

2012

Unity in Diversity

A Paper on the Role of Women within the
C&MA of Australia presented to the 2012
Annual General Council (Sydney)



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Council 2012*

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The National Board
Christian and Missionary Alliance of Australia

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I. Executive Summary

At the 2011, Brisbane Council the following resolution was passed:

Resolved that the National Board provide to the churches a clear statement of the theological basis for the position presupposed in our constitution, together with an affirmation of the priority of unity in diversity on the basis of the Gospel. This statement is to be presented to Council 2012 and provide the basis for an open forum to discuss this issue.

This paper represents the National Board's response to this resolution.

The Position of the C&MA of Australia

In brief, the constitution of the C&MA of Australia places no restriction on women in ministry except for those roles that involve elder authority. The reason for this restriction is based on the headship principle established primarily in 1 Corinthians 11: 2-16 though reflected in other Scriptures that connects male headship – and therefore authority – to the order of creation, thus making the principle universal. It is the C&MA position that a woman can undertake any function within the church except for that of Senior Pastor, Solo Pastor or Eldership.

Simpson & the Early Alliance

Throughout Simpson's public ministry he was questioned on the matter of women in ministry. His constant emphasis was that women were able and encouraged to engage in every ministry which was proper to them. In his work on the Holy Spirit and in specific reference to Deborah, he wrote:

The Holy Spirit has distinctly recognized woman's place in the Church, not only to love, to suffer, and to intercede, but to prophesy, to teach, and to minister in every proper way to the bodies and the souls of men. And yet, when we have said this – all this – there yet remains a restriction which every true woman will be willing to recognize.¹

This restriction was in regards to ecclesiastical office as Simpson was insistent that a woman was "not called to rule in the ecclesiastical government of the Church of Christ or to exercise the official ministry which the Holy Spirit has committed to the elders or bishops of His Church."²

Simpson's view was based on a reading of 1 Corinthians 11:2-6 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 that prohibited women, in the context of creation, from holding authority over men. This 'headship principle' was valid in the home and in the Church and was to be the norm for Christians

¹ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, Vol 1, 107.

² Ibid.

everywhere. As would be expected, the practice of the C&MA reflected Simpson's teaching, and there are several examples in the official publications of the Alliance which reflect this position.

Statement on Unity in Diversity

It is recognised that in the church, men and women share a common spiritual standing and unity in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28, 1 Cor 12:12-13). It is a unity enhanced by interdependent, complementary roles, and varied spiritual gifts (1 Cor 1:11-12; Rom 12:3-8).

Plans for an Open Forum

It is proposed that at Council, time will be given for delegates to break into small groups to discuss this issue and complete a provided survey. After sufficient time has been allowed, we will come back together and each group will report back to the larger group the results and main themes of their discussion.

II. Task as Directed by Council 2011

At the 2011 Annual General Council in Brisbane, the committee on General Legislation brought to the floor the following from their report:

Women in Leadership

Whereas from the input that this committee has received, we believe that there is insufficient reason for change at this time,

And whereas the theological basis for the position presupposed in our constitution on the issue of women in leadership is not well articulated,

And whereas there is a diversity of views within the Society on the issue of women in leadership,

Resolved that the National Board provide to the churches a clear statement of the theological basis for the position presupposed in our constitution, together with an affirmation of the priority of unity in diversity on the basis of the Gospel.

This may then provide a platform for future discussion on the issue.

This resolution was slightly amended and carried as follows:

Resolved that the National Board provide to the churches a clear statement of the theological basis for the position presupposed in our constitution, together with an affirmation of the priority of unity in diversity on the basis of the Gospel. This statement is to be presented to Council 2012 and provide the basis for an open forum to discuss this issue.

The Task

Council has requested that the National Board bring a clear statement on the theological basis for the position presupposed in the C&MA constitution on women leadership. The tasks then are:

1. To define what position the constitution presupposes in relation to women leadership; and then to,
2. Provide the theological (and it is assumed, the biblical) basis for said position;

Therefore the theological and biblical basis to be provided is that which best represents the current position of the C&MA of Australia.

Council has also required that:

3. A statement be made to the effect that an affirmation is given to the priority of unity in diversity on the basis of the Gospel; and
4. That provision is made for an open forum on the place of women in leadership within the C&MA.

III. Definitions

This paper utilises several terms that need to be defined in the context of this discussion. I am aware that some might want nuance certain elements of these definitions but the following describes the sense in which these terms are used throughout. The terms are:

Complementarian Position³:

<p>Basic Position:</p>	<p>God made men and women different, and assigned them different roles in human society.</p> <p>It is God’s intention that men should be responsible for leadership/authority roles (in the home, society, and the church), and that women should play a nurturing, supportive, complimentary role.</p>
<p>Practical implications for church ministry</p>	<p>Some men are given responsibility for spiritual leadership and authority in the church.</p> <p>Women should not exercise roles of spiritual leadership and authority over adult men in the church.</p> <p>Therefore, women should not be ordained, they should not hold pastoral positions which involve broad leadership and authority over the congregation (pastoral staff roles under the authority of a male senior pastor are allowable), they should not sit on governing (Elders) boards or in other position which assumes Elder Authority.</p>
<p>Decorum?</p>	<p>Women should conduct (and dress) themselves in a way that communicates their attitude of modesty and submissiveness.</p>
<p>Exceptional cases?</p>	<p>Where no men are available to lead, women may be forced to do so. But this is never ideal; male leadership should be installed as soon as possible.</p>
<p>Fundamental logic: why do men and women relate in this way?</p>	<p>The <i>male leadership principle</i> was established by God at creation. It is built into the essential make-up of men and women. It has therefore been the predominant model throughout history (and especially across the history of God’s people—Israel and the church).</p>
<p>Key arguments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation-fall narrative (Gen 2-3 especially) places the man first as leader, the woman second as compliment. • Throughout Scripture there is an overwhelming pattern of male leadership. This was true in the NT with the 12 disciples and the other prominent church leaders who are named, just as it was in the OT. • The NT "headship" passages (1 Cor 11, Eph 5) clearly teach the male leadership principle.

³ Modified from Radiant, Kenneth G. *Men & Women in Christian Ministry: An Introduction to the “Gender Role” question for Church Leader*. 1999.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NT "prohibition" passages (1 Cor 14, 1 Tim 2) explicitly restrict women from roles of public leadership and authority over men in the church. • Church tradition reinforces this same pattern.
<p>How has sin affected male-female relations and roles?</p>	<p>Because of sin, healthy authority and leadership roles often degenerate into oppression and abuse. However, the basic authority relationship between men and women is not a result of sin, but was intended to be a beautiful expression of the loving care of God.</p>
<p>Interpretation of the "headship" passages (1 Cor 11:2-16; Eph 5:22-33)</p>	<p>These passages clearly teach the male leadership principle, and connect it both to the creation account and to the nature of the God and His church. It should therefore be treated as universally applicable.</p>
<p>Interpretation of the "prohibition" passages (1 Cor 14:33-36, 1 Tim 2:8-15)</p>	<p>These passages clearly teach that women are not to hold authority over men in the church. This teaching is based in the Law (1 Cor 14:34) and in the creation (1 Tim 2:13-14), so it cannot be taken as a mere cultural application of a larger principle.</p> <p>If we "culturalize" these passages without exegetical warrant, we undermine the authority of Scripture, because we open the door to "culturalize" any biblical teaching that we do not like.</p>
<p>Nature of church authority, ministry</p>	<p>The NT clearly teaches that some positions in the church involve responsibility to guard true doctrine and to teach it authoritatively, and also to preside over the life of the church for the good of its members.</p> <p>It is appropriate for us to identify many of the pastoral and governing roles in our churches with these "authoritative" roles described in the NT.</p> <p>Authority is always to be exercised in a loving and giving spirit, but carries with it the ability to instruct, command, correct, and discipline.</p>

Egalitarian Position⁴:

<p>Basic Position:</p>	<p>God made men and women equal in all respects.</p> <p>God gives each individual a unique set of talents, abilities, and gifts—irrespective of their gender.</p> <p>All Christians should be allowed to minister in whatever way they are gifted. Ministry roles should be determined <i>entirely</i> by giftedness and personal suitability, <i>without regard to gender</i>.</p>
<p>Practical implications for church ministry</p>	<p>Some people are given responsibility for spiritual leadership and authority in the church.</p> <p>Such leadership responsibility can be given to any individual who is appropriately gifted and who shows the suitable level of spiritual maturity.</p> <p>Any church role that a man might have can also be given to an appropriately gifted woman. Absolutely no distinction should be made on the basis of gender.</p>
<p>Decorum?</p>	<p>Generally a non-issue. If asked, the response is that all members of the church should dress in a culturally-appropriate manner to express Christian values.</p>
<p>Exceptional cases?</p>	<p>In certain cultures, it may be wise to use more men or women in public leadership to avoid giving offense. This is not ideal. Where possible, the church should model biblical equality and promote it in society at large.</p>
<p>Fundamental logic: why do men and women relate in this way?</p>	<p>God made men and women equal in His image. He relates to us all individually, and gifts us all uniquely. And He explicitly promised that a feature of the New Covenant would be the universal work of the Holy Spirit in all believers, so that all can serve freely according to their gifts.</p>
<p>Key arguments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation narrative identifies men and women as equal in God’s image (see especially Gen 1:26-30), and shows them exercising an identical range of roles. The fall narrative indicates that gender hierarchy is a result of sin (Gen 3:16). • In spite of a predominantly male-centered social setting, the Bible identifies a number of prominent women leaders who were approved by God (Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Huldah, several "wise women" and prophetesses, women who followed Jesus, Dorcas, Lydia, Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, etc.). • The NT proclaims that sources of division and inequality which are the result of sin are no longer applicable in the church, and should be left behind (Gal 3:28). • The NT illustrates this renewed equality in Jesus’ positive attitude toward women and in many references to prominent women in ministry (see for eg Rom 16 and Phil 4:2-3). • Male-centered church tradition proves nothing except that the church

⁴ Ibid. This position is included to help (a) provide a summary description of the egalitarian position and (b) delineate the C&MA position appropriately.

