

# An Analysis of How the Church of Norway Coped with Male Pastors Who Refuse to Work with Female Colleagues

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## 1. Introduction

Numerous female pastors and bishops in the Church of Norway today is a situation that does not come without struggle and persistent effort. The women before this generation have worked hard to earn their right to work as pastors. Way back in history, many women pastors have experienced being rejected in their callings because of their gender. Today, in contemporary society, women pastors are acknowledged and have the same rights as male pastors in the Church of Norway.<sup>1</sup> However, a small minority of male pastors do not want to cooperate with female pastors.

The Church of Norway had coped with the issue of male pastors rejecting female colleagues by implementing policies. That will protect women pastors from discrimination and secure the rights of male pastors against women pastors. The refusal of women in clerical offices is not a new thing. Many studies have contributed to theological analysis and reflection on the pros and cons of women pastors' acceptance into the office.<sup>2</sup> However, conflicting views exist on how the Church of Norway (CofN) coped with this issue. Moreover, it relates to the church's traditional teaching positions when challenged and changed.

In 2020 the issue of a few male pastors refusing to work with female pastors was brought up in the media. To put it in context, a minority of male pastors today refuse to work with female colleagues. They become vocal about it in the media. Last 12 August 2020, a young male pastor wrote an article published in the newspaper. He questioned what would happen to those male pastors like himself who wanted to reserve themselves from working with female pastor colleagues.<sup>3</sup> The article has been debated throughout the congregation and on many media platforms. These kinds of debates on media bring the previous debate of women's isolation in the workplace to another phase. The year after, another pastor from Møre named

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<sup>1</sup> Stendal, Synnøve Hinnaland. "-under Forvandlingens Lov": *En Analyse Av Stortingsdebatten Om Kvinnelige Prester I 1930-årene* (doctoral thesis, Lunds Universitet, 2003): P, 414; See also Welfare Religion in a European Perspective. *Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe : Vol. 2 : Gendered, Religious and Social Change*. Vol. 2. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. p. 94; and also Norderval, Kristin Molland. *Mot Strømmen : Kvinnelige Teologer I Norge Før Og Nå*. Oslo: Land Og Kirke/Gyldendal, 1982; See also Bjerkås, Ingrid, Hanne Stenvaag, and Bjørg Kjersti Myren. *Hun Våget å Gå Foran : Ingrid Bjerkås Og Kvinners Prestetjeneste I Norge*. Oslo: Verbum, 2011; and <https://www.kirken.no/nb-NO/bispedommer/Hamar/biskopen/prekener-og-appeller/60%20ar%20med%20kvinner%20i%20prestetjenesten/>

<sup>2</sup> Stendal, Synnøve Hinnaland. "-under Forvandlingens Lov" : *En Analyse Av Stortingsdebatten Om Kvinnelige Prester I 1930-årene*,

<sup>3</sup> I am referring with the issue recently about a debate that Mikael Bruun was involved. Bruun refused to work with his female colleagues. This eventually resulted in him leaving his position as a pastor in Sogndal. The debate was at dagsnytt18 a Norwegian radio tv program in NRK. An article was also written at Vårt Land. <https://www.vl.no/religion/kirke/2020/10/16/mikael-bruun-en-klar-innstramming/>

Benjamin Bjørnsen Anda did the same. Anda told *Vårt Land*, a Christian daily newspaper published in Oslo, that he was against women pastors.<sup>4</sup>

These articles about pastors against women show another part of the debate, pointing to the church's adaptation of gender equality. Since the debate about women's isolation in the CofN has been somehow resolved because of policies implemented by church leaders and the Parliament and women who fight for it, it is not a huge issue today. Furthermore, the CofN long ago accepted women in the clerical office. Does it mean that one should neglect the current women pastor's debate; of course not. In this thesis, we primarily are looking at the different angle—the church's application of the rules and policies for those few who reject women pastors as co-workers.

The research aims to contribute a deeper understanding of how the CofN coped with the issues regarding male pastors against and refusing to work with women pastors. Furthermore, to be able to touch and contribute to perhaps the rarely seen part of the women's debate is its impact on the church's position and rules. This paper will also contribute to non-Norwegian speakers interested in grasping how the CofN works with these debates. It will also contribute to my interest in knowing the position of women pastor in Norway. As Iver and Cecilie B. Neumann pointed out in an article, researchers are always connected in their research choices; it may be an experience or something related to them.<sup>5</sup> Humans are also relational when it comes to choosing a topic for research.<sup>6</sup> It is somehow true because this research idea is something that I can relate to even though I am not a member of the CofN. I have lived in Norway for almost ten years and admire gender equality within the churches. I became more exposed to the idea of women pastors when I studied theology at MF (a Norwegian school of theology and society). It is very different from the Roman Catholic context where I grew up, where women are not allowed to be priests or leaders of a church. Learning more about congregations accepting women as teachers and preachers became fascinating. It is why I pursued this topic when I read the news at NRK, *Vårt Land*, and saw the debate on tv that a few male pastors refuse to cooperate with female pastors.

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<sup>4</sup> Vårt Land, "Prest sier «nei» til kvinnelige prester. Presteforeningen: påvirker arbeidsmiljøet," accessed 19/03/2023 at <https://www.vl.no/religion/2022/07/14/prest-sier-nei-til-kvinnelig-prester-presteforeningen-pavirker-arbeidsmiljoet/>

<sup>5</sup> Neumann, Cecilie Basberg, and Iver B. Neumann. "Uses of the Self: Two Ways of Thinking about Scholarly Situatedness and Method." *Millennium* 43, no. 3 (2015), 800.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

## 1.1. Research Questions

The women pastors debate has already been resolved in the CofN, and it is not a big issue as before. However, few male pastors cannot accept work with women pastors in the CofN today. Given that it was resolved long ago, I wondered how the church would react to this issue. I aim to discover where the CofN stood on this issue before and where they stand now. Moreover, I want also to examine and find out the arguments of these male pastors and why they opposed women pastors that the majority in the CofN had already accepted. What are the consequences for those few who, until now, reject women pastors? This research will not go into the particular question of women's isolation. It will elaborate on the church's rules and male pastors' consequences when they refuse to cooperate with their female colleagues. Furthermore, the research will analyse the church's position on the few male pastors who refused to work with female pastors. Moreover, it will focus on policies concerning the said issue.

### *Main question:*

How does the Church of Norway cope with the issue of male pastors rejecting female pastor colleagues?

### *Sub questions:*

1. What are the church's policies protecting women's pastors against discrimination?
2. What are the consequences when someone goes against these policies? Are there any changes to the rules?
3. What are the reasons or arguments of the male pastors that reject female pastors?

The objective is to examine the policies used by the church concerning gender equality. The research will use the recent issue of a few male pastors refusing to work with female pastors posted on a news website, *Vårt Land* and NRK, as a primary example. It will also use the cases about women pastors' debates posted on media. Moreover, analyse how the Church coped with women's opposition in the priesthood.

Before getting into this project, sharing an understanding of key terminologies is essential. For this thesis, a few terms must be discussed from the beginning. First is the term "pastor". The term, in general, means, according to the oxford dictionary, "a minister in charge of a

Christian church or group, especially in some nonconformist or protestant churches.”<sup>7</sup> The term pastor will be used for this project as equivalent to the Norwegian term *Prest*. It refers to the ordained leader of the Lutheran Church of Norway. Although this term is also frequently referred to the Pentecostal church leaders, it will not be used here as the same.

## 1.2. Methodology

As mentioned above, the study’s objective is to present and analyse how the church of Norway coped with the opposition of a few male pastors to work with female pastors. To be able to achieve the goals, a qualitative research approach is used. Since this project focuses more on some historical text, events, articles and the rules of the Church of Norway, document analysis and content analysis are suited as methodologies. According to Chad Nelson and Robert H. Woods, Jr, content analysis is a form of textual analysis. It helps to evaluate text and understand religious events—by selecting the text, tracking specific data and assessing the image of a particular group in society.<sup>8</sup> The data I will collect and select for this research are primarily existing. In order to gain information about the church’s policy, I will select existing data, news articles, interviews of bishops and pastors addressing these issues, church documents and previous studies. I will select different case studies, existing articles, and documents, including news articles.

Furthermore, as Nelson and Woods, Jr state, “Content analysis is studying a text that already exists rather than getting people to produce text.”<sup>9</sup> It means that this method specifically used historical text and documents that have already been published. Several steps have been followed using this method. First, I selected text that is relevant to my research question.<sup>10</sup> However, this step required much time and several sampling to select a few relevant texts and documents. The second step was to put the text into categories.<sup>11</sup> This step, according to Nelson and Woods, “identifies the repeating patterns or treatments”.<sup>12</sup> This procedure gives an eye opener on how the church of Norway copes with the refusal of some male pastors to work with female pastors. This step is also essential when looking at the different arguments

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<sup>7</sup> Oxford Dictionary, “Pastor,” accessed 09/04/2023 at <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/pastor?q=pastor>

<sup>8</sup> Nelson, Chad and Woods, Robert H. Jr, “Content Analysis” in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Stausberg, M. and Engler, S. (London: Routledge, 2011), 111.

<sup>9</sup> Nelson, Chad and Woods, Robert H. Jr, “Content Analysis”, 111.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 114

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

of the women pastors debate. For example, categorising the given text/documents from old and new helps to see if the arguments are repeated or changed over time.

Moreover, the third step of content analysis is classifying in substance and form.<sup>13</sup> Here I examined other research that has been done before about the topic, historical text and news articles. In this procedure, I also look at the validity of the text or document. After that, the fourth step is selecting units of analysis. It helps to determine what content will employ the situation of my sample or the criteria of these contents.<sup>14</sup> Lastly, the final step is to explain the result—few religious studies about gender use this methodology. As Nelson and Woods mentioned, the researcher can go beyond manifest content.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, since the research will examine some debate between female and male pastors in the Norwegian congregation, content analysis is used to describe communication phenomena. Although this paper will not conduct interviews, content analysis will be together with another method, document analysis.

Document analysis is a combination of content analysis and thematic analysis. Document analysis organises information into specific categories associated with the research question. Moreover, the thematic analysis is the more carefully re-reading and reviewing of the data.<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that using documents in the research needs closer evaluation and understanding based on their use and content. Moreover, documents serve a purpose in a specific situation and audience.<sup>17</sup> So it is essential to consider the original purposes of the document and its quality. Moreover, document analysis is a systematic procedure for evaluating documents (printed and electronic). Data must be examined and interpreted to gain meaning, understand, and develop empirical knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the methods mentioned above, Adding a discourse analysis method has been suggested. Discourse analysis is helpful in this research study when dealing with textual

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 114

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Bowen, Glenn. "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal*, Vol. 9 No.2 (2009): 32, doi:10.3316/QRJ0902027.

<sup>17</sup> Davie, G and Wyatt D., "Document Analysis" in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Stausberg, M. and Engler, S. (London: Routledge, 2011), 157.

<sup>18</sup> Bowen, Glenn. "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," 27.



interpretation. Though this method is more into the study of words, it is also helpful in examining how actions are given meaning.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3.Limitations

The study will focus on the church's ways/strategies of coping with the issue of women pastors. This paper has some limitations due to the time given; the study will focus on the church's ways of coping with the issue of women pastors. It includes the policy of the CofN about female clergy. Furthermore, it will be limited to a few debates on the pro-women and contra-women pastors from 1960 to 2020. However, it will briefly discuss the 1930s debate historical background chapter. It will emphasise the current debate, such as the Mikael Bruun case. It will also include articles about the issues of male pastors who do not want to collaborate with female colleagues at Vårtland and NRK.

Furthermore, this paper will briefly present some of the most relevant theological and biblical backgrounds. In addition, the research will focus on the church's challenges and policies for those who reject women as colleagues but not include women's isolation in the workplace context. Access to literature is another limitation. Since there is little research about the church's position and how it copes with women's debate, it will be difficult to access data.

Furthermore, some available data about the topic are written in Norwegian. There will be a language barrier in looking at the data. It is also important to note that the research will be examined from an outsider's perspective. Since I do not belong to the CofN and not participating in any pastoral position.

In addition, the study will examine the debate in the newspaper and media. However, it will be limited only to the published literature, reports, news, commentaries, and articles available in Norwegian media. Living in Norway for years, I completed Norwegian language courses until level B2. Though hurdles still exist to overcome because I am not a native Norwegian speaker, I completed some complex searches and translations myself. I asked for help from Norwegian-speaking scholars and associates for the complicated article and information.

