the differences in men's and women's moral development arise socially, out of early childhood relationships.⁶² The notion that sexual differences are socially derived is also suggested by Martha Long Ice. Ice asserts that, faced from birth with distinct entitlements and social expectations, men and women develop different perceptual/conceptual grids. She writes:

Females are disposed to develop skills of personal nurturance, integrative thinking, peer negotiation, and intuitive judgment, excelling in creative adaptation to environmental particulars. They tend to focus on complex systems, as such, and to see the parts in terms of the whole. Males are more apt to develop skills of abstract analysis, logic, and visual/spatial judgment, aggressively imposing rational control on dynamic processes toward some desired goal or accomplishment. They are likely to concentrate with high intensity on limited aspects of phenomena and to understand wholes as assemblages of discreet component items.⁶³

Thus, it can be seen that women's emphasis on relationality and nurturing are qualities both Gilligan and Ice uncover in their work. Another aspect of the nature versus nurture issue is women's special relationship to their

⁶²Gilligan, 2. Gilligan and Grant Wiggins, in "The Origins of Morality in Early Childhood," Mapping the Moral Domain, ed. Carol Gilligan, Janie Victoria Ward, Jill McLean Taylor, and Betty Bardige (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of Gender, Education and Human Development), 111-137, argue that different dynamics of early childhood result in girls focusing more on connection, and boys, on experiences of inequality--and thus on the two moral visions of care and justice, respectively.

⁶³Martha Long Ice, Clergy Women and Their World Views. Calling for New Age (New York, Westport, Ct., and London: Praeger, 1987), 4. Ice indicates that the most persistent and pervasive difference between men and women is the difference in their social power (4).

bodies. Certain contemporary theorists, for example, claim that women feel more in touch with their bodies and their bodies' physiological processes than men. They in turn argue that the female body can itself serve as a resource for social change. French feminist psychoanalytic theorists Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous are examples of thinkers who focus on the potentially transformative power of female bodily processes.⁶⁴ Their work will be addressed in more detail in Part II.

Feminist scholars in religious studies have also begun to contribute to discussion on whether sexual differences are innate or socially determined, and on what some of the implications of those differences might be. Mary Daly, for example, seems to suggest that women have innate powers of discernment, which enable them to understand such concepts as Being and Eternal Essences in a superior way to men. This notion is most prominent in her later work.⁶⁵ Sheila Greeve Davaney illuminates this theme in Daly's thought:

Stated succinctly, Daly proposes that women possess a distinctive nature and form of consciousness and that such consciousness has the capacity to know Be-ing or Reality. This is so, she believes, because there exists a profound and natural correspondence, apparently lacking in males, between the

⁶⁴This is particularly true of Cixous' The Newly Born Woman and Irigaray's This Sex Which Is Not One, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1974).

⁶⁵Such books as Gyn/ecology, the Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) and Pure Lust (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984) might be considered to contain essentialist notions regarding women's powers of discernment.

minds of musing women and the structures of Reality. (PL 163) Women's consciousness is not neutral but value-laden and biophilic, and therefore recognizes and responds to the evaluative, biophilic dimensions of Be-ing.⁶⁶

Davaney also finds in the work of Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza and Rosemary Ruether traces of the notion that women's experience and consciousness are more adequate than men's for discerning divine purposes. Davaney notes, however, that Schüssler-Fiorenza and Ruether credit female privilege with women's location in historical struggles for liberation, rather than in a unique female nature per se. In contrast, Daly, states Davaney, "grounds her claims of epistemological privilege primarily in the assumption that women possess a distinctive nature, with innate female faculties that are capable of non-distorted, adequate, and true knowledge of Be-ing".⁶⁷

Another way feminists in religious studies have begun to pursue the question of sexual difference is through exploring the relationship between theology and women's experience. Some feminist scholars observe, for example, that women's experiences of the divine are often very different from men's experiences of the divine. These scholars assert that because of the different nature of male and female experience, men and

⁶⁶Sheila Greeve Davaney, "The Limits of the Appeal to Women's Experience," in Shaping New Vision. Gender and Values in American Culture, ed. C. Atkinson, C. Buchanan, and M. Miles (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), 41.

⁶⁷Ibid., 42.

women tend to "theologize" in different ways. They argue, for example, that models traditionally used to describe an individual's relationship with God are in many cases not appropriate when that individual is a woman. These scholars advocate that women need to find their own models to describe female spirituality and religious experience. The examples that follow illustrate initial attempts to develop such models by two women religious scholars.

Judith Plaskow and Carol Christ were among the first scholars in the field of religion to use women's experience to critique male methods of doing theology. Plaskow did so through exploring the theologies of two prominent white male theologians--Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich. She observed that both Niebuhr and Tillich described the notion of sin in terms of pride, or self-aggrandizement. Plaskow noted that women's most frequent "sin," however, tended to center around not acquiring a strong sense of self, and around failing to assume responsibility for taking hold of their own lives.⁶⁸ Women, for Plaskow, were too often not assertive or self confident enough. They were already guilty of sacrificing themselves too often for others. Plaskow argued that theologies such as Niebuhr's and Tillich's--which viewed sin

⁶⁸Judith Plaskow, Sex, Sin and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980), 151. Valerie Saiving also observes this sin of women, in "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," Womanspirit Rising. A Feminist Reader in Religion, 25-42.

primarily in terms of pride or self-aggrandizement, and grace as self-sacrificial love--failed to speak to the experience of women.⁶⁹

Both Plaskow and Carol Christ initially turned to women's literature in their attempt to do theology from female experience. While Plaskow chose to focus on the work of Doris Lessing, Christ investigated some themes common to several women writers.⁷⁰ One of these themes was the quest for selfhood. Christ observed that this quest was frequently expressed in the context of a struggle against patriarchy, and of women's loss of selfhood in male-dominated society. Two of the writers Christ chose to look at were Margaret Atwood and Kate Chopin. In Atwood's Surfacing, for example, the protagonist goes off into the woods, away from civilization, and delves into a search for her roots. These roots gradually appear to her in shamanistic form, through the bodies of birds and animals that come to visit her. Through this process she is able to discover her origins.⁷¹

Christ writes of Chopin's novel The Awakening:

When it was published in 1899, Kate Chopin's story of the awakening of a married woman created a scandal because of its frank treatment of sensuality and suicide. Recently reclaimed as a feminist classic, The Awakening poses a challenge to critics because of its controversial ending. Is Edna Pontellier's

⁶⁹Plaskow, 152, 169-170.

⁷⁰Plaskow, 34-50; Carol Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980).

⁷¹Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing, 41-53.

suicide the triumph of a strong woman who chooses to die rather than capitulate to the constricting social mores of her time?...The distinction between spiritual and social quest is the key to resolving this question, I think. Edna's suicide reflects spiritual triumph but social defeat...Chopin's novel shows that spiritual awakening without social support can lead to tragedy, and provides convincing testimony that women's quest must be for full spiritual and social liberation.⁷²

Investigation of the question of sexual difference has ranged from Catholic theology to feminist political theory and then back again to theology. While the various theorists looked at take different positions on the origin of sexual difference, they seem to concur that perceptual distinctions between men and women do exist. Consequently, it is possible to speculate that if women could be ordained, they probably would make a difference to the nature and/or experience of the Eucharist. From theorists such as Christ and Plaskow, for example, it can be concluded that women's experience has frequently been ignored in Christian theology. Perhaps this conjecture is also true in some way of the theology of the Eucharist? In addition, Gilligan's and Ice's work point out the tendency for women to value relationships, and to develop a style of personal nurturance. It might be hypothesized that these qualities would affect worshippers' experience of women's functioning as priests--a role which has been described as fundamentally relational.⁷³ The next section will

⁷²Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing, 27.

⁷³Metaphors of the priest as caretaker, nurturer, provider are indications this relational role.

focus and expand upon the plausibility of the above conjectures as applied to the theology and experience of the Eucharist.

Theologically, the contemporary Catholic Eucharist is a ritual of sacrifice.⁷⁴ It is possible, however, that the rite has not always been considered in sacrificial terms. It is also possible that women have not always been excluded from taking a leadership role in celebrating this sacrament. In the section that follows, I will explore a possible link between the Catholic Eucharist's male orientation and its understanding as a sacrificial rite. I will also look at a possible correlation among notions of sacrifice, maleness, and the ritual's hierarchical structure.

Speculating a Link Between Eucharistic Theology and Gender

Virtually all Catholic theologians concur that the contemporary Eucharist is a ritual of sacrifice. Alasdair Heron, for example, states that in the ritual of the Eucharist, Christ's sacrifice is made "present" again for priest and worshipper. This condition comes about through the worshipper's consumption of the bread and wine--believed to

⁷⁴The notion of sacrifice is a major difference between Catholic and Protestant perceptions of the ritual, and is a longstanding source of tension between the two groups. In Protestant denominations, the Eucharist is generally considered a rite of remembrance--of Christ's life and actions, and in particular of the Last Supper. Alternatively, in the Catholic Church, the Eucharist is believed to re-enact Christ's sacrifice at Calvary. Alasdair Heron, Table and Tradition (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1983), xii-xiv.

be transformed into the body and blood of Christ.⁷⁵ Scholars also generally agree that historically, the Eucharist developed from a Jewish supper ritual--probably from the Kiddush. Historical scholar E.O. James writes that the Kiddush was basically a ceremony of sanctification, and was usually recited on the Sabbath or on a festival day. It consisted, in his view, of two blessings: the benediction over the wine, and the sanctification of the day. James states that both bread and wine were partaken of on these occasions. The function of the Kiddush was remembrance--of both Creation and Exodus.⁷⁶

Controversy exists over whether the Eucharist originated as a sacrificial ritual. James, for example, maintains that because the Eucharist, from its origins, was associated with the Passover and with the covenant offering, the rite should be understood in light of the Jewish sacrificial system. Christ, he states, was identified with the Paschal Lamb, and the Eucharist in turn became an anamnesis of the atoning death of Christ--comparable to the Paschal memorial of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt.⁷⁷ Other scholars have questioned whether the Eucharist was associated with ancient Hebraic notions of sacrifice. Josef Jungmann, for example,

⁷⁵Heron, xii.

⁷⁶E.O. James, Christian Myth and Ritual. An Historical Study (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1965), 124-125.

⁷⁷Ibid., 127-128.

records a controversy which broke out in Germany in approximately 1910, over whether the early church acknowledged any real sacrifice. Scholars on one side of the controversy argued that prior to Irenaeus, the church had no notion of sacrifice except that contained in the prayer of thanksgiving. These scholars asserted that up until the third century A.D., worship was conducted by means of prayers of thanksgiving only, and that the offering of gifts at communion was not considered a sacrifice. Scholars on the other side of the debate held that the "offering of gifts" was indeed a sacrificial notion, and that the thanksgiving prayer recited over these gifts was simultaneously an offering of them.⁷⁸

Liturgical scholar Gregory Dix suggests a position which mediates between the two above. According to Dix, Irenaeus regarded the Eucharist in terms of an "oblation" offered to God, primarily in the sense of the sacrifice of "first fruits." In Dix' view, this form of oblation was an acknowledgement of the Creator's bounty in providing earthly food, rather than a "re-calling" of the sacrifice at Calvary. Dix indicates that sacrifice as applied to the Eucharist originated with Tertullian, however, that it was not until Cyprian, in the next generation (A.D.255), that the notion of sacrifice came to be associated with oblations brought by the

⁷⁸Josef A. Jungmann, S.J. The Early Liturgy, trans. Francis Brunner, C.S.S.R. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 45-46.

people.⁷⁹

Thus, it can be seen that scholars are not in agreement over whether the Eucharist was in its origin a sacrificial ritual. It is apparent, however, that by the third century A.D., the ritual had strongly begun to develop along the lines of a re-calling of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary. It is interesting to note that the controversy over whether women were involved in the early leadership of the Eucharist also centers around the first few centuries of Christian history. Several feminist scholars point out that women very likely played an important role in the leadership of the early Eucharist, and that their leadership began to become an issue for the early church in approximately the third century A.D.

Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, for example, argues that the centrality of "house churches" for early Christian communities very likely indicates that women were part of eucharistic leadership. She explains that the house church was often held in the homes of wealthy women, particularly widows. Schüssler-Fiorenza states that at the center of house church worship was a communal meal or banquet, which regularly gathered together its members for table companionship.⁸⁰ The Eucharist, in her view, was an important part of this meal.

⁷⁹Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, second ed. (London: Dacre Press, Adam and Charles Black, 1945), 114-116.

⁸⁰Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Tablesharing and the Celebration of the Eucharist," in Can We Always Celebrate the Eucharist? Concilium 152, ed. Mary Collins and David Power (New York: Seabury, 1979), 8.

Since women had a leadership role in house church worship, Schüssler-Fiorenza finds no reason for their exclusion from administering the Eucharist at those gatherings.

Barbara McHaffie offers an additional argument for women's early participation in the Eucharist. For McHaffie, extant archeological fragments indicate that women may have celebrated the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. A fresco from a Roman catacomb, for example, depicts a group of women jointly participating in the ritual:

The figures are all characterized by upswept hair, slender necks, sloping shoulders, and a hint of earrings. The figure actually breaking the bread is clothed in distinctive female dress.⁸¹

It is also possible that certain early Gnostic groups⁸²

⁸¹McHaffie, 28. In addition, Elizabeth Platt suggests that Mary's footwashing ceremony in Luke was a foreshadowing of women's presence at the Eucharist. In "The Ministry of Mary of Bethany," Theology Today 34/1 (April 1977), 37.

⁸²Gnosticism was an early sect which was soon considered heretical by orthodox Christians. One form of Gnosticism, known as Valentinianism, can be described as follows: "The Valentinian gnostic system presents a Pleroma consisting of a series of thirty coupled aeons. This consists of a progression of 15 male and 15 female entities which emanate Sophia (Wisdom), a female principle at the limit between the Pleroma and the world. The world itself is not the work of the Father, or of his Logos, but of a Creator who is also the God of the Jews. While the physical world remains evil, the moral world is subjected to this God--author of the Law and exacter of righteousness. However, because of the intermediary position of Sophia, seeds of divine substance are found upon the earth and, through the unknowing instrumentality of the Creator, enter certain individuals. These individuals are the Spirituals or the Gnostics. The Saviour was sent to the world in order to gather them and return every particle of divine substance to the Pleroma. While the Psychics (those who only understand moral teachings and obey the Creator) will enjoy their reward outside the Pleroma, the Gnostics (those who know themselves as other and

permitted women to co-celebrate the Eucharist with men. Elaine Pagels, for example, notes that Irenaeus describes with outrage the actions of Valentinian leader Marcus:

Worst of all, from Irenaeus' viewpoint, Marcus invited women to act as priests in celebrating the eucharist with him: he 'hands the cups to women' to offer up the eucharistic prayer, and to pronounce the words of consecration.⁸³

Scholar Gerald Massey writes that in addition to permitting women to celebrate the Eucharist, Marcus was known to invoke the feminine principle "Charis," and to ask Her to mix Her blood with the wine in the cup. Women celebrants, according to Massey, were believed to be representations of Charis, and were thought to consecrate the cup "with an effusion of charis coming from themselves."⁸⁴

The reasons for women's loss of leadership power in the early Eucharist may in part have had to do with the church's consolidation as an institution. Schussler-Fiorenza, for example, suggests that suppression of feminine leadership in the church was related to factors involving unification of church power and the formation of the monarchical episcopacy. She describes a shift in authority which took place in the

divine) will enter the wedding room and join their male consort in the Pleroma, which will thereby be completed." In Jean LaPorte, The Role of Women in Early Christianity (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 150.

⁸³Elaine Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels (New York: Random House, 1979), 59-60.

⁸⁴Gerald Massey, The Natural Genesis, vol. II (London: Williams and Norgate, 1883), 355-356.

second century--from charismatic and communal, to leadership invested in local officers:

The ascendancy of local officers thus generated three interlocking developments: 1)the patriarchalization of local church and leadership; 2)the merger of prophetic and apostolic leadership with the patriarchally defined office of bishop; and 3)the relegation of women's leadership to marginal positions and its restriction to the sphere of women.⁸⁵

A relationship between loss of feminine leadership and institutionalization of power is also suggested by anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday. Sanday explains that the familiar theme of male dominance is repeated in the forces favoring ascendancy of orthodoxy and suppression of Gnosticism in the early Christian church. This theme, she claims, is frequently found in a climate of social stress, in which a group perceives itself in competition with other populations who have already adopted male religious symbolism. Sanday indicates that both the Israelites and the early Christians found themselves in such a position, and that they had to fight to preserve their religion against the tide of religious persecution. One consequence for both religions, in her view, was the suppression of feminine leadership and symbolism.⁸⁶

Thus, it can be learned from Schussler-Fiorenza and Sanday that women's loss of leadership in the early Eucharist could have been a by-product of the solidification of male

⁸⁵Schüssler-Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 288.

⁸⁶Peggy Reeves Sanday, Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality (Cambridge, New York, and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 230.

power. This solidification occurred in approximately the third century A.D. The Eucharist was considered a ritual of sacrifice also by the third century A.D. Hence, the work of scholars studied thus far indicates a possible connection between the Eucharist's male orientation and its development as a sacrificial ritual. Can links also be made between the emergence of hierarchy and sacrifice, and between hierarchy and maleness?

An anthropologist who believes notions of sacrifice, hierarchy, and maleness may be integrally connected is Valerio Valeri. Valeri's work on sacrifice in ancient Hawaii is particularly helpful in this regard. Valeri explains that ancient Hawaiian cults and their gods were hierarchically arranged, on the basis of purity.⁸⁷ Women in this culture were considered impure. He writes that because of their impurity, women "were not allowed to offer sacrifice in the hand, only men. They were called by a name which denotes unclean and presumptuous--kahinu." He states that only if the woman herself were a prophet, or kahuna, was it permitted.⁸⁸

Valeri indicates that in these ancient Hawaiian cults, who could perform sacrifices, and their efficacy, was determined hierarchically. A hierarchical chain of sacrificers (the one performing the sacrifice) as well as

⁸⁷Valerio Valeri, Kingship and Sacrifice. Ritual and Society in Ancient Hawaii, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 110.