	<p>sometimes fails to live up to its calling, and has only recently come to a widespread appreciation of the true equality of men and women in Christ.</p>
<p>How has sin affected male-female relations and roles?</p>	<p>Sin is the reason for hierarchy in male-female relationships. As sin's effects are overturned in the gospel, we should begin to experience true equality again.</p>
<p>Interpretation of the "headship" passages (1 Cor 11:2-16; Eph 5:22-33)</p>	<p>The Greek word "head" (<i>kephale</i>) was normally used for other concepts such as "source" rather than for "leader." (Other terms were used for authority figures.) These passages are therefore better interpreted as meaning that the man was created first, and is to be the nurturer who supplies for the woman. They do not clearly teach a universal principle of the authority of men over women.</p>
<p>Interpretation of the "prohibition" passages (1 Cor 14:33-36, 1 Tim 2:8-15)</p>	<p>1 Cor 11-14 says that women can pray and prophesy in public before it commands that they be "quiet" (14:34). Thus, this command cannot be an absolute restriction on women speaking, but must rather be an issue of preserving order in a church where the women were creating confusion by their public outbursts (cf verses 33 and 35).</p> <p>1 Timothy warns repeatedly of false teaching. We know from various sources that there were many problems with false teaching in Ephesus, where Timothy was—some of which were likely connected with the behaviour of loose or domineering women. As a result, this prohibition is best interpreted as a command to a particular cultural/historical situation.</p>
<p>Nature of church authority, ministry</p>	<p>The primary point of ministry is service. Good Christian leadership always follows the example of Christ, who gave Himself for His people.</p> <p>There is a place in the Body for instruction and correction. However, these are functions performed by the Body, following the lead of those who are gifted to offer guidance. And they are done in the name of Christ and under the authority of His Word, not by virtue of the authority of individuals within the church.</p>

Elder Authority:

The phrase 'Elder Authority' is used within the constitution of the US C&MA to exclude those ministries to which women are not permitted to serve. It is defined as:

With authority delegated from Christ the Chief Shepherd and confirmed by the church membership, the elders are the highest level of servant leadership in the local church. As undershepherds, elders collectively oversee the local church and its ministries to accomplish Christ's mission.⁵

As the 'highest level of servant leadership' and consistent with C&MA views on male authority, women are prohibited from serving in any role that would place her in a position of having spiritual (or ecclesiastical) authority over an adult man. Ecclesiastical roles that are defined as conferring elder authority are, for example: Senior Pastor, Solo Pastor and, of course, Elder.

While this term does not appear in the Australian C&MA constitution, its assumption is visible throughout. The phrase is used here as a convenient way to refer to C&MA practice.

IV. Extent and Limit to the Discussion

As can be seen from the above definitions, complementarians generally insist that God created men and women equal in spiritual standing before God, but He created them to fulfil distinct (complementary) roles or functions. This distinction acts to exclude women from certain positions in ecclesiastical leadership. Egalitarians, in contrast, argue that because God created men and women to be equal, and because the hierarchical distinction was a result of the fall, any restrictions – even in reference to church leadership – are no longer valid post Christ's resurrection. Thus women should be free to serve in positions of pastoral leadership and take roles that confer elder authority.

A glance at the sheer volume of literature that has emerged in the recent past on this issue reveals two truths; (a) the debate is far from over and (b) proponents of either position are having very limited success in persuading those from the other side. Unfortunately, many parts of the debate seem to have settled into an "us" verses "them" mentality that does little to move the debate forward and falls far short of bringing glory to God. But this is not to say that the debate has been utterly fruitless. On the positive side, our understanding of the crucial biblical texts has been considerably sharpened, on the negative we've had a salutary reminder that bad exegesis and theology is never far away.

⁵ This definition was incorporated into the larger definition of 'Elder' within the U.S. C&MA constitution at General Assembly 1998.

For this reason the present paper does not debate or even canvas (beyond the definitions given above) the various views that engulf the complementarian/egalitarian debate. The purpose of this paper as directed by Council is to outline the reasons why, in its constitution, the C&MA of Australia has presupposed a complementarian position on women in leadership. Thus the paper should **not** be understood as either a *defence* of the complementarian position nor an argument *against* an egalitarian position. The paper is merely a statement on why the C&MA has historically taken the position on women in leadership that it has. Of course, in order to state the position of the C&MA the paper will inevitably refer to those views that support a complementarian position. However, the National Board wishes to remind delegates of the intent and inherent limitations of the resolution passed.

V. The C&MA Constitution and Women in Leadership

An Alliance distinctive has always been that a woman's talents and gifts may be fully utilised for the good of the society and for the advancement of the kingdom of God.⁶ This was undeniably Simpson's position, who wrote (in the context of a sermon on the Old Testament judge Deborah) that "[i]t is too late in the day to question the public ministry of women. The facts of God's providence, and the fruits of God's Spirit, are stronger than all our theological fancies."⁷ This is why we read that Simpson actively supported women evangelists to 'establish and organise branches' of the C&MA, encouraged women to share the pulpit at his great missionary rallies and called for 100,000 women to go to the mission field.⁸

The importance of women's ministry to the C&MA is clearly demonstrated again in another sermon which Simpson preached some years after the one on Deborah. Speaking at the Old Orchard, Maine, Simpson stressed that the missionary enterprise has caught:

...the heart of woman, and our Women's Societies are leading in this noble crusade all around the world. Someone well expressed the attitude of women to missions in a religious assembly when referring to the fact that men helped the missionary cause by their wills after they were dead, and women helped the missionary cause with a will while they were living, and added, "We are greatly indebted to dead men and live women."⁹

⁶ Runge, Albert. "A Theology of Women Based Upon Genesis 1-3". Unpublished Paper, 44.

⁷ Simpson, A.B. *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly* (December 7, 1894), 533.

⁸ Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry, General Council 1995, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

⁹ Simpson, *The Alliance Weekly* 37:3 (1911), 36.

It was this emphasis on the missionary enterprise that became the real guiding principle in the early Alliance movement because the issue at hand was never the suitability of women to serve in public ministry but how on earth (literally!) the church was going to evangelise the world. Because of this, Simpson had no desire to placate those whose ecclesiastical agendas were, in his opinion, secondary to the task of world evangelization.¹⁰ The ‘main thing’ of bringing back the king must always be the ‘main thing’. This is why Dr Leslie Andrews, a former member of the Board of Managers of the U.S. Alliance is able to comment that, “[i]f women furthered the primary mission of the Church to reach lost souls for Christ, then [Simpson] enthusiastically endorsed their ministries to achieve that objective”.¹¹

However, it is a matter of historical record that women were nonetheless limited within the Alliance’s ecclesiastical structures, particularly in regard to those roles that involved elder authority. Standing in what the early Alliance believed was the bedrock of the Evangelical Protestant tradition, it was maintained that the Bible reserves the ecclesiastical ‘headship’ roles and duties (i.e., elder, pastor, bishop) for men. To quote from Simpson’s sermon on Deborah again,

*There is a difference between the ministry of woman and of man. God Himself has said that the head of every woman is the man, and the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God. ... the practical conclusion of the whole matter [is] that woman is called without restriction to teach, to witness, to work in every department of the church of Christ, but she is not called to rule in the ecclesiastical government of the church of Christ, or to exercise the official ministry which the Holy Ghost has committed to the elders or bishops of His church; and whenever she steps out of her modest sphere into the place of public leadership and executive government, she weakens her true power and loses her peculiar charm.*¹²

Rev. L. James Tieszen, an Alliance pastor writing to the US General Assembly in 1997 summed up the C&MA position:

*Simpson and the Alliance have held a singular view of the biblical teaching regarding women in ministry. They have believed that women are not to hold the positions or conduct the duties reserved for men. These are the positions and duties of headship: elder, bishop, pastor.*¹³

The reasons for this understanding will be discussed further below, but the constitution of the C&MA developed in such a way as to preserve the headship roles within the ecclesiastical structure

¹⁰ See below. Simpson wrote about this in *The Christian Alliance* (December 29, 1893), 402.