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<sup>19</sup> Davie, G and Wyatt D., "Document Analysis," 134.

#### 1.4. Materials and Literature

As mentioned above, I will use analysis as a methodology, which means I will work with many kinds of literature and sources. However, It is essential to state my primary and secondary sources. In this project, I gathered texts, published research and books from theologians, pastors, and biblical scholars about the women pastor's debate in Norway. In addition to these, I also get some articles online, newspaper articles from NRK and Vårtland. Since the research is about the CofN, the materials collected are primarily written in Norwegian. However, some English-translated books are also used in this paper.

I will use Online news articles from NRK, Aftenposten and Vårt Land regarding Mikael Bruun and Benjamin Bjørnsen Anda's case as my primary sources. In addition, are some online documents from the CofN, such as those from *Bespemøtet*, *Kirkemøtet* and some online articles from *Presteforeningen*.

Furthermore, as for my secondary literature, I will use Arne Fjelberg's analysis in his book "*Kvinnelige Prester?*", Bjarne Skard's "*Contra Kvinnelige Prester*", Sverre Aalen's work in "*Kvinnelige Prester Hvorfor Ikke?*", Moreover, Jakob Jervell's and Andreas Aarflot *Bisperåd og Kirkestyre* and some articles (such as *Kirke og kultur*) about women pastors' debate in Norway.

Moreover, Kristin Molland Norderval wrote a book about the history of women theologians in Norway, published in 1982. The book also tackles the necessary historical background of Norway's women pastors' debate. Norderval's book is an essential material in chapter two of this paper. It provides almost all, if not all, of the necessary milestones in the women's debate in the CofN.

After introducing the thesis and choosing methods, limitations, materials, and theories, we move on to the second chapter, the historical background. However, before jumping into that section, I will present how this paper will be arranged.

## 1.5. Disposition

The thesis is organised in the following manner. Chapter One (above) presents the introduction, which includes the paper's research questions, methods, limitations, materials and theories. Chapter two examines the historical background, briefly discussing women's ordination and milestones in the CofN. Moreover, It will present the debate from the 1930s and briefly provide an overview of the Norwegian Theological society. Chapter three presents the 60-plus years of women pastors. It will include the first ordained female pastor in the CofN and the other women pastor pioneers. Furthermore, this chapter will also examine the discussion (about women pastors) in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Chapter four will tackle the issue of conservative pastors today. It will include the case of Mikael Bruun and some online articles about the issue of women pastors. Moreover, it will analyse the policies and the church's reaction towards male pastors refusing to work with female colleagues by examining the Bishop conference statements. Then the last part is my findings or conclusions.

## 2. Historical Background

### 2.1. The Church of Norway

This chapter is intended to provide the historical background about the woman pastors in the Lutheran Church of Norway. It will start by presenting a brief history of women pastors. It will primarily look at women's milestones before accessing the church office. It will discuss the debate from the 1930s until the beginning of the 1960s. It will also include an overview of the women's theological society that play an essential role in the milestone of women pastors.

Moreover, it will dive into the 60-plus years of Norway having women pastors. Furthermore, it focuses on the first women pastor Ingrid Bjerås and Bishop Rosemarie Køhn. Moreover, it will also briefly present some of the women pastors that follow the steps of Bjerås.

Moreover, it will also discuss the different arguments of the debate from 1958.

It has been a long process for the Church of Norway (CofN) to adopt a gender equality policy.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the process was not easy; many theological, political and social debates existed. During the process, there was much dialogue between the contra and pro-women, within and outside the church. Women pastors have indeed achieved milestones

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<sup>20</sup> Stendal, Synnøve Hinnaland. "-under Forvandlingens Lov": En Analyse Av Stortingsdebatten Om Kvinnelige Prester I 1930-årene.

concerning equality. History shows that women's rights result from many generations winning battles and hard work.<sup>21</sup>

The CofN made a strategic plan to protect the rights of women pastors in the church. It is connected to "the ecumenical decade 1988-98- Churches in solidarity with women."<sup>22</sup> It is stated that "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, and there is no longer male and female: for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28): whereas Jesus Christ ministered to men and women alike; Many women live under legal systems that do not acknowledge their rights to equal representation, to hold property, or even to make decisions regarding their children."<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, As Hallgeir Elstad once said, "Since World War II, women's ordination has been accepted in the Nordic Lutheran Churches."<sup>24</sup> It has been over 60 years since Norway got its first female pastor. It started in Denmark in 1948, where the first female priest was ordained, followed by Sweden in 1960, Iceland in 1974, and Finland in 1988.<sup>25</sup> According to the latest news in Sweden, female pastors have already outnumbered male pastors.<sup>26</sup> Today, the female clergy in Norway is increasing steadily. In 2011, according to NRK, a Norwegian broadcasting channel/corporation, Only one in four pastors in the country were women. It is noted that fifty years after Norway got its first female pastor.<sup>27</sup> In 2017, the number of women pastors in the CofN was 31%; in 2019, it increased to 35.9%, according to the

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<sup>21</sup> See, Strategiplan for likestilling i Den norske kirke 2015-2023, accessed 27/02/2022 at [https://kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/planer-visjonsdokument-og-strategier/plan\\_likestilling\\_2015\\_bm\\_web.pdf](https://kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/planer-visjonsdokument-og-strategier/plan_likestilling_2015_bm_web.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Resolution: Ecumenical Decade 1988-89, accessed 27/02/2022 [https://www.sneucc.org/files/tables/content/7726829/fields/files/96f20a11c4614b3f88370643b8207c25/199\\_1\\_solidarity\\_with\\_women.pdf](https://www.sneucc.org/files/tables/content/7726829/fields/files/96f20a11c4614b3f88370643b8207c25/199_1_solidarity_with_women.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Elstad, Hallgeir, "Gender and Conflict: Debating Women's Ordination in Norway in the 20th Century," In *Religion and Conflict: essays on the origins of religious conflicts and resolution approaches*, ed. Erik Eynikel & Angeliki Ziaka, (Harpree Publishing, 2011), 355.

<sup>25</sup> Niemela, Kati. "Female Clergy as Agents of Religious Change?" *Religions* 2, no. 3, Religions (Basel, Switzerland, 2011) 361. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel2030358>

<sup>26</sup> Keyton David, "Women flourish in Swedish church". The Associated Press, Last modified 20 July, 2020. <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2020/jul/26/women-flourish-in-swedish-church/>; See also, Søvik, Oddvar. *Her Er Ikke Mann Og Kvinne: Ja Til Kvinnelige Hyrder Og Lærere*, (Ottestad: Ventura, 2020), 13

<sup>27</sup> NRK, «Fremdeles er det altfor få», last modified 18/03/2011 <https://www.nrk.no/innlandet/50-ar-med-kvinnelige-prester-1.7554211>

report.<sup>28</sup> The number of women pastors in the CofN has been the same in Denmark since 1980.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, it is also important to note that many things happened before women pastor got their positions. According to Norderval, as she presents all the milestones women experience before getting their right to preach, women start with having no right to access to education. In 1870, is the start of women having little access to academic study. In 1880, the start of women entering theological studies. Elstad noted, “The 1870s and 1880s represented a new era in Norwegian cultural history.”

Furthermore, in the women’s liberation debate during these years (the 1980s and 1890s), the idea of women pastors has not been discussed yet. Maybe because, in the late 1880s, only one woman studied theology. Furthermore, it was not before 1899 that there was a woman who completed her degree in theology named Valborg Lerche. She has been engaged in diaconal work because the ministry was not opened yet.<sup>30</sup>

## 2.2. The idea of women pastors

In 1890, Vilhelm Andreas Wexelsen, a member of the Norwegian Parliament who was also a clergyman and later became Bishop in the diocese of Nidaros, indirectly advocated female pastors.<sup>31</sup> It is connected to the bill he supported as a liberal politician, intended to give both men and women the right to vote.<sup>32</sup>

The question of women being pastors has a long history in the CofN. In the early 1900s, the centre of the ecclesiastical debate about women’s access to speak within the church was vital. Since this issue concerns women preaching within the church, in 1902, the Ministry of the Church sent a request to the theological faculty and the Bishop about women’s access to ordination. All bishops (six at that time) rejected the request because it was against the

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<sup>28</sup> Kirkerådet «Årsrapport for den norske kirke 2019», last modified 02/062020 <https://www.kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/kirkeradet/arsmeldinger/%C3%A5rsrapport%20for%20den%20norske%20kirke%202019%20revidert%202.%20juni.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Elstad, Hallgeir (2011). “Gender and Conflict: Debating Women’s Ordination in Norway in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, 335.

<sup>30</sup> Norderva, (1982) *Mot strømmen*, 23-24.

<sup>31</sup> Elstad, “Gender and Conflict: Debating Women’s Ordination in Norway in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, 340

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

church's confession and God's word. Moreover, the theological professors did not find reasons to open the clerical offices to women.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, in 1903, according to Jon Bech, women got their right to vote at the *menighetsrådsmøter* (parish council meetings), the same rights as men.<sup>34</sup> However, women still do not have the opportunity to preach in the service.<sup>35</sup>

During that time, there was unanimous opposition to women being pastors within the church. Furthermore, by the end of 1910, sixty-seven women had taken the civil exam, nine lawyers and one theologian.<sup>36</sup> However, according to Section 92 of the constitution during that time, Norderval noted that women could not use their education to be official or civil servants.<sup>37</sup> Women then used their theological education mostly in supporting roles in the church or a chance to go as missionaries. They are not allowed to preach. In other words, women got access to study but were restricted in preaching and church services.

The question of women preachers was discussed by the government in 1911. The Salvation Army's application for permission for Mrs Bromwell Booth to preach at Bergen Cathedral brought it up.<sup>38</sup> According to Elstad, the government first refused the application; however, they asked the Faculty of Theology and the Bishops to give their opinion about "women preaching."<sup>39</sup> Elstad noted that only two Bishops were willing to permit women to deliver the so-called 'edifying talks' in churches outside the morning service, while the majority rejected the idea of any changes in the field.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, most theological professors find it reasonable for women to preach in the churches.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, in 1911, there was a compromise; women were still not allowed to preach; however, they were permitted to give

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<sup>33</sup> Norderval, Kristin Molland. *Mot Strømmen: En Undersøkelse Av Utviklingen Av De Kvinnelige Teologers Arbeidsmuligheter Og Rettigheter I Den Norske Kirke Kombinert Med En Sosiologisk Undersøkelse Av De Kvinnelige Teologers Bakgrunn Og Yrkesutøvelse*, (1981), 47.

<sup>34</sup> Bech, Jon, "100 år med stemmerett for kvinner- kvinnelige prester," Modified 8/07/2013, (my translation) [https://lovdata.no/artikkel/100\\_ar\\_med\\_stemmerett\\_for\\_kvinner\\_kvinnelige\\_prest/1228#:~:text=I%201956%20vedtok%20Stortinget%20med,tjeneste%20som%20prest%20i%20Norge](https://lovdata.no/artikkel/100_ar_med_stemmerett_for_kvinner_kvinnelige_prest/1228#:~:text=I%201956%20vedtok%20Stortinget%20med,tjeneste%20som%20prest%20i%20Norge)

<sup>35</sup> Elstad, "Gender and Conflict: Debating Women's Ordination in Norway in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 338

<sup>36</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 46.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Elstad, "Gender and Conflict: Debating Women's Ordination in Norway in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 338.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

talks based on the word of God and Christian enlightenment; the official royal order permitted this.<sup>42</sup>

In 1912 the political body opened the debate about women in ecclesiastical offices in Norway.<sup>43</sup> Same time when Parliament (*Stortinget*) had opened the question of women's access to government positions. Although such positions were adopted, as Norderval noted, there were restrictions to the church pastors, ministers and the military.<sup>44</sup> Meaning women were restricted from preaching in church services and were only allowed outside the service, following Bishop Lunde's proposal.<sup>45</sup> The ban on women preaching in church services became increasingly problematic. Moreover, as Norderval said, it was meaningless after laypeople were allowed to do it in regular Sunday services in 1913.<sup>46</sup>

In 1917, most bishops still refused to open the clergy offices to women. However, it is not the case with most of the theology professors at the University. Elstad noted that "the professors made a statement arguing that this inconsistency in law had to be abolished. Furthermore, they also argued that no principles existed against women becoming pastors."<sup>47</sup> Moreover, in 1921 someone came to another conclusion: Bishop Jens Tandberg of the Diocese of Oslo. His opinion was that the negative attitude towards women clergy should change. However, he did not force the matter.