⁸⁸Ibid., 111.

sacrifiers (the one or ones for whom the sacrifice was performed) established how valuable the sacrifice would be. The most valuable sacrifice, or the "great sacrifice," was the sacrifice of the king. The king's sacrifice, states Valeri, was viewed as a "hierarchical communion"--making possible the continued reproduction of society.⁸⁹

Valeri's work illuminates connections among sacrifice, hierarchy, and maleness in the general sphere of human interaction. Sociologist Nancy Jay, in turn, attempts to make a link among sacrifice, maleness, and hierarchy as these are found in the rite of the Eucharist. Jay tries to show that the repetition of the sacrificial rite of the Eucharist and the development of apostolic succession of the clergy achieved the same purpose--namely, preservation of the church against schism, heresy, and religious persecution. She finds parallels between changes in early eucharistic theology and changes in the social organization of the primitive church, particularly regarding development of a clerical hierarchy. One of these parallels, in her view, is that both the mass and church hierarchy became controlled by males. In addition, she states, both became patrilineal. Jay connects development of sacrificial theology with the "institutionalization" of the priesthood:

It is surely no accident that the constitution and maintenance of the enduring Church was accomplished by three simultaneous changes: the recognition of

⁸⁹Ibid., 37, 134, 318.

the bishops as formal unilineal successors to the apostles; the recognition of the Eucharist as sacrifice (first as spiritual sacrifice and then as 'blood' sacrifice); and the transformation of the clergy from administrative and/or charismatic ministries to a sacrificing priesthood increasingly differentiated from the laity.⁹⁰

The fact that only members of the apostolic succession of the church--that is, only male priests--could partake of the sacrifice re-enacted in the mass, and the fact that the eucharistic sacrifice became a "blood" sacrifice, are important, and linked, phenomena for Jay. She indicates that, taking place alongside the development of the Eucharist as a blood sacrifice, was the specific exclusion of childbearing women from performing the rite.⁹¹ One of the reasons for childbearing women's exclusion, Jay states, was the male desire to keep separate the "involuntary, unclean, vulnerable" bringing of life into the world that takes place during childbirth, from the voluntary, "purifying" taking of life that takes place in the "sanctioned killing of sacrifice."⁹²

Jay observes that the attempt to separate order from disorder--associated with maleness and femaleness, respectively--is found in many of the societies she has investigated. She further notes that childbearing women never serve as sacrificers in these societies--except perhaps as

⁹⁰Nancy Jay, "Throughout Your Generations Forever; A Sociology of Blood Sacrifice," (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1981), 265.

⁹¹Ibid., 276.

⁹²Ibid., 4.

virgins or in some other non-childbearing capacity.⁹³ The fact that women are prohibited from celebrating the mass in certain Christian faiths is an indication, according to Jay, of the connection between patrilineality and sacrifice in this ritual:

That the sacrificial line of descent is still strictly patrilineal can be seen from the fact that precisely those churches which practice the Eucharist as a sacrifice (and therefore invalid if not performed by a member of the apostolic descent group), are the ones which do not ordain women...Those churches which are committed to preserving the purity of the unilineal descent of apostolic succession by the exclusive sacrificing power of the priestly hierarchy are quite right in denying ordination to women. For the women who seek ordination in the Catholic church necessarily also seek a redefinition and restructuring of the Church.⁹⁴

Hence, Jay links sacrifice and maleness in the Eucharist on the grounds both that sociological circumstances dictate it, and that sacrifice is a different kind of theology from that with which women are familiar. She seems to imply that women are more comfortable with theologies that stress bringing forth life, while men are more comfortable with those focused on taking it.

Perhaps this claim can be better understood by looking at contemporary theologies which a gynocentric--or woman-centered--viewpoint seem to promote. I will explore two recent attempts to develop such gynocentric theologies--by Kathryn Rabuzzi and Catherine Keller--and then suggest ways

⁹³Ibid., 4.

⁹⁴Ibid., 289-290.

they might be applied to the theology of the Eucharist. Like Carol Christ, Rabuzzi indicates that the quest for selfhood in Christian and other religious traditions has been expressed primarily in male terms. She critiques the popular image of the hero, claiming that it represents attainment of androcentric ideals such as individuation and autonomy, versus gynocentric--or woman-centered--ideals of relatedness and connection. Rabuzzi explains:

...in its basic version the quest of the hero is the story of the male child breaking away from the world of his mother. This world of the mother is the mundane world he must transcend to reach the 'higher' world of the father. When a female 'hero' is substituted, the tale as traditionally told becomes full of awkward permutations designed to make it 'fit' the altered mother-child relationship.⁹⁵

Rather than utilize the myth of the hero, Rabuzzi proposes that women use the image of "motherselfhood" to more adequately describe their spiritual quest. By motherself, Rabuzzi refers to that relationship a woman has with her mother, with herself, and with her daughter. Every woman, in her view, has both an individual self and psychical/biological ties to other women in her life. Motherselfhood involves finding a balance among these interactive selves. Rabuzzi points out that motherselfhood stands in contrast to the notion of the single, unitive self, which is often the goal of hero myths. She states that "motherselfhood" does,

⁹⁵Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi, Motherself. A Mythic Analysis of Motherhood (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 11.

however, share some features with "heroselfhood:"

In one sense the way of the mother is the 'same' as that of the quest of the hero. But what makes this familiar story of the hero seem so different when it becomes the way of the mother is its shift in perspective. In the familiar hero's quest, the hero is by definition just what the word 'hero' implies: 'He' is the center of interest, the protagonist who is typically a force for good... By contrast, in the story of the way of the mother, the figure of the hero is no monster at all. Instead, she is the mother, protagonist rather than antagonist, in this telling of the archetypal story which is simultaneously romance and battle between mother goddess (the mother) and hero (her child).⁹⁶

The symbolic battle between mother goddess and her child is also a focus for Catherine Keller's work. Like Rabuzzi, Keller explores the implications of male gods conquering female goddesses in ancient myths. Also similar to Rabuzzi, Keller concludes that these myths convey the notion that separation--often labelled "independence" and "autonomy"--is normative in the preparation for selfhood. Finally, like Rabuzzi, Keller finds this model inadequate to represent women's quest for selfhood.

Keller proceeds to investigate her theory that dominant male and female styles of selfhood can be categorized in terms of "separative" and "soluble" selves, respectively. The separative self, for Keller, is frequently defined mythologically in relation to conquering some sort of (usually female) monster. Theologically, this self becomes expressed in terms of a transcendent, immovable God. The soluble self,

⁹⁶Ibid., 14.

in contrast, is in her view a self of relation and connection. She states that it in turn suggests such theological⁹⁷ models as a Web or a Weaver.⁹⁸

Keller finds psychoanalysis useful for exploring the possible origins of separative and soluble models of selfhood. She indicates that both models have to do with the child's relationship with its mother--during and moving out of the pre-Oedipal period of development. Keller links the origins of the separative self with boys' tendencies to define themselves in terms of separation from the mother, and the soluble self with girls' tendencies to identify themselves in relation to her.⁹⁹ She in turn critiques religious models which define "holiness" in terms of separation, and advocates that religion be based on the gynocentric, soluble self. Keller writes:

We arise from the matrix; we redesign its elements; we are woven back into the matrix. This is the religious action of reconnecting. As the word itself tells us, matrix is always mater, mother. No inert matter here; there is no such thing. All beings come tied to the matrix of interconnection by what poet Judy Grahn calls 'the one true cord,/the umbilical line/unwinding into meaning,/transformation,/web of thought and caring and connection.'¹⁰⁰

Applied to the Eucharist, perhaps a gynocentric

⁹⁷Keller does not adopt the term thealogy in her work.

⁹⁸Catherine Keller, From a Broken Web. Separation, Sexism, and Self (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 219.

⁹⁹Ibid., 124-135.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 248.

perspective would highlight the nurturing, connective features already present in the ritual. These nurturing aspects might include more of an emphasis on the actual feeding ceremony of the rite, and metaphors of relatedness--such as being sustained and cared for--evoked by a more gynocentric theology.¹⁰¹

This is one hypothesis which a theological approach can make about the possibility of gender re-reversal in the Eucharist. Another is that female celebrants will help expand symbols of God and Christ. Catholic doctrine suggests that when women become celebrants, they become symbolic of Christ.¹⁰² It seems envisioning female celebrants as symbols of Christ can lead in at least two directions: 1) alternative

¹⁰¹There is some uncertainty whether women celebrants would cause the ritual to be less sacrificially oriented. Some scholars have theorized that certain goddess-worshipping societies practiced ritual sacrifice, perhaps even human sacrifice. See Ginette Paris, Pagan Meditations, trans. Gwendolyn Moore (Dallas: Spring Publications, Inc., 1986); and note 60, p. 217 of Riane Eisler's The Chalice and the Blade (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987). For many Christian women, sacrifice is an important aspect of the Eucharist, and they would not want to lessen its focus. See, for example, Maggie Ross, Pillars of Flame. Power, Priesthood, and Spiritual Maturity (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988). Other women associate sacrifice with violence or separation, and claim that it has de-emphasized such aspects of the Eucharist as feeding and nurturing. In addition, some feminist scholars find that theologies of sacrifice encourage women's self-denial and victimization. In this respect, see Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, Metaphors for the Contemporary Church (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983), 76-79.

¹⁰²According to certain papal documents, the celebrant acts in persona Christi--as a representative of Christ ("On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," 279). It seems that in Catholic thinking, the celebrant is not only a representative of Christ, but also a symbol of Christ.

Christologies, and 2) feminine images of divinity.

One type of alternative Christology female celebrants might encourage, for example, is an androgynous one--that is, in which both men and women participate in redeemed humanity. Feminist scholar Rosemary Radford Ruether explains that in some androgynous Christologies, Christ is frequently depicted as a representative of a new humanity, in which male and female aspects are unified.¹⁰³ She indicates that one resource for androgynous Christologies is found in Gnostic teachings. For certain Gnostic groups, Adam's fall represented the splitting apart of androgynous humanity into sexual maleness and femaleness. Christ, in turn, symbolized the restored Adam.¹⁰⁴

Edwina Sandys' sculpture "Christa" might also contribute to envisioning an alternative Christology. This piece of art depicts a female Christ--Sandys has sculpted the naked body of a woman hanging on a cross.¹⁰⁵ Judy Chicago's The Dinner

¹⁰³Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk, 127.

¹⁰⁴While Ruether does find some positive features in an androgynous depiction of Christ, she sees certain limitations in it as well--among them a tendency to presuppose "psychic dualism" (Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk, 100-101, 130). She writes: "Gnosticism can easily fall into an androcentric androgyny that correlated the male part of the original androgynous humanity with spirituality and the female with carnality...But Gnosticism also suggests that there is a spiritual femaleness as well as a carnal femaleness. God is both male and female. Holy Wisdom, the female persona of God, mediates the fall into bodiliness and also the escape from creation into redeemed spiritual life" (100).

¹⁰⁵Kenneth L. Woodward, "Feminism and the Churches," Newsweek, 13 February 1989, 61.

Party in an avant-garde way offers an additional portrayal of Christ in which women play a part. While not a conventional portrayal of Jesus, The Dinner Party is meant to represent the Last Supper--this time including women at the table. The table has thirteen dinner plates, decorated with imagery of ancient goddesses and important women in history; table runners also list names of significant historical women.¹⁰⁶

Besides opening the door to alternative Christologies, perhaps the symbol of a female celebrant can lead towards envisioning God as both male and female. Theologically, as a symbol of Christ, the celebrant also symbolizes God. As such, women celebrants have the potential to evoke feminine images of deity in the psyches of worshippers. Examples of types of symbols that might arise can be found both in paganism and in Christian heritage. Within Christianity, some early Christian Gnostic groups referred to a feminine Godhead. They did so in primarily three ways: as Mother, as feminine Holy Spirit, and as Wisdom.¹⁰⁷ Outside of Christian heritage,

¹⁰⁶Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party. A Symbol of Our Heritage (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1979). Female viewers frequently find this piece spiritually and emotionally powerful. See also Sally Klein and Cheryl Lean, "Just Desserts," Ideas Program on Canadian Public Radio (Ottawa, Ontario: 26 October 1987, 9-10 P.M.).

¹⁰⁷Pagels, 50-54. Some contemporary women find calling God "Mother" very empowering--it elicits feelings of being nurtured, protected, and cared for. Other women, however, assert that the metaphor "mother" stereotypes women's capacities to those of solely maternal and domestic duties; these women in turn look for other than maternal ways to address feminine divinity. Sally McFague, in Models of God. Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age (Philadelphia:

goddesses such as Athena, Aphrodite, and Artemis are familiar already to many North American women and men.¹⁰⁸ Native North American deities such as the Corn Mother are still important to the rituals and mythologies of certain tribes.¹⁰⁹ In Asia, Buddhist women are beginning to lift up "goddess figures" in their own cultures. Kwan Yin, for example, a female portrayal

Fortress Press, 1986), proposes calling God Lover and Friend in addition to Mother (32). Addressing God as Wisdom is one way in which women's sphere of activity can be broadened from strictly domestic aspects. For the Gnostics, Wisdom had at least three roles: 1) as "first universal creator"--bringing forth all creatures, 2) as a source of enlightenment, and 3) as procreator and nurturer (Pagels, 54). For the Gnostics, feminine Wisdom was also called Sophia. Invoking God as Sophia, and embracing some of her qualities, can perhaps also be helpful for modern women. In The Divine Feminine: The Biblical Imagery of God as Female (New York: Crossroad, 1983), Virginia Mollenkott notes that Sophia accomplishes both personal and social renewal in the Hebrew scriptures; she implies that these accomplishments can in turn inspire women today (102, 104). The female body is also affirmed in the figure of Sophia. Authors Cady, Ronan, and Taussig, for example, in Sophia. The Future of Feminist Spirituality (San Francisco: Harper and Row) indicate that in the figure of Sophia the female body becomes the source and center of divine power, life, and creativity (86). Additional role models that Sophia offers, according to Cady et al, are as "strong, angry, assertive, and sometimes prophetic woman" (84, 86). Alternatively, in In Memory of Her, Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza comments on some of Sophia's negative connotations. She describes Sophia as merely a "consort" to the male God; Schussler-Fiorenza states that Sophia is the initiator of a Fall in the Divine World, which results in the "evil, visible world." Because of these connotations, Schussler-Fiorenza labels Sophia the "Cosmic Eve" (273-274).

¹⁰⁸Such works as Christ's The Laughter of Aphrodite, Spretnak's The Politics of Women's Spirituality, and Bolen's Goddesses in Everywoman, have helped to make Greek goddess images familiar.

¹⁰⁹Paula Gunn Allen, The Sacred Hoop. Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

of the bodhisattva or Buddhist saint, is a popular deity among Asian folk peoples.¹¹⁰ And in many parts of the world--including Canada and the United States--the ancient practice of witchcraft has experienced a revival.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰David Kinsley, The Goddesses' Mirror. Visions of the Divine from East and West (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

¹¹¹For resources on witchcraft, see Margot Adler, Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today (New York: Viking Press, 1979); Z. Budapest, The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows (Venice, Ca.: The Feminist Wicca, 1976); Gerald Gardner, Witchcraft Today (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1974); Luisah Teish, Jambalaya. The Natural Woman's Book of Personal Charms and Practical Rituals (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985); Starhawk, The Spiral Dance, Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); Doreen Valiente, An ABC of Witchcraft, Past and Present (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

For additional resources on goddess imagery, see Charlene Spretnak, Lost Goddesses of Early Greece: A Collection of Pre-Hellenic Mythology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981); Merlin Stone, Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood: A Treasury of Goddesses and Heroine Lore From Around the World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); and Barbara C. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983).

It is significant that many feminist scholars in religion have begun to draw upon feminine imagery, including goddess imagery, as a resource in their work. These scholars include women who have rejected Christianity, and women who remain loyal to the Christian tradition. Regarding those in the latter category, some draw upon goddess figures connected with Christianity's Jewish heritage--such as Sophia. Others adopt goddess symbolism that was previously lacking in Christianity, and turn to images originating prior to the advent of the Christian religion. See note 27 of this chapter for examples of scholars in the former category. Included in the latter are Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk, Womanguides. Readings Towards a Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985); Nelle Morton, The Journey is Home; Susan Cady, Marian Ronan, and Hal Taussig, Sophia. The Future of Feminist Spirituality (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986); and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey. Perspectives on Feminist Theology (New York: Crossroad, 1986).

It seems female images of divinity are re-enforced when women celebrate the Eucharist. Perhaps female celebrants open the possibility for women to identify themselves with the divine, and for them to establish a relationship with the Godhead based on their experiences as women. Women celebrants in turn enable men to encounter female as well as male imagery for God, and thus facilitate breaking down men's monopoly on religious symbols.

Hence, two contributions made by theological exploration of gender re-reversal in the Eucharist are that women celebrants would probably alter eucharistic theology to the extent that feeding and relational aspects are emphasized, and that they would encourage feminine symbolism for God and Christ. In summary, the theology I have looked at in this chapter suggests that gender plays a major part in the construction of the Catholic Eucharist. Without making extensive use of psychoanalytic literature, feminist theorists have speculated about several important gender-related themes. They have turned their attention to the nature of religious symbolism, the impact of male and female imagos on women's psyches, the ways in which a male-dominated symbol system might hinder women's equality within the church, and the possible psychological and political empowerment of women resulting from including strong feminine symbols in ecclesial ritual. Through reference to biological and sociological discussion of human gender roles, I have shown that there is

good reason to suspect a gender reversal is taking place in the Eucharist, in which men appropriate women's customary functions of feeding and nurturing. By exploring certain themes in Christian history, I have demonstrated the phenomenon to also be present in Christian scriptures, in the life of Jesus, the apostles and certain monastic figures, as well as in other sacraments in the Catholic church.