¹¹ Andrews, Leslie A. A.B. *Simpson’s Understanding of the Role of Women in Ministry*, 1986.

¹² Simpson, A.B. *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly* (December 7, 1894), 533.

¹³ Tieszen, L. James. *An Alliance Historical Perspective*. A paper presented to the U.S. General Assembly, 1997. This is discussed further in Section VI below.

of the church for men. Thus the constitution takes what might be termed a moderate complementarian view of women in leadership.¹⁴ That is, the constitution places no restriction on women in ministry except that ministry which involves elder authority.¹⁵

The founding of the C&MA in Australia by U.S. missionaries in 1969 led to the establishment of a constitution here that reflected in large part our U.S. heritage. Thus we too reflect a moderate complementarian position which means in practical terms that women are not permitted to (the relevant section in the Australian C&MA manual is shown in brackets):

- Be ordained (and the C&MA will not sustain the ordination of women by other denominations) (Section 2.9);
- Serve as President or Vice-President of the movement (Section 3.15)¹⁶;
- Serve as a solo or senior pastor (Section 1.6); and
- Serve on the board of elders in a local church (Section 1.7)¹⁷.

Beyond these, however, there are no restrictions on women in ministry within the C&MA of Australia. That is, women may:

- Serve as Pastoral Workers under the authority of a male Senior pastor (Section 2.9);
- Administer the ordinances of Communion and Baptism;¹⁸
- Serve on the Board of Deacons;
- Serve on the National Board;
- Serve on Governing Boards (such as the Alliance College of Australia Governing Board);
- Serve as Director of the Alliance College of Australia;
- Serve on the faculty of the Alliance College of Australia;
- Serve on the Property Trust;

¹⁴ I say 'moderate complementarian' because some complementarian positions deny women the right to teach men. See, for example, Moo, Douglas J. "1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance." TJ 1 NS (1980). Grudem, Wayne. "Prophecy – Yes, But teaching – No: Paul's Consistent Advocacy of Women's Participation without Governing Authority." JETS 30 (1987). But this is not a position that Simpson held, see below.

¹⁵ For reference, the particular clause in the U.S. constitution is as follows: "Women may fulfill any function in the local church which the senior pastor and elders may choose to delegate to them consistent with the Uniform Constitution for Accredited Churches and may properly engage in any kind of ministry except that which involves elder authority." *Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, H1, Statement on Church Government, 4. Form of Government, d. Local Church, (5)*:

¹⁶ Whilst there is nothing in the constitution that restricts women directly from having these roles the use of the male pronoun to describe the position indicates that there is an unstated expectation that these roles are for men only.

¹⁷ This section of the constitution declares that elders shall 'conform to scriptural standards'. That this implies 'maleness' is inferred from section II of the manual which excludes women with Pastoral Worker Licenses from the Elder's board (2.9). C.f Section III.18 on Elders boards for developing churches.

¹⁸ Not all local Alliance church pastor's and/or elders boards allow women to administer the sacraments. However, the current constitution does not prevent women from doing so. In this, the Australian C&MA is more open than the U.S. C&MA which currently does not allow women to administer the sacraments. It was actually an attempt to allow women to serve the communion elements at the 1994 U.S. General Assembly that led to a major review of women in ministry within the U.S. C&MA. However, no change was made.

- Serve as missionaries;
- Serve as national evangelists;
- Preach and teach in mixed (male & female) congregations; and
- Any other ministry within the local church that does not involve elder authority.

So what are the reasons for why the C&MA has taken this stance? The answer can be readily divided into two sections. The first has to do with the history and purpose of the C&MA, primarily influenced by its focus on world evangelisation and, of course, the influence of its founder, Dr A. B. Simpson. The second has to do with how key biblical passages have been interpreted in such a way as to support a complementarian view. We will address each in turn.

VI. The Historical Position

The Christian & Missionary Alliance is relatively unique amongst Protestant denominations because it did not have its beginning and grounding in a polemic debate. Indeed, the C&MA was not founded as an ecclesiastical body at all but an interdenominational parachurch organization, whose structures, objectives and foundational principles actually broke new ground. David Fessenden, in describing the historical distinctive of the C&MA writes,

*Born out of an evangelical movement that transcended denominational creeds, the society founded by A.B. Simpson sought to remain loyal to the teachings of Scripture while working within the existing churches of the time. This required that the Alliance be careful to avoid a sectarian bias or an extra-biblical slant. Simpson's goal was to produce an organization that had wide acceptance among evangelicals of all denominations and one that would tolerate differences of opinion in nonessentials.*¹⁹

Fessenden goes on to quote George Pardington, (who the writers of *All for Jesus* cite as the most influential developer of Alliance doctrine apart from Simpson):

*The doctrinal basis of the Alliance is strictly evangelical. In common with orthodox Protestantism it unhesitatingly accepts and unequivocally teaches the fundamental truths of the Holy Scriptures. Aside from the Word of God it has no formal creed.*²⁰

¹⁹ Fessenden, David E. "Present Truths: The Historical and Contemporary Distinctives of the Christian and Missionary Alliance". *Alliance Academic Review*. 1999.

²⁰ George P. Pardington, *Twenty-Five Wonderful Years, 1889-1914: A Popular Sketch of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* (New York: Christian Alliance Publishing Company, 1914), 47.

As such, the early C&MA never actually sat down and hammered out a formalised doctrine or position paper that would act to define the movement on particular issues. Instead, Simpson went out of his way to stress his ties to the historic beliefs of the Church:

First, we believe and teach all the evangelical doctrines of the Christian Church in the strictest sense; and secondly, even in what might be called distinctive teachings, we hold nothing that is not directly founded upon the Word of God. And even these are in accord with the spirit and sense of all the great standards of the Protestant churches.²¹

Thus what was important for the early C&MA was not that it somehow found a way to distinguish itself from all other denominations (through some unique theological or biblical perspective) but that it had fundamental uniformity with the Protestant tradition. This was actually essential if the missionary thrust of the movement was to succeed since the C&MA had to draw its ‘workers’ from the wider evangelical body of Christ. Thus, Simpson never intended to challenge the traditional evangelical understanding of particular theological views or matters of biblical interpretation. Even the ‘distinctives’ of the Alliance (Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King) were to stand within the bedrock of the evangelical understanding.

Of course, as would be expected of the leader of the C&MA, Simpson was challenged from time to time to express his opinion on a whole range of issues, including that of women in ecclesiastical leadership and he did so as the opportunity arose. However, this means that his writings on this matter are always based in the context of a wider discussion and he never presented them as part of a detailed, systematic argument. Andrews is certainly correct when she writes,

Almost always, however, [Simpson] responded to queries about the ministry of women out of his burden to evangelize a lost world and his awareness of the strategic, substantial, and successful roles which women held in meeting that agenda.²²

This needs to be kept in mind throughout the following discussion.

a. Preaching & Teaching

In 1893, a “great convention of Christian workers” took place in Atlanta, Georgia. Taking to the pulpit during the convention were a number of women who spoke with great “blessing”. However, the women’s ministry was not appreciated by all and after the convention one of the leading pastors of the city, supported by his local ministers fraternal, tried to set “the community

²¹ Simpson, A.B. *The Word, the Work and the World*, (July 1887), 2.

²² Andrews, “A.B. Simpson’s Understanding”.

right on the subject of women speaking in public.” In typical style, Simpson chided the pastor for forgetting “all the glorious results of that great convention, in the single fact that it had run across one of his ecclesiastical conventions”. Moreover, Simpson then went on to describe the public ministry of women as

*...a little side issue of a purely speculative character, which God has already settled, not only in His word, but in His providence, by the seal which He is placing in this very day, in every part of the world, upon the public work of consecrated Christian women.*²³

As a consequence, Simpson directed the pastor to “let the Lord manage the women. He can do it better than you, and you turn your batteries against the common enemy.”²⁴ This response was typical of Simpson whose energy was always focused on achieving practical ministry outcomes. He probably would have approved of the 17th century Christian maxim: In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.²⁵

We can also detect this emphasis in the answers that Simpson gave to readers of the weekly Alliance publication on the two occasions that he was challenged about allowing women to teach and preach.²⁶ Both questions made particular reference to 1 Corinthians 14:34-5 and I Timothy 2:9-10, the first being; “...what authority have the women of the C.A. [the Christian Alliance] for preaching or teaching in the churches?”²⁷ The second having a more pastoral motivation; “Satan has kept me [sic] tongue tied by those two verses many times. Through Christ I have overcome; but I would really like to have you explain them.”²⁸

In answering the questions Simpson acknowledged that the passages referred to “mean what they say” but he disagreed that they therefore said that “the women of the C.A. must not preach or teach in the churches”. Appealing to 1 Corinthians 11:5, Simpson notes that this verse

²³ Simpson, *The Christian Alliance* (December 29, 1893), 402.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Often miss-attributed to Augustine of Hippo, this maxim seems to have first appeared in Germany around A.D. 1627 among the Lutheran and German Reformed churches. Simpson’s desire not to cause division over matters of theological perspective is seen in the 1906 Conference for Prayer and Counsel. Subtitled “Respecting Uniformity in the Testimony and Teaching of the Alliance” the document recognises that certain matters of teaching and testimony are “open questions about which our brethren agree to differ and hold in mutual charity their individual convictions”. Four particular matters were said to be “open”. Church government; the subject and mode of baptism; the doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism; and various ceremonies and practices such as feet washing.