Moreover, there is still no change in Bishop's opinion about the idea of women pastors. In the 1920s, the Act of 1912 Ministry of Women was proposed for change advocated by feminist organisations. However, the opposition was firm that the church should resolve this before being sure of the result.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, in April 1921, in the local church in Oslo, for the first time, a woman preached in an ordinary service in the CofN.<sup>49</sup> Martha Steinvik was the preacher and the first female student at MF or *Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet*, now known as the Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society. The institution is known to have a more conservative view at that time. The faculty educates mainly pastors, catechists, theologians and religious teachers.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> See Stendal, "-under Forvandlingens Lov," 389.

<sup>44</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 46.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 43

<sup>46</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 38.

<sup>47</sup> Elstad, 338

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 341.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 342

Women have had access to theological studies since its establishment in 1908; however, access to the practical theological seminar was gained in 1976.<sup>50</sup> Due to what Steinsvik did, she was admonished by the faculty's direction. She acted against the law, and in protest, she broke off her theological studies.<sup>51</sup> Notably, from that time until 1915, MF had a leader named Sigurd Oland, who opposed women preachers.<sup>52</sup> Concerning women preachers, the conservative clergymen and most bishops were in the same position. They were strict with their Biblical argument, giving women no right to preach in churches. However, Bishop Johan Lunde, Bishop of Oslo, was the only one willing to accept preachers outside of service because of women's outstanding efforts in Christian organisations. In 1925, with the support of the Ministry of Church Affairs, by law, women were permitted to preach in churches outside the regular service.<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, the proposal was approved by the King. According to the law, the women were allowed to preach but not in the church service. According to Norderval, women were granted permission to preach besides church services.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, in 1926, only 43 parish councils favoured women pastors, and 957 were against women pastors when asked to give their opinion.<sup>55</sup>

### 2.3. Debates from the 1930s

In 1930, the same issue was opened again. It was raised in the Norwegian Parliament three times under two governments.<sup>56</sup> The so-called "Lex Mowinckel" government put forward a proposal for access to women's government offices. However, in 1934 it was come to consideration and eventually voted down.<sup>57</sup> In 1936, the labour party took the proposal up

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<sup>50</sup> Store Norske Leksikon, «MF vitenskapelig høyskole», last modified 27/12/2022,

[https://snl.no/MF\\_vitenskapelig\\_h%C3%B8yskole](https://snl.no/MF_vitenskapelig_h%C3%B8yskole)

<sup>51</sup> Elstad, "Gender and Conflict: Debating Women's Ordination in Norway in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 343.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 343.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 339.

<sup>54</sup> Norverdal, Mot Strømen, 43. See also Bech, Jon, "100 år med stemmerett for kvinner- kvinnelige prester," Modified 8/07/2013, (my translation)

[https://lovdata.no/artikkel/100\\_ar\\_med\\_stemmerett\\_for\\_kvinner\\_kvinnelige\\_prest/1228#:~:text=I%201956%20vedtok%20Stortinget%20med,tjeneste%20som%20prest%20i%20Norge](https://lovdata.no/artikkel/100_ar_med_stemmerett_for_kvinner_kvinnelige_prest/1228#:~:text=I%201956%20vedtok%20Stortinget%20med,tjeneste%20som%20prest%20i%20Norge)

<sup>55</sup> Bech, Jon, "100 år med stemmerett for kvinner- kvinnelige prester," Modified 8/07/2013, (my translation)

[https://lovdata.no/artikkel/100\\_ar\\_med\\_stemmerett\\_for\\_kvinner\\_kvinnelige\\_prest/1228#:~:text=I%201956%20vedtok%20Stortinget%20med,tjeneste%20som%20prest%20i%20Norge](https://lovdata.no/artikkel/100_ar_med_stemmerett_for_kvinner_kvinnelige_prest/1228#:~:text=I%201956%20vedtok%20Stortinget%20med,tjeneste%20som%20prest%20i%20Norge)

<sup>56</sup> Stendal, "-under Forvandlingens Lov," 389.

<sup>57</sup> Bech, Jon, "100 år med stemmerett for kvinner- kvinnelige prester," Modified 8/07/2013, (my translation)

[https://lovdata.no/artikkel/100\\_ar\\_med\\_stemmerett\\_for\\_kvinner\\_kvinnelige\\_prest/1228#:~:text=I%201956%20vedtok%20Stortinget%20med,tjeneste%20som%20prest%20i%20Norge](https://lovdata.no/artikkel/100_ar_med_stemmerett_for_kvinner_kvinnelige_prest/1228#:~:text=I%201956%20vedtok%20Stortinget%20med,tjeneste%20som%20prest%20i%20Norge)



again but it was also voted down.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, according to Elstad, “In 1937, viewing the question of female pastors as a matter of civil rights was agreed upon by the majority in Parliament.”<sup>59</sup>

Later in 1938, the proposal was relaunched and, by this time, adopted as a compromise to the so-called “Lex Mowinckel”.<sup>60</sup> Elstad noted, “The so-called Lex Mowinckel states that women can be employed in government offices under the same conditions as men. However, regarding the ecclesiastical offices, women should not be employed as pastors, where the church opposes it for reason of principle.”<sup>61</sup>

*Kvinner kan under de samme betingelser som menn ansettes i statens embeder. Ved besettelse av kirkelige embedder bør dog kvinner ikke ansettes som prester, hvor menighetene av prinsipielle grunner uttaler seg imot det.*<sup>62</sup>

According to Stendal, the Debate in Storting on women ministers occurred when the opposite view of women prevailed. The opposing and supporting views expressed in the debate were gender complimentary thinking, subordination ideology and gender equality ideology.<sup>63</sup> The biblical view of MF made an impact and had been at extreme points by that time.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the biblical interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-13 resulted in two opposing views of women pastors.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, the debate has three topics, as Bjørg Tvetene Sæter mentioned in a report/thesis. These topics are “public opinion, what the Bible said about women’s behaviour in church meetings and the female nature.”<sup>66</sup> It is essential to note that women’s access to a clerical office in the CofN does not start as a church debate. It was the politicians who brought the case to the agenda. The case was initially the question of women’s access to government

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Elstad, Hallgeir (2011). “Gender and Conflict: Debating Women’s Ordination in Norway in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, 342.

<sup>60</sup> Bech, Jon, “100 år med stemmerett for kvinner- kvinnelige prester,” Modified 8/07/2013, (my translation)

<sup>61</sup> Elstad, Hallgeir, «Ho var den første», Nytt Norsk Kirke Blad, 2011, 7. (my translation)

<https://www.tf.uio.no/forskning/publikasjoner/nytt-norsk-kirkeblad/nnk-i-pdf/nnk-2011-3.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Stendal, «-under forvandringens Lov,» 391.

<sup>64</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 62.

<sup>65</sup> Stendal, «-under forvandringens Lov,» 391.

<sup>66</sup> Sæter, Bjørg Tvetene. *Kvinnelige Prester: En Presentasjon Og Analyse Av Den Teologiske Debatten I Norge*. Vol. 6/08. Rapport (Sogndal: (Høgskulen i Sogn Og Fjordane, Avdeling for Lærarutdanning Og Idrett, 2008), 23.

officials.<sup>67</sup> We also note that the CofN was not yet separated from the state.<sup>68</sup> In 1891, women's access to public offices was promoted. The women's access to ecclesiastical office waited for 55 years after the proposal was approved in 1938 by the Parliament.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, Stendal's thesis shows that a gradual shift in the church's understanding of the limitations of the New Testament regarding women's service has occurred since the 20th Century. On the one hand, the opposing side has maintained the Bible as a binding instruction for all times, only allowing men to be the leader and teachers of the church. While on the other hand, the supporting side interprets the verses in the New Testament letters more pragmatically, giving the text great principles and importance. According to the supporting side, women should be included in the ministry to interpret the stories of Jesus's encounters with women in the Bible.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the opposing side considered tradition as an argument against women. However, Stendal notes this has become non-essential because reforms should not be brought upon the church outside the authorities.<sup>71</sup>

The issue of women pastors had been regarded as a matter of liberalism, justice and human rights. As Stendal said, "The argument implied optimism for developments and was combined with strong criticism."<sup>72</sup> Moreover, this criticism was that "the church stood on conservatism and power, and the opposite to progress. Nevertheless, the church could also undergo metamorphosis."<sup>73</sup> The church has indeed shown it can adopt changes.

In principle, the priesthoods had been opened to women by an amendment to the law in 1938. The act to open all state offices to women is passed.<sup>74</sup> However, the *Storting* (Parliament) have some addition to the decision stating that women should not be employed as pastors where they were unwanted by the congregations. Notably, and as mentioned above, in 1926, 957 Parish councils (*Menighetsråd*) voted against women's pastoral service, and only 43 voted for it.<sup>75</sup> As Scaer quotes the work of Fred Meuser, to some extent, the church was

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>68</sup> In 2017, the church of Norway is officially separated from the state, see <https://kirken.no/nb-NO/church-of-norway/about/brief-history/> accessed 27/02/2022

<sup>69</sup> Sæter, Bjørg Tvetene, *Kvinnelige Prester*, 9.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 398.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Saltkjel, Mari, and Sanna Sjöswärd. *Som En Krone På Hodet: Fortellinger Om Kvinners Prestekall*. (Oslo: Verbum, 2011), 12.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 13.

political, and the first to decide women's ordination was not ecclesiastical but rather political.<sup>76</sup>

With that being mentioned, we can say that women have been given some rights within the church but with reservations. For example, as mentioned earlier, in 1903, women got the right to vote at the parish council. They were allowed to give lectures but could not preach. It was not before 1925 that they were given a chance to preach but with reservation. It is mainly because most of the church's leaders opposed having women preach in the church service. It took time for the state to give women complete access to the priesthood without reservations. It is, I think, mainly because of the kind of position (as a pastor) that holds a deep ecclesiastical and biblical grip. Furthermore, when women finally got full access to preach in the ordinary service, there were still conditions. For example, the congregation can say no to women pastors if it opposes their principle. It is under the so-called "Lex Mowinckel" mentioned above. In other words, no total access has been given here. In political arguments, it is maybe solved as rights for equality. However, they must always consider what the church's principles, traditions, and biblical interpretations say to women pastors. The state made a compromise to meet the church's demand. Seen from the state authorities' side, it was a technically unfortunate section that broke with the rest of the legislation. In the long term, the provision had no chance of surviving.

The question became relevant in the early 1950s, and again it was the labour party that wanted to implement a change in law from an equality point of view. The background was that the issue of women's equality with men and the work to give her full political and social rights had received international attention after the second world war.<sup>77</sup> The political debate or argument is primarily about human and women's rights as part of the functioning society. As the church is part of society, women should have a representative in the church. Women are not into dominating men in the church but are asking for equal rights. All have the same rights, as God created as in His image. As Stendal quoted Signw Swennson, who fights for women's position to be pastors, "We stand not as women, we stand as human, created in God's image. We stand as Norwegian people."<sup>78</sup> It shows one of the fundamentals of the women pastors' debates as an equal rights debate. Another political argument was religious

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<sup>76</sup> Scaer, D.P., in Harrison, Matthew C., and John T. Pless. *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective : A Collection of Essays*. 2nd ed. St. Louis, Mo: (Concordia Pub. House, 2009), 227.

<sup>77</sup> Stendal, *Kirke og stat*, 133.

<sup>78</sup> Stendal, *Kirke og stat*, 133 (my translation)

freedom. It also includes having the same rights in religious beliefs and positions. Here the argument is that one can choose under the religious rights to say no or yes to include or not based on one religious principle. It means according to the UN, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”<sup>79</sup>

We can say that the state is opening the opportunity for women at that time with equal rights. The labour party and the feminist organisations supported the ideology of gender equality. However, the opposition is into subordination ideology.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the opposition also leaned toward the conservative way of understanding the Bible at that time. As I said earlier, it is the position of being a church pastor anchored to the word of God and the long church traditions.

