

THE GREAT DEBATE: A STUDY OF THE PEOPLE AND FACTORS THAT
INFLUENCED THE DISCUSSIONS ON WOMEN AS ELDERS IN
THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE CHURCH IN CANADA,
1982 TO 2000

By

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A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of McMaster Divinity College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Christian Studies

McMaster Divinity College,
Hamilton, Ontario
2006

Summary Page

M.A. in Christian Studies

McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Great Debate: A Study of the People and Factors that Influenced the Discussions on Women as Elders in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Canada, 1982 to 2000

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NUMBER OF PAGES: 133



McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

Upon the recommendation of an oral examination committee, this thesis-project by

J. ALEXANDRA MEEK

is hereby accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Christian Studies



First Reader and Advisor



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Date: *March 20, 2006*

Abstract

M.A. in Christian Studies

McMaster Divinity College

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Year: 2006

Author: Jennifer Alexandra Meek

Members of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church (C&MA) in Canada debated, for nearly twenty years, whether or not it was appropriate for women to be Elders in the church. The purpose of this thesis is to examine, through interviews and archival research, why members of the C&MA could not agree on this issue and to argue that the lack of resolution throughout the debates is the result of a variety of interconnected factors. First, there was confusion and disagreement over the denomination's tradition of women in ministry. Second, there was disagreement over what was the appropriate response to rapid cultural changes both inside and outside of the church. Third, the denomination's inability to come to a consensus on the interpretation of scripture contributed to the lack of resolution.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Gordon Heath who, despite the distance, offered great support and supervision for this project as my first reader. I would also like to thank Dr. Mark Boda for his support in the early stages of this project and as second reader.

To each person who so graciously accepted my request for an interview and was willing to share with me all that they could remember about this period in C&MA history: Miriam Charter, Arnold Cook, David Freeman, Ross Ingram, Melody Kilbank, Paul Little, Franklin Pyles, Peter Ralph, Arnold Reimer, Rod Remin, Keith Taylor, Wendy Thomas and David Tjart, Thank you.

I would also like to express my thanks to Sandy and Diane Ayer, for their help throughout the research process (and to Sandy especially for writing his annotated bibliography that saved me days and days of research), to Andy Reimer and Ken Draper for their valuable insight and constant encouragement for a former student, to Leanne Friesen for being confident of her calling and to Sherri Trautwein for your wonderful friendship, your support and encouragement and for all of the coffee that you drank with me throughout this process.

To my husband, Scott, thank you so much for your help and support, for believing in me and for reminding me of my calling when I have allowed myself to forget.

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Glossary

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors is the executive body and is responsible under God for the administration of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws and within the legislation and limitations passed by the General Assembly. The Board of Directors shall consist of 14 persons including the president, who shall be an ex officio member. At the time of election, there shall be one member from each district of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada and the other persons, one of whom shall be a missionary, elected without consideration as to their district of residence

Board of Elders: The Board of Elders shall have a minimum number of four members, including the senior pastor, with the maximum number established by the bylaws. Persons shall not vote on any matter which may directly or indirectly result in financial benefit to them, whether such benefit be in the nature of salary or other payment. With the exception of the senior pastor, who shall be a member ex officio, the Elders shall be elected at the annual meeting. The meeting of biblical qualifications shall be taken into consideration in their election.

District Executive Committee (DEXCOM): The administrative work of the district shall be committed to the District Executive Committee. The district superintendent, or a member of the District Executive Committee appointed by him, shall be the chairman. This committee shall consist of the officers of the district and such other members as shall be elected by district conference. As far as possible, they shall represent the various regions of the district. This committee shall consist of not less than five members, with the number to be established by the District Bylaws.

District Superintendent: The District Superintendent shall be the recognized head of the entire work of the district. He shall be a member ex officio of all district committees.

Ordination: A process whereby licensed workers in positions of ministry as defined in the ordination policy are ordained to the ministry. Ordination is the solemn observance whereby representatives of the church corporate, together with the Elders representing the local congregation, set apart and charge those men whom God has called already and equipped for ministry, through the laying on of hands and the offering of prayer for spiritual enduement.

Senior Pastor: The pastor of the church shall be called by the Board of Elders and appointed by the district superintendent. The pastor shall have general oversight of the work of the church in conjunction with the district superintendent. He shall be chairman of the advisory committee and is a member ex officio of all committees.¹

¹ *Manual of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada.* Canada: 2000 edition.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THESIS STATEMENT, LITERATURE REVIEW, METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

Throughout history women have played a crucial part in sharing the gospel message with the world. They have served the church in many different capacities, including: the monastic life, mystic revelation, preaching, martyrdom, missions, evangelism and social reform, and through this service have been of great benefit to the church and to the world.¹ There is also, unfortunately, a clear record of how women have been continually limited in their participation in church life. For many different reasons women have been restricted in the roles that they might hold in the church. Church father, Tertullian (ca. 160-230)² for example, believed and taught that each woman should daily carry the guilt of the first sin with her and because of that sin women should be silent in church and refrain from learning, teaching and baptizing. Thoughts similar to these have been carried forward throughout history in many different forms, but the result has been the same: women, while continually finding different means to share their faith have also always been restricted in their service to God.³ In the Church today these restrictions continue, although many are beginning to question why.

Over the past hundred years the Church in general, and the Canadian Church in particular, has begun to question the restrictions that it has placed on women in leadership. There is great uncertainty among both mainline and evangelical churches concerning the appropriate roles for women in the Church and this issue has been a source of controversy for Protestants and Catholics alike. While many well-intentioned

¹ Ruth A. Tucker, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry From New Testament Times To The Present* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 3.

² Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* vol. 1 (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 1984), 73.

³ *Ibid*, 102.

people have sincerely struggled to understand how the Church must proceed and have offered definite and supposedly irrefutable arguments to end the discussion, there is still no consensus on what is appropriate. The opinion of the Church in Canada is divided on this matter. The purpose of this paper is to examine how one specific denomination, The Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Canada (C&MA), dealt with the issue of women in leadership during the 1980's and 1990's and to argue that the lack of resolution during this period of debate is the result of a variety of interconnected factors. First, there was confusion and disagreement over the denomination's tradition of women in ministry. Second, there was disagreement over what was the appropriate response to rapid cultural changes both inside and outside of the church. Third, and most explicitly, the denomination's inability to come to a consensus on the interpretation of scripture contributed to the lack of resolution.