²⁶ The two occasions were separated by six years which shows that this was hardly a contentious issue at the time.

²⁷ Simpson. *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly* (April 20, 1894), 437.

²⁸ Simpson. *The Christian and Missionary Alliance* (March 24, 1900), 18.

“distinctly recognizes the right of women to prophesy in public”, as long as she does so “modestly”.²⁹ Simpson clearly understands Paul’s comments on prophecy here to extend to both preaching and teaching.³⁰ He goes on to say,

*The great question is, whether the sister has anything worth saying. If she has a message from God, God forbid that anybody should stop her delivering it, and there are plenty of Scriptural and womanly ways in which a true woman can represent her Master and speak for the edification of His people.*³¹

It seems, therefore, that Simpson had two guiding criterion for the ministry of women. The first was the manifestation of the Spirit’s presence in and/or through the woman’s ministry; and the second was that the woman undertakes her public ministry in “womanly ways”. He therefore did not answer the ‘prohibition’ issue directly, preferring instead to focus on whether the goal of Christian ministry was being achieved.

b. Authority & Headship

To the author’s knowledge, the earliest discussion that Simpson gave to the issue of women’s ministry appears in 1891, in the March 27 issue of *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*. Headed as “Ministry of Woman”, Simpson devotes almost 500 words to a defence of a woman’s right to engage in public ministry but at the same time he explains that this ministry is limited to those roles that do not bear ecclesiastical office. Whilst this text is early in the life of the C&MA there are no published writings from Simpson to indicate that he ever changed his mind on this issue.³² Simpson begins by drawing from the example of two women in Scripture:

Ever since Anna announced the incarnation, and Mary Magdalene heralded the resurrection, woman has been God's special instrument for publishing the glad

²⁹ In both answers Simpson refers to 1 Corinthians 11:5, however he only includes the ‘modesty’ reference in the response to the later question.

³⁰ Elsewhere Simpson insisted that the prophetic ministry had “undoubtedly” been given to women and that this meant nothing less than speaking “unto men to edification and exhortation, and comfort.” Thus “any word [...] of edification and exhortation is proper for a woman to speak in the Christian assembly, and anything the apostle may have said subsequently to this statement can never rescind or abrogate these admissions and permissions.” Simpson. *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly* (March 27, 1891), 195.

³¹ Simpson. *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly* (April 20, 1894), 437.

³² *Contra* King who tries to make a case that Simpson did change his mind. King, Paul L. *Our Forgotten Heritage: A Unifying Moderate Complementarian Model of Women as Pastors in the Earlier 20th Century Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 2-3. Whilst King is right in pointing out that some women did serve in pastoral capacities in the early C&MA it is clear that these were exceptions rather than normal practice. Even the 1911 statement from the Board of Managers on the possibility of woman pastors that King champions is clear in its intent that such women were only permitted to serve in the absence of a suitable man. On this, see below.

*tidings of salvation. We may regulate, but can never suppress her ministry. The best remedy for the abuse of anything is its wise and proper use.*³³

Simpson goes on to say that the Scriptures themselves have regulated the “wise and proper use” of woman’s ministry through the principle of headship as found in 1 Corinthians 11. “The head of every woman is the man, the head of every man is Christ, the head of Christ is God. This is the Scriptural order of the sexes...”³⁴ In his commentary on this passage, Simpson explains this headship principle by comparing judges who sit on the same bench. Just like a man and a woman, both judges are equal in ability and dignity; however “one is the head of the court and the other a member of it.”³⁵ Thus while women are equal to men both in “ability and honour” they are nevertheless to submit themselves to male authority.

This principle of headship, grounded in the order of creation, functions to regulate a woman’s ministry but Simpson was insistent that it does not “authorize the exclusion of woman from public work for the Lord.” What it does do though,

*[is] prohibit women from the formal and official ministry of the Christian church in the strictly ecclesiastical sense. She is not called to be a pastor, an elder, a bishop; but besides the official ministry and government of the Christian church there is an infinite room, for proclaiming a glad message of salvation.*³⁶

So again, despite this restriction Simpson makes the point that there is much (infinite!) room within this framework for women to do the work of the Kingdom. But in doing that ministry, a woman should be careful to not act or become like a man. She should not try and “unsex”³⁷ herself, rather she should make the most of her gender in proclaiming the Word of God. He writes,

*the less formal her testimony is, the better. The more it takes the form of a simple story of love, the less like a sermon and the more like a conversation, the more effective it will be. The more it is attended by the spirit of feminine modesty, the more power it will have.*³⁸

To make his point, Simpson differentiated between the Greek words *kerago*, “to proclaim officially with a trumpet,” and *laleo*, “to talk.” He claimed that *laleo* describes the ministry of woman, and *kerago* the ministry of man. “Man,” therefore, “is the official herald, woman is the echo

³³ Simpson. *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly* (April 20, 1894), 437.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Simpson, 1 Corinthians, 237. Simpson, standing in the long line of protestant tradition, accepts the metaphorical use of head here to mean ‘authority over’.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Simpson, 1 Corinthians, 237.

³⁸ Ibid.

of his voice, repeating it in a thou-gentler tones, until love bears it to every human heart."³⁹ This distinction of method was heuristic only and may have reflected his "intuitive sense that women do not have to minister like men in the sense of sounding like men in order to have a viable public ministry."⁴⁰ Simpson concludes the article with a reaffirmation of the importance of women's ministry:

While we place these gentle restrictions around the ministry of woman, as the bible seems to teach, we do not say that they limit her work a single iota in any really practical and womanly way. We thank God for her precious ministry, and we pray God to raise up more and more of His daughters to proclaim abroad in their sweeter and gentler way the Father's love. The Lord Himself gave the Word, great was the company of women that published it. May the Lord speedily fulfill this, the true version of the grand old Psalm.⁴¹

One final example of the importance of this authority structure to the C&MA: Three years before Simpson was promoted to glory the *Alliance Weekly* printed an article by A.E. Thompson (Simpson's official biographer and regular contributor to the magazine) who repeated this principle of headship in the context of "Women in Church Worship":

"It all hinges on relationships, or, to be more explicit, headship. The order is, God, Christ, Man, Woman (11:2-3). The woman is the glory of the man as the man is the glory of God (11:7). The man is not of the woman but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man. Yet neither is without the other, for as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman (9:8-12). Consequently he says, 'I suffer not the woman to usurp authority.' Her place in the worship of the Church is one of association with, rather than superiority to the man. She may pray and even prophesy in the Church, but must do it in a modest and seemly manner (11:5).⁴²

Thompson then goes on to say that this principle of headship means that women "should be willing to take their God-given place in the line of headship... and any assumption of the place or prerogative of the man is improper, even though the woman be exercising the gift bestowed upon her."⁴³

It is clear then, that the early C&MA taught that the headship principle, grounded in the order of creation, functioned to prohibit women from the ecclesiastical offices of Pastor, Elder and Bishop.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Andrews, "A.B. Simpson's Understanding".

⁴¹ Simpson. *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly* (April 20, 1894), 437.

⁴² Thompson, A.E. "The Corinthian Epistles", *The Alliance Weekly* (Feb 5, 1916), 294.

⁴³ Ibid.

c. Ministry by Exception

In 1897 the two parachurch movements that Simpson founded, the Christian Alliance and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance, merged to create the Christian and Missionary Alliance, a larger body that would remain a parachurch movement. Simpson envisioned that this movement would be “[an] Alliance of all those in all the world who hold in unison the faith of God and the Gospel of full salvation.”⁴⁴ In other words, Simpson never intended the C&MA to take up an ecclesiastical structure itself, instead drawing its workers from other churches. In 1914 Pardington wrote,

*There are today across the country about fifty independent Full Gospel churches in association with the Alliance[...]. These churches, it must be clearly understood, are not Alliance churches. There is, in fact, no such thing as an Alliance church. Nor indeed can there be, for the Christian and Missionary Alliance is not a denominational body.*⁴⁵

Gradually, however, this parachurch movement became a church and ultimately a denomination as these “independent Full Gospel churches” desired to become more formally related to one another. But it must be stressed that this was never Simpson’s intention, nor indeed, his desire and it did not occur until well after his death.⁴⁶ Hence, Simpson never strictly faced the widespread practical implementation of a biblical view that limited the role of women within ecclesiastical structures, simply because he didn’t lead one.⁴⁷ And so, some of the practical exceptions to the biblical ‘norm’ that the early C&MA evidenced must be understood within the context of the C&MA as a non-denominational parachurch organisation.⁴⁸

Two related points:

- More freedom was permissible because the ‘branches’ of the C&MA were never thought of as Churches in the ecclesiastical sense. Thus we find women often founded and led branches, tabernacles and missions because these were not thought to reflect a church pattern.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Pardington, *Twenty-Five Wonderful Years*, 49.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

⁴⁶ The C&MA formally became a denomination 1974. It had, however, been functioning as one for some decades.