After Lex Mowinckel was established, the formal conditions for women pastors it has remained conditional that women theologians applied in the church office as pastors need a Bishop who can accept to ordain them.<sup>81</sup>

There was a compromise that was happening during that time. There was someone who stood in the midpoint of the debate, Bishop Berggrav. According to Estald, Beggrav attempted to have a ‘compromise: a specially designed position for women.’<sup>82</sup> Establishing a Bishop committee that will discuss the said issue. Moreover, in 1937 the committee’s conclusion was not to include any clerical functions in this position of women. Furthermore, the Bishops also discussed special education for the position.<sup>83</sup>

The said discussion and compromise were set aside during the Second World War. In 1947, it was brought up again when the bishops adopted a position supporting laypeople (both male and female) in the parishes.<sup>84</sup> The Bishop could assign laypersons to clerical positions in parishes or at institutions. It was following the royal order of 28 January 1949.<sup>85</sup> Bishop

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<sup>79</sup> United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights#:~:text=Everyone%20has%20the%20right%20to%20freedom%20of%20thought%2C%20conscience%20and,%2C%20practice%2C%20worship%20and%20observance>

<sup>80</sup> Elstad, 343

<sup>81</sup> Elstad, 343

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 344

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 345

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 345

Berggrav, in 1950, assigned or gave the right to two women with a theology degree and to Agnes Vold (theological candidate) a position in parishes without ordination.<sup>86</sup> Since conservative theologians and laypeople are the majority, they advocate a non-clerical position for women.

The need for alternative and extended female service in the church was emphasised during the Bishop's conference in 1955.<sup>87</sup> Notably, this is also after Bishop Berggrav's retirement.<sup>88</sup> It was the year when the debate occurred about Norway's accession to the United Nations Convention on Women's Political Rights.<sup>89</sup> In 1955 it was also suggested to tackle the question about women's access to preach with the standard church service, referring to case 3/39 (sak 3/39) of the bispemøteprotokoller.<sup>90</sup> However, before they came up with a report, the Storting in 1956 abolished the law of 1938, giving congregations the right to reservation.<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, in 1955, a year before the law was abolished, no theological faculties (MF and TF) recommended the change of Lex Mowinckel when the government consulted them about the issue. The Bishops were also asked about the same issue. As Elstad stated, among the Bishops, there were differences of opinion. Most of the five do not want to change "Lex Mowinckel". There were only two Bishops who supported female pastors, namely: Kristian Schjeldrup in Hamar and Alf Wiik in Trømso.<sup>92</sup>

Furthermore, according to the registered bispemøtetsaker in 1958, bispemøtet handled the case of women's service in the church.<sup>93</sup> As it was looked up again, it emphasised its significance for the church if a particular women's ministry could be developed, organised and integrated into the other work of the congregation.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Aarflot, Andreas, *Bisperåd og kirkestyre*, 2011, 181.

<sup>88</sup> Elstad, 345

<sup>89</sup> Aarflot, Andreas, *Bisperåd og kirkestyre*, 2011, 181.

<sup>90</sup> Aarflot, Andreas, *Bisperåd og kirkestyre*, 2011, 182.

<sup>91</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 84.

<sup>92</sup> Elstad, 345-346

<sup>93</sup> [https://www.kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/bispemotet/2019/dokumenter/bm-protokoller/register-bispemotesaker-pr-mars-2019\\_sortert-arstall.pdf](https://www.kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/bispemotet/2019/dokumenter/bm-protokoller/register-bispemotesaker-pr-mars-2019_sortert-arstall.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 85.

As Norderval noted, Bispemøtet wanted to channel the female theologians into a position such as helping deed, soul care and testimony. It was argued that the development of the female parish service was necessary to solve the tasks that particularly called for the efforts of the women, whether they had a theological education or diaconal background or other courses.<sup>95</sup> However, some bishops, like K. Schjelderup of Hamar and Alf Wig of Nord-Hålogaland, disagree. They did not get the point of forcing women into these positions if they had the right to be pastors.<sup>96</sup> According to these two bishops, quoted by Norderval, “the question about women’s church service was already resolved when women theologians get access to apply for the priesthood.”

Furthermore, Norderval states that bispemøtet established a new committee to work further on the matter. Then the committee presented its draft to the Bishop’s Conference in 1959.<sup>97</sup> “In this draft, seven different work areas that could be relevant for the female position were listed. The work was listed as such; (1.) responsibility for visiting service- a kind of social work. (2.) working with children and the youth (preferably girls), Sunday school and those who will undergo confirmation. (3.) association work (4.) empowering women to join the church work (5.)family counselling (6.) spiritual care among women (7.) *Klokkerstillinger* combined with congregational work”.<sup>98</sup>

*Det ble nevnt en hel rekke arbeidsområder som kunne være aktuelle for en kvinnelig stilling:*

1. *Ansvar for besøkstjenste- en slags sosialarbeider*
2. *Ansvar for arbeid blant barn og ungdom (helst piker), søndagsskole, konfirmanter*
3. *Foreningsarbeid*
4. *Dyktiggjøring av kvinner til å bli med i menighetsarbeidet*
5. *Familierådgivning*
6. *Sjelsorg blant kvinner*
7. *Klokkerstillinger kombinert med menighetsarbeid.*<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 85

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 86. (my translation)

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 86

The above are the kinds of work areas where women can be appointed; the committee released a draft. Furthermore, like the Skagestad committee, the committee was neutral on the question of the female priest, as it was believed that this concerned work task in the church must be solved regardless of how one approached this question. Notably, during this time, the women theologians gained access to be pastors but restricted their position in the church. Moreover, Norderval noted that the committee did not mention direct preaching activities in the religious congregation, consecration, or administration of the sacraments.<sup>100</sup>

We noticed that the discussion of the 1950s was no longer about women being a pastor. It was indeed achieved in 1938. These discussions were about the churches that can reserve their selves to female pastors. Moreover, as we presented, another milestone for women pastors has been achieved as the “Lex Mowinckel” has been abolished. It is no longer allowed to have reservations against female pastors.<sup>101</sup>

Women pastors can freely apply and have the same access as men in the pastoral position. They will no longer consider whether the congregations were willing to ordain them. In 1958, there were 40 women holds a degree in Theology, after Valborg Lerche, the first woman to get that degree.<sup>102</sup>

#### 2.4. Norwegian Women Theological Society

Moreover, in 1958 the *Kvinnelig Teologforening* (Female Theological Society) was Established.<sup>103</sup> The association’s main goal, as Norderval stated, “is to create a basis for Christian and professional fellowship between female theologians and look after the interest of female theologians regarding the work opportunities so they could fill their place in the Norwegian church life.”<sup>104</sup> The female theologians from MF and TF (faculty of theology at the University of Oslo) established the Female Theological Society. The theology students of both MF and TF meet to discuss different theological matters and what kind of career they can take as women theologians. In the autumn of 1955, one of the students, Anne-Berit Aas,

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Elstad, 346

<sup>102</sup> Dalen Anne, «NKTFS Historie og betydning»

<sup>103</sup> Saltkjel, Mari, and Sanna Sjöswärd. *Som En Krone På Hodet: Fortellinger Om Kvinners Prestekall*, (Oslo: Verbum, 2011), 13.

<sup>104</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 90. (my translation)

organised a community for female theologians and theology students who met in the priest's office of Agnes Vold, who had worked as the chaplain at Ullevål Hospital since 1949.<sup>105</sup> Later these meetings became weekly, attended by women theologians from both MF and TF.

The need for the community was not only among the women theologians of Norway. It was also for Scandinavian female theologians. The emergence of a community for women theologians was pushed through the whole Scandinavian. In 1956, the same year the "Lex Mowinckel" was abolished, Margit Sahlin, women theologian from Sweden and in 1960, became one of the first three female pastors in Sweden. She sent an invitation to the Nordic conference for female theologians.<sup>106</sup> Norway and Sweden (in other Scandinavian countries) had different timelines and situations concerning women pastors. However, women theologians like to meet to discuss the situations in their perspective countries.<sup>107</sup> Norway's debate about women pastors intensified when Sweden ordained their first women pastor in 1960.<sup>108</sup> The vast majority of the clergy in Norway remained against the ordination of women pastors. However, few, like Arne Fjelberg, stand for women's ordination.<sup>109</sup> Fjelberg was a principal of The Practical Theological Seminary at the University. In 1958 he advocated women's ordination and argued that there were no arguments against female pastors as he examined Biblical material.<sup>110</sup> (a closer look at these arguments will be presented in the later part of this chapter)

Moreover, in 1960, Several female candidates considered entering the priesthood; however, they refused to be the first. Being a pioneer needs much courage because of the opposition and criticism. However, the criticisms did not shake Ingrid Bjerås's willingness and calling to be a pioneer. She contacted the Bishop of Hamar, Kristian Schjelderup, who decided to ordain her as a substitute priest in Hamar. Bjerås's permanent priesthood was pending.

Furthermore, during that time, only three of the country's nine bishops were for the ordination of women.<sup>111</sup> The other six bishops in Norway issued a statement that distanced

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<sup>105</sup> Dalen, Anne, 2008, 26

<sup>106</sup> Dalen, Anne, 2008, 26

<sup>107</sup> Dalen, Anne 2008, 27.

<sup>108</sup> Elstad 346

<sup>109</sup> Elstad 347

<sup>110</sup> Elstad 347

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.



themselves from female pastors and claimed that pastors and lay people should not support Bjerkås. Several Christian organisations had similar appeals.<sup>112</sup>

### 3. 60 Plus Years of Women Pastors

#### 3.1. The First Woman Ordained in Norway

On 3 March 1961, Ingrid Bjerkås received an ordination permit from the Ministry of Church Affairs. Bjerkås was 57 years old already when she took her degree in theology at the University in 1958 and finished her practicum in 1960.<sup>113</sup> Before 1999, to be a pastor, there was a mandatory requirement to have a *cand.theol.*, furthermore, passed practical theological education to be appointed as a pastor.<sup>114</sup>

Bishop Kristian Schjelderup ordained Bjerkås in Vang Church in the Hamar diocese on 19 March 1961.<sup>115</sup> Arne Fjelberg encouraged Bjerkås to contact Bishop Schjelderup in the Diocese of Hamar because of his positivity towards women's ordination; he was willing to ordain Bjerkås.<sup>116</sup>

Bjerkås was appointed *sokneprest* (parish priest) in Berg and Torsken in the Nord-Hålogaland diocese, advertised three times without any male applicant.<sup>117</sup> In the same year, Bjerkås was nominated by one parish council and appointed *Kongen I Statsråd* (The King in Council) on 14 April 1961.<sup>118</sup> The King in Council, as Ole Berg defines it, is a term used for the council of ministers where the government meets under the leadership of the King and makes formal decisions. The term is also used for the power of attorney laws when the Parliament delegates authority to the government without the latter delegating further.<sup>119</sup>

During Bjerkås's leadership as a parish priest in Berg and Torsken, few conservatives, deliberately those who were old believers, refused to recognise her as a priest and demanded

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 106. see also, Elstad 2011, 349

<sup>114</sup> Kirken, "Kvalifikasjonskrav for tilsetting som menighetsprest i Den norske kirke," Last modified, 14/06/2006, 4. [https://www.kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/migrering/kr\\_45\\_06\\_vedlegg2.pdf](https://www.kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/migrering/kr_45_06_vedlegg2.pdf)

<sup>115</sup> Scaer, D.P., in Harrison, Matthew C., and John T. Pless. *Women Pastors?*, 226.

<sup>116</sup> Elstad, 2011, 349

<sup>117</sup> Nationen, "60 år med kvinneprester" Last Modified 19/03/2021

<https://www.nationen.no/motkultur/kronikk/60-ar-med-kvinneprester/>

<sup>118</sup> Norderval, Kristin Molland: *Ingrid Bjerkås* in *Store norske leksikon* on snl.no. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from [https://snl.no/Ingrid\\_Bjerk%C3%A5s](https://snl.no/Ingrid_Bjerk%C3%A5s)

<sup>119</sup> *The King in Council* in *Store norske leksikon* on snl.no. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://snl.no/Kongen\\_i\\_statsr%C3%A5d](https://snl.no/Kongen_i_statsr%C3%A5d)

alternative clerical service (local opposition). Most of the locals in Berg and Torsken supported her in her service. However, the opponents of women pastors in the country tried to keep the conflict warm. It was reported that, among other things, several teachers at MF offered to travel to Berg and Torsken to perform clerical services for the small group of opponents.<sup>120</sup>

The controversy around women pastors became intense as Bjerkås got ordained. Conservative Christians opposed it even though the law permits it. The liberals in church celebrate with her.<sup>121</sup>

“Bjerkås’s path of ministry was dramatic,” as Espedal quoted Tønnessen.<sup>122</sup> During that time, six out of nine bishops protested against Norway’s first female ordained pastor. Those six bishops were Johannes Smemo, Bjarne Skard, Ragnyald Indrebø, Kaare Støvlen, Hans Edvard Wisløff and Fridtjof Birkeli. Their arguments started exegetical arguments about women pastors. They strongly disagree with having women pastors in the church. They use biblical scriptures such as God’s order of creation, that man created first before women, and God’s command. They have quoted the New Testament and argued that it rejects women’s access to the office.<sup>123</sup>

In an article in *Aftenposten*, a Norwegian newspaper, these bishops give their reasons for disagreeing with women pastors. In the article, they said that they could not connect female pastoral service with the New Testament. Moreover, for them, the action of a female pastor has been initiated from personal interests other than ecclesiastical ones. They consider it unjust for the church to force through such a principled arrangement and contribute to its implementation.<sup>124</sup>

Furthermore, they said to *Aftenposten* that in this matter, they feel bound by God’s word and loyalty to the church. In addition, the bishops in this situation must assert their right to act following their conscience, bound by God’s word. Also, when this conflicts with state and state church external regulations, they must assert the right for all pastors and their members

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<sup>120</sup> Norderval, Kristin Molland: *Ingrid Bjerkås* in *Store norske leksikon* on snl.no. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from [https://snl.no/Ingrid\\_Bjerk%C3%A5s](https://snl.no/Ingrid_Bjerk%C3%A5s)

<sup>121</sup> Elstad, 2011, 350

<sup>122</sup> Espedal G. “Not for my sake, but for the church,” *Diaconia*, Vol.12 No.2 (2021) 166: DOI 10.13109/diac.2019.10.issue-1

<sup>123</sup> Skard, Bjarne. *Contra Kvinnelige Prester*. Oslo: Land Og Kirke, 1960.

