
Überblickt man die gesamte Untersuchung, so ist die Fokussierung auf die weiblichen Freigelassenen innovativ und führt zu interessanten Ergebnissen. Allerdings muss man dabei manche einseitige Überzeichnung in Kauf nehmen. Trotz dieses Einwandes handelt es sich um ein wichtiges Buch, das jeder, der sich mit der römischen Freilassung und den Freigelassenen beschäftigt, lesen sollte.

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This well documented, thought-provoking, and sadly posthumous volume analyses the hagiographical story of Praxedes and Pudentiana (Ch. 1) and explores the iconography of the mosaics of the ninth-century church of Santa Prassede, which was commissioned by pope Paschal I (817–824) and preserves one of the largest intact programs of church decoration in Rome up to 1200 (Ch. 2). Ch. 3 investigates women’s ecclesiastical ministries in the ancient churches outside of Rome, and Ch. 4 in Rome. Ch. 5 researches ancient ordination rituals for men and women. The beautiful pictures, often taken by Schaefer, are black and white. Schaefer rightly observes (118) that, since in Acts 13:1–2 prophets «liturgise» and in Didache 10.7 can eukharistein, and since the «ministry of prophets» in Didascalia apostolorum 2.26, women deacons are even described as worthier of honour than presbyters, and of equal worth as male deacons, in the following hierarchy: the bishop is the type of God (the Father), a man deacon the type of Christ, a woman deacon the type of the Holy Spirit, the presbyters are a type of the apostles, and the widows a type of the altar.

Not only does iTim 3:11, according to John Chrysostom and Schaefer (130), refer to women deacons, but I have shown that Origen even saw in iTimothy and especially in Titus clear references to women presbyters.² Presbyterae are epigraphically well attested in the ancient Christian churches, from Egypt to Greece,

Asia Minor to Southern Italy, Dalmatia etc.,¹ and in a number of cases they were not presbyters’ wives. The Council of Laodicea, Canon 11, attests to the existence of women presbyters and presidents (πρεσβύτιδες, προκαθημέναι) ordained (καθίστασθαι) in churches. Schaefer (153) also endorses my identification of Theosebia as a presbyter.²

Around mid-tenth century, bishop Atto of Vercelli in a letter (Ep. 8) recognised as normal the presence of presbyterae and presidents (praesidentes) who led (praerant) ancient churches by preaching, giving orders (iubendi), and teaching (170; 211–218).

In Gaul, in 511, a letter by three bishops attests that two presbyters travelled along with women conhospitae with portable altars to celebrate the Eucharist in various places (147). In the same century, again in Gaul, St Remigius of Reims († 533) in his will called his daughter Hilary diacona, and Medardus of Noyon consecrated queen Radegunda a deaconess by the laying of hands (Venantius Fortunatus, Vita S. Radegundis 1.12). In Merovingian and Carolingian Gaul, Germany, and England, deaconesses and women presbyters evolved into canonesses, whose titles were præposita, decana, or sacerdota, i.e. president, dean, or priest. In the tenth-century Saxon Chronicle, the Benedictine Widukind speaks of sacerdotes utriusque sexus. But already in the fifth or sixth century there is epigraphic evidence for a sacerdota in Salona, when this title was normally reserved for bishops.

Schaefer, in a fine archaeological and iconographic examination, points to the balance of female and male imagery in the iconography of Santa Prassede: «a decorative program centred around an ideal Christian family, gender parity, and church leadership» (375). In the apse, Peter and Paul have an arm around Pudentiana’s and Praxedes’ shoulders respectively, thus displaying a surprising familiarity (in a Santa Cecilia mosaic, also commissioned by pope Paschal I, St Cecilia has one arm around Paschal’s shoulders and presents the pope). Two women in the Santa Pudenziana apse are interpreted by Schaefer as two presbyterae who parallel the elders of the Apocalypse (195). In the Zeno Chapel, Mary Theotokos with baby Jesus is accompanied – as every respectable bishop – by a deacon and a presbyter, as well as by eight crowned women garbed in gold, as a parallel to the twelve apostles accompanying Christ. In the chapel, three female saints of Rome, Agnes, Pudentiana, and Praxedes face the three male apostles Andrew, James, and John. On the triumphal arch, it is Praxedes who leads Peter and the other apostles.

A marble plaque identifies the chapel as the burial place of pope Paschal’s mother, «the lady Theodora bishop [donnae Theodoreae episcopae]». In the mosaic that represents her with a rectangular nimbus and a white veil, flanked by Praxedes, the Virgin Mary, and Pudentiana, she is also identified as Theodora episcopa. Since her husband Bonosus, the father of pope Paschal, was no bishop, nor was he ever called episcopus on account of his son, Theodora cannot have been called episcopa merely because she was a bishop’s wife or mother. In this


² In ‘Theosebia: A Presbyter’.  