⁴⁷ He did, of course, lead his own church and at the Gospel Tabernacle, Simpson’s practice was consistent with his biblical understanding: The elders were always men. Foster, K. Neill. “Women in Ministry: The Ecclesiastical Journey in the Christian and Missionary Alliance”, 1998.

⁴⁸ For a careful study of these exceptions, see King. *Our Forgotten Heritage*. For the importance of understanding them in terms of a parachurch model see Foster, “Women in Ministry”.

⁴⁹ Foster, “Women in Ministry” quoting former C&MA Vice President Kieth Bailey.

- As a loose alliance of independent and other denominational churches, the C&MA leadership did not wield control over the ecclesiastical structures of those churches. Thus when challenged that women were functioning as pastors and/or with eldership authority in churches who were associated with the Alliance, Simpson and the C&MA leadership tended to be more pragmatic than rigid.

Two particular examples will demonstrate these exceptions. The first has to do with women anointing people with oil for healing – a function that the Scriptures indicate should be properly performed by elders. The second has to do with women who are functioning as pastors in their local churches.

Elder Functions

Healing has always been stressed as one of the distinctive elements of the Christian and Missionary Alliance and prayer for the sick accompanied by anointing with oil by the elders of the church was encouraged. On one occasion, a reader wrote to ask whether women have the right to anoint the sick for healing. Apparently, an evangelist had claimed that "no women have a right to anoint the sick for healing, but elders only." Simpson replied:

We believe the teaching of the Scripture recognizes the elder as the proper one to anoint, but we do not consider that this should be carried to such an extreme that in the absence of a proper elder, a suffering child of God should be compelled to refuse the ministry of a believing woman simply on a technical ground. God's methods in matters of outward form are flexible enough to allow for exceptions and adjustments, and while every true woman will ever seek to take the more quiet place, yet we believe that where the regular officer is not available or even prepared for this ministry, that God will accept hers.⁵⁰

The above commentary on James 5:13-16 reveals that two issues were at Simpson's heart. The first is that what the Scriptures teach is true. It is the proper role of the church eldership to anoint people for healing. However, for Simpson the intent of this passage and the reason for its inclusion in the Scriptures is that healing itself is available to those who are sick and needy. The point is not that anointing with oil must only be practiced by the eldership but that God has provided a mechanism for healing to be practiced in the churches. And for Simpson, the latter was more important than the former. Thus, if no elder was available or "even prepared for this ministry", a suffering child of God

⁵⁰ Simpson. *The Christian and Missionary Alliance* (June 9, 1900), 385.

should not refuse the ministry of a believing woman simply on the grounds of a technicality. As always, Simpson was “concerned with expediency, in this instance that of divine healing for the sick, and he regarded the form of anointing with oil by the elders as servant to the function which the form served.”⁵¹

Pastoral Functions

In August 1911 a reader wrote in the *C&MA Weekly*, asking in light of 1 Timothy 2:2, whether it is proper for a woman to be a pastor or officiate at baptisms, weddings, funerals, or communion. J. Hudson Ballard, Secretary of the C&MA Board of Managers and Associate Editor of the *C&MA Weekly*, presented the official Alliance response:

It will be noticed that this passage speaks particularly against a woman teaching or usurping authority “over the man.” We may imply from this that the force of the prohibition is applicable only when there is a proper man around to do the teaching and have the authority. If there is such a man it seems unscriptural for a woman to step in and usurp his place and prerogatives. In the absence of a man qualified for such work we do know that God has often chosen and anointed spiritual women for teaching and for leading on the work of the Lord. Such an arrangement is, we believe, contrary to the ideal. God’s highest plan is for men to be the leaders and for men to be the teachers in His work. Attention has frequently been called to the fact that most of the serious defections from the Christian ranks, such as Christian Science, Modern Theosophy and Spiritualism, are led by women. It is very seldom that God finds a woman who so differs from the divinely ordained condition of her sex as to be fitted for public leadership. Woman has a most valuable and absolutely indispensable mission in the world; but that mission is not to be a leader or teacher in a public sense, especially over men. When God cannot find the right kind of men He does not hesitate to lay hold of a willing woman. If a woman has been seemingly divinely appointed as a pastor over a church we know no reason why she should not perform all the duties associated with her office, such as baptism and officiating at the Lord’s Supper, weddings and funerals.⁵²

There are several points to note here. Firstly, Ballard restates and accepts as Scriptural the headship principle that the C&MA had publically espoused. Secondly, he acknowledges that women have an important and God given role in fulfilling the “work of the Lord”. However, he argues that God’s highest plan for men is that they take on the leadership roles and be the primary teachers of the flock. Perhaps with 1 Timothy 2:14 in mind, Ballard points out that “most” serious defections from

⁵¹ Andrews, “A.B. Simpson’s Understanding”.

⁵² Ballard, “The Spiritual Clinic”, *The Christian and Missionary Alliance Weekly* (August 19, 1911), 333.

the Christian faith have been led by women and therefore it is very “seldom” that God finds a woman suited to public leadership. However, if no man is available then God will use a woman if she is so gifted, and if this is the case, then they should be allowed to perform all the duties that are associated with the pastoral office. It is important to note that this is not a freedom to allow women to take up pastoral ministry *per se* but an acknowledgement that when no men are available then God will use women to carry out His work.

What does it all mean? For the C&MA the primary focus was on “Full Gospel” realisation both in the lives of Christians at home and in the missionary endeavours internationally. God, as always, was in charge and if God had put a woman in place to do His work then the C&MA would not act to directly remove that woman from that particular role. What assisted this decision was the fact that the C&MA was a parachurch movement and thus without the normal ecclesiastical boundaries of a local church. However, the C&MA was always clear that it was the responsibility of men to lead the church within those ecclesiastical structures and to provide the authority and headship that the Scriptures required. So while some women were “pastors” in a movement that did not wish to admit it even had churches, as the parachurch “society” moved to establish itself as a church in its own right, women who had positions of elder authority were slowly replaced by qualified men.

VII. The C&MA Theological and Biblical Perspective

The following discussion on the biblical and theological views that underpin the Alliance position as described above was written by Rev. Russell Warnken. It is not a full study guide on the subject and it really makes no attempt to convince the reader of the superiority of the complementarian view over against the egalitarian view. It is rather, an attempt to outline the way the Alliance has interpreted the New Testament in order to arrive at the position it has. Indeed, it is well recognised that the relevant verses are difficult to exegete and that multiple views are possible. However, the task of this paper was to provide a statement on why the Alliance has taken the view that it has. The discussion below adequately achieves this goal.

a. Women in Ministry in the New Testament

i. The Gifting of the Spirit

The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) constitutes one of the great pivotal points in the life of the church. Whether or not it constitutes the birth of the church it certainly stands unique in the church’s history. Of that day the apostle Peter said, *‘this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel’: And it shall be*

*in the last days God says; 'that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind' (Acts 2:16,17). Of particular interest to us are Peter's following words, 'And your sons and **daughters** shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; Even upon My bondslaves both men and **women**, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and **they shall prophesy.**' (Acts 2:17,18)(my emphasis).*

The Spirit was poured out in all His baptising fullness upon women as well as men. Contrary to practice in Judaism and generally amongst the O.T. people of God, women were in the church to receive the Spirit of God and to play a significant public role, *and they will prophesy* (Acts 2:18). And this is what happened on the Day of Pentecost for there were women numbered with those who gathered in the upper room after the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:14). And it was upon this group at prayer, including the women, who under powerful influence of the Holy Spirit began 'speaking of the mighty deeds of God' (Acts 2:11). Women were baptised with the Spirit along with the men and women joined with the men in proclaiming the gospel to the startled inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The Spirit was given not only to empower the church for witness but to also equip it as the Body of Christ. In Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4, Paul enumerates certain gifts the Spirit has endowed Christians with for the health and growth of the body of Christ which is the church, and for the mutual support of its members. Included in these endowments of the Spirit were such gifts as teaching, exhorting (Romans 12:7,8), word of wisdom, word of knowledge and prophecy (1 Cor. 12:8,10). Now all of these gifts were public ministry gifts, gifts given for the Body to be used when the members of the Body were gathered together.

It should be noted that the gifts of the Spirit are given without regard to gender. True the Spirit distributes His gifts according to His sovereign will (Heb. 2:4), but there is no indication in Scripture that there are certain gifts reserved only for men, some gifts which women, because they are women, cannot receive. Therefore women must also receive the public ministry gifts mentioned above, gifts given by the Spirit to be used in the edifying of church. Again it should be emphasised that these are manifestations of the Spirit to be exercised when the members of the church are gathered together in public meetings, what we would today call services. What the Spirit gives He gives to be used, and to be used where they are meant to be used.