<sup>124</sup> *Aftenposten*, «Seks biskoper advarer mot kvinnelige prester.» 06/03/1961, 16

in similar situations to follow their views and conscience in complete freedom without being blamed. They continue saying that the women's ordination will lead to much distress and serve contradiction to the church.<sup>125</sup> Some support these six bishops, such as the Indremisjonsfolk—stating their opinion at *Aftenposten* that they are also against women pastors.<sup>126</sup>

From 1921 until 1960, the case was always a discussion about women's access to the office, access to preach in church and the standard/ordinary service and their pastoral service in the church. From 1961, the time women got their pioneers in the pastoral position. The discussion at *bispemøtet* changed into a more colleague relationship discussion. Although, in 1961, it was still discussion about women's pastoral service. Several problems with relationships with colleagues, especially with males, arise. In addition, is the relationship of the ordained pastor to the Bishop. I mentioned the six Bishops who strongly disagree with having female pastors. These are just a few examples of work-related problems and divided Bishop colleagues. As presented in the historical background chapter, at the beginning of women pastors in the CofN, most bishops disagreed with the idea of a female pastor. However, since the state had given women the right to access the office, these Bishops in the opposition could not prevent women from being appointed. However, they wish to prevent ordination or avoid it. In other words, women pastors who want to be in a position and be ordained first need to find someone willing to ordain them. It is indeed an internal division here.<sup>127</sup> Imagine the situation of women pastors candidates and the minority Bishops who supports female pastor ordination must be difficult. Another situation is the relationship of the female pastor to the Bishop, who is in the opposition. Women pastors can not be refused by the Bishop to be a pastor in his diocese, but he can refuse her a *kollas*.<sup>128</sup> *Kollas* is a recommendation letter that Bishops write to the parish.<sup>129</sup>

The opposition was not just the majority of the Bishops; all the professors at MF were also against female clergy. Notably, MF was responsible for the education of the majority of the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> *Aftenposten*, «Indremisjonsfolk stotter de seks biskopene» 07/03/1961, 10.

<sup>127</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 205.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 206.

<sup>129</sup> Elstad, Hallgeir: *kollas* i *Store norske leksikon* på snl.no. Hentet 4. mai 2023 fra <https://snl.no/kollas> (my translation)

clergy.<sup>130</sup> At that time, MF professors argued that the idea of women pastors contradicted the Bible and their faith. Eventually, this argument and perspective changed.

In the 1970s, they arrived at a different opinion concerning female pastors. Eleven years after the ordination of Bjerkås, the situation reversed; from having all professors in the opposition eleven years later, the majority of them accepted women pastors.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, in 1976, women attended the Practical Theological Seminary at MF.<sup>132</sup> According to Elstad, “One important reason for the change of heart was the government’s threat of withdrawal of economic subsidies,” meaning MF had become dependent on state support.<sup>133</sup>

MF’s change of heart significantly affects the growth of women’s acceptance in the church. However, I also think that women after Bjerkås also have a significant portion in this growth of acceptance.

Ingrid Bjerkås’s ordination opened up for more women to identify with and feel a sense of belonging to the church. Bjerkås’s courage to enter the ministry as the first women-ordained pastor was significant for the women in the Church of Norway and Church leadership. It also marked a new orientation where women’s resources could benefit all parts of the church’s life.<sup>134</sup> It was firmly expressed when Rosemarie Køhn became the first female Bishop in Norway in 1993.<sup>135</sup>

Before we jump into the presentation of the first bishop of Norway, let us first look at some of the women pastors that follow Bjerkås. From 1961 to 1969, there were seven ordained women.<sup>136</sup> In 1965, a woman became a pastor at Tromsø Hospital. Moreover, from 1970 until 1980, the number of women pastors was very small.<sup>137</sup>

During that time, women who entered the clergy needed to show they would not destroy or disappoint the church. It is what Berit M. Andersen and other women pastor pioneers felt then. Berit Andersen was the eighth woman pastor in the church of Norway. Berit Andersen

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<sup>130</sup> Elstad 2011, 351

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Elstad, 2011 351.

<sup>134</sup> See <https://www.nationen.no/motkultur/kronikk/60-ar-med-kvinneprester/>; See also Bjerkås, Ingrid, Hanne Stenvaag, and Bjørg Kjersti Myren. *Hun Våget å Gå Foran: Ingrid Bjerkås Og Kvinners Prestetjeneste I Norge*. Oslo: Verbum, 2011.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Som en krone på hodet 2011, 11

<sup>137</sup> Elstad, 2011, 352.

was ordained in January 1970 at Skedsmo.<sup>138</sup> As mentioned, the number of ordained women was small then, so they were often taken as income for causes they did not necessarily sympathise with.<sup>139</sup> Those pioneers like Bjerås have some tracks to walk that others have not walked through before. They were finding their way and setting an excellent example for the next generation. They must create or set the standard for being a women pastor then.

Moreover, it was not easy, especially when the majority opposed them. At that time, Berit struggled with her colleagues, especially when a confidential letter was sent behind her back, and refused to work with her.<sup>140</sup> Despite these colleagues' refusals, Berit persevered on her calling. She stood for her job without *Kollas* and Bishop's recommendation and recognition. It took her two years to get *kollas*, and she felt a colleague formally supported her.<sup>141</sup>

Berit, after Bjerås, was not the only female pastor who met the opposition. Svanuag Lindmand was the seventh female pastor to be ordained in Norway. She was ordained in Tromsø in 1969.<sup>142</sup> Svanuag Lindman, like the other pioneers, had a challenging experience as a women pastor. She experienced people who did not want her to be in meetings and colleagues did not greet her. She had been unsuccessful before she got her position until she contacted three Bishops willing to ordain women, and one recommended a position.<sup>143</sup> Lindman's first job was at the Diocese office as the first female diocesan chaplain in Tromsø.<sup>144</sup> Bjerås inspired Lindman ever since she was a student, especially when she got to meet Bjerås and know her story. She gets inspired by Bjerås's humility and kindness towards people who are against her.<sup>145</sup> Bjerås impacted many women; her braveness and endurance inspired many women who entered the ecclesiastical office. Despite knowing that it could be a challenging position with many in the opposition, many women followed their calling to serve.

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<sup>138</sup> Som en krone på hodet 2011, 24

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. 25

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. 27

<sup>142</sup> Ville ikke ha henne med i møter, 19/03/2021, <https://www.kirken.no/nb-NO/bispedommer/Hamar/nyheter/inspirert%20av%20bjerkas/>

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ville ikke ha henne med i møter, 19/03/2021, <https://www.kirken.no/nb-NO/bispedommer/Hamar/nyheter/inspirert%20av%20bjerkas/>

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

The number of women pastors began to increase after 1980. In active service, 11% of the clergy were women; in 1997, equivalent to 127 female pastors.<sup>146</sup>

### 3.3. First Bishop in the Church of Norway

In 1969 ‘Rosemarie Køhn became the sixth female ordained as a minister in Norway. She got a position at the University of Oslo teaching Hebrew and later became the principal of the Seminary of Practical Theology.’<sup>147</sup>

The first female Bishop appointed by the Labour government in 1993 followed the perseverance of Bjerkås. Køhn uses the same biblical passages as Bjerkås when discussing women pastors.<sup>148</sup> It was the narrative of Jesus’s revealing himself first to a woman and having the verses Galatians 3:28. Bjerkås inspired Køhn in many ways. These two women give impact and inspiration to the women that follow their steps. They also influence women’s leadership within and outside the church. They did not just create a way for the other women pastors in the CofN but also for the women outside the church. These two women did many things as pioneers of women pastors, which is too many to mention in this section. As Espedal discussed, they (together with Guldberg) have been “changemakers in the church in three ways; first, by embodying the change of the church and, second, by continuously working on their changing roles in a dialogue...framing new understanding of the leadership roles and the church’s reality.”<sup>149</sup> Even though Bjerkås inspired Køhn, there were apparent differences in their way of leadership. For example, in Køhn, understanding the gospel of Jesus includes the outcasted and the oppressed. In 1999, as Espedal wrote, “she restrains female pastors who had married a woman, even though the church has voted not to reinstate gay pastor living partnership.”<sup>150</sup>

Moreover, Kohn was not just the first female Bishop in Norway but also the first female Lutheran Bishop in the Nordic countries and the third in the world.<sup>151</sup> In 2022, there were seven women and five men Bishops in Norway.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Elstad, 2011, 352

<sup>147</sup> Espedal G., (2021), 166.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 172

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>150</sup> Espedal

<sup>151</sup> Elstad, 2011, 16

<sup>152</sup> Kværne, Per; Rasmussen, Tarald; Elstad, Hallgeir; Løøv, Margrethe: *prest i Store norske leksikon* på snl.no. Hentet 11. mai 2023 fra <https://snl.no/prest>

## 4. Arguments Around Women's Ordination

In this section, I aim to present the arguments around the ordination of female pastors. It has been mentioned that most Bishops and clergy were initially against the ordination of women pastors. Moreover, some professors of theology and biblical scholars (at MF) oppose ordaining women. Their arguments were theological and biblical. I will present some of the arguments to have an overview. I will present the Biblical interpretations and then the scholar's main argument. I will not make exegesis in the biblical passages on women but aim to present it in detail for background purposes.

### 4.1. Biblical Interpretations

Hermeneutics is the way of translating and understanding the text (in this case, the Bible) in a different context.<sup>153</sup> Many have argued over time that translation and understanding of the Bible is the main reason we cannot be one for women's rights to be pastors. It is noticeable that in the biblical debate, the creation story in the Bible and the Letters of the Apostle Paul was the primary text used in the argument. Many theologians and biblical scholars examined the context of these texts, and it remains a debate now. However, Norwegian theologians and male pastors use these texts as their primary arguments for rejecting women to lead the church. As mentioned in the previous chapter, at the time of Bjerkås's priesthood, those pastors who were against her ordination wrote commentaries and articles defending their understanding of the scripture and appointing women pastors can create a fear of having a feminist church. Some of them, like Bjarne Skard, wrote about his opposition to women pastors. They have quoted the New Testament and argued that it rejects women's access to the office.<sup>154</sup> They use biblical scriptures such as God's order of creation, that man created first before women and God's command. I will not do exegesis in this paper. However, I certainly agree that there are things that we need to put into context to make sense of biblical and theological arguments. The question of the position of women can already be seen in the creation story in Genesis and Paul's letters. Some biblical passages lead to the church's debate on leadership and women's rights. It started with the question; What does the Bible say about women pastors?

We can undeniably read about the view of women in Genesis in the Old Testament. As we read, "God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and

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<sup>153</sup> See Ferguson Duncan S. *Biblical Hermeneutics : An Introduction*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), 4; See also, Ferguson, Duncan S. *Biblical Hermeneutics : An Introduction*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2016.