The C&MA is an evangelical denomination⁴ that began in the United States and quickly spread to Canada. It is also a denomination with a confused history in regards to the appropriate role of women in leadership in the church. In the early years of the C&MA, in both Canada and the United States, women acted as evangelists and preachers alongside men. They shared equally in the task of spreading the gospel and always had an active role in missions, children's ministry and ministry to other women. However,

⁴ The terms "evangelical" and "evangelicalism" are difficult to define because they encompass people in many Christian traditions who will hold different doctrinal beliefs. However, this paper will use the definition of evangelical offered by Sam Reimer. An evangelical is "one who believes in a personal God, in the divinity and unique saving work of Jesus, and in the unique authority and inspiration of Scripture." Reimer's definition also states that an evangelical is also part of a recognizable subculture that includes regular attendance at worship services, regular reading of the bible and time for personal prayer, financial giving to conservative Christian organizations and a tendency to interact primarily with other evangelicals. Sam Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003), 6-7. Donald Bloesch would define evangelicalism as a movement, "that makes the proclamation of the biblical gospel its chief concern, that appeals to the gospel in its biblical setting as the final arbiter for faith and practice. Donald Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1988), 4.

despite these varied roles, women in the C&MA have traditionally been excluded from the office of Elder and ordained minister, and since the formalization of the denomination women have not served as senior pastors or as district superintendents. During the 1980's, after the C&MA in Canada became autonomous from the movement in the United States, these restrictions were called into question and for nearly twenty years both locally and nationally the denomination debated the issue of women in church leadership. In 2000 a decision was finally made by the General Assembly that allowed for each local church to grant or restrict freedom in this area depending on the will of the congregation.

The C&MA in Canada went through a significant struggle as it debated the appropriate roles for women in the church throughout the 1980's and 1990's, however, it was not a struggle unique to this denomination.⁵ Many denominations in Canada have questioned how women should be allowed to lead and serve in the Church. The first denomination in Canada to officially acknowledge that there was an issue to address concerning the role of women in church leadership was the United Church that began ordaining women in 1936.⁶ The Anglican Church of Canada also began to address the issue early on and for several decades debated women in church leadership until 1971 when they made the decision to ordain women as deacons. In 1973 they also agreed to ordain women as priests.⁷ The Free Methodist Church of Canada began to ordain women in 1974 and, although change was not implemented immediately, declared that women

⁵ Stanley Grenz would argue that the questions concerning women in church leadership have been the greatest challenges that evangelical churches (young as they are) have had to face to date. Stanley Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Dowers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 19-28.

⁶ Shelagh Parsons, "Women and Power in the United Church of Canada," *Women and the Church* (Toronto: Griffen House, 1986), 219.

⁷ Patricia Bays, *Partners in the Dance: Stories of Canadian Women in Ministry* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1993).

were to have equal status with men to serve.⁸ The Roman Catholic Church in Canada, following the direction of the Pope, has remained firm on its teaching that women should be excluded from ordained ministry but this decision has been opposed by many and most recently has resulted in the ordination of four catholic women to the priesthood and five to the diaconate on the St. Laurence River (25 July 2005). While it is important to note that these ordinations are not recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, the risk that these women have chosen to take, actually following the example of eleven others who have been secretly ordained to the diaconate, priesthood and the bishopric since 2002,⁹ is indicative of the confusion and unsettled state of the Catholic Church on this issue. The Church in Canada is clearly divided over the appropriate role of women in leadership and many have spent years considering how to deal with this issue in a way that is honoring to God.

Literature Review

Although the questions regarding the role of women in church leadership have been significant in the C&MA, and in the Canadian Church in general, there is surprisingly little written on the subject. The emphasis in writing has been on the explanation of the different positional stances and on the interpretation of difficult passages rather than on the preservation of what actually transpired in Canadian churches. One significant text that was written on the issue of women in church leadership in Canada is *God Calls: Man Chooses*.¹⁰ In this text Grace Anderson and

⁸ Canadian Study Commission on Doctrine, Free Methodist Church of Canada, "Women in Ministry": www.fmc-canada.org/papers/Women_Ministry.

⁹ Doug Struck, "Nine Defy Vatican's Ban on the Ordination of Women," *Washington Post* (Tuesday July 26th, 2005), A15. www.washingtonpost.com

¹⁰ Grace Anderson and Juanne Nancarrow Clarke, *God Calls: Man Chooses* (Burlington, ON: Trinity Press, 1990).

Juane Nancarrow Clarke consider the role of society in church decisions, the authority structures of several denominations and the role women are allowed to have in those structures. They also study sexism in the church and the resulting responses from women who have been and are a part of ministry in a variety of Canadian churches. This text is significant because in it are direct contributions from women who were trained through the Toronto School of Theology and its affiliate schools to be ministers who are both presently in ministry positions and those who chose not to enter professional ministry for a variety of reasons. The text also offers great insight into how Canadian society has affected the decisions made by the church. Unfortunately, the authors did not have the endless resources to study each denomination and, while providing a setting for the discussions that took place in the C&MA, the book does not consider the debates of the denomination specifically.

A second text that offers significant insight into the role of women in leadership in the Canadian church is *Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada*,¹¹ edited by Elizabeth Muir and Marilyn Fardig Whitely. This text is a compilation of history papers that consider many different roles that women have had in Canadian churches over the past hundred years. This text reviews the roles that women willingly bore in service to others, missionary work done by women of several denominations and the social action of Canadian women in response to their faith. These papers reveal the great work that was done by Canadian women in the church throughout the country and considers how they were able to act within their restricted roles. While this text is indicative of the work being done by women in many churches in Canada it is

¹¹ Elizabeth Muir and Marilyn Fardig Whitely, *Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

not comprehensive and the editors admit to major gaps in this history. The text does not consider the work being done by women in the C&MA specifically or women who were a part of other holiness movements.¹²

Another text that recounts the history of specific women in ministry is *Partners in the Dance*,¹³ edited by Patricia Bays. This text is also interesting in setting a Canadian context for the development of women's leadership roles but it is specific in its interest in Anglican women. *Women and the Church: a Sourcebook*¹⁴ is a compilation of papers that were a part of a course given in 1984 at St Jerome's College in Waterloo, Ontario. While many of these papers consider historical views of women in ministry a few consider the role of women presently in the Canadian church and what it would mean if the Catholic Church were to ordain women. These are interesting articles as they reveal different sentiments on the issue from a Roman Catholic perspective.

A text that deals with a history of women in ministry that includes churches from the holiness tradition is *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from the New Testament Times to the Present*¹⁵ by Ruth Tucker and Walter Liefeld. In this text Tucker and Liefeld devote a chapter to the revivals of the 19th century and the roles that women had in those movements, including within the C&MA. They also write on the opportunities given to women in sectarian movements, such as the holiness movement, that were unavailable to women in mainline denominations. Tucker and Liefeld remind their readers that the motivation of such movements was to spread the gospel and that it

¹² Churches that developed at the end of the 19th century that emphasized Wesley's teaching on sanctification. Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* vol. 2 (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1985), 255.

¹³ Patricia Bays, *Partners in the Dance: Stories of Canadian Women in Ministry* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1993).

¹⁴ M. Higgins and D. Letson, ed., *Women and the Church* (Toronto: Griffin House, 1986).