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connection, Schaefer examines iconographic evidence of the Virgin Mary represented as *archiepiscopa* and intercessor, wearing a *pallium* with two or three crosses (whereas popes and bishops wear *pallia* with one cross), e.g. in the Chapel of St Venantius in the Lateran Baptistry, from 640–642, in the sixth-century basilica of St Euphrasius in Istria, and in the archiepiscopal chapel in Ravenna. Already around the year 500, a *venerabilis femina episcopa* Q... is attested for Terni in Umbria. At that time, too, in Ireland the virgin Brigid of Kildare († 525ca) was ordained a bishop by bishop Mel.

Abbesses would later have episcopal dignity, as highlighted by Joan Morris and Gary Macy. In a letter of Gregory the Great, an abbess asserts her right to dress, not in monastic, but in presbyteral garb (Schaefer 180). A visual representation of a canoness-abbess, often called *sacerdos maxima*, is found in the Uta Codex: she is portrayed as teaching or preaching and wearing a short stole as a sign of sacerdotal status. The canoness-abbess in Lucca was called *episcopa* and *metropolitana*. Iconographic and liturgical sources reveal that these abbesses wore the same regalia as abbots and bishops: pectoral cross, episcopal ring, pastoral staff, miter, and throne.

Several fourth-century sarcophagi in Vatican’s Museo Pio Cristiano represent women as teachers and philosophers; e.g., elderly Crispina holds a Gospel and Schaefer remarks: «evidently, this is a made-to-order sarcophagus lid for a woman of considerable repute who holds church office ... a *presbytera*» (196). A Pola fifth-century ivory casket stemming from a Roman patriarchal basilica represents Old St Peter with clerical men and women inside, perfectly paired, with identical locations, poses, and garments. They all lead the prayer of the populace in the aisle. Women as ecclesiastical teachers are further epigraphically and iconographically attested in Sant’Agnese and Santa Sabina in Rome. In the latter, the woman teacher in the mosaic, depicted in the same teaching gesture as Christ’s, seems to Schaefer to be a *presbytera* (205). On a Roman fourth/fifth-century tombstone, an Alexandra *orans* standing between two sheep is likely to represent a Roman *episcopa*, given the parallel with bishops, such as Apollinaris of Ravenna, represented as standing between sheep. Likewise in the Domitilla Catacomb a Christian woman’s title *Veneranda* and her vestment suggest a status as *episcopa* (224–225).

Fifth-century marble slabs in Gallic St Maximin represent the Virgin Mary as an *orante* clothed in a dalmatic with unveiled long hair and an inscription that identifies her as a minister in the Temple of Jerusalem (143), and a more mature female *orante* on a *suppedaneum* in the presbyterium of a church. In a sixth-century Syrian Bible, an illumination represents Solomon dressed as a Byzantine emperor, the Virgin Mary, and a woman dressed as a bishop (249).

In the early-third-century Greek Chapel of the Priscilla Cemetery in Rome, from Origen’s time, the *fractio panis* fresco displays women in the gesture of eucharistic consecration. Schaefer observes: «The likeliest reading of the evidence identifies the *fractio panis* fresco as a third-century Christian eucharistic funerary banquet celebrated by seven women» (189). In the same Priscilla Catacomb, in the cubiculum of the *velata*, according to Dorothy Irvin, followed by Schaefer 1 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 13601, fol. 4r.
2 Paris, Bibl. Nationale, ms. syr. 341, fol. 118r.
(191–192), two men flank a central female figure wearing a ‘chasuble’ over an alb and carrying a Gospel scroll; the bishop’s hand on her shoulder represents her being sent forth to teach. The enthroned bishop on the left is balanced by the enthroned woman on the right, dressed like the bishop and sucking a child: it is the enthroned Mary *episcopa*. In a study that Schaefer obviously could not have cited, Ally Kateusz interprets the *velata* as the Virgin Mary.  

In 819, at the vigil of St Praxedes’ feast, pope Paschal I buried the bones of almost 2,300 saints under the altar of the newly built church of Santa Prassede. In the crypt under the high altar, iconographic evidence indicates that in the time of Paschal Praxedes was attributed official ecclesiastical ministry. In a painting, now restored, Praxedes and Pudentiana flank the Virgin Mary; they wear a dalmatic and Praxedes has an ochre band of cloth very similar to that of the sixth-century Christ icon in St Catharine’s Sinai monastery. Likewise, in the sister church of Santa Pudenziana in Rome, a ninth-century fresco represents Praxedes, Peter the apostle, and Pudentiana, all dressed as Carolingian bishops.