So I conclude that the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost to empower and equip the whole church, women and men, for ministry. The Spirit's gifts were given to all members of the church according to His sovereign will. While we do not know what matters formed the basis of His choice, we

can be sure gender was not one of them, just as we can be sure that race, education, family background, social origins were not either.

ii. Women in public ministries

Women Prophets

As noted above, women as well as men, participated in the public ministry gifts of the Holy Spirit including the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:10). Further I see no reason to exclude with this gift the accompanying function of judging (*diakrino*) or evaluating the prophetic utterances of other prophets (1 Cor. 14:29). So women along with men receive the gift of prophecy and are also, along with the men who have received this gift, to exercise an evaluating role, evaluating the prophetic utterances of those who have just prophesied. And all this is to occur, as the context of 1 Cor. 12 and 14 clearly shows, when the church has gathered together for a public meeting.

Apart from the reference in 1 Cor 11:5 we find in Acts 21:9 that women did indeed exercise the gift of prophecy in the New Testament church. ‘Now this man (Philip the evangelist) had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses’ (Acts 21:9). Actually the word ‘prophetesses’ does not occur in the Greek, rather a feminine participle is used, so that a more literal translation would read, ‘and to this man were four daughters virgins prophesying’. The use of the present participle points more to an activity, and a continuing one at that, or gift rather than to an office. So Philip’s daughters had the spiritual gift of prophecy and used it on a continuing basis. In a study on prophecy in Acts, E.E. Ellis concluded that “although prophecy is a possibility for any Christian it is primarily identified with certain leaders who exercise it as a ministry.”⁵³ So the fact that Luke mentions Philip’s daughters and stresses their ongoing prophetic ministry may indicate they were considered to be among the leaders of the church.

In 1 Cor. 11:5 Paul refers to women praying and prophesying. The context for these remarks and for the section of which they are a part (1 Cor. 11:2-16) is the members of the church assembled together in a public meeting. While this passage will be dealt with in more detail later we can say here that Paul is concerned in these verses with propriety when the church gathers for worship and in particular with the way in which women can participate in the public meetings of the church. Women **can** participate in these services, they **can** pray and they **can** prophesy, but they must do so in a proper way. That is they must do so in a way that indicated their understanding of and willing submission to both the orders of creation and the conventions of the culture in which they lived.

⁵³ E.E. Ellis, ‘The role of the christian prophet in Acts’, in *Apostolic history and the gospel*, ed. W. Ward, Gasque and R.P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Erdmans 1971). Quoted in *The new international dictionary of New Testament theology, Vol.III*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), S.V. Prophecy, 87.

Paul states that there is an ordered set of relationships, God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman (1 Cor. 11:3).⁵⁴ Reflecting Gen. 2 Paul also states that there is an order of creation: woman comes from man and is for man (1 Cor 11:8, 9 see also 1 Tim 2:13). Further, he goes on, these must be respected in the lives of Christians and manifested when the church meets. True, as members of the Kingdom of God we are free in Christ, yet we are still created beings and live in a transitional stage between two ages, this age and the age to come. In this transitional age, created differences must be respected, one's freedom in Christ must not be abused.⁵⁵

Paul is at pains to see that these relationships are respected when the Church gathers together. How were they to be adhered to in public worship? In elaborating on this Paul utilises a custom common to the culture of the time, namely a head covering for women. For a woman to pray or prophesy with head uncovered was a denial of her status in creation,⁵⁶ 'because this is tantamount to a denial of her relation to man by the ordinance of creation.'⁵⁷ So the head covering had a two-fold function of firstly preserving the proper order in worship by ensuring that only God's glory is revealed there, and secondly, it authorised women to pray and prophesy.⁵⁸ That is, a woman had the right to pray and prophesy when the church assembled as long as she showed her submission to God's order, including his order of creation, in this case by the use of a head covering.

The issues of headship, the head covering for women and other matters that this passage raises will be dealt with later. It is sufficient for our purposes here to note that women could pray and prophesy when the whole church gathered together as long as they respected God's created order. In Paul's day this was done in a way appropriate to the culture of the Corinthians. We need to find our own culturally acceptable way to express this order.

The significance of women prophesying can be seen if we look at the role of prophesy in the N.T. church. In a study on this subject, E.E. Ellis drew attention to several features of Christian

⁵⁴ The Greek word used for 'head' is *kephale*. Commentators divide over whether this signifies authority or source. The C&MA has *generally* adopted the meaning of authority cf Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18.

⁵⁵ See C.K. Barrett, *A commentary on the first epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 253.

⁵⁶ Regarding the meaning of a head covering: 'The wearing of a head covering by an adult woman in public (especially in ritual context) was a traditional practice known to Jews, Greeks and Romans. This may be contrasted with evidence that girls, ...harlots and immoral wives were expected to be bareheaded in various contexts.' Ben Witherington III, *Women in the earliest churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 82. We may further add that as far as wives were concerned the wearing of a head covering showed she was in a proper relationship to her husband.

⁵⁷ Witherington, *op cit*, 88.

⁵⁸ F.F. Bruce, *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Oliphant, 1971), 104.

prophecy.⁵⁹ Christians exercising the gift of prophecy were similar to O.T. prophets in that they predicted future events (see Acts 11:28; 20:23,25; 27:22) and also declared divine judgements (see Acts 13:11; 28:25-28). Further, prophecy and exhortation were associated (eg. see Acts 15:32), that is those who prophesied were also involved in exhortation (and for the significance of exhortation see Acts 11:23; 16:40; 20:2).

Those engaged in a prophetic ministry, bringing a word from the Lord also interpreted Scripture. This is seen in Peter's ministry (Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 48-12). Although the functions of prophesy and teaching could be distinguished, there was an area of overlap between the two, that is, the prophetic ministry involved a teaching element as well. The function of prophet was not confined to those whom the church designated as prophets, it was also exercised by those whom the Spirit endowed (women and men) with the gift of prophecy.

Ellis concluded his study by saying 'the role of the prophet may overlap that of the elder as it does that of the apostle and teacher, especially in certain teaching functions'. In addition to Ellis' findings, we may note Paul's own attitude towards prophecy. He saw it as an important gift for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:6). In all of Paul's lists of spiritual gifts the only common member is prophecy or prophet and the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in a tongue unless there is someone to interpret the tongue and so edify the church. And finally, it is the gift Paul says, that one should 'desire earnestly' (1 Cor. 14:1).

We have seen in this section on women prophets that women in the N.T. actually did prophesy. We have the example of Philip's daughters and Paul's instructions on how women were to prophesy (and pray) when the church came together. Further, from a study of prophecy in the N.T. church one can reasonably conclude that the woman (or man) who prophesied exercised a significant and important ministry in the life of the church. But was prophecy the only ministry women were engaged in? We now need to look at another area of activity in which we find women making a significant contribution.

Fellow-workers in the Gospel

In his letters Paul uses a special word to describe those who have worked alongside him in the ministry of the gospel, a word that Paul does not use for believers in general. These people who played a special part with Paul in the ministry of proclaiming Christ he describes as his fellow-workers (*synergoi*).

⁵⁹ Brown, *op cit*, 87-88.

Included amongst his fellow-workers are such people as Timothy (Rom. 16:21), Mark (Philemon 24), Apollos (1Cor. 3:9), Urbanus (Rom. 16:9), Luke (Philemon 24), and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25). From what we can learn about these men in the New Testament, they were quality people who were prominent in the ministry of the gospel and whom Paul held in high regard.

In writing to the Philippians Paul said of Timothy, 'I have no one else of kindred spirit who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare...you know of his proven worth that he serves with me in the furtherance of the gospel...' (Phil. 2:20,22). And a few lines later Paul speaking of Epaphroditus, describes him as 'my brother and fellow-worker (*synergon*) and fellow-soldier who is also your messenger and minister to my need' (2:25), who, Paul said, the Philippians were to 'hold men like him in high regard; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me' (2:29, 30). 'The Philippians were to honour with respect and high esteem men of such calibre (sic). For he carried out the work of Christ with all that it demanded in the way of sacrifice and privation and even risked his life...'.⁶⁰ Selfless dedication and significant service characterised these *synergoi*.

But Paul's fellow-workers were not confined to men only. Paul numbered some significant women amongst his fellow-workers, women such as Priscilla and Euodia and Syntyche. We meet Priscilla in Acts 18 and Romans 16:3-5 where she is referred to by the shortened form of her name, Prisca. Priscilla is always mentioned with her husband Aquila, both of whom Paul describes as 'my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus'. Commentators have drawn attention to the fact that of the 6 times the two are mentioned in the New Testament, Priscilla is mentioned first 4 times, perhaps indicating her greater significance in their team ministry.