¹⁵ Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry From New Testament Times To The Present* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

was this urgent purpose that provided women with new possibilities for leadership. This text considers the roles of denominations often overlooked in other texts, such as the Salvation Army, the Church of the Nazarene and the Pentecostal Church. Although not specifically Canadian there is still an important overview of many evangelical denominations and the roles that women played in those denominations in the 19th and 20th century. This text, however, does not deal with the issue of women in ministry as these movements developed into formal denominations and what happened when they began to review the roles that women held within their ranks.

Two unpublished sources that will offer significant direction for this project are a pair of dissertations written during the 1970's on the role of women in the C&MA. Written by members of the denomination, *Perceptions of the Role of Women in the Christian and Missionary Alliance*¹⁶ by Leslie Andrews and *The Role of Women in the Ministry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance*¹⁷ by Wendall Price both consider the question of women in leadership within the denomination prior to the period of open debate that took place within Canada. These dissertations consider the historical roles of women in the C&MA and the opinions of significant members of the denomination in the United States. The insight offered by these two works into the opinions of the denomination prior to the debates that were about to take place in Canada is extremely important.

A goal of this thesis is to add to the stories that have already been recorded through an examination of how the C&MA as a denomination resolved its beliefs on how

¹⁶ Leslie Andrews, *Perceptions of the Role of Women in the Christian and Missionary Alliance* D. Min. diss., (Georgia: Columbia Theological Seminary, 1976).

¹⁷ Wendall Price, *The Role of Women in the Ministry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* D.Min. diss., (San Francisco: San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1977).

women should act in the church. Since little has been written on the issue of women in leadership within the Canadian church in general it is not surprising that the history of the issue within the C&MA (a small denomination, at that) has been missed. This, however, is still unacceptable. The issue of women's roles has affected many denominations and yet only the stories of those in mainline denominations are being recorded. This paper will therefore add to the history of what has happened in Canadian churches by recording the progression of thought, the process of debate and the acts of discernment that took place in a small evangelical denomination. In addition to filling in a gap in Canadian history it is also a goal of this paper to provide the C&MA in Canada with a valuable resource that will be useful as the denomination continues to consider the role of women in leadership in the church. By providing the denomination with a record that considers the many different aspects that affected this debate, the C&MA should be better equipped to move forward in its discussion without unknowingly repeating past arguments and mistakes.

The primary sources available for study are members of the denomination who were a part of the debates and who have agreed to offer their insight through personal interviews, commissioned reports, official records and personal correspondences written during the 1980's and 1990's. Personal interviews will be a major portion of the research for this paper since an official history has not yet been written. In addition to these interviews, papers that were commissioned by the national office during the 1980's and 1990's to study the role of women in church leadership will also be extremely important. These papers were sent to local churches across the country and were to be read by pastors and Elder's boards prior to several General Assemblies. These reports are now

archived at the national office and are a part of public record. Biennial reports from 1982 to 2000 are another primary source that will be useful to this project. These reports are the official records of General Assembly and they note when discussions took place concerning women in ministry, any official statements or changes to policy that might have been made and who was directly involved in promoting or restricting that change. These reports are, however, limited in what they reveal and really only offer a skeletal structure of the discussions that took place at Assembly. A final source available for research that will be used is personal correspondence written by members of the denomination during the debates in the 1980's and 1990's concerning the role of women in leadership. Interviewees generously provided these letters. The primary sources available for this paper are not comprehensive but used together with the memories of those within the denomination, the papers and the records, they should reconstruct a faithful history of what happened during these twenty years of debate and how the denomination was able to finally come to a decision on the issue of women as Elders within the church.

Methodology

The discussions concerning women as Elders have only just ended within the C&MA. It is for this reason that the most significant method for obtaining primary information on the subject was accomplished through personal interviews. These interviews provided insight into other primary sources and were used to answer the many questions that these sources created due to their formal nature and the extremely brief attention that they gave to the subject. Therefore, when confirmed by other written primary sources or by information provided by other interviewees, the interviews will be

considered as equally reliable as the written records and incomparably valuable in their insight.

Twenty people were approached for interviews throughout the spring, summer and fall of 2005 and the winter of 2006. In order to obtain a faithful representation of what happened and what was believed within the denomination as a whole throughout the 1980's and 1990's potential interviewees were approached for three main reasons. The first consideration for qualification for an interview was based upon the involvement of the individual in the discussions, with an attempt being made to interview an equal number of people who either supported or disagreed with women as Elders. The second consideration was the geographic location of a potential interviewee during the discussions, with the goal of interviewing people from across the country that could speak as representatives of many of the different regions. The third consideration was the official position held by each individual within the denomination throughout the 1980's and 1990's, with the intention of interviewing people who had varied involvement within the denomination. Each person who agreed to an interview was asked standardized questions and all were required to sign a waiver that gave permission for their names and stories to be told within this project.¹⁸ This waiver form also outlines the risks that they might face in participating in this project and the responsibility of the researcher to act in good faith. Interviewees include Miriam Charter, former director of Canadian Theological Seminar (CTS) Toronto; Arnold Cook, retired missionary and president of the denomination; David Freeman, former pastor and current administrator in the national office; Rev. Ross Ingram, retired church planter and pastor; Melody Kilbank (née

¹⁸ For the list of questions asked to interview participants as well as the official waiver form that each signed, please see appendix 1.

Coutts), former C&MA pastor; Paul Little, pastor of Georgetown Alliance Church; Franklin Pyles, president of the C&MA; Peter Ralph, professor of pastoral theology at Canadian Theological Seminary; Arnold Reimer, retired pastor; Rod Remin, professor of Greek and Hebrew at CTS; Keith Taylor, pastor of Beulah Alliance Church; Wendy Thomas, former youth pastor and currently the dean of student development of Canadian Bible College and David Tjart, retired C&MA pastor. Each of these people were either significant contributors to the discussions on women as Elders or they were a consistent witness to these events. The methodology used following the interview process was to research and reconstruct important insights offered by the interview participants. Their direction influenced the secondary sources that were considered and the important issues that will be emphasized because it was through their recollection that the history of denomination took shape. Consideration will also be given to secondary sources that reveal what was happening within popular Canadian culture and within other churches at the time.

Structure

This thesis has been structured with the intention of emphasizing the three main influences upon those in the C&MA that aided in either the creation or the continuation of the discussions concerning women as Elders within the denomination: tradition, culture and personal hermeneutics. This emphasis is in reaction to popular assumptions within the denomination that the issue of women as Elders is a simple acceptance or rejection of the authority of scripture. This thesis, therefore, has been structured into three thematic chapters (chapters two, four and five), which will reveal how significant the surrounding influences were upon those involved in the debates. The second chapter,

Tradition: An Argument for All, will provide context for the discussions that took place during the 1980's and 1990's by focusing on the history of the denomination in relationship to women and their roles in the church and through an examination of how tradition influenced those involved in the debates. The third chapter, A Chronological Overview of the Debates, will focus specifically on the events that took place within the denomination between 1980 and 2000. This chapter has been specifically placed after the chapter on tradition so that the reader will be aware of the context of the debates.