There are issues relating to gender and the Eucharist which a theological approach does not adequately address, or which might be explored in greater depth using an additional method of investigation. One such issue is possible reasons for gender reversal in the sacrament. The reasons offered in Chapter Two for the Vatican's objection to women clergy give no indication as to why men might want to appropriate female functions and roles. I suggest further insight into this issue can potentially enrich current understandings of the Vatican's position on women priests, as well as further the discussion on the contemporary debate. There is much more to say, as well, on the issue of gender re-reversal in the Catholic Eucharist. Thus, it would be helpful to have a theory, or foundation, to better describe the phenomenon of gender reversal, and to more adequately understand re-reversal in this sacrament. This theory, I propose, can be obtained through using psychoanalytic thought.

In Part II of the thesis, I will use psychoanalytic theory to address some of the same theological concerns

explored in Part I, that is, such notions as gender reversal, sexual difference, possible connections between sacrifice and maleness, and changes which might be brought about by women priests. Through doing so, I will show how much more nuanced and rich the discussion of gender concerns in the Eucharist becomes when theological study is augmented by certain psychoanalytic schools of thought.

PART II:

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS TO EXPLORING
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER FOR THE EUCHARIST**

CHAPTER FOUR
PSYCHOANALYTIC UNDERSTANDINGS OF GENDER REVERSAL
IN THE EUCHARIST

I suggest that psychoanalytic theory can offer a unique approach to understanding gender reversal as it is seen in the Eucharist, and in illuminating possible reasons for the Vatican's continued prohibition of women priests. It can do so through investigating unconscious motivations, and through exploring repressed thoughts and feelings. The frequency of gender reversal within Christian ritual and tradition, and the fact that it occurs on levels of ecclesial power and authority, make this topic important for furthering study on the current Catholic debate over women clergy.

Using psychoanalytic theory to explore possible reasons for gender reversal in the Eucharist necessitates acknowledging the role of the unconscious mind in determining conscious thoughts and behavior. Freud theorized that virtually all conscious actions were, in part, motivated by unconscious desires. Even routine occurrences, such as jokes, slips of the tongue, and bodily movements, for Freud had an

unconscious root.¹ In using a psychoanalytic method to investigate gender reversal in the Eucharist, one of the first hypotheses that can be made is that the reasons for this phenomenon dwell largely at an unconscious level of awareness.

In order to uncover what some of those reasons might be, I will utilize Freudian and Kleinian theories, as well as the work of psychologists Karen Horney, Bruno Bettelheim, and Dorothy Dinnerstein. My discussion will also include several feminist critiques of Freud. Freudian theory provides a good analysis of the desire for gender reversal in women--which Freud calls penis envy. Horney's and Bettelheim's work serves to balance Freud's emphasis on gender reversal solely in women, and to directly address the issue in men. Feminist critique of Freud opens the possibility that perhaps Freud himself had unconscious feelings of fear and hostility towards women, and that, as a result, he might have been biased in his understandings of male and female psychology. Klein and Dinnerstein continue my exploration of unconscious fear and hostility towards women, and aid in investigating a possible correlation between these repressed emotions and gender reversal in the Eucharist.

Freud's own writings reveal little material on the subject of men's desire to appropriate women's functions or

¹Freud's "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 5 (1975), and "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905)," vol. 6 (1976), are illustrations of his application of psychoanalysis to routine conscious behavior.

roles. When he does mention instances of this occurring, he gives them only peripheral attention. In the case of little Hans, for example, Hans at one point fantasizes he will have children:

I (Hans' father): You'd like to have a little girl.
 Hans: Yes, next year I'm going to have one, and she'll be called Hanna too.
 I: But why isn't Mummy to have a little girl?
 Hans: Because I want to have a little girl for once.
 I: But you can't have a little girl.
 Hans: Oh yes, boys have girls and girls have boys.
 I: Boys don't have children. Only women, only Mummies have children.
 Hans: But why shouldn't I?
 I: Because God's arranged it like that.
 Hans: But why don't you have one? Oh, yes, you'll have one all right. Just you wait.²

It can be seen from the above dialogue between Hans and his father that Hans is quite interested in being able to have children the way his mother has children. Yet, in Freud's analysis of the case, he seems to overlook this piece of clinical data. Freud writes:

There is no necessity on this account to assume in Hans the presence of a feminine strain or desire for having children.³

Another occasion on which Freud seems to overlook a desire for gender reversal can be found in the case of Senatspräsident Schreber. One aspect of Schreber's illness consisted of delusions that he had a mission to redeem the

²Freud, "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy (1909)," vol. 8, The Pelican Freud Library (1977), 246-247.

³From Hannah Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye. From Psychoanalysis to the Psychology of Women (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1986), 81.

world. This mission was to be preceded, in Schreber's view, by his "transformation into a woman."⁴ Freud records the way Schreber believed this change would come about:

By means of what he calls 'drawing' (that is, by calling up visual images), he is able to give both himself and the rays an impression that his body is fitted out with female breasts and genitals.⁵

The "rays" refer to divine rays which Schreber imagined would impregnate him, "to the end that a new race of men might be created."⁶ Freud's explanation of this unusual fantasy does not include the possibility that Schreber might have had secret wishes to possess women's functions. Instead, Freud states:

It is not to be supposed that he wishes to be transformed into a woman; it is rather a question of a 'must,' based upon the Order of Things, which there is no possibility of evading, much he would personally prefer to remain in his own honourable and masculine station in life.⁷

While Freud seems to push aside any desire for gender reversal in men, he does not deny the notion that women might want to appropriate men's functions. This idea is clearly expressed, for example, in his theories on penis envy. I suggest reviewing these theories in order to gain an understanding of Freud's notion of the desire for gender

⁴Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides) (1911)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 9 (1979), 146.

⁵Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," 165.

⁶Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," 151.

⁷Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," 146-147.

reversal in women. Doing so, I propose, can shed light on this same desire in men.

Freud's concept of penis envy is integral to his understanding of women's psychological development. Penis envy, in his view, dates to the time a girl first observes her parents in coitus, and discovers she has been castrated. Freud believed the wish for a penis is an important element to the girl's Oedipus complex, to the resolution of this complex, and to her life as a woman. First, I will turn to Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex.

Freud initially developed his theories on the Oedipus complex in terms of male psychology, and only later attempted to explain what the phenomenon might mean for girls. In terms of boys, the Oedipus complex consists of a period of development during which the boy has sexual feelings towards his mother and hostile ones towards his father. This situation is resolved, according to Freud, through the onset of the castration complex--the boy's fear of losing his penis. The desire to sleep with his mother becomes complicated by his fear that his father will castrate him for his desire. Freud explains that the boy's wish to keep his penis eventually comes to outweigh his desire for his mother. The father is introjected as the superego, and the boy's sexual feelings towards his mother are repressed.⁸

⁸Freud's theories on the Oedipus complex are outlined in both "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex (1924)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 7 (1977), and "Some Psychological

Freud believed that girls worked through the Oedipus complex in a different way than boys. Whereas boys resolve the Oedipus complex by means of the castration complex, Freud states that girls enter into the Oedipus complex via the castration complex. This happens, for Freud, in the following manner:

The girl's Oedipus complex is much simpler than that of the small bearer of the penis; in my experience, it seldom goes beyond that of taking her mother's place and the adopting of a feminine attitude toward her father. Renunciation of the penis is not tolerated by the girl without some attempt at compensation. She slips--along the line of a symbolic equation, one might say--from the penis to a baby. Her Oedipus complex culminates in a desire, which is long retained, to receive a baby from her father as a gift--to bear him a child. One has the impression that the Oedipus complex is then gradually given up because this wish is never fulfilled. The two wishes--to possess a penis and a child--remain strongly cathected in the unconscious and help to prepare the female creature for her later sexual role.⁹

Freud writes that upon discovery of her own castrated condition, the girl feels hostility towards the mother who is also castrated. Then, out of penis envy she attempts to identify with her father. This latter state, Freud felt, may persist for a long period of time. He theorized that because girls were already castrated, they lack motivation to move out of the Oedipus complex. Freud believed that often this complex remains uneasily resolved throughout their lives:

Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes (1925)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 7.

⁹Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," 321.

Girls remain in it for an indeterminate length of time; they demolish it late, and, even so, incompletely. In these circumstances the formation of the superego must suffer; it cannot attain the strength and independence which give it its cultural significance, and feminists are not pleased when we point out to them the effects of this factor upon the average feminine character.¹⁰

In his essay "Female Sexuality," Freud outlines three possible paths open to girls for resolving their Oedipus complex. The first, he states, is a "general revulsion" from sexuality. The girl, dissatisfied with her clitoris, decides to give up sexuality altogether. The second, in his view, is to cling to the hope of getting a penis sometime. He writes:

That hope becomes her life's aim; and the phantasy of being a man in spite of everything often persists as a formative factor over long periods.¹¹

Freud describes the third path as "very circuitous." Ultimately, it leads to the girl's taking her father as love object, and giving up her pre-Oedipal attachment to her mother. Later in life, he states, her baby will symbolize her substitute penis from her father.¹²

Thus, this survey of Freud's views on women's psychological development demonstrates that envy is an important dynamic in his understanding of women's desire for a penis. Given the important place of envy in Freud's mind,

¹⁰Freud, "Femininity," lecture 33 of "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1933)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 2 (1973), 163.

¹¹Freud, "Female Sexuality (1931)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 7, 376.

¹²Freud, "Female Sexuality," 386-388.

it is noteworthy that he does not find a similar place for the desire for gender reversal in the psyches of his male patients.

In order to explore this observation further, I will look at the work of some of Freud's contemporaries. G. Bose and Karen Horney, for example, both cite case material in which male patients express a wish to be female. Bose, founder of the Indian Psychoanalytic Society, is recorded to have written the following statement to Freud:

My Indian patients do not exhibit castration symptoms to the same degree as my European cases. The desire to be female is more easily unearthed in Indian male patients than in European.¹³

Similarly, object relations theorist Karen Horney takes issue with Freud's emphasis on penis envy in girls, and argues that there is a corresponding envy in men of female functions. Her studies in particular indicate that men feel extreme envy towards processes of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood, as well as of breasts and suckling. Horney finds that men's envy of females is expressed in several ways. One is resentment towards women. Another is the tendency to devalue such functions as pregnancy and childbirth, while at the same time overemphasizing male genitality. A third way is to sublimate the envy into such values as productivity and creative work. Horney states:

Language itself points to this origin of cultural

¹³Karen Horney, Feminine Psychology (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1967), 21.

productivity. In the historic times that are known to us, this productivity has undoubtedly been incomparably greater in men than in women. Is not the tremendous strength in men of the impulse to creative work in every field precisely due to their feeling of playing a relatively small role in the creation of living beings, which constantly impels them to an overcompensation in achievement?¹⁴

If Horney's observation, that men find cultural expressions for envy of women, is correct, it should be possible to find other examples of this phenomenon occurring. One possibility, perhaps, are rites of bleeding performed at puberty among men in many primitive cultures. This notion is further explored by psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim.

Bettelheim became interested in primitive puberty rites from his work with emotionally disturbed children. He found that these children demonstrated extreme envy of the other sex's reproductive organs. Some of the boys, for example, were obsessed with the idea of possessing a vagina. Others expressed aggressive desires to cut off and tear out breasts and vaginas.¹⁵

From his observations, Bettelheim came to the conclusion that it is natural for each sex to envy anatomical parts it does not possess. Like Horney, he suggests that Freud

¹⁴Ibid., 61. Mary O'Brien, in The Politics of Reproduction (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), proposes a similar notion--that men's focus on ideologies of productivity stems from their alienation from the reproductive process.

¹⁵Bruno Bettelheim, Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954), 35-37.

overemphasized penis envy while at the same time ignored boys' envy of the vagina, womb, and breasts.

Through studying primitive cultures, Bettelheim came to believe that many male puberty rites are in fact imitations of female fertility rites--such as girls' initiation into menstruation. He hypothesizes that rituals of cutting, circumcision, and subincision represent men's attempt to "bleed" the way women bleed. Bettelheim suggests several reasons for this phenomenon. One is that boys feel they need to compensate for their lack of marked physiological and hormonal changes in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Another possible reason, in his view, is their desire to participate in women's procreative ability.¹⁶

Bettelheim finds additional support for the idea of male envy of female functions in another ritual prevalent in primitive societies, called the couvade. The couvade is a ritual of birthing performed by men:

'The woman works as usual up until a few hours before birth; she goes to the forest with some women, and there the birth takes place. In a few hours she is up and at work...As soon as the child is born, the father takes to his hammock, and abstains from work, from meat and all food but weak gruel, from smoking, from washing himself, and above all, from touching weapons of any sort, and is nursed and cared for by the women of the place...This custom goes on for days, sometimes weeks.'¹⁷

The couvade is a good illustration of men's desire to

¹⁶Ibid., 116.

¹⁷Ibid., 209.

participate in and experience birth. In addition, it illustrates men's attempt to detract from women's importance in the birthing process.¹⁸

Turning from the couvade to the contemporary Eucharist, is there not a similar phenomenon happening in this sacrament? In the Eucharist, men perform a ritual centered around feeding, while at the same time deny women a leadership role in the rite. Knowledge of the couvade and other primitive male puberty rituals thus leads to speculation that gender reversal in the Eucharist may be an expression of the wider instance of male envy of female physiological abilities. Catholic scholar John Thompson also suggests this possibility:

...In the church's liturgies, we see men at the altar creating body and blood--for only men can consecrate the elements. And in the church's liturgies, we see men rebirthing children--for only if you are born again...and only the male can baptize. And in the church's liturgies we see men consecrating buildings built by men--large, cavernous, womb-like buildings, all part of what is called 'Mother Church.'

Men, without wombs, envying those with wombs, attempting over and over again to act out birthing, attempting to insist upon creating life singly, alone, without the dependence upon women, insisting upon her inferior status out of the envy of her having a womb.¹⁹

Hence, it seems one possible psychological reason for the continued prohibition of women priests is male envy of the female biological processes of birthing, suckling, and

¹⁸Ibid., 211.

¹⁹John R. Thompson, "Psychic Sources of Misogyny," Christianity and Crisis 39 (2 April 1979), 76.

nurturing.²⁰ Sacramentally, it is possible that men unconsciously react to their envy by permitting only males to perform these functions, while simultaneously voicing other, more "rational," reasons for excluding women from the priesthood.

It is interesting to speculate on additional potential reasons for gender reversal in the Eucharist. It seems especially significant, for example, that Freud failed to acknowledge the desire to possess female capabilities among some of his own clients. Perhaps an investigation of why this was so can prove fruitful in further understanding reasons for gender reversal in this sacrament. In order to undertake such an investigation, it would seem helpful to look at Freud's own relationships with women.

Research into Freud's life suggests that Freud may have found women mysterious and inaccessible, and that, in particular, he may have imagined his mother a powerful and overwhelming figure. Two scholars who offer this hypothesis are Hannah Lerman and Sarah Kofman. Lerman, for instance, states that, for Freud, women would "almost have to be thought of as mysterious creatures, subjects only for fantasy."²¹ She bases her claim on observations that have been made about

²⁰Phyllis Chesler, in About Men (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), illustrates the phenomenon of womb envy through quotations from myths, the Bible, Freud, and other famous thinkers.

²¹Lerman, 12.

Freud's early life. Lerman indicates that in both his childhood and to some extent in his adulthood, Freud experienced a distinct separation between the lives and spheres of men and women. She notes that he had almost no female friends or schoolmates in his youth or college days. He married at the age of thirty, after a four-year engagement primarily conducted long-distance.²² Prior to his engagement, Freud mentions only one other occasion of a romantic attraction--an infatuation when he was sixteen.²³ Freud writes little of his relations with women after his marriage until later in his life, when he began to acquire a following of male and female analysts.²⁴

Freud's dreams seem to indicate that he found the mother figure especially powerful and mysterious. Sarah Kofman singles out two dreams which illustrate this attitude particularly well. She writes:

Two of Freud's dreams corroborate the view that at the level of Freud's own fantasies the mother is indeed the figure of the inaccessible woman, fearsome and all-powerful: forbidden.²⁵

Kofman observes that in one of these dreams, Freud

²²Ernest Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, vol. 1 (New York: Basic Books, 1953), 99.

²³Ibid., 25.

²⁴Erik Erikson has speculated that Freud had early issues of dependency with his mother, and that these only began to surface with his female colleagues (from Lerman, 11).

²⁵Sarah Kofman, The Enigma of Woman. Woman in Freud's Writings, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), 72.

imagines his mother's death. In this dream,²⁶ Freud associates his mother with an Egyptian god having the head of a sparrow hawk. Kofman links this image with that of Mut, the androgynous vulture goddess who possesses the power of life and death over human beings. The other dream is that of the Three Fates responsible for spinning human destinies.²⁷ Kofman notes that Freud gives the mother figure power over life and death in this dream as well:

The dream of the Three Fates thus identifies the Mother with the Nurse, with the Seductress and with Death, which 'The Theme of the Three Caskets' much later (1913) would call 'the three inevitable relations that a man has with a woman--the woman who bears him, the woman who is his mate and the woman who destroys him; or the three forms taken by the figure of the mother in the course of a man's life--the mother herself, the beloved one who is chosen after her pattern, and lastly the Mother Earth who receives him once more.'²⁸

Both Freud's dreams and what is known of his relationships with women seem to corroborate the hypothesis that he viewed women as remote and enigmatic, and that the figure of the mother wielded considerable psychological power over him. If correct, this hypothesis can perhaps help explain Freud's reluctance to acknowledge the desire for gender reversal when it occurred in his male clients. To do so would have stirred up issues he may have had with women, and

²⁶Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams (1900)," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 4 (1976), 740-741.

²⁷Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," 294-299.

²⁸Kofman, 75.

particularly with his mother. These issues may have included fear of the control Freud felt his mother had over his life.

Perhaps psychoanalytic thought after Freud can also help illuminate Freud's own issues with his mother, and his failure to verbalize male envy of female functions. Two thinkers who might offer assistance in this regard are Melanie Klein and Dorothy Dinnerstein.