Wherever they went Priscilla and Aquila were active in the ministry of the gospel. They accommodated Paul while he was in Corinth and went with him to Ephesus after he left that city. Paul left them in Ephesus to continue ministering. It was while they were in Ephesus that they came across the eloquent and learned Apollos. Luke described Apollos as 'mighty in the Scriptures...instructed in the way of the Lord...fervent in spirit...speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus' (Acts 18:24-25). However, despite his impressive learning, Priscilla and Aquila discerned something lacking still in Apollos so 'they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately' (18:26). Whatever else may be said about Priscilla and her husband, they were **both** theologically learned and capable teachers so as to be able to make a significant contribution to Apollos and his ministry.

⁶⁰ Jac Mueller, *The epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 102.

Priscilla and Aquila eventually left Ephesus and returned to Rome. There a church began to meet in their home and Paul writing to the Roman Christians sends greetings to 'the church that is in their house' (Rom. 16:5). He also greeted his fellow-workers Priscilla (or Prisca) and Aquila and gives us a further glimpse into their lives. They, Paul said, 'for my life risked their own necks', and he went on, for whom 'not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles' (16:4). They had both risked their lives for Paul's sake, under what circumstances we do not know, and their worth and work was not only enthusiastically recognised by Paul but widely appreciated by the Gentile church.

Now it is true, as has been pointed out,⁶¹ that there is no evidence of Priscilla holding office in the church, nor is there anything said about her being a teacher in the church. We only know that she and her husband taught Apollos privately. However, we can say of Priscilla that Paul considered her, along with her husband, a fellow-worker. This, plus the fact that her name occurs first in 4 of the 6 times they are both mentioned in the N.T., implies she was in no way inferior to her husband in their ministry. Further, she was very active in ministry of the gospel wherever they went, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. She was theologically acute, so much so as to be able, along with her husband, to add to Apollos' theological understanding. And Apollos was no beginner in these matters! She was a fellow-worker 'in suffering and in church building' and 'universally recognised as such'.⁶²

Paul also includes amongst his fellow-workers Euodia and Syntyche of the Philippian church (Phil. 4:3). These women, Paul recorded, 'shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel' (4:3).

The word Paul uses (*synethlesan*)⁶³ carries the idea of an intense struggle and could be translated 'fought together with'. While nothing else is said about the nature of their work with Paul, we can certainly say this, they were actively engaged, with Paul, in the spreading of the gospel. Theirs was hardly a passive role. And in reflecting on this aspect of their lives one cannot but recall the many Alliance women missionaries who down through the years have fought, contended with great energy, in the cause of the gospel.

Paul reserved a special term for those who had played a significant part with him in the spreading of the gospel, a term that was not applied to all believers. Fellow-worker. We meet some of these fellow-workers in Paul's letters and from these references we learn that they were people of selfless dedication and sacrifice, gifted and quality people who played a prominent role at the cutting edge of the gospel. And they included women as well as men.

⁶¹ James B. Hurley, *Men and women in biblical perspective* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 120.

⁶² Don Williams, *The apostle Paul and women in the church* (Glendale: Regal, 1977), 43.

⁶³ This word 'hardly suggests a passive or quiet role in the spreading of the Gospel, but rather one that involved real activity, difficult struggles, and maybe noteworthy sacrifices'. Witherington, *op cit*, 112.

b. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

In 1 Cor. 11:2 on Paul deals with certain matters about church life at Corinth. In verses 2-16 he treats the matter of women participating in congregational meetings or what we might today call 'services'.⁶⁴ Paul wrote that it was alright for a woman to pray or to prophesy when she had her head covered (11:5). In prohibiting women from praying or prophesying without a head-covering Paul reminds the Corinthians that *the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.* (1 Cor 11:3). Paul is referring to an order established by God. A few verses later, Paul makes a reference to an order in creation. *For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.* He then draws a conclusion: *For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.* (1 Cor 11: 8-10).

Paul thus sets forth a principle of male headship. This he first of all bases on God's order: God, Christ, man, woman. Secondly he appeals to God's act of creation: woman came from man and was created for man. It is not clear what Paul meant by making reference to *angels*.

It was wrong for a man to pray or prophesy with his head covered for it brought shame on his 'head', Christ. A woman, on the other hand, was to have her head covered. The head-covering referred to was most likely some form of a veil. For a woman to pray or prophesy without a head-covering was to bring shame on man.

These verses sound strange to us today. We do not have a lot of background information about the matters Paul wrote about.⁶⁵ It would seem that the head-covering was a sign of the woman's recognition of the relationship of women to men (see v. 10) and their authority.

In verses 11 and 12 Paul further qualifies the relationship between men and women. They are, I believe, a salutary reminder to men not to abuse their authority by failing to take account of the full picture of the relationship between men and women. The authority man has is not absolute nor unqualified.

c. 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35

It might be objected that regardless of whatever public role one thinks women should have, it would seem that two passages in particular prevent them from exercising a leading public ministry in the church, namely 1 Cor. 14:34-36 and I Tim. 2:11-15. It would appear that these passages with

⁶⁴ Gordon Fee, *The first epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1987), 505.

⁶⁵ Fee, *The first epistle*, 510.

their injunctions to women to be silent in church and not to teach or exercise authority over man, nor even to speak in church, rule out any ministry by women to the members of the body when they gather together. And indeed these verses have been used for just this purpose, so now we need to turn our attention to them.

At first sight it would seem Paul's injunction is fairly straight forward and unambiguous. *Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak...*(14:34). What could be plainer? And for many, nothing more need be said. But others are worried that Paul may be guilty of contradicting himself, for while on the one hand he enjoins the women to be silent and not speak, yet on the other, he allows them to pray and prophesy when the church gathers (1 Cor. 11:5). It cannot be objected here that Paul, in 11:5, is speaking about what women can do in private. He is giving instructions on how they are to participate in the public meetings of the church. Is Paul inconsistent? Some have sought to remove this apparent inconsistency by admitting that indeed the teaching is inconsistent with other relevant parts of the Corinthian letter and that these verses were not written by Paul but inserted by a later author.⁶⁶ There is, however, a better way of approaching this problem.

To understand these verses one must understand their wider context, which is the church gathered together for worship (1Cor. 14:26). Further, one must grasp Paul's concern at this juncture, which is order in worship (14:40). In chapter 14 Paul is dealing with the church when it worships, and in particular, he is addressing certain abuses that were occurring in the Corinthian worship services, such as the wrong use of tongues. Paul is concerned that when the church gathers for worship there is order, and that what is done builds up the Body of Christ. *Let all things be done for edification* (14:25).

Paul is in vv. 34-36 dealing with another abuse in the Corinthian worship, namely women speaking out of turn by asking questions and disrupting the meetings. Perhaps used to a rather restricted life in their culture, they may have been taking their new freedom in Christ too far. Possibly their questions were directed at those who had given prophetic utterances and may have been asked in a disrespectful way.⁶⁷ The result was chaos.

⁶⁶ Eg. see Barrett, *op cit*, 332.

⁶⁷ For the view that the women's questions were directed at those who had prophesied, see Witherington, *op cit*, 103, Hurley, *op cit*, 187 and Bruce, *op cit*, 135.

Paul's response to this particular problem was to ask the women to be silent and not ask questions 'which could be more properly put to their husbands at home', nor were they to take part 'with more ardour than intelligence in the discussion of prophetic messages'.⁶⁸

Opinions vary as to whether, indeed, these women were speaking out of turn in the form of questions directed to other members of the church, or whether their speaking was of some other kind. However, v.35 gives a good clue that the manner of their speaking was in the form of (disrupting) questions. *And if they desire to **learn** anything, let them **ask** their own husbands at home...(v.35).*

Paul's command to silence, in light of the above, is not to be understood as a universal prohibition against women participating in the worship service of the church. Paul approved of women contributing to the service as 11:5 shows, as also does v.26. *When you assemble, **each_one** (including women) has a psalm...a teaching...*' etc.⁶⁹ Just as the mode of women's speaking is to be understood in the light of v.35, so too is the imposition of silence. Women are not to ask questions that disrupt the meetings, but they may contribute in other ways, as in v.26.⁷⁰ If it is argued that this restricted understanding of the meaning of silence is not obvious, especially as the words, *Let the women keep silent*, seems anything but restricted, it can be replied that Paul left it to his readers to grasp the context of his words.⁷¹

Further, we can note Paul's other commands to silence in vv.28 and 30 where it is quite clear that he is not saying to the tongue speakers or those prophesying that they can make no further contribution to the meeting. In these cases, the context makes clear that the injunction is not a universal prohibition.

The context of 14:34,35 is that of the church gathered for worship. In these verses we find Paul addresses a specific problem that had arisen in the Corinthian worship services, namely women disrupting the meetings by intrusive questions. When God's people gather together there must be order and contributions to the service must above all be for the edification of all. Paul does not enjoin a total silence on women, but rather he asks them specifically to refrain from those questions that disrupt the meeting. However, they certainly may pray or prophesy or contribute a psalm or teaching or revelation or tongue or interpretation.