Although disruptive to the sequence of thematic chapters this chronology will report what actually transpired during the debates, how people acted and reacted and the progression of significant events. This chapter will in turn provide context for why the content of the fourth and fifth chapters have been considered influential and a necessary part of this study. The fourth chapter, Culture: The Silent Partner, will consider the impact of popular culture upon those within denomination and how that influenced their thoughts on women in church leadership. The fifth chapter, Scripture: The Battle Field, will offer insight into how members of the denomination were actually interpreting scripture during the 1980's and 1990's and how they used scripture to support their own convictions.

CHAPTER TWO

TRADITION: AN ARGUMENT FOR ALL

As questions about the appropriate roles for women in the Church emerged and members of the C&MA began to debate whether or not women should be called to be Elders, the tradition of the denomination was often raised for consideration. While clergy and laity alike had typically been ignorant of the denomination's history prior to the debates that began in 1982, when discussions on women as Elders began knowledge of the denomination's tradition suddenly became important for many.¹ In fact, when interviewed, each member asked affirmed the importance of the denomination's tradition in the discussions during the 1980's and 1990's. Each interviewee was able to use the tradition of the denomination in their defence and supported their views with the actions of A.B. Simpson and different statements that he made throughout his life. Although the issue of tradition was only ever formally raised by the Board of Directors in a statement that they made in 1988² the tradition of the denomination has, without a doubt, affected the attitudes of those who took part in the debates. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the history of the denomination in relationship to the leadership roles allowed for women and to discern how those involved in a national debate during the 1980's and 1990's were each able to use tradition to their own advantage and remain in disagreement over their interpretation of history. This chapter will not consider the actual debates that took place in the 1980's and 1990's but it will provide the proper context for the debates in light of the tradition of the denomination.

¹ Melody Kilbank, personal interview, winter 2006.

² Biennial Report (General Assembly: Saskatoon, 1988).

Let the Lord Manage the Women

The chosen date for the birth of the Christian and Missionary Alliance is November 1881. The founder of the movement, Albert B. Simpson,³ was born thirty-eight years earlier in Bayview, Prince Edward Island and from an early age it was evident that he would take his ministry very seriously. His parents prayed that he would become a minister and at the age of 14 their prayers were answered when he made this decision for himself. Simpson began to study languages immediately and, when he was eligible, attended Knox College in Toronto from which he graduated in 1865. Simpson was ordained in the Presbyterian Church and pastored three churches, one in Canada and then two in the United States, before he felt the call to begin a new movement.⁴ Simpson's decision to leave the Presbyterian Church was due to beliefs that he held which had been changing over a period of time. By 1881 Simpson's doctrine had moved away from classic reformed theology in respect to baptism, grace and sanctification and his intense insistence on premillennialism and divine healing were problematic for serving in the Presbyterian Church.⁵ For these reasons, along with his rising passion for evangelism,

³ For further consideration of early C&MA history see R. Niklaus, J. Sawin and S. Stoesz, *All For Jesus* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, 1996), A.E. Thompson, *The Life of A.B. Simpson* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications Inc., 1920) and A.W. Tozer, *Wingspread: A Study in Spiritual Altitude* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, 1992).

⁴ Leslie Andrews, *Perceptions of the Role of Women in the Christian and Missionary Alliance*, D. Min. diss., (Georgia: Columbia Theological Seminary, 1976), 42.

⁵ Simpson believed that sanctification took place through a second filling of the Holy Spirit that enabled the believer to live a holy life. This differed from Presbyterian theology that argued Sanctification was a life long process that began at conversion and continued slowly throughout life. Simpson argued that sanctification involved surrendering one's life to Christ. It was, however, Simpson's early view of divine healing that caused the most controversy for himself in the Presbyterian Church. He believed that healing was provided for in the atonement of Christ and, therefore, if one had faith the person could ask for healing. He believed medicine was fine if you had no faith but if you were filled with the Holy Spirit you should be confident in the healing power of God. Simpson also believed in premillennialism. Premillennialists expected the return of Christ before the millennium and then Christ will rule for a thousand years during which time the promises of Israel will be fulfilled. After the thousand years Christ will return for a second and final resurrection at the end of the world. This was in opposition to the prevalent postmillennial view that believed the church would usher in the end time after all had heard the gospel. Lindsay Reynolds, *Rebirth* (Toronto: C&MA in Canada, 1992), 5-7.

Simpson resigned from his pastorate at Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church in New York City and became focused on evangelism, missions and divine healing.⁶

A. B. Simpson began an evangelistic work in New York as he attempted to reach those the established church had missed. Having been heavily influenced by the holiness movement, the foreign missions movement, the divine healing movement and the premillennial movement Simpson began his evangelistic outreach with great urgency. He believed in the power of Jesus to save but he also felt the weight of the responsibility to share this truth with as many as possible before Christ returned. Simpson, therefore, preached and held prayer meetings as an independent evangelist with great fervour until it became evident that those he was ministering to also needed a church in which they could develop their faith. An independent church was started a year later and Simpson continued to focus on the need to reach those who had been missed. As his congregation matured in their faith they were also trained to go out and share the good news with others. Simpson felt the need for the gospel to be spread with great urgency and in his opinion it did not matter who was sharing the gospel as long as it was being presented to all people. He began to publish a paper called *The Word, Work and World* and from its first release he expressed his strong opinions on evangelism, missions and the need he felt for people, trained men and women, to be sent out into unreached regions of the world to share the gospel.⁷

In 1887 two societies were begun: The Christian Alliance and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance. The purpose of these two groups was to join Christians together in order to encourage one another in the faith and to spread the gospel to the world. It is a

⁶ Ibid, 3.

⁷ Ibid, 4.

clear and important fact that Simpson did not intend to begin a new denomination nor did he view these two societies as a church. He instead viewed the Christian Alliance as complementary to the church and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance as a service arm for the church that sent out missionaries. In the last twenty years of his life, however, as these two groups amalgamated into one and slowly became more and more like a church the emphasis of the work began to alter. While Simpson had begun with an urgent sense to help those ignored within North America, by 1897 his focus was on foreign missions and in his opinion men and women who believed, needed to give their “strength and wealth to do the best things and not the second best.” In 1912 a General Council agreed to a new constitution and the unity of branches became affiliated independent churches.⁸

During this time women served in a variety of different positions. Due to the urgency of the call to spread the gospel women acted in whatever role needed to be filled. While some outside the movement disagreed with Simpson’s allowance of such practices he chose to remind them of the good that was happening through the ministry of these devoted women. At one point Simpson even wrote about the 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 on this very day, in every part of the world, upon the public work of consecrated Christian women.” He went on to say “Dear brother, let the Lord manage the women. He can do it better than you, and you turn your batteries against the common enemy.”⁹ Women held prominent positions of leadership within this new movement during Simpson’s life. They were on the executive board committee, women were employed as Bible professors at the Bible

⁸ Ibid, 20-25.