<sup>154</sup> Skard, Bjarne. *Contra Kvinnelige Prester*. Oslo: Land Og Kirke, 1960.

female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27 NIV) As Arne Fjelberg noted, the image of God is thus not reserved for men alone. It is both owned by men and women. They did not own it separately, which is not a matter of subordinate arrangement. However, they have an intimate relationship with God and with each other.<sup>155</sup>

Moreover, it is just the first chapter of Genesis; as we go to the second chapter of Genesis, we will encounter the second version of the creation story. Here, the woman is formed from the man’s rib. It is written like this, “So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called *woman* for she was taken out of man.’ It is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife. They become one flesh ” (Genesis 2:21-24 NIV). This passage makes it easy to say that the man was created before the women and can create a subordinate relationship. However, it is noticeable that towards the end, “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” can be seen as the equality of man and woman and their uniqueness to all other creatures.

Furthermore, in the last verse, the man leaves his father and sticks to his wife. A commentary from Matthew Henry states that “the woman was made of a rib; not made of his head to rule over him. She was not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him but out of his side to be equal. Moreover, the woman was made under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be loved.”<sup>156</sup>

Interestingly, this verse is the opposite of a subordinate relationship. As Fjelberg mentioned, if these verses emphasised unity and parallelism, then it agrees with the intention of the first version of the creation account.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, a commentary was written by Matthew Henry

As we move on to the chapters of Genesis, we will come across the Fall narrative, one of the most famous biblical narratives, if not the most famous, when talking about women. In the Fall narrative, where we can find in Genesis 3, the woman is the first to be tempted. This situation has impacted the relationship and role of man and woman—moreover, the relationship between God and humans. In Genesis 3:16, the woman got a new role.“ To the

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<sup>155</sup> Fjelberg, Arne. *Kvinnelige Prester?* (Oslo: Land Og Kirke, 1958) 16.

<sup>156</sup> Henry, M. "Commentary on Genesis 2 by Matthew Henry." *Blue Letter Bible*. Last Modified 1 Mar, 1996. [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Gen/Gen\\_002.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Gen/Gen_002.cfm) Accessed 19/03/2023

<sup>157</sup> Fjelberg, Arne. *Kvinnelige Prester?* (Oslo: Land Og Kirke, 1958) 17



woman, he said, ‘I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labour, you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.’” (Genesis 3:16 NIV). The woman’s new role has become much different from the man’s. The man will rule over the woman. As Fjelberg explained, since the fall started, the absolute parallel relationship between man and woman has been destroyed.<sup>158</sup> As mentioned earlier, the role of women can be read already at the first chapter of the Bible. It is needed after the fall narrative in the Old Testament; the position of women has changed. In this story, one can underline that man was created before woman, so the woman should submit to the man. However, women only ended up as mothers and wives during that time. Some women in the Old Testament shine on what they do; for example, in the story of Deborah in Judges 4:4. Deborah is said to be a judge of Israel at that time. Another example is in Exodus 15:20, Aaron’s sister Miriam is a prophet. These are examples of women in the Old Testament that has a different role than the others before the time of Jesus Christ.

It leads us to the second point. The New Testament says another thing about women’s position. Fjelberg noted that In Jesus himself, we find no principled stand on women’s place in society.<sup>159</sup> However, Jesus’s attitude is not allowing himself to be determined by the usual conversations in this area. However, as a rabbi, he shows his disciples his encounter with women. For example, in John 4:27, Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman.

Moreover, it is noticeable also that the women he encountered were mostly sinners and non-Jewish. In Luke 7:36-38, Jesus encounters a sinful woman who even anoints him. In John 8:3-11, the Pharisees and the teacher of the law brought a woman caught in adultery. They ask Jesus how he will deal with the sinful woman because, according to the law of Moses, to be stone to death is the punishment for this kind of sin. However, Jesus teaches them not to condemn, saying, “Let any one of you without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” (John 8:7-10 NIV). Thus, In Matthew 15:22, Jesus encounters the Canaanite woman to whom he again grants a request.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 19.

We can go on with different women that Jesus encounters in the Bible, not to mention others. For example, in the encounter with Mary and Marta, which we can read in Luke 10:38 and John 10, Mary Magdalene is the first woman Jesus appeared after his resurrection. We can conclude here that it is clear that all the women Jesus met were treated equally and kindly by him. As Fjelberg said, We cannot read in the NT that there was any difference in the fundamental religious relationship between man and woman. It means a sovereign break with the prevailing notions. This break necessarily had to lead to practical and concrete changes in the position of women during the subsequent development in the Christian congregations.<sup>160</sup>

Above are just some women's positions in the OT and the NT. To briefly summarise, the woman's position was equal before the fall, and it changed again when Jesus came. However, the submission of women can be seen as a consequence of the fall. Many scholars, like Arne Fjelberg and David William Spencer, disagree. Fjelberg believes that the corresponding verses after the fall emphasise unity and parallelism<sup>161</sup>. Spencer concluded in his work that "men's oppressive domineering in 'lording it over' subjected woman is part of that effacing, not commensurate with what we see in Genesis 1 as God's intentions for how humans are to relate. Therefore, a one-way, graded, hierarchical command structure among humans is not what God expressly intends and, therefore, does not reflect or image the nature of God."<sup>162</sup>

We can also add that Jesus's attitude towards women was fair and with no condemnation in all his encounters in the NT; however, when Jesus appointed disciples to lead the church. Jesus chooses twelve men and no women included.

This narrative is often part of the women's leadership debate. I will briefly present an overview of the passages and their interpretation. In Mark 3:14, Luke 6:12-16, and John 15:16, we can read that Jesus chooses twelve men as his disciples. Let us start with Mark's verses: "He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach." (Mark 3:14). It is now apparent why this verse is often used to support an argument against women leadership. Not only because this passage tells that only men are to preach

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>162</sup> Spencer, Aída Besançon, and William David Spencer, eds. *Christian egalitarian leadership: Empowering the whole church according to the scriptures*. (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020) 80-81.

and lead churches but also because Jesus personally chooses the twelve, which happen to be men. He gives them authority to do what he did, such as to heal and cast out evil spirits.

Moreover, the twelve chosen disciples walk together with Jesus. The question now leads to whether Jesus only favours men's leadership and women are not for a leadership position. If we are to see this verse literally, we can say that men are only allowed to preach and lead the church. However, many scholars consider these verses to represent the twelve tribes in the old covenant. In the Jewish tradition, the twelve tribes of Israel are described as Jacob's sons and grandsons.<sup>163</sup> Another analysis of Mark 3:14 from an Evangelical Lutheran point of view gives a specific point on using the word apostles instead of the word priest. According to Fjelberg, the word priest in Greek, "*Hiereus*", is not used in the New Testament for any function in the congregation. Moreover, he noted that if apostles were meant to take over a particular priestly function, why did Jesus not use the word priest instead of apostles? Furthermore, the apostles were called to carry the possibility of salvation to all people.<sup>164</sup>

We also note that the apostle Paul has a primary role in the modern debate about women's position and place in the church.<sup>165</sup> In this case, Paul's letter is vital in the debate, saying that women should be silent and not teach. The letters of Paul, such as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 1 Timothy 2:11-15, Ephesians 5:22-33, and Galatians 3:26-29 are the most familiar New Testament verses relevant in the position of women.<sup>166</sup>

It is maybe the most challenging text concerning women. On the one hand, others might see it as it is and agree with it. While on the other hand, you will find those who will look at its context and say that there must be another meaning to it or a reason on its context why Paul said it in the first place.<sup>167</sup> I found theologians and scholars that looked at this text and its meaning. One of them is Fjelberg; for him, it is questionable if this letter is written by Paul or by Paul's disciple that borrow his authority. Moreover, he said that it might be disagreements about the text's authenticity. However, Fjelberg put these things aside and moved on to the authenticity question because the authority remains unchanged on whether the letters originate from Paul himself.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Fjelberg, Arne. *Kvinnelige Prester?* Oslo: Land Og Kirke, 1958, 24.

<sup>165</sup> Fjelberg, Arne. *Kvinnelige Prester?* (Oslo: Land Og Kirke, 1958) 35.

<sup>166</sup> Fjelberg, 24.

<sup>167</sup> See Harrison, Matthew C., and John T. Pless. *Women Pastors? : The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective : A Collection of Essays.* 2nd ed. St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Pub. House, 2009, 16.

Furthermore, Fjelberg insists that we should not discuss the New Testament's canonical authority but accept it.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, Sverre Aalen works on the speech prohibition of women in the New Testament. He examined two of Paul's letters, 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-38.

Aalen stated that it is impossible to address the question of the authenticity of the pastoral letter entirely. However, it must be stated that the question of the position within research can in no way be said to be settled in a negative direction.<sup>169</sup> In a closer analysis, Aalen stated that 1 Timothy 2 shows that it cannot be understood as a secondary Abklatsch of 1 Corinthians 14 from a later time. However, it gives the impression of the same originating of the same era as the place in 1 Corinthians 14 because of internal kinship in concepts and terms. In addition, the place is in 1 Timothy 2, far too independent concerning the Corinthian site.

In summary, with this prohibition of women from speaking, in the letters of Paul, we can maybe say that the apostle Paul allows women to speak. However, in some contexts, he wants to prohibit them from speaking. Upon looking at all of these different texts in the Bible, specifically the letters of Paul, how will we distinguish the biblical arguments against and pro-women pastors? Well, there are some points that I think we can take from this. On the one hand, translation, hermeneutics, biblical context, and authenticity are vital for the pro side of the debate. While on the other hand, context is also vital; however, they look at the text as literary or as is. I am not saying it is a lousy hermeneutics; it is not. What I am trying to say is that most of the biblical passages that are used in the debate are passages that do not have the whole picture and are far from each other context. For example, in the letter of Paul, where the contra women pastors argue that women should be silent because it is the teaching of Paul and written in the Bible. However, Paul is saying another in a context, so it should not be detached from other previous and proceeding verses. I will not go deeper into this area since this is not an exegesis. However, as I said, looking at these biblical passages used as arguments in women's debate gives context.

#### 4.2. Main Arguments

The debate around ordination intensified in Norway around the 1960s, after international human rights were bought up and the reservation against women was abolished (Later on, first, women pastors get ordained). Although the majority of the Bishops and clergy at that

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<sup>168</sup> Fjelberg, Arne. *Kvinnelige Prester?* Oslo: Land Og Kirke, 1958.

<sup>169</sup> Aalen, S. *Kvinnelige Prester - Hvorfor Ikke?* : Kirken Og Dens Embete I Dagens Debatt. Oslo: Land Og Kirke, 1961, 40.

time were in opposition, some accepted women. We have presented above the biblical interpretation regarding women quoting some scholars who opposed and advocated for women pastors.

Arne Fjelberg is one of those voices that was different from the majority. In 1958, Fjelberg published a book, *Kvinnelige prester?* (Female Pastor?). The said book supports women's ordination. Fjelberg discussed and examined Biblical passages concerning women and them being pastors. He concluded that reading the Bible as a law book with caustic rules applicable to bad times and under all conditions is wrong. Moreover, upon analysing and examining, his answer to the question of women as pastors is a yes. Furthermore, he argued that women in the church would add new strength to the church while not welcoming them into the position would lead to resignation and indifference among females.<sup>170</sup>

If we have Fjelberg, who advocated women's clergy, it did not change the fact that the majority of Bishops in the CofN opposed the idea of women clergy. A pamphlet titled *Contra kvinnelige prester* (Contra Female Pastor) was written by a Bishop of Tunsberg, Bjarne Skard.<sup>171</sup> By its title, we already know that this is against women pastors. Some of the biblical interpretations and arguments of Skard were presented above. His arguments are classical arguments that are used in women's debates. He emphasises that there are no women in the twelve chosen apostles of Jesus Christ. Skards's arguments are classical: women clergy was not in accordance with the word of God. Furthermore, for him, the New Testament teaches us that women and men have different positions and tasks within the church. It led to his conclusion that the ministry was only for men. Men are called to be pastors, and the ministry is reserved for men and not women.<sup>172</sup>

Moreover, a theologian professor completely disagrees with Skard. Jacob Jervell, a theological professor at the University of Oslo, argued that “ the Lutheran Reformation led to a changed view of the ministry. Furthermore, according to Lutheran theology, the ministry is not a condition for the gospel. However, instead, the gospel is a condition for the ministry.”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Fjelberg, 1958, 203-206

<sup>171</sup> Elstad, 2011, 13.

<sup>172</sup> Skard, *Contra kvinnelige prester*, Oslo 1960

<sup>173</sup> Jervell, J, quoted from Elstad, 2011, 14.