Klein was a contemporary of Freud who indirectly took issue with some of his theories on childhood development. For example, Klein theorizes that the Oedipal phase develops much earlier than Freud had supposed, and that initially, it describes the infant's relationship with its mother. In addition, Klein argues that the mother, not the father, is seen by the child as the first castrator.²⁹

Klein hypothesizes that an infant comes into the world with feelings of both love and hate towards its mother, or the "object" of its first attentions. She believes these feelings are innate, however, she also feels they are exacerbated by the infant's experiences of frustration and deprivation at the breast. The infant's hostility towards its mother, according to Klein, is manifested in terms of sadistic and persecutory phantasies.³⁰ She writes:

²⁹Melanie Klein, "The Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict," in The Selected Melanie Klein, ed. Juliet Mitchell (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1986), 74.

³⁰Klein's use of the spelling "phantasy," rather than "fantasy," indicates for her the unconscious nature of these desires (from Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism

Now, the earliest phase of human relationship is one dominated by oral-sadistic urges.³¹

In particular, for Klein, the infant's world is dominated by a "breast" and a "belly:" the breast which is its source of nurturance (or deprivation) and the belly from which it came.³² In Klein's view, these two body parts both are dangerous to the infant and are endangered by it:

In the earliest reality of the child it is no exaggeration to say that the world is a breast and a belly which is filled with dangerous objects, dangerous because of the child's own impulse to attack them.³³

Specifically, Klein's description of the infant's sadistic feelings towards its mother's belly is expressed in metaphors of oral and tactile aggression. She states:

In the very first months of the baby's existence it has sadistic impulses directed, not only against its mother's breast, but also against the inside of her body: scooping it out, devouring the contents, destroying it by every means which sadism can suggest.³⁴

Klein states that at approximately six months of age, the infant reaches what she labels the "paranoid-schizoid" position. In this stage, the internalized breast is split

[New York: Vintage Books, 1974], 351).

³¹Klein, "The Psychotherapy of the Psychoses," in Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945, 233.

³²The infant is aware that her or his brothers and sisters also come from this same belly.

³³Klein, "The Psychotherapy of the Psychoses," 233.

³⁴Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States," in Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945, 262.

into a "good" and "bad" object--or, the nurturing breast and the breast which fails to be there for the infant when it is hungry. Later, at about eighteen months of age, the infant begins to be able to integrate the breast as a whole object, one that has good and bad aspects. Klein indicates that at this point in its development, the infant also begins to integrate the mother as a whole object, and not just as a breast. Klein calls this stage the "depressive" position. The depressive position, in her view, is marked by guilt for what the infant fears it has done to the mother in phantasy, and by its attempt to make "reparation" to her for possible inflicted harm. Klein acknowledges this shift as a necessary part of healthy childhood development:

I believe this capacity to regain the split-off parts of the personality to be a pre-condition for normal development. This implies that splitting is to some extent overcome during the depressive position and that repression of impulses and phantasies gradually takes its place.³⁵

Klein's work suggests that to a certain degree every infant feels hostility, envy, and sadism towards its mother during the early stages of life. Her work indicates the extent to which the mother, based on the power of the breast to grant or withhold nurturance, is an awesome and terrifying figure to the child. Using Kleinian theory, it might be hypothesized that perhaps Freud harbored some hostility

³⁵Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," in Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963, 89-90.

towards his mother, or that, even as an adult, he found her awesome and powerful. If so, his failure to account for gender reversal in men may be due to his reluctance to give women any more power than they already have as mothers. Klein's work also suggests that men may desire to possess maternal functions--particularly lactation--in reaction to the early memory of being beholden to these functions as infants.

Dorothy Dinnerstein extends Klein's work into the realm of social relations. Using Kleinian notions of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, Dinnerstein speculates on the reasons for men's domination and women's subjection in North American society. These reasons, in her view, have to do with the fact that women are by and large the primary caretakers of small children.³⁶

Dinnerstein argues that excluding women from childrearing practices results in both boys and girls permanently sidestepping the task of working through the persecutory and depressive anxieties described by Klein. She asserts that when adults, individuals retain their infantile sense of the mother figure as "engulfing" and "nebulously overwhelming."³⁷ Girls and boys, in Dinnerstein's view, deal with this situation in different ways. In order to avoid the pain

³⁶Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur. Sexual Arrangements and the Human Malaise.*

³⁷From Janet Sayers, *Sexual Contradictions. Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism* (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1986), 57.

involved in separating from their mothers, girls grow up to be dependent on men. In particular, they choose not to undergo the process of forging a separate feminine identity, and instead, like their mothers, accept the reign of male authority. Boys grow up, on the other hand, to feel vindictive towards women, and in turn seek vengeance for being subject to the female will in childhood. Male vengeance, according to Dinnerstein, is expressed in patriarchal tyranny and authoritativeness.³⁸

If Dinnerstein is correct, oppression and subjection of the overall female sex is one expression of the hostility men feel towards their mothers. Perhaps another expression of male hostility towards maternal figures is gender reversal --the attempt to appropriate feared maternal power. It might be speculated that in addition to envy, the Vatican's continued prohibition of women clergy may be due to fear of women's power, and particularly of the power associated with female physiological processes. Gudorf also comes this conclusion:

In the Catholic Church women are excluded from priesthood because priests operate within the sacramental system as symbols of the ability of men to be life-givers. Perhaps the exclusion of women is rooted in a fear of the power of women. The power of women emanates from their bodily and familial functions: their ability to bear children, to feed and nurture children, to mature in obvious physical stages, to nurse and comfort the dying, to forgive and be reconciled with, and to mate and begin the cycle

³⁸Dinnerstein, 163, 177.

again. Fear of women's power leads men to take on in symbolic ways these powerful functions of women.³⁹

Thus, it seems two possible psychological reasons for gender reversal in the Eucharist are men's envy of women's physiological abilities, and their fear of women's power.⁴⁰

³⁹Gudorf, 302.

⁴⁰It is interesting to note that two conversations with Episcopal women indicate these reasons might be plausible in the Episcopal faith as well. One Episcopal laywoman, for example, states: "Sometimes, when I get really angry, I think the root of all this [men's objections to women priests] is that men do not want women to have the things that they have, and they base that on a God who is a man. If they were to accept that God could be anything else, it would mean losing the privileges they have had for centuries;" personal conversation, Jean Pedderson (Chicago, Ill.: 11 July 1988). A woman priest had the following observation to make: "The reason, I think, is all this deep stuff about the difference between men and women, and the terror that gets attached to anything that's female. In The Women's Room, for example, they wouldn't let the women into Widener Library at Harvard because they might leave big clots of blood on the floor. I think that's part of it. What are they going to do when we're bleeding? We're going to bleed all over them! It's the taboo about being in contact with menstruating women...Having women priests brings up all this archaic stuff about the power of women. People like Daly are absolutely right about what misogyny is about--it's about women's power. It's connected with the ability to bear life, the ability to survive, and mind/body dualisms--where the body is outrageous, uncontrolled. Women represent that. I don't think most people would agree with me, because most of us are unreconstructed liberals when it comes to these things;" personal conversation, Ellen Wondra. Wondra also relates an incident which suggests certain Episcopal men's anxiety about gender issues. She had had a confrontation with a male clergy friend of hers, in which he had expressed the following constellation of feelings: "I cannot stand it if you are ordained, because it calls into question everything I'm doing with my life. Because if you can do it, then what does it mean that I as a man can do it?...I'm already acting like my mother--I run around on Sundays in this dress! How do I know who I am as a man if you can do this?" personal conversation, Ellen Wondra. Several priests also relate incidents of parishioners (men and women) who left the church rather than

The psychoanalytic approaches I have used in this chapter suggest that the desire to be the opposite sex is "natural" --in women it may be expressed as penis envy, while in men one manifestation may be envy of female breasts and genitalia, and the wish to give birth and suckle infants. I have also cited theorists who suggest that current childrearing practices cause the figure of the mother to be placed in a position of dominance over small children. This position may result in mothers being viewed as fearsome and powerful by their offspring, and may lead to men's desire to appropriate maternal functions when boys grow up.⁴¹

Hence, one way in which psychoanalytic thought contributes to the debate over women's ordination is to hypothesize underlying motivations for the Vatican's predominant concern over gender. Another way it can contribute is to speculate on possible changes in the nature and experience of the Eucharist if women were ordained. In the next chapter, I will use psychoanalytic theory to further discussion on the hypotheses made in Chapter Three using feminist theological study. Thus, I will investigate

take the Eucharist from a woman. The reasons the parishioners gave were not always clear--one priest indicated he thought there was a good deal of "fear of anticipation" on the part of worshippers--anxiety around what the experience might be like. Personal conversation, Mike Russell (Chicago, Ill.: 2 February 1989).

⁴¹Women, alternatively, may not experience the same desire to dominate men as adults, in part because, as mothers, they will dominate them.

psychoanalytic perspectives on sexual difference, a possible relation between maleness and sacrifice, and potential changes in the qualities of the Eucharist if the ritual were to be celebrated by women.

CHAPTER FIVE
PSYCHOANALYTIC UNDERSTANDINGS OF GENDER RE-REVERSAL
IN THE EUCHARIST

Investigating Psychoanalytic Perspectives on
Sexual Difference

In Chapter Three I used theological study to hypothesize a possible correlation between maleness and the eucharistic doctrine of sacrifice. I made the observation that sacrificial theology may have developed alongside women's gradual exclusion from administering the Eucharist in the early church. I pointed out anthropological studies which indicated a possible connection among sacrifice, maleness, and notions of hierarchy. I also used feminist theology to entertain the possibility that a gynocentric--or woman-centered--theology of the Eucharist would be less sacrificially oriented. I suggested that a more gynocentric perspective would in turn highlight nurturing and connective elements already present in the ritual, and would enhance metaphors of being fed and sustained by God. I speculated as well that female celebrants would open "cracks" in the predominantly masculine iconography characteristic of Catholic ritual and doctrine, particularly in the form of alternative Christologies and feminine images of divinity. In this

chapter, I will show how psychoanalytic theory can augment and deepen my previous theological discussion of gender re-reversal in the Eucharist.

Before beginning investigation of gender re-reversal, it is important to look at various psychoanalytic positions on the origin and nature of differences between the sexes.¹ Understanding these positions will lay a psychoanalytic foundation for studying the impact of women celebrants in the Catholic church. Psychoanalysts generally take one of three perspectives on questions pertaining to gender acquisition: 1)males and females are innately different, 2)males and females are not innately different, however, they develop differently due to their anatomy and constitution, and 3)males and females are not innately different, however, they develop differently due to differences in socialization processes imposed by parents and society. In this section, I will discuss possible implications of each of these perspectives for gender re-reversal in the Eucharist.

French feminist psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray implies that males and females are inherently different. Hélène Cixous at times also infers there are innate distinctions between the sexes. Irigaray and Cixous both claim that women's differences from men give them power to help overturn male domination in society. Irigaray, for example, states that

¹I refer here to other than strictly anatomical differences.

women's reproductive organs--vaginal and uterine movements in particular--can serve as models for women's language, which in turn will subvert patriarchy.² Cixous, alternatively, centers upon "feminine writing," which she bases on the body's drives. Cixous is particularly interested in the gestational drive.³ Similar to Irigaray and her notion of women's language, Cixous asserts that women's writing has the power to bring about constructive social change. Unlike Irigaray, however, Cixous is less definite about restricting feminine writing to solely female physiological processes.⁴

It is significant that both Irigaray and Cixous have been criticized by feminist political theorists on the grounds of "biological essentialism." Their critics assert that Irigaray and Cixous ground women's qualities in female reproductive biology--which they claim is a dangerous political position. Irigaray is more often accused of essentialism than Cixous. Social theorist Chris Weedon, in a book about feminism and poststructuralist thought, offers an explanation of some of

²Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One" and "When Our Lips Speak Together," in This Sex Which Is Not One, 23-33, 205-218. In making this claim, Irigaray seems to exclude men from being able to take an active part in a feminist social movement.

³In The Newly Born Woman, Cixous writes: "Let's not repress something as simple as wanting to live itself. Oral drive, vocal drive, all drives are good forces, and among them the gestational drive--just like wanting to write: a desire to live oneself within, wanting the belly, the tongue, the blood" (90).

⁴Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 68.

the social dangers of centering on female sexuality:

While many women may wish to see the emergence of a female sexuality which is not constructed by and in the interests of men, to make such a sexuality the basis for women's language is politically dangerous, since it reduces women to a version of their sexuality. This theory marks one possible conclusion to the psychoanalytic assumption that language is motivated by sexual desire and that subjectivity, acquired in language, is no more than an effect of sexual identity.⁵

In addition, Weedon explains her preference for Cixous' thought to Irigaray's in serving the interests of the women's movement:

On the one hand, in a move into essentialism, similar to Irigaray's, she [Cixous] links feminine libido with the female sexual organs. On the other hand, Cixous gestures towards an historical perspective in which both feminine and masculine libidos are constructed in particular but not necessarily universal ways under patriarchy...The concern with real power relations implicit in this move aligns Cixous more closely with feminism as a political movement.⁶

In terms of the Eucharist, Irigaray's thought helps explore a possible erotic component in the Eucharist if celebrated by women. For Irigaray, female language emerges from the pre-Oedipal period of development. This language is based, in her view, on female bodily sensations--particularly reproductive processes. Irigaray argues that there is a flow and a connectedness to female language based on the cyclic

⁵Ibid., 65.

⁶Ibid., 68.

flowing characteristic of female sexuality.⁷ As well, both female language and female sexuality, for Irigaray, have a multiplicity of expressions:

So woman does not have a sex organ? She has at least two of them, but they are not identifiable as ones. Indeed, she has many more. Her sexuality, always at least double, goes even further: it is plural... Indeed woman's pleasure does not have to choose between clitoral activity and vaginal passivity, for example. The pleasure of the vaginal caress does not have to be substituted for that of the clitoral caress. They each contribute, irreplaceably, to woman's pleasure.⁸

Applied to the Eucharist, Irigaray's thought suggests that perhaps the ritual can function as a connective, even erotic medium between worshippers and divine. By making the erotic the basis for feminine expression, Irigaray's thought challenges the traditional separation of sexuality and sacred.⁹ Her work seems to indicate that the erotic--because a manifestation of intimacy and connectedness--need not be excluded as a possible feeling a worshipper might have while participating in the Eucharist. Her work also suggests that the erotic need not be excluded from a theological

⁷Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," 28-30.

⁸Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," 28.

⁹Frequently women are in turn associated with sexuality, or with pleasures of the flesh. See, for example, Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 17; Bernard P. Prusak, "Woman: Seductive Siren and Source of Sin? Pseudipigraphal Myth and Christian Origins," in Religion and Sexism, ed. Rosemary R. Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 89-116; Rosemary R. Ruether, New Woman/New Earth. Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 17-18.

understanding of the nature of the ritual.¹⁰

It is interesting to note that while Cixous is accused by some scholars of biological essentialism, others claim her work makes an argument for the potentiality of men, in time, to access their own "feminine"¹¹ natures. Cixous indicates that both men and women have a latent bisexual disposition. In this respect, she concurs with Freud. Because Freud was the first theorist to propose bisexuality, it may be helpful to review his understanding of it. Freud seems to fall into category two of the psychoanalytic perspectives on sexual difference; that is, he believed boys and girls initially go through the same stages of development, but that at a certain time their development inevitably becomes different.

Freud postulates that males and females possess bisexual dispositions from birth. Bisexuality for Freud has several consequences. One is children's possessing erotic feelings for both males and females. Another is children's having male and female psychological characteristics.¹² Freud believed

¹⁰It is interesting that Merlin Stone, in When God Was a Woman (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), speculates that the Eucharist may have originated from an ancient fertility rite, centered around communing with the goddess Hathor (216, 220).

¹¹"Feminine" is defined by Cixous as intuitive, relational, giving.

¹²For example, Freud associated passivity with females, and activity with males. In "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 7, he writes: "It is essential to understand clearly that the concepts 'masculine' and 'feminine,' whose meaning seems so unambiguous to ordinary people, are among the most confused that occur in

that when the Oedipus complex emerges, bisexuality is generally repressed. Nevertheless, he felt this disposition remained an important part of the human psyche.¹³

In addition to their bisexual nature, both boys and girls, according to Freud, go through identical developmental phases up until the Oedipal stage. Toril Moi acknowledges this understanding of Freud's in Sexual/Textual Politics:

For Freud there is no sexual difference in the pre-Oedipal stage: through the oral, anal, and phallic phases, the little girl is no different than the little boy. It is at the moment of the Oedipal crisis that the crucial change in the little girl's orientation occurs: whereas the little boy continues to take his mother as his object, the little girl has to turn from her pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother and take her father as love-object instead.¹⁴

Thus, it seems that for Freud, the pre-Oedipal period is

science. It is possible to distinguish at least three uses. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' are used sometimes in the sense of activity and passivity, sometimes in a biological, and sometimes, again, in a sociological sense. The first of these three meanings is the essential one and the most serviceable in psychoanalysis. When, for instance, libido was described in the text above as being 'masculine,' the word was being used in this sense, for an instinct is always active even when it has a passive aim in view...Such observation shows that in human beings pure masculinity or femininity is not to be found in either a psychological or a biological sense. Every individual on the contrary displays a mixture of the character-traits belonging to his [sic] own and to the opposite sex; and he shows a combination of activity and passivity whether or not these last character-traits tally with his biological ones" (141-142).

¹³Freud, "Three Essays," 52. Yet "inversion," or homosexuality, is for Freud the result of a "sexual aberration," or abnormal sexual development. See Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.

¹⁴Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics (London and New York: Methuen and Co., 1985), 132-133.

experienced basically the same way for girls and boys.¹⁵ With the onset of the Oedipal stage, however, Freud believed girls' and boys' psychological development significantly diverges. Boys experience the Oedipal drama in terms of conflictual feelings towards their fathers, while girls, for Freud, feel penis envy and hostility towards their mothers. Freud implies that male and female anatomical differences ultimately control acquisition of gender identity.

In terms of the Eucharist, Freudian thought points out possible origins of such themes as aggression, reverence, and sacrifice present in the ritual when celebrated by men. His work does not, however, directly address ways female celebrants might affect the theology or experience of the sacrament. From Freud, it can be speculated that whereas male celebrants evoke worshippers' interactions with their fathers, female celebrants would call up memory of maternal relationships. His work indicates there would be differences in these two types of relationships¹⁶, however, it does not specify what the differences might be with respect to the Eucharist.