⁹ A.B. Simpson, *Christian Alliance* (December 29th, 1893), 402.

Training Institute¹⁰ and they were supported as evangelists and branch officers (when organized into a denomination branch officers would be known as local pastors). In fact, half of the C&MA vice presidents in 1887, the year when the two societies merged together to form the C&MA, were women. Simpson strongly encouraged women to become foreign missionaries and while they attended the training institute they were required to practice preaching in chapel in the same way as the men. A few of the women who held significant roles during Simpson's own life include Harriet Waterbury who taught Bible Doctrine at the Bible Institute in Nyack, Mary Glover Davis who was a field evangelist and Evelyn Forrest who served as a faculty member at Toccoa Falls teaching Bible.¹¹

In the early days of the movement Simpson used women in virtually every aspect of ministry in order to share the gospel with the world. His belief in sanctification and the changing power of Christ in the lives of believers, along with his conviction that anyone with a basic understanding of the gospel could be an evangelist created a seemingly egalitarian position in Simpson's ministry focus. His open rebuke of men who questioned the work of women and his obvious allowance for women to work provided strong arguments for those who during the debates of the 1980's and the 1990's wished to call the denomination "back to its true roots."¹² It is not surprising then that Franklin Pyles, when considering how the tradition of the denomination affected the debates of the

¹⁰ The Bible Institute in Nyack was the first training school to open. However, in 1911 an Alliance field evangelist and member of the board of managers opened another school in North Carolina that would soon relocate to Georgia and become Toccoa Falls Institute. At this institute professors were required to sign a doctrinal statement, which stated that women's ministry was open to question. Janette Hassey, *No Time for Silence* (St. Paul, MN, 1986), 18.

¹¹ Ibid, 18.

¹² Ross Ingram, personal interview, summer 2005.

1980's and 1990's, argued that the tradition of the denomination actually supported women as Elders:

There is a dual tradition in the Alliance and basically *they* (those opposed to women as Elders) were shutting down tradition discussions because the Alliance has always had a strong tradition of women in all roles, including pastoral leadership. They tried to show that A.B. Simpson wouldn't allow women to be Elders, which kind of put them in a funny place because he would allow them to be pastors. I think all that was sort of dicey research. Leslie Andrews wrote a paper that is probably the very best of historical study of women in the C&MA that I have seen but all of that was just being ignored. What was being picked up on was the tradition of the last 20 years.¹³

Miriam Charter, an official worker who has served the Alliance for thirty years, also believed that the tradition of the denomination supported women as Elders. She questioned how, considering the early history of the denomination, there was debate at all over how women might serve in the church. Although she did not remember the particulars, Dr. Charter's presupposition was that if history had continued on the course begun by A.B. Simpson woman's roles would never have become an issue, "From what I remember of Alliance history there has been a shift somewhere. Why did we need to go through years of debate to get a woman on the Board of Directors when in the early days A.B. Simpson's wife was on the Board."¹⁴

Barak Should Stand in Front

In the early years, and clearly during Simpson's life and under his authority, the roles that women held in the C&MA were significant positions that included teaching and leading men and women alike. It is easily understood how, when looking back upon the history of the denomination, some might say that in restricting women from the role of Elder, from preaching or from being a senior pastor the denomination has left its roots

¹³ Rev. Dr. Franklin Pyles, personal interview, summer 2005.

¹⁴ Dr. Miriam Charter, personal interview, spring 2005.

and has created boundaries and arguments that previously had never existed. There is however, another side of the history that must be explored when considering A.B. Simpson's views and that is his belief in regards to formal ecclesiology. Simpson, despite the practical leadership that he encouraged women to take everyday, believed that it was right to restrict women from official leadership in the church, that is, the role of Bishop, Elder and Sr. Pastor. While Simpson encouraged women to preach, act as "branch leaders" and serve as missionaries, within the church proper he held that women should not be allowed lead.¹⁵ It is upon this distinction that those who believe only men should be Elders have based their argument from tradition.

A.B. Simpson was comfortable making a distinction between Christian ministry *in* the Church and *for* the Church, despite the lack of practical difference. While it has been recorded that Simpson encouraged women to speak and openly rebuked men for their censor of public female ministry, when considering leading ministry within the Church, Simpson wrote that women should not "usurp the authority of men":

After all that can be said on both sides of this question it seems to remain as the practical conclusion of the whole matter 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.¹⁶

Simpson moves from saying that the issue of women in public ministry is a side issue to writing that when women attempt to govern the church they leave their modest sphere and lose their peculiar charm. Simpson clearly used the distinction between formal and

¹⁵ Leslie Andrews, "Restricted Freedom: A.B. Simpson's View of Women," *Birth of a Vision* (Alberta: Buena Book Service, 1986), 26.

¹⁶ A.B. Simpson, *The Holy Spirit (or) Power From On High* (New York: Christian Publishing Co.), 149-150.

informal ministry to his advantage in the development of the C&MA as he allowed women to act in all of the roles typically restricted to men in governing positions without, seemingly, straying from his formal belief that women should not lead formal ecclesiastical structures. It cannot be denied, however, that Simpson did hold to this distinction in theory at least and he did write against women as Elders, supporting the argument of those in the 1980's and 1990's who would argue that they are continuing the appropriate tradition of the denomination.

Simpson is recorded on several occasions reiterating his view that women should be restricted in their action in the church. However, his view was not static and it would seem that with time he became even more conservative in his thinking. This is exemplified best by his changing responses to whether or not it was appropriate for women to preach in the church in light of 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. He first stated:

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 way in which a true women can represent her Master and speak for the edification of His people.¹⁷

At this point it would seem that Simpson, while still maintaining a formal idea of restriction when he writes that a true woman will be able to share the message given from God in a "womanly" way, believes it is absolutely appropriate and plausible that a woman might be given a message from God and called to share that message from the pulpit. He does not seem to consider it wrong that a woman might be called by God to teach the community in such a direct manner. Later, in fact, Simpson also clearly wrote that women were clearly to be prophets, without any indication that this role would

¹⁷ A.B. Simpson *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 7 December 1894, 533; Leslie Andrews, "Restricted Freedom: A.B. Simpson's View of Women," *Birth of a Vision* (Alberta: Buena Book Service, 1986).

change between men and women. Simpson's conviction seems to be that while women should not expect to lead he is convinced that the Spirit would regulate who is to speak and who is to lead through clear direction, and as a result, he is therefore not overly concerned with the issue.¹⁸

Simpson, without explanation, does become more concerned with the appropriate role of women in the church later in his life. When writing on the worship of the church Simpson states that a woman should never assume a role designated for a man even if she may be gifted by God to do so. When he considers women's ability to preach or to prophesy he cautions that they do so in an appropriate and modest manner. Simpson's suggestion is that women speak in a conversational manner and testify as if telling a "story of love" rather than a sermon.¹⁹ A woman's ministry in the church should be, according to Simpson near the end of his life, in association with men and never in superiority to men based on his interpretation of the scriptures that speak of headship. If woman is the glory of man and was created for the man then her place in worship should be in association with men but never in a superior position to men.²⁰

It cannot be doubted that Simpson definitely felt the need to discern between the ministry allowed women in the church and outside of the church, and this sentiment is carried on today by many. A common explanation given in interviews concerning the practical liberty allowed to women in the C&MA despite the formal restrictions is that outside of the official ecclesiastic role, women are definitely gifted by God to teach and preach but that they must do so in a womanly way. This "way" was explained by some as a proper understanding of their position in the church and the headship of men.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, 228.