⁶⁸ Bruce, *op cit*, 135.

⁶⁹ J.R.W. Stott, *Issues facing Christians today* (U.K.: Marshalls, 1984), 251.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, 135.

⁷¹ Hurley, *op cit*, 190.

d. 1 Timothy 2:8-15

This passage, even more than 1 Cor. 14: 34, 35, would appear to comprehensively prohibit women from participating in the worship services of the church. There would seem to be no mitigating factors. A woman is to 'quietly receive instruction'. Not only is she not to teach nor to exercise authority over a man, but she is 'to remain quiet' (1 Tim. 2:11,12). Further, what makes Paul's injunctions here appear to be universal and not based on contextual grounds (as in 1 Cor. 14:34,35) is the fact that he bases his injunctions on Creation, 'for it was Adam who was first created and then Eve' (v.13), and the Fall, 'it was not Adam who was deceived but the woman was deceived...' (v.14). By so doing, Paul seems to be enumerating a principle regarding women's roles in church that transcends time and place, that applies all the time in every age and in every culture.

These verses have divided scholars. Some have maintained that this passage clearly prohibits women from teaching and exercising any form of authority over men.⁷² Others have adopted the opposite view, that Paul is dealing here with a specific local problem and his words have consequently only a limited application.⁷³ And some have chosen to adopt a moderating position, seeing in this passage both universal principles and specific applications related to the situation Paul addressed.⁷⁴ [The Alliance has tended to] adopt this third view.

Paul's concern in 2:1-3:13 and elsewhere, eg. 4:7-6:21, is expressed in 3:15. 'I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God...' In particular, in 2:8-15 he writes on specific concerns when the 'household of God' gathers for worship (see 2:1,8). And in this respect there is a similarity between 2:8-15 and 1 Cor. 14:34,35. Both arise out of a concern for proper conduct in worship. Paul is urging Timothy to ensure that the Christians in Ephesus conduct themselves in such a way as to commend the gospel to their non-Christian neighbours. This would mean in addition to adhering to the principles of Christian living, being sensitive to culturally acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour.

⁷² Eg., to name but a few: William Hendricksen, *New Testament commentary: exposition of Philipians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962); Kenneth S. Wuest, *The pastoral epistles in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans); Hurley, *op cit*.

⁷³ Eg. David M. Scholer, 'The place of women in the church's ministry: 1 Tim. 2:9-15', Transcript of address given at Macquarie University, March 1985.

⁷⁴ Eg. Stott, *op cit*. Another view not mentioned above is that which argues that Paul was basically wrong. These verses reflect, it is argued, more Paul the Rabbi than the Paul who wrote Gal. 2:28, which is to be taken as the more foundational principle to be used today in relation to women's roles. See Dorothy Pape, *God and Woman* (Oxford: Mowbrays, 1976); Paul K. Jewett, *Man as male and female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); William Barclay, *The letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1956).

Ephesus was a cosmopolitan city with a 'wide variety of religious influences and forms of syncretism'.⁷⁵ It was also a society in which external and expensive adornments indicated 'material extravagance and sexual infidelity' while 'rejection of external adornment was part and parcel of a woman's submission to her husband and recognition of her place among men in general'.⁷⁶ Although a woman's position in society at that time varied depending on whether one was in Rome or Greece or Asia (where Ephesus was), the picture was still one of male dominance.

When the people of God in Ephesus gathered for worship they had to ensure that, not only was their conduct consistent with the gospel, but that it also presented a good witness to those outside the church, that is, it did not offend prevailing societal standards of behaviour where these were not inconsistent with the Christian faith. This was Paul's concern in 2:8-15.⁷⁷

Specifically when the church assembled for worship, the women were to dress with propriety (2:8, 9), being sensitive to what various styles of dress communicated. True, they were free in Christ, full citizens of the Age to Come, but they were also citizens of this Age and had to have regard to that. In addition to the cultural implication of extravagant and suggestive clothing, ostentatious hairstyles 'could attract the wrong sort of attention and compromise the moral witness of the church'.⁷⁸

But more importantly for our purposes was Paul's desire that when the church gathers for worship, the women behave properly, that there be no unseemly behaviour that would present a bad witness to society and bring the church into disrepute (there was enough offence in the cross without Christians, through their behaviour, adding more!). In particular, they were not to behave in a way that would infringe the principle of male headship,⁷⁹ they were to 'quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness'. They were not to 'teach or exercise authority over a man but to remain quiet'.

How do Paul's words apply to us today? Did he prohibit women from public ministry in 'the church of the living God'? In answering this question we need to note the principle Paul used and the particular cultural application he made. The principle we would want to still regard as relevant, but we would have to find our own culturally relevant application. The principle involved is male

⁷⁵ Witherington, *op cit*, 118.

⁷⁶ Scholer, *op cit*, 6.

⁷⁷ Attempts to show that Paul was combating a particular false teaching, the Ephesian heresy (eg. Scholer, *op cit*) are not convincing.

⁷⁸ Witherington, *op cit*, 119.

⁷⁹ Stott, *op cit*, 1.

headship, which Paul bases on Adam's prior creation to Eve, 'it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve' (vs.13). The application of this for the situation Paul was addressing was that women were to quietly receive instruction and not teach or exercise (or usurp?) authority over a man. It is probably better to understand this latter part of the application as not to usurp authority or use improper authority over a man. The Greek word used (*authentien*) occurs only here in the N.T. From what can be gleaned from its use in secular literature, it can best be understood to carry the idea of an improper use of authority, eg. domineer.

But Paul does not simply use a creation principle with a specific application for a specific situation. He utilises the Fall, not to establish a principle, but to sound a warning to women: do not be deceived as Eve was and consequently became a transgressor.⁸⁰ The impact of this warning derives from the result of Eve's deception. Do not be deceived but rather follow the kind of behaviour outlined in v.15.⁸¹ Verse 15 is a notoriously difficult verse, but the thrust of its teaching can be understood as follow. Firstly, Paul is not saying that women will be saved (from death into life) by childbearing. Rather, it seems he is enjoining them to work out the implications of their salvation in their daily lives, having due respect for the role of women within the culture in which they are to live out their faith and to which they are to give a good witness.⁸²

If one wishes to argue that Paul does not use the Fall as an example, but to establish a principle, then one has to accept the implication of that principle: women are inherently incapable of teaching,⁸³ a position supported neither by the rest of Scripture nor our own experience.

I have attempted to show that in I Tim. 2:8-15 we do not find a universal prohibition of women from the public ministry of the church but rather the enunciation of a principle - women are to be in submission to the principle of male headship, and the specific application of that principle to the situation Paul was concerned with, namely women are to be quiet, not to teach or domineer men. The principle still applies to us today, being grounded as it is in a Creation principle. How that principle is to be applied in our time and culture is something for us to work out. I do not believe its application is to be found in imposing on women a total silence in our churches, nor in keeping them out of all ministerial and teaching functions in the church of the living God. We may accept this approach to I Tim. 2:8-15 if for no other reason than the traditional view of this passage prohibiting

⁸⁰ Witherington, *op cit*, 121; Scholer, *op cit*, 9.

⁸¹ Witherington, *op cit*, 122.

⁸² Wuest, *op cit*, 50; Scholer, *op cit*, 2. Salvation is here understood not as a completed act at the point of conversion (which in one sense it is), but as a process begun at conversion and reaching its completion at the return of Christ (eg. see Phil. 1:6; Rom. 8:23).

⁸³ Eg. see Hendricksen, *op cit*, 109.

women from teaching does not concur with Paul's teaching elsewhere and the practise in the Pauline churches.

VIII. Statement on Unity and Diversity

It is recognised that in the church, men and women share a common spiritual standing and unity in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28, 1 Cor 12:12-13). It is a unity enhanced by interdependent, complementary roles, and varied spiritual gifts (1 Cor 1:11-12; Rom 12:3-8).

IX. An Open Forum

It is proposed that at Council, time will be given for delegates to break into small groups to discuss this issue and complete a provided survey. After sufficient time has been allowed, we will come back together and each group will report back to the larger group the results and main themes of their discussion.

Some Questions for reflection.

- What is your position? Is this a position you hold because it's what you've been brought up to believe? Or do you hold this position because you have studied the arguments?
- Do you think we have changed from the early Alliance?
- How do you relate to the early Alliance treatment of women in leadership?
- What do you think about the pragmatic approach that Simpson took in relation to women performing eldership functions?

X. Conclusion

The C&MA of Australia reflects the position of its founder, A. B. Simpson, in allowing women the freedom to exercise their gifts in service to the Kingdom of God. The only restriction placed upon women is that they are prohibited from serving in those ecclesiastical roles that involve elder authority. The basis for this restriction is an understanding of 1 Corinthians 11:2-6 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15 which connects male headship to the order of creation and thus makes a hierarchical structure universal.

XI. Useful References

The following representative references may be useful. Many of these articles are available for download from the Alliance College of Australia Website: www.aca.act.edu.au/cma-resources. Login: cmaperson / password: absimpson

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