Similar to Freud, several psychoanalysts concur that the pre-Oedipal period is lacking in sexual differentiation. They

¹⁵If girls' penis envy exists during this period, it seems to be less important than it is during the Oedipal stage.

¹⁶One difference is that daughters feel hostility towards their mothers because their mothers lack a penis, while sons love their mothers but will not act on that love--due to their fear of castration at the hands of their fathers.

do not agree with Freud, however, that males and females initially develop differently due to distinct biological makeups. Julia Kristeva, for example, describes the pre-Oedipal period as lacking in perceived differences between the sexes. Kristeva indicates that any strengthening of pre-Oedipal memory, however, would contribute to dissolution of gender distinctions later on:

...Kristeva makes quite it clear that like Freud and Klein she sees the pre-Oedipal mother as a figure that encompasses both masculinity and femininity. This fantasmic figure, which looms as large for baby boys as for baby girls, cannot...be reduced to an example of 'femininity,' for the simple reason that opposition between masculine and feminine does not exist in pre-Oedipality...Any strengthening of the semiotic, which knows no sexual difference, must therefore lead to a weakening of traditional gender divisions, and not at all to a reinforcement of traditional notions of 'femininity.'¹⁷

Kristeva opposes Freud's notion that gender identity is acquired through biological means. In this respect she falls into category three of the psychoanalytic perspectives mentioned on sexual difference. That is, Kristeva would argue that males and females are not innately different, however, that they become viewed as different because of their "positions" in society.¹⁸ Thus, for Kristeva, there is no such

¹⁷Moi, 165.

¹⁸The nature of feminist practice, according to Kristeva, can be found in identifying with and participating in marginal modes of signification. Moi, in Sexual/Textual Politics, writes: "Kristeva sees the ideological and philosophical basis for modern linguistics as fundamentally authoritarian and oppressive...The way out of this impasse, she argues, lies in

thing as an "essential" womanhood--not even a repressed one.¹⁹

Similar to Kristeva, Cixous also hypothesizes that traditional gender divisions would weaken through a strengthening of pre-Oedipal memory. Like Kristeva and Freud, Cixous asserts that there is lack of sexual differentiation for girls and boys during the pre-Oedipal period. Unlike Freud, however, Cixous seems to indicate that sexual differentiation is not a result of individual biology.²⁰

Cixous contrasts the pre-Oedipal with the Oedipal stages, during which she claims "binary oppositions" emerge. Binary oppositions, for Cixous, consist of categories of thought that

a shift away from the Saussurian concept of langue towards a re-establishment of linguistics away from its fascination with language as a monolithic, homogeneous structure and towards an interest in language as a heterogeneous process. This will only happen, however, if one avoids defining the 'speaking subject' as any kind of transcendental or Cartesian ego...For Kristeva, the speaking subject is posited as the 'place, not only of structure and its repeated transformation, but especially, of its loss, its outlay.' Language then, for her, is a complex signifying process rather than a monolithic system" (152).

Moi also explains the value of Kristeva's position on identity to feminist political theory: "Kristeva's emphasis on femininity as patriarchal construct enables feminists to counter all forms of biologicistic attacks from the defenders of phallogentrism. To posit all women as necessarily feminine and all men as necessarily masculine is precisely the move that enables the patriarchal powers to define, not femininity, but all women as marginal to the symbolic order, and to society...Kristeva's emphasis on marginality allows us to view this repression of the feminine in terms of positionality rather than of essences. What is perceived as marginal at any given time depends on the position one occupies" (166).

¹⁹Weedon, 69.

²⁰Rather, it comes about through constructs which emerge in the Oedipal period, as explained in the following paragraph.

are assumed to be opposites--such as head/heart, logos/pathos, matter/spirit. Male/female, according to Cixous, is the ultimate binary opposition. She maintains that these categories are actually part of a continuum, but are distorted by Oedipal experiences of separation and loss.²¹ Evoking pre-Oedipal memories, in her view, would help dissolve binary oppositions in our culture, because it would mean remembering a time when they did not exist.²²

Cixous' thought can illuminate the possibility for women celebrants to break down certain dichotomies often experienced in the Eucharist. For example, theologically women have traditionally been associated with matter, the earth, and sin.²³ Thus, women at the altar would juxtapose historically opposed concepts in religion: matter/spirit, sacred/profane, earthly/transcendent.²⁴ It might be speculated that in their taking on a traditionally male role, women clergy would also challenge the opposition male/female. When gender roles such as these begin to cross, it seems gender distinctions themselves will begin to blur, and perhaps will with time fall away.

²¹Here Cixous is referring to separation and loss of the pre-Oedipal mother. This notion will be discussed further in the next sections.

²²ibid, 104-105.

²³Ruether, New Woman/New Earth, 17-18.

²⁴Eleanor McLaughlin, "On Language, Liturgy and Gender: A Feminist Hermeneutic," lecture given at Queen's School of Theology (Kingston, Ontario: 2 March 1988).

Thus, while Kristeva's and Cixous' thought can be used to hypothesize lessening of gender distinctions as a result of gender re-reversal, the work of Freud and Irigaray infers that female celebrants would by their nature significantly alter the nature of eucharistic theology. Irigaray's thought, for example, can be used to suggest that women celebrants would heighten erotic aspects of the ritual. Freud's theories, on the other hand, allow the hypothesis that male celebrants contribute to a eucharistic theology based on aggressive Oedipal desires.

Psychoanalysis can be used to further explore the relation between gender and the Eucharist. The next two sections will investigate the following two ideas: 1) that maleness and sacrificial theology are linked, and 2) that, if celebrated by women, pre-Oedipal memory would alter worshippers' experience of the Eucharist. Freudian, Lacanian, and Kristevan theory will be used to facilitate exploration of the origins of sacrifice in early childhood; in turn, object relations, Kleinian, and Kristevan thought will be employed to better understand the impact of the pre-Oedipal period on the nature and experience of the Eucharist.

Speculating the Origins of Sacrifice in Early Childhood

Theological study indicated that sacrificial theology may have emerged simultaneously with women's exclusion from administering the early Eucharist, in approximately the third

century A.D. It also suggested the hierarchical nature of this sacrament may have developed at about this time. I propose that psychoanalytic thought can further theological discussion on the relation between gender and sacrifice. It can do so through study of early childhood, and, in particular, through investigation of gender acquisition in the pre-Oedipal and Oedipal periods of development.²⁵

Freud became quite interested in the origins of rites of sacrifice. His interest led him to hypothesize the existence of thanatos, or the death instinct. For Freud, the death instinct is the origin of all human aggression. Investigation of the death instinct thus seems a suitable place to begin my psychoanalytic exploration of possible origins of sacrifice in childhood.

Freud's first attempt to describe thanatos is found in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920)." In this essay, Freud is interested in explaining certain actions which transcend interpretation by solely the pleasure and reality principles. One example of this type of action, for Freud, was the compulsion of some of his patients to repeat painful behavior in therapy. He hypothesized that in these cases, there seemed to be a desire to return to an earlier state of things--an attempt to return to the inorganic. He called this desire the

²⁵If gender differences are innate, they will begin to manifest themselves during the pre-Oedipal or Oedipal period.

"conservative nature of living substance."²⁶

Later, Freud came to associate the death instinct with the Oedipus complex, and with the formation of the superego. Sociologist Robert Bocock explains this use of the death instinct in Freud's work:

The superego uses energy from the death instincts to turn on the ego with its criticisms of the inadequacies of the person given the standards of the ego-ideal, both the positive ones of what the ego should be, and negative ones about what the ego should not do, and desire to do.²⁷

Bocock notes that Freud also used the notion of the death instinct in "Totem and Taboo," to explain the emotional ambivalence--encompassing both sexual and aggressive feelings --contained by rituals and taboos.²⁸ Christ's sacrifice on the cross, for example, was for Freud an attempt to get rid of guilt brought about by aggressive instincts turned on the ego.²⁹

It seems significant that Freud makes links among the death instinct, the Oedipus complex, and the formation of the superego. It is also interesting to note that when the child breaks away from its mother and turns instead to its father as love object, it is the castration complex which, in Freud's view, propels the child to change its love object. The child

²⁶Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 73.

²⁷Bocock, 78.

²⁸Bocock, 87.

²⁹Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents (1930)," in The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 12 (1985), 329.

fears castration at the hands of his father if he³⁰ continues to identify with his mother. Freud believed this fear was coupled by the child's horror at discovering his mother was herself already castrated.³¹

If there is a connection between aggression and gender, perhaps it lies in the castration complex, and in the fact that this complex is resolved differently in boys and girls. Freud maintained that girls and boys were affected by the castration complex in unique ways. Boys, in his view, are propelled out of the Oedipus complex by the castration complex. Girls, however, for Freud are propelled into the Oedipal drama by this complex--i.e., by the knowledge that they are already castrated.

Freud's castration complex requires boys to separate from their mothers, while girls do not feel the same pressure to do so. Thus, it can be speculated that for boys, castration implies separation, and loss of the mother. For a male child, the pre-Oedipal connection to the mother is forever lost to him when he makes the switch to his father. This loss can in some sense, perhaps, be seen as a "sacrifice"--sacrifice of the mother for the father. Girls, alternatively, are not required to sacrifice their mothers the same way that boys are. While girls in Freud's schema adopt the father as love

³⁰This model applies to male children only. I have shown that Freud developed a different model for girls.

³¹Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," 318.

object, they do not identify with masculinity, or with the Oedipal father, to the same extent as boys.

Could this be the origin of sacrifice? It is possible that the brutality and aggressiveness of the boy's initial separation from the mother is what is repeated again and again in rituals of sacrifice. Or, it could be that men defend against the pain of this initial separation in ways that approximate sacrificial rituals. In other words, men's attempts to rigidly separate clean from unclean, order from disorder, may be disguised efforts to defend against the archaic mother, and the connection they once knew with her.

Support for this last hypothesis is offered by two of the French feminist psychoanalytic theorists. Helene Cixous, for example, argues that binary oppositions are an illustration of the kind of defensive categorization that men erect, and that this categorization is essentially a defense against castration. She calls the masculine libidinal economy the "Realm of the Proper:"

Proper-property-appropriate: signalling an emphasis on self-identity, self-aggrandizement and arrogant dominance, these works aptly characterize the logic of the proper according to Cixous. The insistence of the proper, on a proper return, leads to the masculine obsession with classification, systematization and hierarchization.³²

Male obsession with the proper is, according to Cixous, the result of men's fear of castration:

One realizes that the Realm of the Proper is erected

³²From *Moi*, 110-111.

on the basis of a fear which as a matter of fact is typically masculine: a fear of expropriation, of separation, of the loss of the attribute. In other words: the impact of the threat of castration.³³

One could hypothesize that the classification and systematization which takes place in sacrificial rituals is an example of the kind of phenomenon described by Cixous. In the Eucharist, for example, only ordained priests are allowed to celebrate the mass. In addition, only men are permitted to be ordained to the priesthood. The elements and utensils are prepared in a certain way, they are kept in a particular place, and special words and gestures are necessary for proper consecration and distribution. Any deviation of these procedures is considered taboo.

It seems that in equating castration with loss and separation, Cixous is using the term in a metaphorical sense --castration symbolizes not only loss of the penis, but loss of the mother, as a result of the Oedipus complex. The metaphorical aspects of the castration and Oedipus complexes are also a focus for French psychoanalysts Jacques Lacan's and Julia Kristeva's work. Thus, a foray into their thought will help investigate these metaphors in greater depth.

Exploring Lacanian and Kristevan Understandings
of Separation and Loss

Lacan re-interpreted Freud's theories on the Oedipus and castration complexes in terms of symbolization and language.

³³From Moi, 111.

For Lacan, initially the child exists in a state of identification with its mother. He calls this stage the mirror stage. In the mirror stage, according to Lacan, the mother "grants" an image to her child. This image gives the child its first sense of a coherent identity, and its first sense of its own body as a totality.³⁴ The mirror stage is also, in his view, the infant's first articulation of itself as an "I."

Lacan argues that the mirror stage, however, is fundamentally alienating for the infant. He states that essentially, it consists of a series of narcissistic identifications--of the infant with its mother. Benvenuto and Kennedy provide the following understanding of Lacan on this stage of development:

He [the infant] only sees his [sic] form as more or less total and unified in an external image, in a virtual, alienated, ideal unity that cannot actually be touched.³⁵

Lacan states that the mirror stage necessarily comes to an end with the onset of the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex, in his view, fundamentally emerges as a result of desire. From birth, the infant wishes to be everything the mother desires it to be. The infant discovers, however, that

³⁴Anika Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, trans. David Macey (London, Boston, and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 177.

³⁵Rice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy, The Works of Jacques Lacan. An Introduction (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 55.

this is an impossible goal; the infant discovers that the mother has another desire besides itself--the desire for the father, or the "phallus."³⁶ As a result of the mother's primary desire for the phallus instead of the infant, the infant feels "castrated." It feels compelled to renounce its desire for the mother, and--because the mother desires the phallus--it in turn shifts its desire to the phallus also.³⁷

Hence, according to Lacan, at the time of the Oedipal crisis, the father splits up the mirror-stage unity between mother and infant, and prevents the infant from further access to the mother or her body. Thus, one consequence of the resolution of the Oedipus complex, for Lacan, is that the child becomes separated from and loses access to the mother. From then on, desire for the mother, and imaginary unity with her, must be repressed. This repression, in his view, is evidenced in the child's acquisition of language. Lacan believed that speech essentially expresses lack--in particular, lack of unity with the mother.³⁸

Similar to Freud, Lacan initially developed his theories

³⁶Again, phallus was Lacan's metaphorical equivalent of penis. However, the term encompassed much more than male anatomy. The phallus, for Lacan, also stood for culture, language, power--everything brought about by the symbolic, or Oedipal, order.

³⁷Conversations with Caryl Steffens, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, were instrumental in my coming to understand Lacan's theories about the phallus and desire. See also Lemaire, 82-83.

³⁸Moi, 99-100.

on the Oedipus and castration complexes in terms of male psychology. Lacan believed that girls went through an Oedipal experience similar to that of boys, however--like Freud--he was unclear as to how they resolved it. Jacqueline Rose, for example, has observed that Lacan really had no place for "woman" in his theoretical constructs. Woman, for Lacan, is described only in relation to man. In relation to man, Rose states, woman stands for both difference and loss. She represents what man is not, as well as the jouissance he must renounce.³⁹

Rose's understanding of Lacan suggests that perhaps the little boy's fear of castration--his fear of separation and loss--is actually an expression of his earlier pain around first losing his mother. This notion lends further support to the hypothesis proposed earlier--that sacrificial rituals, for men, essentially defend against the pain of maternal separation. Still additional support for this hypothesis is found in the work of Julia Kristeva, in her theories on Old and New Testament sacrifice and taboos. Kristeva theorizes that sacrificial practices originally evolved out of the male fear of sinking back into fused identity with the mother. As a result of that fear, she states, over time men constructed rituals around purity, defilement, order, and disorder. Kristeva points out that in societies in which there is

³⁹Jacques Lacan, Feminine Sexuality, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1982), 48-49.

ritualization of defilement, there is also a strong concern with separating the sexes, and domination of men over women.⁴⁰

In another essay, Kristeva describes the "symbolic" order--the Oedipal order which determines culture and society⁴¹--as a sacrificial order. She writes:

The new generation of women is showing that its major social concern has become the sociosymbolic contract as a sacrificial contract. If anthropologists and psychologists, for at least a century, have not stopped insisting on this in their attention to 'savage thought,' wars, the discourse of dreams, or writers, women are today affirming--and we consequently face a mass phenomenon--that they are forced to experience this sacrificial contract against their will.⁴²

In this essay, Kristeva again equates sacrifice with separation from the mother.⁴³ Castration, in her view, represents the maternal separation required by entering the symbolic world of language.⁴⁴ She indicates that women are struggling to find ways to exist without living sacrificially. One area in which they are having some success, in her view, is in religion. In religious practices, Kristeva states, women are providing "representations" of themselves--and thus are providing ideologies which re-find the maternal. She

⁴⁰Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 70.

⁴¹The symbolic is a concept Kristeva adopts from Lacan.

⁴²Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 7 (Autumn 1981), 25.

⁴³Ibid., 24.

⁴⁴Ibid., 23.

writes:

The fact that this new ideology has affinities, often revindicated by its creators, with so-called matriarchal beliefs (in other words, those beliefs characterizing matrilinear societies) should not overshadow its radical novelty. This ideology seems to me to be part of the broader antisacrificial current which is animating our culture...⁴⁵

Kristeva is uncertain whether even women can escape existing by some sort of sacrificial contract. She speculates that living in the symbolic order may always require sacrifice.⁴⁶ Her uncertainty leads to the question: would women be any less likely to promote a theology of sacrifice than men?⁴⁷

Hence, a psychoanalytic understanding of the origins of sacrifice seems to rivet around the castration complex, and the different ways this complex is resolved by girls and boys.

⁴⁵Ibid., 33.

⁴⁶Yet, for Kristeva, living entirely in the imaginary, or stage of pre-Oedipal unity with the mother, can only lead to psychosis. See Desire in Language, 125, 139, 154.

⁴⁷In Tales of Love, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (Columbia University Press, 1987), Kristeva seems to modify somewhat her views on the connotations of religious sacrifice. In this work, she equates Christ's sacrifice with a necessary abolition of the "Self," and with a "homologization" of Christ and the believer to the "Name of the Father." The Passion, according to Kristeva, is evidence of the Father's love, and is not a sacrifice stemming out of the law of social contract (140-146). In Black Sun, she states that through the ritual of the Eucharist, sacrifice is destroyed and superseded (131).

It is also interesting to observe that in her book In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York and Guildford, Surrey: Columbia University Press, 1987), Kristeva correlates transference love--in her view a necessary part of the psychoanalytic relationship--with religious faith (52).

If sacrifice is indeed a result of male fear of separation, and separation an inevitable element in boys' resolution of their Oedipus complex, then it would seem that sacrificial theology would always be a part of a male-dominated Eucharist. If maternal separation, on the other hand, is not an unchangeable aspect of boys' psychological development, then perhaps the possibility exists for re-envisioning even a male-oriented Eucharist as less sacrificial.