²⁰ Ibid, 228.

Women may preach, and may be called by God to do so, but they should tell their story rather than lecture and they should have a man on the platform alongside so that it is clear that they know their place.²¹

Arnold Cook, president of the Alliance during many of the national debates on the subject, offered the following response to how he believed the tradition of the denomination affected the debates over women as Elders during the 1980's and 1990's:

I think tradition has greatly influenced our thought. In his book *On High*, A.B. Simpson has a section on Deborah that is very interesting. Simpson set the tone in how he allowed women to participate in the movement in different ministries but this part on Deborah he even goes as far as to say Deborah actually put Barak ahead of herself in some points of her leadership. He even goes as far as to say, and this isn't popular today Simpson would get in trouble for these words, that every true woman-and he hammers that- every true woman feels uncomfortable in the ecclesiastical roles of leadership. Simpson has pretty well set our guidelines over the years. We've had women missionaries come and minister in our churches on Sundays and before when there were more woman evangelists, there used to be more than there are today.²²

Arnold Reimer also agreed that tradition greatly influenced the thoughts and the actions of the denomination as it dealt with the debate over women as Elders. Reimer focused his answer on how he believed that this tradition is a positive one that should be upheld because in his opinion it gave appropriate freedom to women to serve while still maintaining official restrictions. He said:

We have a wonderful tradition and I like to think I've been part of it over the decades. I come from a large family with five sisters and two brothers and five of us were in full time ministry; two as missionaries, two as pastor's wives and myself. The others were all also very active in their churches in every role imaginable. I believe the denomination had a Godly balance and a biblical balance to this issue. A.B. Simpson's openness to women in ministry, be it with his own wife's role to some very wonderful women in New York who ran houses of healing. There was also of course his school at Nyack which opened its doors to the preparation of women, a tradition that has continued and we have had many wonderful ladies who have served in unique roles down through the generations.

²¹ Arnold Cook, personal interview, summer 2005.

²² Arnold Cook, personal interview, summer 2005.

The truth is that to this day without those highly involved women we would be a hurting denomination, but interestingly enough we really did not have women who demanded the roles of leadership beyond what the scriptures would allow. I know that's a controversial statement but A.B.'s wife was on the board but *he* was the chair of the board *and* it was a corporate board and not a church board. I think there are distinctions to be held there. We have always had in all Alliance churches areas for women to minister and without them we would have hurt terribly. I don't think that the issue is women's ministry but that very exclusive position of leadership that God only knows he seems to have indicated should be for men only.²³

How the West Was Won: The Great Tradition of Women in Canada

It is important when considering the history of the denomination to recognize that while A.B. Simpson was the founder of the movement he lived in New York and ministered in the United States. The history of the C&MA in Canada is undeniably linked to that of the United States, but in considering the debates of the 1980's and 1990's it is important to consider the Canadian history specifically, since those involved in the discussions have been directly influenced by these events and stories. The C&MA was not born in Canada until 1889 when a former Methodist pastor named John Salmon, who had also left his tradition and begun a new movement among the people, invited Simpson north to explain the Alliances to those involved in his movement. John Salmon, like Simpson, focused his teaching on the fourfold gospel: Jesus as our Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King. He began his movement with the intention of being a complementary ministry to the church. Salmon invited Simpson to come and explain the Christian Alliance to those within his movement and the result was a type of merger.²⁴ The "Dominion Auxiliary Branch of the Christian Alliance" was born with the agreement that the Canadian movement be allowed to continue electing its own president and executive committee. The first president of the Auxiliary was William Howland, an

²³ Arnold Reimer, personal interview, summer 2005.

²⁴ Lindsay Reynolds, *Rebirth* (Toronto: C&MA in Canada, 1992), 34.

Anglican who had been mayor of Toronto. Vice-presidents included John Salmon and Maggie Scott, a paralytic woman who had been healed through prayer and whose story had widely spread throughout southern Ontario. The Auxiliary quickly spread as a society that promoted the fourfold gospel until 1891 when Salmon convinced Simpson to come and officiate an ordination service. The act of ordaining made many within the society uncomfortable and they believed that the Auxiliary was changing from a fraternity into a denomination. It was at this point that many people left the auxiliary. In 1897 the auxiliary amalgamated with the American Alliance with the result in Canada being a loss of its right to elect its own president and executive committee. This hurt the movement in Canada for several decades and the enthusiasm that had existed prior to the amalgamation dwindled.²⁵

It was not until after World War I that the C&MA began to restructure and rebuild. The belief in moral laxity and rising liberalism within mainline churches created a new sense of need for the C&MA and the purpose of the movement was reexamined. Under the leadership of Paul Radar the C&MA became focused on foreign missions and while they still preserved the fourfold gospel it was no longer a focal point for the movement. In the East the gospel was being shared and the call was made for missionaries in tent meetings and conventions. It was the West, however, that offered the greatest opportunities to the C&MA because there were not enough churches to serve the thousands of immigrants who were moving to the area. This opportunity was made known to the C&MA by Beulah Mission, a small organization in Edmonton that asked that someone be sent to offer support and help. J.H. Woodward answered the call and quickly realized the need in the West for ministers of the Word. While Beulah Mission was soon

²⁵ Ibid, 34-38.

renamed Beulah Tabernacle and became the first C&MA church in the West, Woodward realized the great need throughout the prairies for evangelists and pastors. Woodward asked for students from Nyack College to come to the West during the summer and help spread the Word.²⁶

The first summer that Woodward had students from Nyack three men and one woman answered the call and each was given the same task to accomplish. After receiving five dollars, a horse, saddle and a blanket the students were sent off in different directions and told to visit homes, to hold public services whenever possible and to report back to Edmonton for prayer one day a month. Muriel Owen, the only woman, was not given special consideration due to her gender. There was great work to be done and so she was required to do the same as the men. At the end of the summer Woodward acknowledged her work accordingly. She was evaluated and praised and Woodward wrote that she would be a good worker for a new field because she was not afraid of difficulty, she worked with great energy and she had an ideal spirit. Although it was later decided that women should not continue in this work alone for safety reasons it is clear that Muriel Owen, one of the first C&MA missionaries in western Canada, accomplished the task of spreading the gospel along with her male coworkers and was not prohibited from doing so because of her gender.²⁷

Margaret Connor was another Canadian woman who was willing to bear great difficulty in order to share the gospel in the West. In 1918 she began her ministry in Denzil, Saskatchewan preaching from a schoolhouse. She visited homes, nursed the settlers back to health when they were sick and encouraged the people. In 1919 she

²⁶ Ibid, 110.