The *Vita* of the sisters Praxedes and Pudentiana, possibly from the fifth or sixth century, but based on earlier traditions, was promoted by the archpresbyters and presbyters of the *titulus Praxidea*. The sisters’ grandfather, Pudens, had hosted St Peter and had been baptised by him (*2Tim* 4:21, which Michel Gourgues deems probably Pauline, 2 extends Paul’s greetings to Pudens). The two sisters, daughters of Pudens junior, both consecrated, gave their wealth to the poor, and served the church. During a persecution, Praxedes hid many Christians, nourishing them with food and the word of God. Schaefer (16) rightly notes that the story depicts Praxedes and Pudentiana as the leaders of their house church. Fioravante Martinelli, a priest and antiquarian, in 1655, and the Benedictine prior of Santa Prassede Dom Benigno Davanzati in 1725, thought that Praxedes was a *presbytera* who led an ancient Christian house church on the site of the present church (11). It is indeed likely that women presidents of house churches led the eucharistic prayer in their community (31; the same is maintained by Jerome Murphy O’Connor3). As Schaefer summarises, «Whether historical figure or fictional personage modelled on the women Paul names in chapter 16 of his Letter to the Romans, Praxedes is the archetype of those ecclesial women who, in every generation, have responded to the call to preach Christ’s gospel» (375).

Among Schaefer’s many insights is her analysis of the possible ecclesiastical standing of the main feminine figure in the *Shepherd of Hermas*. The woman-church who is the revealer of Visions 1–4 is a *presbytis* on a white cathedra, and then a *presbytera* reading a book, whose message is to be sent to other churches and to the *presbyteroi* of the local church. It is suggested that Grapte was an *episcopa* of the church of Rome (181–182). In the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* 8, the liturgical prayers for the ordination of women by *χειροτονία* parallel those for the ordination of men. The same holds for the ordination rituals in the Byzantine church (in Schaefer’s analysis, 254–255) and for the Latin

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church, as Gary Macy\(^1\) and Schaefer (272–299) show. In the eighth-century Pontifical of Egbert of York, in the tenth-century Romano-Germanic Pontifical, and in others, the ordination rituals for men and women, including abbots and abbesses, are the same, only with grammatical gender changes. The episcopal laying of hands and invocation to the Spirit are the same for men and women. Notably, in some rituals an abbess is explicitly conferred a pastoral staff and the *regimen animarum*: like a bishop, she rules souls. Schaefer comments: «If the rite for an abbess is substantially the same as that for an abbot ... is it possible to claim that the abbot is ordained in a sacramental way and the abbess is given a ‘non-sacramental’ blessing? ... We can speak of ‘female equivalences’ with offices held by men. Equivalency is not exactly equality. However, equivalency represents an important step toward equality when contrasted with the official Catholic anthropology of female complementarity taught by popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI» (299, 310).

Schaefer takes a different stance (21–23 and *passim*) from Candida Moss, not even cited, with respect to early Christian persecutions and martyrs. On the other hand, she agrees with most scholars that until at least the second half of the second century the Roman church was governed by a presbyteral council rather than a monarchic bishop (21 and *passim*). Now, however, Alistair Stewart\(^2\) argues that the episcopacy was monarchic from the beginning and a collegial governance by elders was in fact unknown in the first centuries. Schaefer is correct that the Constantinian basilica of St Peter «was martyrium (transept) and funerary hall (nave and aisles) juxtaposed, not a place for regular eucharistic assemblies» (330). All Roman Constantinian basilicas seem to have been roofed cemeteries, as Ramsay MacMullen has emphasised.\(^3\)

Schaefer takes Canon 2 of the Second Council of Nimes as prohibiting women’s diaconate (141), whereas the prohibition of taking women *in ministerium leviticum* likely refers to the presbyterate. But her questions, asked most probably from a Catholic perspective, are sensible: «In the past, the old churches of the East and the Roman church in its first 1200 years were welcoming of women’s participation in official ministry. Why was women’s ecclesiastical ministry visible and validated in more androcentric times? Why is it less visible today, when the equality of the sexes is an accepted principle? ... Giftedness for pastoral office can be found among both women and men» (376, 378). Schaefer challenges the priest’s «ontological identification» with Christ (377), which has been one factor in the exclusion of women from ecclesiastical offices in the Catholic confession. One could add that the historical Jesus was not only a man, but also a Jew and a ‘white’, or at least not an Asian; thus, if women are to be ruled out from ordained offices because Jesus was not a woman, so should also all non-Jewish men be excluded, as well as, for instance, all Chinese men.

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