It is interesting to note that while Freudian and Kristevan understandings of the Eucharist take into account its sacrificial aspects, certain other qualities of the ritual fail to be addressed. These include feelings of being nurtured, "fed," or sustained by God, and a sense of connection with God and community. Perhaps these aspects of the Eucharist can be included by looking at other psychoanalytic developments after Freud.

Whereas Freud views the father figure as the source of religious ideas, other psychoanalytic theorists argue the mother is also important to development of religious beliefs.⁴⁸ In the next section, I will explore the notion that pre-Oedipal concerns are at the base of Oedipal ones, and that the relationship with the mother is also being expressed in worshippers' partaking of the bread and wine in the Eucharist. In my discussion, I will include the work of Klein to

⁴⁸Ana-Maria Rizzuto, Birth of the Living God. See Chapter One, section two.

investigate infant-mother hostility, Kristeva to explore pre-Oedipal "jouissance," and several object relations theorists to look at other types of maternal relationships in the earliest years of life.

Hypothesizing the Effects of Women Celebrants
on Worshippers' Experience of the Eucharist

In addition to its sacrificial aspects, the Eucharist can also be considered a re-enactment of infant-mother feeding. Religious studies scholars Mary Ellen Ross and Cheryl Linn Ross offer support for this hypothesis. As well, they suggest that pre-Oedipal notions of play, creativity, and connection underlie more aggressive motifs in the ritual.⁴⁹ Ross and Ross argue that these notions are not adequately accounted for by a classical Freudian understanding of the Eucharist, and that object relations theory can help address them. Ross and Ross write:

That Father, son, and Holy Spirit are referred to as males may obscure the maternal image; nevertheless many of the themes and issues raised during the mass have relevance to the preoedipal period when interaction between the infant and mother is central.⁵⁰

Ross and Ross conclude that pre-Oedipal issues present in the Eucharist should be given equal weight with Oedipal feelings of anxiety, ambivalence, and aggression which Freud finds in the ritual. In addition, they suggest that object

⁴⁹Ross and Ross, 38.

⁵⁰Ross and Ross, 36.

relations theory be used to extend classical psychoanalysis --enabling a search for both maternal and paternal influences in theology and religion.⁵¹

Kristeva also observes the existence of maternal themes in the Eucharist. For Kristeva, the Eucharist is expressive of pre-Oedipal "heterogeneity."⁵² She states, for example, that in both the Eucharist and in the pre-Oedipal period, themes of "devouring" and "satiating" intermingle. In her view, eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ are psychologically equivalent to "symbolic satiation at the breast of a good mother."⁵³ The sacrament, for Kristeva, is essentially meant to remove guilt for archaic maternal relations.⁵⁴

Kristeva and Ross and Ross "whet the appetite" to further investigate the nature of the pre-Oedipal period, and how the infant-mother relationship might be expressed sacramentally in the Eucharist. It seems the pre-Oedipal period is significant for studying the effects of women celebrants for at least two reasons: 1) because pre-Oedipal emotions and issues often underlie and influence Oedipal ones, and 2) during this period a feminine image--the mother--is primary to the

⁵¹Ross and Ross, 39.

⁵²The notion of "heterogeneity" is mentioned in note 18 of this chapter.

⁵³Kristeva, Powers of Horror, 119.

⁵⁴Kristeva, Powers of Horror, 188.

child's growth and development.

Psychoanalytic theory offers ample support for the above two hypotheses. Object relations theorist D.W. Winnicott, for example, indicates that a "two-body" relationship--between infant and mother or mother-substitute--precedes the "three-body" relationship characteristic of the Oedipal phase. This two-body relationship, according to Winnicott, exists "before any property of the mother has been sorted out and molded into the idea of a father".⁵⁵ Another object relations theorist, W.D. Fairbairn, writes of the Oedipus complex:

...a sufficiently deep analysis...reveals that this situation is built around the figures of an internal exciting mother and an internal rejecting mother.⁵⁶

For Fairbairn, paternal exciting and rejecting objects are partly fused with and superimposed upon maternal exciting and rejecting objects.⁵⁷ According to this perspective, the Oedipus complex at its deepest level revolves around ambivalent feelings towards the mother.⁵⁸

Psychoanalyst Melanie Klein also argues that the Oedipus complex is initially based upon an infant's relationship with its mother. She postulates that this complex begins earlier

⁵⁵Donald W. Winnicott, The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), 29-30.

⁵⁶Fairbairn "Endopsychic Structure Considered in Terms of Object-Relationships (1944)," in An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality (New York: Basic Books, 1952), 124.

⁵⁷Ibid., 121.

⁵⁸Ibid., 124.

than Freud had supposed,⁵⁹ and, similar to Fairbairn, speculates that its deepest source is concern over feared loss of the good maternal object. Klein disagrees with Freud's Oedipal theory that the child turns from mother to father upon discovery of its mother's castration. Rather, in her view, deprivation of the breast is the most fundamental cause of the switch from mother to father as love object.⁶⁰ Penis envy can thus for Klein be traced to breast envy.⁶¹

If it can be assumed with Winnicott, Fairbairn, and Klein that pre-Oedipal issues precede and are the basis for Oedipal ones, it becomes important to attempt to determine what some of those issues are. One reason is that it is very likely these issues would re-emerge when women celebrate the Eucharist. Perhaps one way to begin is to investigate prominent feelings or behavioral patterns that might be evoked during the pre-Oedipal stage. Three such patterns are play/creativity, connection/merging, and fear/anxiety. By exploring each pattern in turn, I propose that the impact of the mother on later adult experiences--including religious ones--can more clearly be understood.

⁵⁹Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict," 83.

⁶⁰Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict," 78.

⁶¹For Klein, penis envy precedes and underlies breast envy. The small infant, according to Klein, first envies the object that provides it with nurturance, and which can also cut off or "castrate" that nurturance. Later, the infant's emotional cathexis becomes focused on the penis, and its possible castration.

It is logical to suppose that a pre-Oedipal pattern of play or creativity is initiated at the mother's breast. Winnicott's work illuminates how such satisfaction of infantile playful and creative urges might come about. He writes, for example, that the first "play at the breast enables the baby to find the mother and to communicate with her."⁶² Without this interaction baby and mother would remain strangers.⁶³ Playful interaction between baby and mother paves the way, in Winnicott's view, for the infant's development of "transitional objects," and for adult creative behavior. In the theoretical "first feed," he states, the creative potential of the infant causes it to hallucinate the "would-be-breast," in response to which the mother provides the breast "more or less in the right place and the right time." Much repeated, this ritual initiates the infant's ability to form illusions. Winnicott indicates that at eight to ten to twelve months, a particular object--the transitional object --comes to replace the infant's illusions.⁶⁴ Transitional objects involve what Winnicott calls an "intermediate" area of experiencing--which he equates with the infant's being lost in the activity of play.⁶⁵

⁶²Donald W. Winnicott, Collected Papers. Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis (New York: Basic Books, 1958), 165.

⁶³Ibid., 165.

⁶⁴Ibid., 223-224.

⁶⁵Ibid., 230, 241.

Transitional objects and play are later important to cultural experience. Winnicott asserts that cultural experience is the adult continuity of the childhood experience of play, and is an extension of transitional phenomena.⁶⁶ An inability to play early in life--due to loss of the mother or her failure to be dependable--results, for Winnicott, in loss of meaningful cultural symbols in adulthood.⁶⁷

Using Winnicott, the Eucharist can be seen as an important cultural extension of early transitional phenomena --in turn a by-product of playful feeding at the breast. Winnicott makes no distinction between male and female infants' relationship with the mother; he seems to suggest that in order for healthy development to occur, both sexes must experience playfulness at the breast. This perspective indicates that one type of pre-Oedipal memory a female celebrant might evoke is early associations of play and creativity.

Another type of pre-Oedipal memory, feelings of infant-mother connectedness, might be experienced as a sense of harmony, or "intense relatedness." Michael Balint, for example, proposes that the infant is born in a state of intense biological and libidinal relatedness to its environment. If infant care is not unnecessarily difficult

⁶⁶Winnicott, Playing and Reality (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1971), 99, 102.

⁶⁷Ibid., 100, 102.

or insensitive, he maintains, parts of the environment retain some of their primary intense cathexis. These parts in turn become primary objects.⁶⁸

The infant's mother, for Balint, is the most important of its primary objects; he states that a bond of "primary love" is normally formed between infant and mother. For Balint, the infant only feels aggressive if the harmony between itself and its primary objects becomes disturbed.⁶⁹ Balint believes that the earliest object relation is a passive one--the infant wants to be loved and satisfied, with no obligation to love in return.⁷⁰

Another way infant-mother connection might be experienced is as a type of ecstasy. Julia Kristeva calls this ecstasy "jouissance"--or a state of simultaneous sexual, spiritual, emotional, and physical connection.⁷¹ Kristeva's notion of jouissance is largely an extension of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's. Her editor Leon Roudiez states of jouissance:

Kristeva gives "jouissance" a meaning closely related to that given the word by Jacques Lacan...What is

⁶⁸Michael Balint, The Basic Fault (London: Tavistock Publications, 1968), 67-68.

⁶⁹Ibid., 68. Balint indicates that the birth trauma--the period during which the infant's harmonious environment inside the womb is disturbed--is the basis for any later aggressive feelings.

⁷⁰Balint, Primary Love and Psychoanalytic Technique (New York: Liveright Publications, 1953), 98-99.

⁷¹Kristeva, Desire in Language, 15-16.

significant is the totality of enjoyment that is covered by the word 'jouissance,' both in common usage and in Lacan... 'jouissance' is sexual, spiritual, physical, conceptual at one and the same... time... In Kristeva's vocabulary, sensual, sexual pleasure is covered by plaisir; 'jouissance' is total joy or ecstasy; also, through the working of the signifier, this implies the presence of meaning, requiring going beyond it.⁷²

Kristeva indicates that expression of jouissance can be found in some types of artistic and literary works. The state has also been described, in her view, by certain Christian mystics. In all cases, she explains, jouissance is experienced in what she calls the pre-Oedipal "semiotic." The semiotic, in her view, in contrast to culture and language, emerges from the relationship between mother and infant. It is prior to language acquisition, and is dependent upon the body's drives.⁷³ Kristeva indicates that this state constitutes a return to primary process, pulsions, and energy. To experience the Kristevan semiotic can mean losing oneself in flux and formlessness.⁷⁴

An important aspect of the semiotic is what Kristeva labels the "chora." Roudiez explains that "chora" means "receptacle," and is a term borrowed from Plato. Plato described the chora as an "invisible and formless being which perceives all things and in some mysterious way partakes of

⁷²Kristeva, Desire in Language, 16.

⁷³Weedon, 161.

⁷⁴Kristeva's semiotic is equivalent to Freud's primary process--and is similar to Lacan's concept of the imaginary. See Anika Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, 60-61.

the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible."⁷⁵ He called it "mother and receptacle to all things"--anterior to any space. One of Kristeva's aims in using the term chora, according to Roudiez, is to remove what Plato saw as "mysterious and "incomprehensible" about it.

Kristeva attempts to do this by equating the chora with modes of signification which exceed rational conscious subjectivity. Weedon and Moi offer some ideas on what these modes might be like. Weedon, for example, describes Kristeva's chora as a site of negativity, which constantly challenges the seemingly unitary subject of the symbolic order.⁷⁶ Moi understands it as an endless flow of pulsions, which stem from dichotomous and heterogeneous anal and oral processes--including life versus death, and introjection versus projection.⁷⁷ Kristeva states that these heterogeneous modes of signification are present in the first "echolalias" of infants--and manifest themselves as rhythms and intonations occurring prior to the formation of phonemes, morphemes, and sentences.⁷⁸

In terms of the Eucharist, Kristevan theory can enable the rite to be envisioned as fostering a greater degree of connection with the holy. With the advent of women

⁷⁵Kristeva, Desire in Language, 6.

⁷⁶Weedon, 70.

⁷⁷Moi, 162, 170.

⁷⁸Kristeva, Desire in Language, 133.

celebrants, perhaps more pre-Oedipal jouissance will be experienced in the ritual than with only men celebrating. In addition, women celebrants might more easily facilitate memory of a time prior to language, when the early infant-mother relationship was based on a connection of bodies, and was more fluid, formless, and heterogeneous.

It is possible to speculate that while women may experience a sense of jouissance or connectedness in partaking from a woman celebrant, men, alternatively, might feel fear or anxiety to have a woman at the altar. This situation might arise particularly if boys and girls experience the pre-Oedipal period differently. Perhaps, in girls, the infant-mother relationship is most frequently felt in terms of identification or merging. In boys, however, maybe connectedness with the mother would pose a threat to their masculinity, and is thus seen as something to be defended against.

Nancy Chodorow's⁷⁹ work on early infant-mother bonding helps illuminate the distinct ways girls and boys perceive the figure of the mother. Chodorow finds it significant that in the majority of North American families, women function as the primary caretakers of small children. This model of childrearing, according to Chodorow, involves a woman in a

⁷⁹Chodorow describes herself as an "interpretive," or even "humanistic," psychoanalytic sociologist and psychoanalytic feminist. Nancy J. Chodorow, Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 18.

double identification with her own mother and with her child, and puts her in a situation of repeating her own mother-child history. One result of this set of circumstances, in her view, is that mothers and daughters develop a stronger bond than mothers and sons. Another result is a greater degree of infant-mother merging for girls than for boys. Chodorow maintains that because of this pattern of early bonding, girls develop more flexible ego boundaries than do boys, and that, as adults, women find a certain psychological security in feeling interconnected with other women. This pattern also, in Chodorow's view, creates the psychological conditions for perpetuation of women's subordination to men.⁸⁰

While women may be inclined to remember their relationships with their mothers as one of positive connection and identification, this feeling is not necessarily shared by men. One possible reason for this is that mothers relate to their male children differently than they do to their female children. Again, Chodorow can help illuminate the way mothers and sons perceive and interact with one another. She writes

⁸⁰Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, 205-209. See also Weedon, 58; Eisenstein, 15; and Sayers, 69-70. In Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory, Chodorow writes that "...core gender identity for a girl...is built upon, and does not contradict, her primary sense of oneness and identification with her mother and is assumed easily along with her developing sense of self. Girls grow up with a sense of continuity and similarity to their mother, a relational connection to the world. For them, difference is not originally problematic or fundamental to their psychological being or identity. They do not define themselves as 'not-men,' or 'not-male,' but as 'I, who am female'" (110).

that from the moment of birth, a boy's mother relates to her son as different from herself. The separation process between mothers and sons is further promoted, she claims, by boys' repudiating their first object relation--their mother--in the course of forging a masculine identity. Hence, boys grow up fearing connection, and concentrate instead on establishing a separate identity from their mothers. Chodorow explains that whereas female gender is based on some degree of merging with the mother, masculine gender identity becomes modelled on roles "occupied by men in society."⁸¹

Chodorow states that the difference in development between girls and boys results in the notion of gender difference being central for males, while it is not for females.⁸² She maintains that because of early-developed, conflictual core gender identity problems, men find it important to have a clear sense of gender difference, and to maintain rigid boundaries between what is masculine and what is feminine.⁸³ The sense of a gendered self, for Chodorow, constantly challenges and threatens men, while it does not women.⁸⁴

⁸¹See Janet Sayers, Sexual Contradictions, 69-70.

⁸²Chodorow, "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective," in The Future of Difference, 13.

⁸³Chodorow, "Gender, Relation, and Difference," 13.

⁸⁴Chodorow, "Gender, Relation, and Difference," 15. Chodorow writes in Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory that "...because women mother, the sense of maleness in men differs from the sense of femaleness in women. Maleness is more

Psychoanalyst Eli Sagan corroborates Chodorow's theory that males exhibit more anxiety than females regarding gender identity issues. Sagan explains that a "partially re-engulfed woman," for example, still experiences herself as a female person, whereas a partially re-engulfed man suffers intense anxiety about the state of his masculinity. In consequence of that anxiety, Sagan states, he erects defenses to assure himself of his maleness:

The memory of the pre-Oedipal mother, the recollection of the time when women were omnipotent and little boys helpless, the reliving of the era when a boy was profoundly uncertain about his maleness and the permanent possession of his penis, the evocation of an age when the fear of engulfment by the symbiotic mother was a fundamental and overpowering anxiety--all this is profoundly disturbing for an adult male, the cause, if not panic, of intense concern that one's identity as a person and as a male is exceedingly fragile.⁸⁵

Hence, Sagan and Chodorow suggest that while feeling connected to the mother may be experienced positively by women, it could be experienced negatively by men. In terms of the Eucharist, their work indicates that due to early childrearing patterns, men might feel some fear and anxiety

conflictual and more problematic. Underlying, or built into, core male gender identity is an early, non-verbal, unconscious, almost somatic sense of primary oneness with the mother, an underlying sense of femaleness that continually, usually unnoticeably, but sometimes insistently, challenges and undermines the sense of maleness. Thus, because of a primary oneness and identification with his mother, a primary femaleness, a boy's and a man's core gender identity itself--the seemingly unproblematic cognitive sense of being male--is an issue. A boy must learn his gender identity as being not-female, or not-mother" (109).

⁸⁵Eli Sagan, Freud, Women, and Morality (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 112.

about receiving the Eucharist from a woman. Speculation could be made that female celebrants might pose a threat to male gender identity--particularly since the priesthood has for centuries been defined as a male role, and celebration of the Eucharist a "masculine" function.

It is possible, however, that some women would also experience fear and anxiety in taking the Eucharist from a woman. This might prove to be the case for women who experienced a negative relationship with their mothers. Because the ideal infant mother relationship is rare,⁸⁶ the question should be asked whether all individuals have some aggressive feelings towards their mothers. Klein is an example of a theorist who makes this hypothesis. Whereas Chodorow and object relations theorists locate potential aggression in early relationships, Klein does so innately, in the body. Klein believed aggression is instinctual, and is one of the body's drives.