These were just the early controversy surrounding women's ordination. It all intensified more when Bjerkås got ordained. Conservative Christians strongly opposed it. In 1961 Leiv Aalen, a systematic theology professor at MF, edited a book *Kvinnelige prester-hvorfor ikke?* (Female Pastors – why not?). The same with Skard's book, this book rejected women pastors. He was looking at the dogmatic side of the issue. The book gives a representative view of the Lutheran church, which does not accept women's access to the clergy.

These are just some of the published books and writings about women pastors' debate during that time of the intensity of the disagreements. We see in the historical background that women pastors debate ideological conflicts in two aspects. First, we have the church and state, then the conflicts within the church, such as theology and conflict between colleagues. The heated question of female pastors has been seen in different contexts of equality, human rights, and state, including welfare and, of course, within the congregation. As I said many times, the debate started as political. Without that initiative, women ordination, as Elstad said, "the ordination of women would probably come later", maybe like in Finland that came in 1986.<sup>174</sup>

#### 4.3. Discussions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Today women pastors are entirely accepted and celebrated in the CofN. However, a few still go back to the classical argument that opposes women pastors. However, the question of women's ordination and women in church services has long since been debated. In 2019, a professor at VID Mission College published a book about arguments against women that invites debate about whether it is right to ordain women.

*Skal kvinnene tie?* ( Shall the women keep quiet?), a book published by Knut Alfsvåg and others in 2019. It contains different contributions from male and female authors s that concluded that ordinating women as pastors is a mistake. Some of the articles collected in this book are old (from a few decades ago), and all authors are Lutheran except C.S. Lewis. According to Alfsvåg, as they collect and review these articles, it shows that there are essential principles that they agreed on. The New Testament strongly emphasises that men and women have the same human dignity and stand equally before God. Nevertheless, Jesus

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<sup>174</sup> Elstad, 2011, 17.

and the apostles introduce a difference between women and men when serving the congregations. Moreover, this difference is justified, so we cannot ignore it today.<sup>175</sup>

Furthermore, Alfsvåg states that this book wants to stimulate discussion on that we may lose a few things along the way; their main hope is that this discussion can bless congregations.<sup>176</sup>

However, many find this book provoking and invite debate; others say that the book contributes little new insights. One of the people who commented on this book is Knut Holter, a professor at VID Mission College. In October 2019, He wrote an article in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, commenting on the book. Holter wrote, “If the purpose is to create space for a conversation, not just to equip the already convinced with supposedly good reflections. Some of the contributions are also well-written, especially the historically oriented-article. However, as a whole, the collection of articles is marred by texts that seem counterproductive to any conversation.”<sup>177</sup>

Not only Holter commented about Alfsvåg, Gunhild Maria Hugdal, a book reviewer, wrote her review about the book at *Vårt Land*. Hugdal states that the book contributes little and is unlikely to revitalise a significant debate for many. Hugdal also noted that an empirical and, preferably, ecumenical approach could have lifted the project and made the book more relevant for 2019. However, there is no trace of it in the book.<sup>178</sup>

In 2020 a book titled, *Her er ikke mann og kvinne: JA til kvinnelige hyrder og lærere* (Here is not man and women: YES to women sheperds and teachers) by Oddvar Søvik was published. Søvik has a theological background from MF and was a pastor in Kristiansand and Bryne in the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church. His book is unlikely to Alfsvåg in many ways. One is that this is not opposed to women pastors; as the title said, it is a yes. Søvik wants to show that it is possible to be faithful to the Bible and, at the same time to be open to women in pastoral ministry. Furthermore, He looks at this not as a matter of doctrine but as a question of arrangement. It is the question of interpretation.<sup>179</sup> Oddvar was trying to promote that

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<sup>175</sup> Alfsvåg, Knut, Alf Danbolt, Boe Johannes Hermansen, Erik Okkels, Astrid Sagnes, and Foreningen for Bibel Og Bekjennelse. *Skal Kvinnene Tie? : Om Ordinasjon Av Kvinner Til Prestetjeneste*. (Råde: FBB Efrem, 2019), 8.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Holter, Knut, “Maktspråk mot kvinnelige prester”, *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 12/12/2019

<https://www.aftenbladet.no/meninger/debatt/i/6jdWGr/maktspraak-mot-kvinnelige-prester>

<sup>178</sup> Hugdal, Gunhild Maria, «Can it be written well about the women priest issue in 2019?», 18/10/2019,

<https://www.vl.no/kultur/boker/2019/10/18/kan-det-skrives-godt-om-kvinneprestsporsmalet-i-2019/>

<sup>179</sup> Søvik O. «Her er ikke man og kvinner. JA til kvinnelige hyder og lærere.» 2020, 9-10.

whatever argument we have about women pastors; there is an excellent way to talk and agree with some things; there are things to remember in this book.

## 5. Conservative Pastor/s

In this chapter, I will present a case of a conservative pastor<sup>180</sup> who has refused to collaborate with their female colleagues until now. Moreover, I will focus on one case as my primary example. I am aware that there are others (few), like Benjamin Anda and Vidar Nes Mygland, who refuse to work and collaborate with their female colleagues.<sup>181</sup> However, I choose to stick to only one case because the paper will examine the policies and the church's strategies for coping with those who refuse to work with women pastors. I want to focus on that. I will first provide a case orientation. Then I will discuss the case. Moreover, I will look at other related online articles and discuss the debate.

The question of women's ordination and women in church services has long since been debated. Above I have discussed several arguments and debates around women's ordination and ministry. Today, the majority of Bishops and clergy in the CofN support women clergy; as mentioned previously, the number of women pastors is increasing steadily. However, in August 2020, a young male pastor wanted to reserve himself working with female pastor colleagues. Pastor in Sogndal, Mikael Bruun, wrote an article in Vårt Land newspaper. In the article, Bruun explains that only men can hold the church ministry.<sup>182</sup> The article led to emotional comments and posts on social media. Many also published their thoughts about it in different newspapers. It has been a topic on a debate program at NRK that was released. Like the classical debate, Bruun was demanded to have some reservations about working with women pastors.

Reactions from theology students, professors, pastors, and the Bishop's office were published. Several of the pastors NRK has spoken to also have some basic theological views.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Conservative can mean many things, but here I will use the word conservative equivalent to those pastors who are holding traditional values with regards to female pastors. Those who are opposing to work with female pastors

<sup>181</sup> Articles related to them, <https://www.nrk.no/mr/seier-nei-til-kvinneprestar--far-likevel-halde-fram-som-sokneprest-1.16026756> and <https://www.nrk.no/mr/prest-vidar-nes-mygland-kan-fa-sparken-om-han-ikkje-vil-jobbe-med-kvinner-1.15676173>

<sup>182</sup> Vårt Land 24/8/2020.

<sup>183</sup>



The debate started when the *Domprost* in Tromsø, Stig Lægdene, wrote an article in *Vårt Land* addressing the issue of “the Church of Norway legitimises discrimination against women”.<sup>184</sup> He said he understood that in the CofN, they let time work for female pastors for a long time. However, one can ask “whether it is still right today to ordain and employ men pastor who clearly expresses that they do not want to recognise their female colleagues.”<sup>185</sup> According to him, those male pastors who do not celebrate communion together means schism. Furthermore, he expressed that the Lord’s Supper symbolises unity in the church. Therefore an ordained pastor refuses to celebrate it with his female colleagues brings division in the church.<sup>186</sup> Lægdene raises questions such as: How can you work together if you allow employees to distrust each other initially?

Moreover, what workplace would hire people who openly said they were fundamentally opposed to a woman? His point is that the practice that the CofN have today is unsustainable. Furthermore, he emphasised that one could not accept that someone reserved himself against cooperation with women. Suppose they want to reserve themselves from working or collaborating with women pastors. In that case, they cannot be a pastor in the CofN.<sup>187</sup>

Some days after, Mikael Bruun replied that he was against women’s ministry but not against women in general. In an article in *Vårt Land*, Bruun writes why they have landed on a no to women’s ministry. He said that they/he has profound and less dangerous reasons.<sup>188</sup> Then, he pointed out some critical points in the theological argumentation, which we can say is a classical argument. Bruun argued that (1)men and women are equal but have different abilities, roles, and tasks. (2)Jesus chooses only men as his apostles and shepherds of God’s people; therefore, the ministry is reserved for men. Furthermore, Bruun replied to what Lægdene wrote, saying that several of them have drawn the practical consequence of their official theology that they do not practice in communion or church service with a female pastor. He insists that it does not represent a break in communion but that they have chosen to live with the pain of staying away from the sacrament. Moreover, he said that this is a practice that former president Byfuglien has repeatedly given legitimacy<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Vårt Land 12/08/2020 <https://www.vl.no/meninger/verdidebatt/2020/08/12/dnk-legitimerer-kvinnediskriminering/>

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Vårt Land, 24/08/2020

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, Bruun writes that as a young pastor, he is afraid of losing his job, and he is happy with his church and does not want to leave his position. He hopes that Lægdene will moderate his authoritarian statement and can see that they are also good servants in the church. Bruun also said that most so-called anti-women pastors he knows treat their colleagues respectfully and openly.<sup>190</sup>

This post of Mikael Bruun led to a fierce debate in the national media and raised the question: Is there a form of right in the Church of Norway that allows one to reserve against working with women? On 27 August, Bruun and Lægdene appeared in a debate program called Dagsnytt 18 in NRK.

As mentioned, many disagree and emotionally comment with what Bruun published. The three students of the theology faculty at the University of Oslo published an article saying that the minority is not Bruun and people who share the same view; it is still many ways women pastors are the majority. They said that even though many women become pastors, men still dominate.<sup>191</sup>

Furthermore, going back to the history of the women pastor's debate, "reservation to work with women pastors"<sup>192</sup> can be seen as almost identical when the church had a compromise to those women pastors that will be ordained. Now it is not the church that wants a compromise; if we can call it that way, it is now a few conservative pastors.

The church (especially the Bishop conference) had an essential role in this issue. They fully support that the debate about women's ordination and reservation was long before gone. In the last Bishop conference, it has been discussed the consequences of male pastors that will reject working with any female pastor. Furthermore, male pastors rejecting women can get kicked out of the church because of the protocols. The protocols indicate that the CofN will not tolerate the said behaviour.

In this paper, I aim to analyse how the church coped with the male pastors who did not want to collaborate or work with their female colleagues. Focusing more on the church's response

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Vårt Land, 13/09/2020 <https://www.vl.no/meninger/verdidebatt/2020/09/13/det-er-oss-mikael-bruun-reserverer-seg-mot/>

<sup>192</sup> Norderval, *Mot Strømmen*, 96-97

to this debate is essential. We now look at the church's responses to the debate published online in the newspaper and on their official webpage.

Kjersti Boge, a pastor and church council member, demands a requirement, those men who do not cooperate with women are unqualified. During the church council meeting, Boge raised the issue of cooperation with women pastors. She suggested adding a point to the qualification requirements for pastors in the CofN about willingness to cooperate with colleagues, regardless of gender.<sup>193</sup>

In September, the *Preses* of the Bishop conference, Olav Fykse Tveit wrote at *Vårt Land* regarding the question: do male pastors in the Church of Norway have a right of reservation against cooperating with women? His answer is No. He states that,

“Women are welcome in all types of positions in the church. The practice has shown that this is taken seriously, with women in all leadership positions in the CofN. This is also reflected in the fact that all Bishops ordain women and men to the ministry and that all dioceses have appointed both women and men as pastors.”<sup>194</sup>

This statement makes evident that there is no such right of reservation. In the article, Tveit also mentioned that this matter would be discussed thoroughly at the Bishop conference. Furthermore, the Church of Norway has no rule or arrangement for such a reservation right. Moreover, Tveit clarified that the *Presteforeningen* (PF) is an earlier phase in the women's ministry service debate. About the “driving rules”, they have never had the status of an official arrangement in the Church of Norway but have to some extent, been practised in collegial relationships<sup>195</sup>

The college fellowship and cooperation, also known as “driving rules”, are used as a basis for bishops handling intractable conflict situations between colleagues. It was developed by PF in 1978; however, have not been part of the PF program since 2004.<sup>196</sup>

PF is the largest association for pastors, organising pastors in the CofN and other theological candidates. Moreover, it is also a building body that must contribute to resolving issues

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<sup>193</sup> Vårt Land 18/09/2020 <https://www.vl.no/nyheter/2020/09/18/vil-ha-inn-som-krav-menn-som-ikke-samarbeider-med-kvinner-er-ukvalifisert/>

<sup>194</sup> Vårt Land, 21/09/2020 <https://www.vl.no/meninger/verdidebatt/2020/09/21/ingen-reservasjonsrett-mot-a-samarbeide-med-kvinner-i-den-norske-kyrkja/>

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Enstad, Martin, *Presteforeningen og kjørereglene*, 28/08/2020 <https://www.prest.no/artikkel/presteforeningen-og-kjorereglene/>

within the church's area of activity.<sup>197</sup> On 28 August 2020, PF released a statement on its website concerning the women's ministry service debate and the so-called driving rules. The statement goes like this,

“For PF, this means that the driving rules are not ours and have not been used as a basis for our guidance of members since 2004. In our context, these rules are, therefore, no longer applicable. We, therefore, perceive the status or design of any driving rules today as the employer's responsibility.”<sup>198</sup>

On September 2020, Bishop Halvor Nordhaug of Bjørgvin was among those who became involved in this debate. First, in an article, he stated that it is dramatic to deny women pastor opponents in the CofN. He said he was one, and the other Bishop did not think this question was serious.<sup>199</sup> However, in autumn November 2020, Nordhaug was involved in many conversations with female pastors. In a report, he said he still believes the church should have a place for the opposition view, but the unsustainable opinion should be challenged. He apologises to women that experience things they should not.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, In October Bjørgvin diocese council supported the Bishop's conference statement:

“There is no right for male pastors to reserve themselves from working with female colleagues. If a priest has problems with worship communion or church service with women, he must take it up with the Bishop. Local loopholes are no longer possible.”<sup>201</sup>

### 5.1. Consequences and Church Policies

In this part of the paper, I will examine and analyse the policies and strategies of the CofN concerning the issue of male pastors who says no to working with women colleagues. We will look at the Bishop conference statements and other online articles from the CofN's official website concerning the consequences and policies they implemented when someone does not want to cooperate with his female colleagues. We will use the case of Bruun as an example.