²⁷ Ibid, 110-115.

organized a church in Allenbach, Saskatchewan and then planted a church in Elk and then another in Major, Saskatchewan. Margaret preached at all of these locations as well as others in the region. In 1923 one of Woodward's summer students, Catherine McCoy, met up with Margaret and helped her begin a fourth church in Greenvale. This pushed Miss Connor to her limits, however, and forced her to restrict her work to these four established churches. At this point in time Miss Connor's ministry was not under the C&MA banner, however, in 1923 she met with the district superintendent and offered to join with the C&MA if a young man would be sent to take over her churches so that she might be able to continue planting more. District Superintendent Roffe accepted her offer immediately and Miss Connor became an official C&MA worker.²⁸ Margaret Connor later also became an assistant pastor at Beulah Tabernacle.²⁹

During the 1920's women were a critical part of beginning and maintaining churches in the West. In addition to the work of Miss Owen and Miss Connor, Miss A.B. Rose preached and remained in charge of a church at Lac LaBiche. This ministry post also included preaching at two other stations. Another instance of women serving in significant positions of leadership during this period includes the placement of Della Carstead and Grace Johns into a struggling church whose pastor, Raymond Francisco, returned to Nyack to finish his training. In 1922 the C&MA was asked to take over this ministry and they were requested to send a "really good young man to be a full-time pastor" and in response two female graduates from the Canadian Bible Institute were sent and served as pastors for the congregation.³⁰ The C&MA continued to place women in leadership when the ministry in the West stabilized and a new district was begun. Agnes

²⁸ Ibid, 115-119.

²⁹ Ibid, 220.

³⁰ Ibid, 156.

MacDonald was elected secretary and in 1928 when the Western Canadian District recorded its first list of officials three women were on the District Executive Committee, Miss S. O. Gardiner, Miss M. Connor and Mrs. B. Tinker.

In 1929 Myrtle Bradley was invited to Regina to preach and soon was asked to become pastor/evangelist of the Regina Church. Miss Bradley accepted the call and within five months her congregation was over a hundred people. During this time the chairman of the church, the secretary and the treasurer of the church were all men. Godly men were available to serve if it was believed that a woman should not lead, however Miss Bradley maintained her position as pastor of this congregation. 1929 also saw Mabel Bailey and Muriel Dougall, students from Nyack, sent to Teulon, Manitoba to conduct Children's Ministry. During their stay in Teulon the gospel was spread through their acts of devotion to the people and more than the children were affected by their message. When they left the people of the town begged them to return or to send others to continue the ministry they began.³¹ Women were ministering in any way possible in the West in order to spread the gospel and men supported their work. There was no question over the propriety of women church planters, preachers, children's ministers or roaming evangelists. Women in the C&MA in Canada were given great freedom during the 1920's to serve God in whatever way possible.

Women served in the C&MA churches in the 1920's because the need to spread the gospel was considered great and proper roles for women were not debated. However, despite their practical equality a distinction did exist between men and women in the area of ordination. Even during this period of extreme freedom in service women were not ordained within the C&MA. This issue was raised at the Third Annual Conference in

³¹ Ibid, 239.

1928 but the decision was made to continue in the established practice and not ordain women. The question about ordination was asked in response to a suggestion that the C&MA be careful as it set men apart for ministry and wait until their work proved their call by God. In response to this suggestion someone posed the question if a woman proved her call if she might also be ordained. The reply, by the home secretary E.J. Richards, referred to the C&MA position set up by A.B. Simpson that stated that women might be set apart as deaconesses but not as ordained ministers of the gospel. As Reynolds points out, this provided the opportunity for male pastors to be ordained as well as male evangelists, however Margaret Connor, who had planted numerous churches and at the time was a pastor at Beulah Tabernacle, was to be set apart as a deaconess.³² The common bond between the C&MA in Canada and the United States during this time is evident in the mutual decisions to formally restrict women from ecclesiastical leadership while developing no practical difference in the ministry provided by men and women.

Despite this official level of restriction it was not until later that the C&MA in Canada began to restrict the practical roles that women were allowed to hold within the church. As Franklin Pyles stated, the tradition of restricted roles was not a founding tradition but one that developed during the 1950's and 1960's.³³ There are several possible contributing factors that encouraged this restriction, including the newfound interest in religion and preserving the "Christian heritage" of the people in both the United States and in Canada after WWII.³⁴ Church attendance doubled during this period and the C&MA began to plant many churches in Canada. Even after the mainline

³² Ibid, 230.

³³ Franklin Pyles, personal interview, spring 2005.

³⁴ John Stackhouse, "The Protestant Experience in Canada Since 1945," in *The Canadian Protestant Experience: 1760-1990*, ed. G. Rawlyk (Welsh Publishing Company: Burlington, 1990), 200.

churches began to return to normal attendance³⁵ the C&MA enjoyed continued growth and from 1966 to 1980 grew from 157 to 229 local churches.³⁶ Another important factor might include a statement made by the then retiring president, Dr. Turner, in May 1960, who declared that the C&MA was officially a church. The C&MA had been acting as a denomination for a significant period of time but until this point few had been willing to acknowledge that it had become more than a movement or a fellowship of believers. Until recently even, there have been those within the C&MA who have continued to refuse to acknowledge this transformation³⁷ but in 1960 Dr. Turner stated the reality for the first time for all to consider:

Rightly or wrongly, the days are past when we are only a fellowship. Today we are a church. We must tell the world what we believe and why we believe it. We need to re-think, re-emphasize, consolidate and expand our educational obligations. Too little, too late can rob us of desirable candidates and make us followers, rather than leaders.³⁸

Those who had previously claimed that the leadership roles appointed to women in the C&MA were appropriate because they were acting outside of the formal church could no longer make such a distinction. If Simpson's ecclesiology was to be followed women should no longer be able to serve as pastors or "branch leaders" nor should they be able to serve as members of a committee with spiritual authority because those responsibilities would now be tied to the official role of an Elder.

In addition to the formal acknowledgement made by Turner and the sudden interest in church within Canadian society, the change in the C&MA might also be attributed to the healthy growth that was taking place at Canadian Bible College, the

³⁵ From 1951-1961 the United and Anglican Churches' membership rose 25%. Ibid.

³⁶ Lindsay Reynolds, *Rebirth* (The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1992), 287.

³⁷ Dave Tjart, personal interview, winter 2006.