Klein holds a similar view to Freud on the nature of the death instinct. She believed that the infant comes into the world with two main conflicting impulses--love and hate. Love, for Klein, expresses the life drive, and hate, the death drive. The infant deals with these two impulses, in her view,

⁸⁶Even Winnicott acknowledges that the mother is not perfect--hence the "good enough" mother will do (The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment). Feminists, however, find that the good enough mother must, in Winnicott's view, be quite good. See Diane Jonte-Pace, "Feminism, Object Relations Theory, and Religion: The Betrayal and Recovery of Mothering," 8-9.

either by bringing them both together and integrating them, or by expelling the death drive into the outside world.⁸⁷

For Klein, in addition to the two instincts of love and hate, the infant enters a world which is both satisfying and frustrating. Initially, the infant believes satisfactions and frustrations are caused by the breast. The breast that supplies the infant's needs when it wants them satisfied is internalized as the "good" breast. In contrast, the breast which is absent, or that fails to fulfill the infant's needs becomes internalized as the "bad" breast. Klein believed the infant projects its innate hatred onto the bad breast.⁸⁸

From Klein it is possible to see the reality and importance of aggression in the earliest stages of childhood. Klein presents a challenge to object relations theorists who suggest that the pre-Oedipal period is a time only of harmony and connection, for boys or for girls. Dorothy Dinnerstein holds a similar view to Klein on the hostile and aggressive

⁸⁷See Juliet Mitchell, ed. The Selected Melanie Klein, 19-20.

⁸⁸Klein labels the period of splitting the paranoid-schizoid position. The infant, according to Klein, feels anxious during this period, because it is angry at the breast yet at the same time feels the breast might retaliate. She asserts that at approximately eighteen months of age, the infant begins to integrate the bad and good breast into a whole entity--a stage she labels the depressive position. At this time, the infant wants to make "reparation" to the mother for damage it has done to her in phantasy. One way it attempts to do so is through love and good deeds. Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," in Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963, 66, 293. See also the previous chapter of the thesis.

nature of the early infant-mother relationship. Dinnerstein feels, however, that men harbor more hostility than women towards female figures in later life.⁸⁹

Klein and Dinnerstein raise the concern that the Eucharist, if celebrated by women, might provoke rage and hostility on the part of both male and female worshippers. Perhaps both men and women would, to a degree, be unwilling to receive the host from an individual who symbolized the omnipotent mother of their childhood. These questions warrant further study on the nature of the infant-mother relationship, and on the effect that relationship might have on the contemporary Eucharist.

Study of the pre-Oedipal period in this chapter indicates that female celebrants would evoke a variety of memories for worshippers, and that these memories might be different at different times. They could include, for example, feelings of play and creativity, connection and merging, and perhaps fear and anxiety. If, as research suggests, the pre-Oedipal period is formative for the Oedipal stage, it is likely that male celebrants would evoke some of the same memories as female celebrants in the psyches of parishioners. One difference between male and female celebrants, however, is that the memories called forth by women would be earlier, more

⁸⁹Dinnerstein is not clear, however, as to how women resolve their hostility towards their mothers. See Janet Sayers, 63. Men's hostility towards female figures is also discussed in the previous chapter of the thesis.

primal, and perhaps more formative for later development.

It thus seems a significant possibility that women celebrants would raise issues about gender identity that men do not. Some men might feel their masculinity threatened by a woman's presence at the altar--especially those men who had problems separating from their mothers. It also seems likely that women would tend to feel more secure than men about the possibility of dissolution of sexual identities.⁹⁰ Women would also probably also feel they had more to gain by lessening of gender distinctions.⁹¹

Some men would also no doubt welcome the opportunity to move out of traditional masculine roles, and to break away from historically male ways of thinking and acting. Hence, in these ways, it seems religious experience would be broadened and deepened by the advent of women celebrants to the Catholic Church.

In summary, in this chapter I have used several schools of psychoanalytic thought to examine the impact of early childhood patterns on the Eucharist if women were ordained. Through using Freudian and French feminist psychoanalytic theories, I have speculated on the origins of sexual difference, and thus on the possibility that women by their nature would alter the qualities of the Eucharist. Using

⁹⁰This is true with the exception of women who themselves experienced conflictual relationships with their mothers.

⁹¹Women might gain greater equality, for example.

Freudian, Kristevan, and Lacanian theories, I have explored such notions as the death instinct, the Oedipus complex, and the castration complex, and through doing so have investigated a possible psychoanalytic connection between maleness and sacrificial theology. I also pointed out ways psychoanalytic theory demonstrates the mother's formative influence on all stages of development, particularly on the pre-Oedipal period. I utilized the work of object relations theorists, psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, and feminist appropriations of psychoanalytic thought to indicate possible emotions that women celebrants might evoke for worshippers in partaking of the Eucharist. I showed that it is likely women celebrants would evoke different memories than male celebrants alone would, and that women might bring issues of gender identity to a focus--particularly for men.

It is important to understand more clearly how the hypotheses made in this and the previous chapter--derived from psychoanalytic thought--augment theories proposed in Chapters Two and Three by feminist theological study, as well as how psychoanalytic theory adds to the overall ordination debate in the Catholic church. In the concluding chapter, I will summarize the main points of the thesis, and explain the contributions of a psychoanalytic approach to a theological investigation of gender concerns in the Eucharist.

CHAPTER SIX

PSYCHOANALYTIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF GENDER CONCERNS IN THE EUCHARIST, AND TO THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE OVER CATHOLIC WOMEN PRIESTS

The following quotation, by Sarah Hall Maney, indicates a sharp dichotomy between women's work of feeding in the home, and the ecclesial ritual of feeding when male priests serve as presiders:

When sacrament happens around our dinner table with friends or family, I, a woman, have done the sacred work and I preside at the sacred moment. By contrast, the Eucharistic celebration I attend at church, with its circles of styrofoam bread and the only plate and the one cup at the bare table and no conversation, seems a bleak imitation of the rich and profound sacramental experience of feeding that happens at home. But by removing the sacrament of feeding away from the home, men can pretend that they are in charge, that they preside and make magic out of the sacrament of the Eucharist.¹

A similar contrast between a male-dominated Eucharist, and one which includes feminine imagery, can be seen in the descriptions below. The first was recorded by Sharon Neuffer Emswiler, in 1974:

Listening to the minister preach his sermon for the morning, I am aware that he is not really attempting to address me or my sisters in the congregation. His

¹Sarah Hall Maney, "Cooking: Divine and Destructive," in The Sacred Dimensions of Women's Experience, ed. Elizabeth Dodson Gray (Wellesley, Mass.: Roundtable Press, 1988), 175.

illustrations all revolve around men and speak overwhelmingly to the masculine experience in our society. Suddenly, I feel as though I am eavesdropping on a conversation labeled 'For Men Only.' Or worse yet, I feel that the suspicion I had after the call to worship is true. I do not exist! I look down at my hands and arms and feet. I can see them; they are very real to me. But I feel that somehow I must be invisible to this preacher who has designed this service and now stands in front of me, speaking of 'the brethren' and telling his congregation to be 'new men.'

Following the sermon, the worshippers are invited to participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. As the large group of male ushers marches down the aisle to receive the communion elements and distribute them to the congregation, I am suddenly struck with the irony of the situation. The chicken suppers, the ham suppers, the turkey suppers in the church are all prepared and served by the women, but the privilege of serving the Lord's Supper in worship is reserved for the men. This particular morning I find it very difficult to swallow the bread and drink the wine, knowing that within the Body of Christ, the Church, the sisters of Christ are not given the same respect and privileges as are his brothers.²

The second quotation, from a collection of rituals centering on Sophia, appears in a 1989 litany:

Consecration of the Meal:³

CELEBRANT: In the beloved city...I wield my authority. I have taken root in a privileged people. (Sirach 24:11,12)

ALL: To Wisdom say, my sister.

CELEBRANT: Approach me you who desire me, and take your fill of my fruits. (Sirach 24:19)

ALL: To Wisdom say, my sister.

²Sharon Neuffer Emswiler and Thomas Neuffer Emswiler, Women and Worship (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 6-7.

³From "Sophia's Table," in Wisdom's Feast. Sophia in Study and Celebration, ed. Susan Cady, Marian Ronan, and Hal Taussig (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 98-99.

CELEBRANT: I am like a vine putting out graceful shoots, my blossoms bear the fruit of glory and wealth. (Sirach 24:17)

ALL: To Wisdom say, my sister.

CELEBRANT: Memories of me are sweet as honey, inheriting me is sweet as the honeycomb. (Sirach 24:20)

ALL: To Wisdom say, my sister.

CELEBRANT: Over the waves of the sea and over the whole earth; and over every people and nation I have held sway. (Sirach 24:20)

ALL: To Wisdom say, my sister.

CELEBRANT: They who eat me will hunger for more, they who drink me will thirst for more. (Sirach 24:21)

ALL: To Wisdom say, my sister.

Passing of the Bread: Each person takes a piece and offers the loaf to the next person saying, "The bread given for the life of the world" (John 6:51). Last person gives loaf back to leader, who also takes a piece.

Dipping of the Bread: All dip bread together into the honey, milk, or wine (according to preference) and eat. Silence.

CELEBRANT: Wisdom has built herself a house, she has slaughtered her beasts, prepared her wine, she has laid her table. She has dispatched her maidservants and proclaimed from the city heights: "Come and eat my bread, drink the wine I have prepared!" (Proverbs 9:1-3,5)

If these two quotations, written fifteen years apart, are compared in terms of inclusivity of feminine symbolism and language, it might be concluded that the church has made enormous strides in terms of women's leadership and equality. Such a conclusion, however, would be far from true, particularly in the Catholic faith. Rather, it seems the

Catholic Church is becoming more and more conservative, not only in its views towards women, but in other political and ethical attitudes as well.⁴ That women remain prohibited from celebrating the Catholic sacraments serves to perpetuate the church's conservative trend in political and ethical concerns. This situation also continues to bring into question whether

⁴Religiously, for example, the Vatican seems to be returning to a pre-Vatican stance of intolerance of other religions. A recent target for their attention has been such Eastern practices as yoga and meditation. According to Vatican officials, there is little possibility for integration of these practices with Catholic spiritual life. Rather, they claim, yoga and meditation can prevent individuals from truly giving themselves to God. As a result, they assert, individuals should refrain from practicing them. This perspective would seem not only to promote alienation and hostility between world religions, but it would also seem to deny the efforts of several Catholic thinkers who have begun successful ecumenical dialogue with Eastern thought. "Vatican Warns of Danger in Zen, Yoga," Chicago Tribune, 15 December 1989, sec. 1, 12. Examples of Catholic thinkers who have begun dialogue with Eastern thought are Thomas Merton, Zen and the Birds of Appetite (New York: New Directions, 1968); William Johnston, Christian Zen, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981); and Aelred Graham, Zen Catholicism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963).

An issue which perhaps more directly impacts the lives of North American women is the Vatican's stand on abortion. Because of tighter restrictions on abortions in a number of U.S. states, this issue has recently become a focus for concern within the larger feminist movement. From 1973 until 1989, women could not legally be prevented from having an abortion during the first six months of pregnancy. This law was established by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, and was modified July 1989 in the Webster decision, which allows states to impose some restrictions on abortion. In "Abortions-rights Forces Lose a Round in Wisconsin," Chicago Tribune, 31 January 1990, sec. 1, 10. It is significant that the Vatican has never permitted this freedom of the woman to decide the future of the child within her womb, nor for women to take responsibility for the results of their actions. The Catholic stand on abortion is staunchly anti-abortion, regardless of consequences for mother or child. See Jane Hurst, The History of Abortion in the Catholic Church (Washington, D.C.: Catholics for a Free Choice, 1989).

the church is in truth promoting equality and basic human rights.

One of the tasks of this study has been to raise hypotheses concerning the current debate over women's ordination in the Catholic church. In order to deepen investigation of these hypotheses, I will frame my discussion in this chapter around four questions. These can be articulated as follows: 1) Are current childcare practices a significant factor in the continued prohibition of women priests? 2) Would women celebrants alter the qualities or nature of the Eucharist, and thus change Catholicism? 3) Would women negatively affect the Eucharist in some cases? and 4) Would the ordination of women be a positive step for Catholic women, and for the overall feminist movement? Answering these questions will form the crux of my concluding statements to the thesis.

The first question might be approached by reviewing the phenomenon of gender reversal in the Eucharist. I suggested in Chapter Three that not only do men symbolically enact a ritual of feeding--which is in domestic and biological realms a function traditionally performed by women--but they also prevent women from consecrating the bread and wine. This male appropriation of women's role as feeders I termed gender reversal. Review of Christian scriptures, history, and ritual indicated the phenomenon's widespread occurrence.

In Chapter Four, I used psychoanalytic theory to show

that the desire to reverse gender roles in early childhood is exhibited by both sexes. Girls frequently envy boys' penises, and boys, girls' vaginas. In addition, boys often express wishes to possess physiological abilities their mothers possess: the capacity to carry babies in their womb, to give birth, and to suckle their offspring.⁵ I turned to Karen Horney's work to speculate that the notion of "cultural productivity" may originate in men's sublimation of envy of female processes of pregnancy, childbirth, and suckling.⁶ In addition, I showed that primitive rituals such as the couvade --in which men imitate birthing--may be an attempt by men to experience birth while simultaneously detracting from women's role in this process.⁷ I suggested that the contemporary Eucharist seems to demonstrate a similar male appropriation of female physiological processes.

In addition to envy, I utilized followers of Freud to indicate that another reason men might desire gender reversal in the Eucharist could be childhood memories of the mother as terrifying and omnipotent.⁸ Infants may respond to maternal

⁵Bruno Bettelheim, Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male.

⁶Karen Horney, Feminine Psychology.

⁷Bettelheim.

⁸Hannah Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye. From Psychoanalysis to the Psychology of Women; Sarah Kofman, The Enigma of Woman. Woman in Freud's Writings; Melanie Klein, Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945, Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963; Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur. Sexual Arrangements and the Human

fear by feelings of hostility, or even sadism, towards the breast. As adults, this hostility or sadism may, by men, be expressed in terms of male tyranny and authoritativeness over women. I hypothesized that perhaps, as well, the hostility or sadism is expressed in men's attempt to appropriate women's physiological functions for themselves. I speculated that Vatican officials are not immune from having feelings of envy and fear towards women; one reaction they in turn might have is to prevent women from performing sacramental functions of birthing, feeding, and caretaking in the Catholic church.

In Chapter Two, I pointed out that in Canada and the United States, women still do the majority of feeding and caretaking in the home. With this situation in mind, the question might be raised whether in fact men can overcome their psychological barriers against ordaining women. I have used psychoanalytic theory to hypothesize that until men equally participate with women in childrearing, men will continue to feel hostility towards their mothers, and women will continue to seem overly powerful and ominous--to both men and women. As a result, perhaps at an unconscious level men will continue to want to dominate women. Dinnerstein, for example, writes that infants would feel differently towards their mothers if women were not their sole caretakers:

If these first encounters (with the angry pain of defeat) had not taken place under all-female auspices, if women were not available to bear the

Malaise.

whole brunt of unexamined infantile rage at defeat that permeates adult life, the rage could not so easily remain unexamined; the infantilism could more easily be outgrown.⁹

If mothers and fathers were to share basic tasks of childrearing, men may not as keenly experience the desire for gender reversal. In a scenario such as that envisioned by Dinnerstein, men would take a more active role, in actual nurturing of children and of one another. As a result, perhaps they would not have to repress their maternal inclinations--or require that they be expressed in unconscious ways. Nancy Chodorow, for example, has noted a direct correspondence between current childrearing practices and men's repression of nurturing feelings:

I argue that the contemporary reproduction of mothering occurs through social structurally induced processes...Women, as mothers, produce daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother. These capacities and needs are built into and grow out of the mother-daughter relationship itself. By contrast, women as mothers (and men as not-mothers), produce sons whose nurturant capacities and needs have been systematically curtailed and repressed. This prepares men for their less affective later family role, and for primary participation in the impersonal extrafamilial world of work and public life.¹⁰

If social practices were to change such that men felt more a part of the maternal activities they desired and envied, Vatican officials might be less resistant towards allowing women to administer the sacraments. Maybe they would

⁹Dinnerstein, 91.

¹⁰Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, 7.

also be less opposed to ordaining women as priests. Despite possible future changes in childrearing practices, however, it seems children will continue to experience some degree of jealousy towards, as well as desire to possess, the other sex's anatomy and physiological capabilities. Girls will continue to experience penis envy, and boys, envy of breasts and suckling. If these feelings can be recognized for what they are, however--rather than being repressed and denied--perhaps their relevance for women's ordination can be more critically evaluated. In addition, by realizing the source of their objections, Vatican officials might begin to shift their focus to possible implications of gender re-reversal for the Catholic church.

The second question might be addressed by reviewing psychoanalytic studies of pre-Oedipal and Oedipal interactions between mothers and infants. Investigation of the nature of Oedipal and pre-Oedipal relationships in Chapter Five allowed me to hypothesize possible changes in the Eucharist if women could be clergy. Through exploring psychoanalytic perspectives on the origin of sexual difference, I suggested that women might alter the nature of the Eucharist in a way men could not. Alternatively, I suggested they might inaugurate changes in the sacrament that would gradually make a difference in the way men celebrate.

Research on the Oedipal stage of development illuminated a possible correlation between gender and sacrificial

theology. I pointed out possible associations among the death instinct--the psychoanalytic origin of aggression--the Oedipus complex, and the formation of the superego. I used Freudian, Kristevan, and Lacanian theories to speculate a connection between the castration complex and its different method of resolution in boys and girls.¹¹ For boys, castration implies separation, and loss of the mother. Girls, alternatively, are not required to relinquish their maternal identification to the same extent. I hypothesized that men may repeat the event of separation from the mother in the form of rituals of sacrifice, or, possibly, they may defend against the pain of this initial separation in ways approximating sacrificial rituals.