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<sup>197</sup> Gisle, Jon, *Presteforeningen* i Store norske leksikon at snl.no. retrieved 13, May 2023 from <https://snl.no/Presteforeningen>

<sup>198</sup> Enstad, Martin, *Presteforeningen og kjørereglene*, 28/08/2020 <https://www.prest.no/artikkel/presteforeningen-og-kojoreglene/>

<sup>199</sup> Vårt Land 15/09/2020

<sup>200</sup> Vårt Land 13/11/2020 <https://www.vl.no/reportasje/2020/11/13/biskopen-i-bjorgvin-er-berort-og-beklager-kvinner-har-opplevd-ting-de-ikke-burde/>

<sup>201</sup> Vårt Land, 13/11/2020

In the historical background chapter, I discussed that from 1921 until 1960. The case was always a discussion about women's access to the office, access to preach in church and the standard/ordinary service and their pastoral service in the church. From 1961, the time women got their pioneers in the pastoral position. The bispemøtet (Bishop conference) discussion became a more colleague relationship discussion. Although, in 1961, it was still discussion about women's pastoral service. Several problems with relationships with colleagues, especially with males, arise. In addition, is the relationship of the ordained pastor to the Bishop. I mentioned the six Bishops who strongly disagree with having female pastors. These are just a few examples of work-related problems and divided Bishop colleagues. That was the problem then. However, today the case is different. In this paper, I have said many times that the church of Norway accepts women, and the debate about it is long gone. However, few refuse to collaborate with them in the service. As presented in the previous chapter was an example of that issue. This section will look at how the Bishop conference now discusses this issue. The goal is to see if there are policy changes and to look at the strategies or ways of the church in coping with the issue.

As mentioned, Tveit said the Bishop's conference would thoroughly discuss this issue in October. He mentioned that at the Bishop's conference, they would specify the service arrangement and the current and expected of the new pastors.<sup>202</sup>

In October 2020, Bishop's Conference discussed the commitment to cooperation among pastor colleagues, especially in matters that concern certain male pastors collaborating with women in pastoral service (BM Case 59/20). There were six main points in the discussion (summarised here). Stating that "(1) the CofN understands its doctrine and that the call to service with word and sacrament applies to both women and men. Furthermore, the church openly welcomes and wants both women and men to accept the call to become a pastor and enter the ministry with their abilities and gifts for the congregation's joy. (2) There must be communion about word and sacrament among those assigned to this service. It must also be expressed in the church's service and daily cooperation exercise. (3) Anyone ordained or appointed to pastoral service commits to the CofN's teaching and arrangements. A pastor cannot invoke a right to abstain from collaboration with other pastor colleagues. No such right of reservation exists in the church's arrangements. (4) The Bishop is responsible for supervising the pastoral ministry and, thus, the collegial relations under which it is carried

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<sup>202</sup> Vårt Land 21/09/2020

out. (5)The so-called “driving rules” was abolished in 2004 by Presteforeningen (PF). They have never had status as part of the church’s system. (6)In meetings with candidates who register for ordination, the Bishop will clarify the Church of Norway’s arrangements.<sup>203</sup>

The above decision of 2020 from the Bishop’s conference has been followed up. In October 2021, *Preses* Olav Fykse Tveit released a statement stating, “No one can refuse to cooperate based on gender. Suppose working environment problems arise because a male pastor refuses to cooperate with a female pastor. In that case, the Bishop must follow up on this personally.”<sup>204</sup>

In this new follow-up, they specify that the church as an employer should follow up the decision in practice. Tveit has been asked in an interview if dismissing opponents of women pastors is a solution. Moreover, he answered that he could not say anything in general.<sup>205</sup>

With this statement realised in 2021, the Bishop Conference, the bishops already determined that pastors must work together regardless of gender. Weeks before the statement, two priests have already resigned. Mygland and Bruun have resigned; however, Bruun confirms that he has not been fired or pressured into resigning.<sup>206</sup>

Furthermore, Bruun told NRK that the clarification sends an unfortunate signal to other Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian brothers. Moreover, he said that this was expected.<sup>207</sup> If Bruun was sad about this decision, many were happy with this, especially those who had been boycotted before by male pastors.<sup>208</sup>

We can now analyse the BM Case 59/20. I have mentioned (in Chapter 5) the “driving rules” that it was used as a basis for the Bishop’s handling of intractable conflict situations between colleagues. According to PF, the bishops, as leaders of the priestly ministry, have also taken this as a basis when dealing with such cases since then.<sup>209</sup> It is also essential to know that

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<sup>203</sup> Bispemøtet, Sak BM 59/20, *Ordinasjon og kollegiafellesskap*, 16/10/2020 <https://www.kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/bispemotet/2020/dokumenter/bispem%C3%B8tet%2012.%20-%2016.%20oktober%202020/bm%20kollegialitet%202020%20final.pdf>

<sup>204</sup> Den Norske Kirke, *Biskopens ansvar for arbeidsmiljøet*, 22/10/2020 <https://www.kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/aktuelt/biskopens%20ansvar%20for%20arbeidsmilj%C3%B8et/>

<sup>205</sup> Vårt Land 22/10/2021

<sup>206</sup> Vårt Land 22/10/2021

<sup>207</sup> NRK, 16/10/2020

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Enstad, Martin, *Presteforeningen og kjørereglene*, 28/08/2020 <https://www.prest.no/artikkel/presteforeningen-og-kjorereglene/>

when the case BM 59/20 was followed up in 2021, the employer's committee (AGU) decided, based on media reports from pastors in autumn and the Bishop's conference statement 2020, to survey female pastors about their working environment, the result was published 2021. Rambøll surveyed on behalf of the Church Council. 78% of women pastors in the CofN joined in the said survey. The survey said there are many positive answers for framework terms and leader relationships. However, there are more negative responses associated with unsolicited comments.<sup>210</sup>

One of the survey's most critical findings was the differences in the experience of equality and treatment of female pastors in the various dioceses. The CofN stated in the full report that there is a significant difference within the CofN. The result is not the same in all dioceses.

When the CofN was for a survey, it seemed they wanted more concrete data on how they will follow up on their decision on the case BM 58/20.

With all this being said, what are the consequences of not following these new protocols? As we have tackled, the first debate was about the church legitimising women's discrimination by employing male pastors who reserve themselves to working with women. Now the church has released a statement that men cannot reserve themselves. If they have issues with it, they must talk to the Bishop. Furthermore, the church has room for conservative pastors. The Bishop must take care of them through his supervision. The church hopes for diversity in the church in so many ways. However, as Tveit said, it cannot be translated into what one wants from practices that negatively affect other colleagues and the working environment.<sup>211</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

Suppose we are going to look back at the debate from Bjerkås ordination. In many ways, the church of Norway has evolved in resolving and implementing protocols with the issue of women pastors in general. Initially, there were not just church rules or policies involving women pastors' debate since it has the background of equality, democracy and the welfare state. The women pastor discrimination was high, and there was even a compromise. Moreover, the resistance to women pastors created conflicts between church and state, especially theological conflicts within the church. In addition, it was also a work environment problem at that time. However, today, when it has been a long time since women got their

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<sup>210</sup> Medarbeiderundersøkelsen blant kvinnelige preste. <https://www.kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/kirkeradet/medarbeiderunders%C3%B8kelse%20kvinnelige%20prester/>

<sup>211</sup> Vårt Land, 13/10/2021

rights, what is the situation now? As discussed in the previous chapters, it is noticeable that the church has a gentle strategy for women pastors' issues. Everything took time, from having the right to preach in ordinary service to women's right to access ordination until women pastors had the same right as men pastors.

After Bjerkås ordination, many in the church opposed it, and it did not become easy for the pioneers. However, a few women are taking theological studies and following their calling as time passes. A significant change came when MF changed their position about women pastors in the 1970s. Many studied theology and eventually became pastors. Notably, in 1978, "the country board of the Clergy Association of the Norwegian Church recommended that the document '*Kollegefellesskap og samarbeid*' the so-called *Kjørereglene* (driving rules) used as a basis of Bishop for their handling of intractable conflict situations between colleagues."<sup>212</sup> Then women became increasingly confident in their calling, especially when Rosemarie Køhn became the first bishop of Norway. Then in 2004, the driving rules were abolished. The number of women pastors increased, and many got ordained as pastors.

The opposition to women's ministry is few, though they still exist. The CofN welcome and accepts women's ministry. We do not hear much about it today until they write on the news about it. However, there were few professors of theology in 2019 who did not accept women pastors, which I discussed in Chapter 4. Then 2020, we have Mikael Bruun, who became famous because of his post about women's ministry. The church released articles clarifying its position on it. Issues are discussed at the Bishop conference.

Moreover, a survey was done on behalf of the CofN that at some point revealed the situation of some women. Now the CofN has made a move that seems like the obstacle to women having their ministry rights entirely equal to men fallen. The time has finally come; it took time, but the most important is that it happens finally.

The CofN has indeed gone through the process of dealing with women pastors. It is noticeable in this process of dealing; women have a significant part of it. For example, in the times that pioneers like Ingrid Bjerkås and Berit Andersen started their calling. These women show the best they can and create a good standard. Because of that time, many in the opposition and clergy refused to work with Andersen, so she had to continue without *Kollas*.

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<sup>212</sup> Bispemøtet, Sak BM 59/20, *Ordinasjon og kollegiafellesskap*, 16/10/2020



It is seen that women also help the church to cope with those who refuse to collaborate with them. Let us look at a current example: when Mikael Bruun posted his comment in the newspaper (mentioned in Chapter 5), many women responded, including the three theology students at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo.<sup>213</sup> The response from the female students is, I think, a part of dealing with the opposition who refuse to collaborate with female pastors.

The interesting part of my finding, I think, is that, given that there are a few who are vocal in the media that they are against or refuse to work with their colleagues. A few women also complained about mistreatment before the debate arose. It seems that some women may brush it off, or maybe they focus on their calling and service. The report is based on the survey of *arbeidsmiljøundersøkelse*; it says that one out of three women pastors experienced unpleasant treatment because they are women. Thinking that many women experienced unwanted incidents because of gender reminds me of the story of Berit Andersen. One of the pioneer pastors, Andersen, did her best to be a role model.

The debate about women's ministry in the Church of Norway has been long resolved. Today no male pastor in the Church of Norway can refuse to work with a female colleague. Thus I think the last hindrance to a full women's ministry has now been removed.

This thesis does not fully explore many things, mainly how the different kinds of media (online newspapers), mainly social media, affect the recent women's ministry debate. Furthermore, explore the reason the few young male pastors are in opposition (no side) to women's ministry, relating to neo-conservatism.

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<sup>213</sup> Vårt Land, 13/09/2020 <https://www.vl.no/meninger/verdidebatt/2020/09/13/det-er-oss-mikael-bruun-reserverer-seg-mot/>

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