In addition to the presence of Oedipal themes of sacrifice, I used object relations theorists to indicate that the Eucharist also expresses pre-Oedipal issues related to infant-mother interactions. Possible emotions evoked during the pre-Oedipal period are play and creativity, connection and merging, and fear mixed with anxiety. I suggested that the degree to which these emotions are experienced are influenced by the amount of satisfaction or hunger felt at the breast. I also explored feminist uses of psychoanalysis to indicate

¹¹Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," "Civilization and Its Discontents," "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex;" Anika Lemaire, Jacques Lacan; Rice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy, The Works of Jacques Lacan; Jacques Lacan, Feminine Sexuality; Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror, "Women's Time."

that gender plays a role in the degree of connection felt between mother and infant. I noted that girls are socialized to identify with their mothers, while boys are encouraged to forge a separate identity apart from her.¹²

In terms of the Eucharist, I speculated that women celebrants would probably evoke different memories than male celebrants would. Female celebrants might lessen sacrificially related themes such as guilt and aggression. They might also enhance nurturing and connective aspects of the sacrament. A further difference which might be brought about by women is a focus on gender identity--especially what it means to be male or female in contemporary society.

It is interesting to compare these hypotheses--derived through psychoanalytic theory--with some experiences of women celebrants in the Episcopal tradition. Literature study and conversations with priests and laypersons demonstrates that women priests are beginning to have an impact on the qualities of the Eucharist in the Episcopal faith. Including these experiences might help in answering the question of what changes women priests would bring to the Catholic Eucharist, and to the future of Catholicism.

One way women priests are affecting the qualities of the Eucharist is through their very presence at the altar. Episcopal priest Eleanor McLaughlin notes, for example, that

¹²Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory.

women priests "destabilize" the system--they are "matter in the wrong place".¹³ Seeing women celebrate the Eucharist, according to McLaughlin, challenges the dichotomy between proper and improper. It also challenges other dichotomies and dualisms that seem intrinsic to hierarchical structures.¹⁴

Since women priests challenge assumed "realities," it seems the ordination of women necessitates a change in consciousness with respect to liturgy. Episcopal priest Denise Haines makes this observation. For Haines, women clergy challenge traditional assumptions about the world--including that it is rational, understandable, and enlightened. Traditionally, according to Haines, the priest served as a mediator between "sacred mysteries" and "profane earth." Women's biology, however, in her view inextricably binds women to the earth. Thus, she states, it is difficult to maintain the dichotomy between sacred and profane when women preside at the altar.¹⁵

¹³For those who objected to women's ordination on the grounds that women were not "proper matter," women at the altar constitute "matter in the wrong place;" thus, women's celebrating the Eucharist becomes transgressive and taboo behavior. Eleanor McLaughlin, "On Language, Liturgy and Gender: A Feminist Hermeneutic."

¹⁴McLaughlin.

¹⁵Denise G. Haines, "Women's Ordination: What Difference Has It Made?" Christian Century 103:30 (15 October 1986), 888. In a conversation with Episcopal laywoman Laurie Patton (Chicago, Ill.: 12 July 1988), Patton made a connection between seeing a woman celebrant and the symbol of a woman's body being broken at the altar. Biologically, in her view, this occurs during the event of childbirth. Patton stated that she can personally identify with the crucifixion when a

It seems that women clergy influence dichotomies which might be present in the understanding of the Eucharist itself. For example, the theology of transubstantiation implies a separation between spiritual and earthly spheres--earthly food is transformed into heavenly food. The advent of women would challenge this rigid differentiation between the two spheres. Alla Bozarth-Campbell, for example, suggests that women clergy allow for a more "consubstantially" oriented view of the Eucharist--in which everything in the universe exists in relation to everything else. She writes:

Unlike split-level transubstantiation, consubstantiation says that body and blood exist with, not against bread and wine. The grace of Christ's presence doesn't destroy or replace the material substance of the physical elements, but it exists with and through them, naturally and supernaturally.¹⁶

Again, literature study and conversations with priests and laypersons can further illuminate the affects of women celebrants on worshippers' experience.¹⁷ Several women priests

woman is celebrating mass--it seems natural to her for a woman's body to be broken--while it does not seem natural to her for a man's body to be broken.

¹⁶Alla Bozarth-Campbell, Womanpriest. A Personal Odyssey (New York, Ramsey, and Toronto: Paulist Press, 1978), 205.

¹⁷Rev. Mike Russell explains the distinction in the way men and women view women celebrants as follows. Some men, he states, find that having both men and women celebrants is "better," because it is "fairer." These men, according to Russell, tend to see the question of women's ordination as a "justice and fairness" issue. Russell perceives that women, alternatively, have a much more moving experience of affirmation of themselves in receiving the Eucharist from a woman. Women tell him they feel greater comfort, welcome, and support for their "being" within the church as a result of

indicate more specifically what the presence of women celebrants is like for them. Bozarth-Campbell, for example, states that women celebrants facilitate a "perspective and appreciation for human life that comes directly from their existential reality as women."¹⁸ One aspect of that reality, in her view, is women's bodies and their sexuality. She writes:

Seeing a female priest at the altar assures me that I don't have to leave my sexuality at the church door when I come to worship, but that I can worship with my body as well as my heart and soul and mind, wholly joining the Great Dance.¹⁹

Eleanor McLaughlin also discusses the relationship between women celebrants and sexuality. The image of a woman at the altar, for McLaughlin, throws together symbols of erotic and holy--two traditionally opposed concepts in Christian history. McLaughlin states that women also force juxtapositioning of other traditionally separate concepts in Christian theology. Drawing upon the work of French feminist psychoanalyst Hélène Cixous,²⁰ McLaughlin indicates that spirit and matter, holy and profane, sacrifice and nurture come together when women celebrate the Eucharist. She states that

women celebrants, and as a result of women priests in general. Conversation with Mike Russell (Chicago, Ill.: 2 February 1989).

¹⁸Bozarth-Campbell, 159.

¹⁹Bozarth-Campbell, 171.

²⁰In particular, McLaughlin uses Cixous' notion of binary oppositions. See Chapter Five of the thesis for an explanation of this term.

one result of this occurrence is gradual healing of traditional dualisms in church and society. Another, according to McLaughlin, is that worshippers feel more connected with God, others, and community.²¹

In addition to associations with sexuality, women celebrants seem to facilitate a more "sensual," intimate presence at the altar than men. One way in which they do this is through voice and gesture. One layperson, for example, states that she believes women's voices are generally more expressive than men's, and that their ritual gestures are more genuine.²² A woman priest relates that parishioners tell her they love to watch her when she celebrates--they express to her that what she does with her hands and voice is "so wonderful." This priest indicates that small gestures inviting intimacy--such as eye contact and closing the parishioner's hand with the bread in it--mark women's celebration as different from men's.²³

Because women are often associated with preparation and serving of food, parishioners frequently associate the Eucharist with dining when celebrated by a woman. In such a scenario, the celebrant becomes "hostess;" and the Eucharist,

²¹Eleanor McLaughlin, "On Language, Liturgy and Gender: A Feminist Hermeneutic."

²²Conversation with Jean Pedderson.

²³Conversation with Ellen Wondra. Rev. Wondra states that while initially, there were marked differences in gesture between men and women, gradually men have begun to adopt some of these "feminine" gestures themselves.

a "banquet" or "dinner party." One priest, for example, states that when she celebrates, she sees her role as to present the food, and to give people permission to eat. She prefers not to see herself in the position of mother, feeder, or nurturer, but rather as part of a group of adults at a dinner party. She likes banquet imagery, because it conveys for her the sense of worship as party, festive occasion, or special event.²⁴

One laywoman makes a direct identification between women celebrants and partaking of the elements in the Eucharist. She states that for her, a woman celebrant is "like the food in some ways"--she "really puts one in touch with meals, and with the eating experience." Also, she notes the presence of what she calls "hostessness" as part of the ritual when women celebrate; she feels this sense is generally lacking when men serve as celebrants.²⁵ As well, one male priest makes a connection between women celebrants and the image of a hostess at a meal. Women, he states, think of the Eucharist much more than men do as an occasion of "having people to dinner."²⁶

Thus, in part because of women's comfortableness in the domestic sphere, and in part because of their tendency to emphasize touch, connection, and relationality, women

²⁴Conversation with Joy Rogers.

²⁵Conversation with Laurie Patton.

²⁶Conversation with Lionell Mitchell (Evanston, Ill.: 21 February 1989).

celebrants affect the way the Eucharist is experienced in the Episcopal church. Perhaps, if women could be priests in the Catholic church, they would affect the Eucharist in ways similar to those just mentioned.

It seems Catholicism would not be the same as a result of women's leadership. At this point it is difficult to speculate on how the tradition might change. It is possible, for example, that women priests would be incorporated into the existing church hierarchy. It is also possible that women clergy would schism the church--with one branch assimilating "feminine" symbols, theology, and structures, and the other remaining staunchly opposed to women priests.²⁷

Not all of the theological changes being initiated by women in the Episcopal church are being viewed favorably. This observation brings up the third question raised at the beginning of the chapter: that is, whether women could negatively affect the Eucharist in some cases. Some priests, for example, have begun to question the foresight of ordaining women without giving prior critical reflection to ways they might alter traditional theology. Rev. Don Melvin is an example of a priest in this category. While he is not on the

²⁷This is happening in the Episcopal church, with the recent formation of an independent traditionalist group called the Episcopal Synod of America. This independent group refuses to recognize women priests, disapproves of some of the church's liberal teachings, and insists that the 1928 Book of Common Prayer be used in worship. Thus far, they still consider themselves part of the larger Episcopal church. Richard N. Ostling, "Episcopalians' Semi-Schism," Time (19 June 1989), 53.

whole opposed to women clergy,²⁸ Melvin feels that some women celebrants are having a negative affect on the celebration of the Eucharist. According to Melvin, liturgy is by nature hierarchical. He states that technically, the Eucharist becomes "invalid" without a priest presiding at its head. Some women's style of celebration, in his view, defies this understanding. Their style is either too timid, or it conveys the sense of: "I'm just one of you folks," "I am just one among many." These women, according to Melvin, are too willing to give over the reigns of authority--"to let whatever happens, happen." Their style of celebration conflicts with Melvin's notion of the leadership role of the priest.

Melvin also questions ways in which women priests might alter understandings of Christ. Traditional Christology, he explains, maintains that human and divine natures are joined in the person of Christ. The priest in presiding at the Eucharist, in his view, is alter Christus--he/she stands "in the place" of Christ. Melvin finds that many feminists attempt to downplay the maleness of Christ; they try to make a distinction between the gender of the historical Jesus and the saving "Christ of faith." In doing so, he argues, they in effect separate the human Jesus from the divine. In diminishing the fact that Jesus was male, Melvin asserts that feminists bring into question whether sexuality is in fact redeemed.

²⁸He describes himself as "questioning" at this point.

Thus, for Melvin, women celebrants raise questions of whether women can represent Christ. They raise questions for him of just what women celebrants do represent. In consequence, he feels the church "leapt" before it "looked" when it agreed to ordain women; women's ordination, he states, was a "liberal knee jerk reaction" to a call for justice. While he is not convinced that women's ordination is not "from the spirit," Melvin states that only time will tell.²⁹

Melvin's questions raise the concern of whether women celebrants would alter the nature of the Eucharist in the Catholic faith. Would the ritual remain the "Eucharist" as currently defined by Catholic theologians if women became celebrants? If the Eucharist, for example, re-enacts Christ's sacrifice at Calvary, can women also re-enact that sacrifice? Are women an appropriate vessel for doing so? Christologically, can women represent both the historical, male Jesus who was crucified, and Christ the "son of God" who brings redemption? The issue of women priests calls for critical reflection on questions such as these. In addition, it must be asked: what would become of the clerical hierarchy if women were to become priests? Certainly, it would no longer be entirely male-oriented.³⁰ Would women be assimilated

²⁹Conversation with Don Melvin (Chicago, Ill.: 22 February 1989). Due to the fashion in which women's ordination was handled canonically, Melvin indicates that it is still possible for the ordination of women to be overturned, and to be declared invalid.

³⁰It might, however, remain male-dominated.

into the existing male-oriented structure? Or would the present hierarchy dissolve in time? Or, would another situation arise, whose character cannot yet be predicted?

Numerous Catholic scholars and theologians would applaud the possibility of women breaking down clerical hierarchy--among them Ann Carr.³¹ Many others, however, may not.³² It would seem issues of sacrifice and hierarchy are of particular interest to feminist scholars as well. Investigating these issues continues to probe such questions as: Can there be society without sacrifice, and without hierarchy? What would society be like if women had more power? Would it be any different from the way it is now? Would the church be any less hierarchical if women could be priests?

I propose an affirmative answer to question four--that the ordination of women would be positive both for Catholic women and for the wider feminist movement. In uncovering gender reversal in the Eucharist, I discovered through feminist theological study that women are being excluded from functions that are traditionally theirs. Birthing, feeding, and caretaking are all represented in the sacraments,³³ and they are all activities for which women are responsible in

³¹Ann Carr, Transforming Grace. Christian Tradition and Women's Experience; see Chapter Two, section one.

³²Those priests, for example, in favor of returning to saying the mass in Latin would no doubt look unfavorably upon dissolution of clerical hierarchy.

³³They are represented in the sacraments of Baptism, the Eucharist, and Reconciliation.

every realm except political and ecclesiastical ones. This observation leads to speculation that perhaps the sacraments would seem more "natural," more related to everyday life, if performed by individuals accustomed to performing them. Enabling the sacraments to more closely model everyday life would entail either ordaining women as priests, or allowing lay individuals to take leadership roles in liturgy. Gudorf agrees that women should take a more active role in administering the sacraments:

We must reconnect the sacraments with the activities they symbolize. We must do this in order to restore respect for life and for God's creation. We must also reconnect sacraments with the human activities they symbolize for the sake of the sacraments themselves...The sacraments should not draw our attention away from 'ordinary' human life, but should transform 'ordinary' life by causing us to understand it more deeply.³⁴

Ordination of women is the barricaded front door to reuniting sacraments with everyday life.³⁵

Another positive change that would be brought about by women is that pre-Oedipal feelings of nurture and maternal connection would allow emphasis on other aspects of the Eucharist than Oedipal notions of separation and loss. The actual feeding ceremony, for example, and metaphors of being sustained and cared for, might come more easily to mind when the celebrant is a woman. Even though women may in some cases

³⁴Gudorf, 305.

³⁵Gudorf, 306.

elicit negative feelings in the psyches of worshippers,³⁶ it seems important for men and women to experience maternal as well as paternal influences from childhood. Psychoanalytic theory has indicated that pre-Oedipal memories are as formative--if not moreso--as Oedipal ones for initial psychological development and later adult life. Similar to the desire for gender reversal, it would seem that if early feelings towards the mother are covered up, they will eventually emerge in other ways--and perhaps more destructive ones.³⁷

This thesis contributes both to feminist theology, and to the Catholic ordination debate over women priests. It contributes to theology through exploring specific gender concerns in the Eucharist, in the following ways: 1)through study of the significance of religious symbols, and, in particular, of the symbol of a woman celebrant, 2)through hypothesizing that a gender reversal is occurring in the Eucharist, 3)through investigation of sexual difference, and its implications for theological and religious concerns, 4)by speculating that sacrificial theology may be linked to maleness, and 5)by proposing possible effects of gender reversal in the sacrament.

³⁶Psychoanalyst Melanie Klein's work has allowed me to make this hypothesis. See Chapters Four and Five.

³⁷Examples of destructive expressions of maternal hostility are wife battering, rape, pornography, and other forms of political, economic, and psychological oppression of women.

The thesis contributes to the ordination debate by offering an overall theory for understanding notions of gender reversal and gender re-reversal in the Eucharist. While feminist theology allowed speculation that gender reversal is taking place in the Eucharist, I used psychoanalytic theory to hypothesize possible reasons for its occurrence. Whereas theologians draw from primarily history, sociology, and women's experience, psychoanalytic theorists investigate early childhood patterns of development. Psychoanalytic theory thus offers a complement to current theological approaches for understanding the significance of gender in this sacrament.

The focus of psychoanalysis on early childhood patterns allows hypothesis on the origins of important theological issues. In this way, psychoanalytic thought makes an additional contribution to theology. Specifically, psychoanalytic theory aids study of the origins of religious symbols, notions of sacrifice, and motifs of nurture and connection in early childhood relationships. It is interesting to speculate that the individualistic and hierarchical nature of much of modern society may stem from Oedipal memories relating to separation, loss, and fear of castration. Alternatively, psychoanalytic theories on religious symbols and the origins of connective motifs point to the possible healing role of women in leadership roles. If women in leadership positions can evoke pre-Oedipal

memories of intense connection and identification,³⁸ women celebrants, presidents, and corporate executives can potentially open a realm of experience previously not emphasized by men in leadership roles.³⁹

The thesis has shown that, politically, one way in which the church would be different if women were celebrants is that they would hold leadership positions. For the church, ordaining women as priests is a giant step towards attaining the Vatican model of egalitarianism and mutuality between the sexes. Women clergy allow women to image themselves as Christ, as symbols of divinity, and as equal in every way to men. For society, instead of perpetuating existing sexist structures, I suggest the symbol of women celebrants would help in transforming other patriarchal institutions. The

³⁸This is in addition to women's ability to evoke memories of intense hostility. In this context, Arnold Cooper has observed that the relation of past experience to present psychological life may be in the form of "constructions" rather than "reconstructions." "Changes in Psychoanalytic Ideas," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 35 (1987), 83. Yet Cooper also writes: "There is no other past than the one we construct, and there is no way of understanding the past except through its relation to the present." This understanding--that memories become realities as they are remembered--forms the backbone of the arguments made in the thesis.

³⁹An example of this type of opening of experience by women is the Pakistani's Prime Minister's recent delivery of her second child. The Chicago Tribune writes that Benazir Bhutto became the "first modern head of government to give birth while in office" ("Pakistanis Rejoice Over Birth of Prime Minister's 2nd Child," [26 January 1990] sec. 1, 2). A comparable phenomenon might be experiencing the Eucharist celebrated by a pregnant woman, or by a female priest holding her baby.

church would come into the forefront in heralding women's rights and equality for women. Rather than serving as a "cracked mirror" of what already is, the church would become an example for women and men of movement towards a more gyn-conscious, less misogynist world.

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