³⁸ Lindsay Reynolds, *Rebirth* (The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1992), 315.

official denominational college in Canada. The college was training many men who were preparing for pastoral ministry and as the denomination grew there were many small churches that simply needed one pastor. Arnold Reimer, when reflecting upon this period suggests that the reason why there were fewer women in active ministry was because of how the denomination had changed:

I think the reason was that we had a lot of small churches and lots of pastors, at least enough pastors because our school was really starting to grow. There was also a sense that we needed to run to get these guys roles -and it was mostly guys. When we got to the 70's we took off in the realms of growth and in the 80's even more so.

Interestingly, it was when the churches started to grow again, in the 1970's and 1980's³⁹ that the debate over the role of women emerged. There was a need to fill ministerial positions during this time that was reminiscent of the need in the early days. The church was growing, however, this time as an official denomination it was no longer considered appropriate to place women in just any position available. Women were hired to care for children and other women but no longer to serve as pastors. Women were encouraged to minister and they were encouraged to serve in the church but there was an assumption that this would no longer include church planting or trudging over the prairies alone to find people with whom they might share the gospel.⁴⁰

³⁹ Arnold Reimer goes on in his interview to consider what happened as the Alliance began to see growth in the churches and more than a single pastor was needed for each congregation. He said, "When our churches started to grow we wanted first of all the children's ministries to be adequately cared for so we started to look for managing all of that and our Sunday schools were important and they were growing and then we started to care for our growing women's ministry and we had women serving in those roles. In the 1980's and 1990's we had the area of pastoral care and there were some ladies who were able to do that. We wanted to give our ladies the chance to minister as they wanted to and they were, "asking what can I do, I'm not going to be a missionary but I want to do something" and those were of course important roles. Arnold Reimer, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁴⁰ An article written by Louella Gould for *His Dominion* entitled "Women's Involvement in the Church Should Provide a Broader Basis for a Wider Ministry" reflects this attitude as she encourages women to broaden their involvement in women's ministry, outreach, prayer support and missions in order to help the church. Nowhere in this article does broader ministry involve preaching, leading the church or church planting. This article is not wrong in what it says but it does reflect an attitude that insinuates a woman's

Following the Early Canadian Way

Although the trend of the 1970's and 1980's was to relegate women who wished to serve the church to the nursery or to the hospitality room, others saw the need for women to continue serving in leadership positions. When interviewed, Rev. Ross Ingram remarked that one thing he greatly appreciated about the tradition of the C&MA, and A.B. Simpson in particular, was a sentiment held by the founder that he discovered in Leslie Andrew's paper, "Restricted Freedom:"⁴¹

Simpson's view of women must be viewed against the backdrop of his consuming passion to reach the lost. If women furthered the primary vision of the church to reach lost souls than he enthusiastically encouraged them to do so. When I first read this I felt quite pleased that our founder did not make who can do this or that the first thing. The first thing is the kingdom; if women can do it- let 'em go.⁴²

Rev. Ingram, a retired church planter and a pastor, had the great desire to share the gospel in his community. He was also the first person to hire a woman as a pastor in Canada after the early days of the movement had passed, to fight for this woman's right to be licensed as a pastor with the national office and to place women on his Board of Elders prior to the decision made in 2000. When asked why he placed women on his board during the period of debate in the 1980's Rev Ingram replied:

I didn't do it. The Elders said "shouldn't we consider a woman" and I said "sure". There is a great deal of healthiness when you start a church fresh, when you start from scratch. I'd done that when I started at Coburg and at Rexdale [two churches that he planted]... And so I didn't ask them. The guys said "shouldn't we have a women" because they wanted to have a broader perception on the board. Well, men have their own vision and women usually have different ones and so over and over again some of the guys would say "shouldn't we have a woman", because often the women would be sharp and they would say "well my

broader ministry will be in conjunction with and never in superiority to the authority of men. Louella Gould and Miriam Charter, "Women's Involvement in the Church Should Provide a Broader Basis for a Wider Ministry," *His Dominion* 6 (Regina: Winter 1979): 10-3.

⁴¹Leslie Andrews, "Restricted Freedom: A.B. Simpson's View of Women," *Birth of a Vision* (Alberta: Buena Book Service, 1986).

⁴² Ross Ingram, personal interview, summer 2005

perception of this” and they would go ahead, they gave us more to think about. The ideas would begin to build and then there were ideas that were better than what either one could have done alone because we had the big picture. I guess I kind of went with what I thought was needed. And I listened to my Elders; I listened carefully to my Elders.⁴³

Rev. Ingram’s focus during his time as a church planter and a pastor was on reaching the lost. Ingram was not concerned with who was sharing the gospel as long as people were learning about Jesus. The result of this emphasis was that during a period of time when women were extremely limited in their public roles in the C&MA Rev. Ingram allowed them to serve the church without restriction. Ingram followed, what he believed to be, the early tradition set in place by A.B. Simpson and those involved in the early Canadian movement and placed women in positions where they were gifted to serve. Although Rev. Ingram did not act in order to bring about controversy, those in leadership in the national office did question his actions and he was asked to remove the women from his Board of Elders. Ingram refused to comply with this request. He did not believe that he was acting outside of the precedent set by the tradition of the denomination nor did he feel as if he was ignoring the authority of scripture. Rev. Ingram, although fully aware of the passages of scripture which seem to restrict women from authority in the church, after preaching on Paul’s greetings to the people in Romans 16 believed that scripture supported women in all roles in the church.⁴⁴ Ingram’s ministry in Southern Ontario from the 1950’s through to the 1990’s was liberating to women, but as he recounts his own history he views his actions as simply following the tradition set out before him to keep the kingdom first and to be concerned with who was doing what afterwards.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ross Ingram, personal interview, summer 2005.

Conclusion

The debate regarding women as Elders in the C&MA in Canada emerged out of a tradition that restricted women from leadership in theory while encouraging women to take many different forms of leadership out of a sense of necessity to spread the gospel. The discussion also emerged out of a tradition that had become progressively more conservative in regards to the roles that women might hold as it became an established denomination. It is for this reason that those who argue on both sides of the debate are able to use the tradition of the denomination as support and encouragement for their opinions. It is indisputable that women planted churches, preached and cared for congregations. Women were pastors of churches in the C&MA and held positions of ecclesiastic leadership in the early days. It is also indisputable that the official stance of the denomination was that women might not hold positions of ecclesiastical authority and that when it was possible men were called to be pastors before women, even on the frontier in Canada.

CHAPTER THREE

A CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER TO THE DEBATE

A Regime Change: 1982

The Canadian C&MA officially became autonomous from the movement in the United States on 1 January 1981 and Dr. Melvin Sylvester was elected president over the two hundred and fifty one churches in the nation.¹ In 1982 at the second Canadian General Assembly in Hamilton, Royal Hamel, a pastor, began the debate that would continue on for another eighteen years when he raised the question of whether or not women could serve as Elders in the church.² There was not, however, much discussion or debate on the topic during 1982 since many found that the question had been raised without fair warning. The Board of Directors commissioned a report for consideration and the discussion was postponed until the next General Assembly to be held in 1984.³ While there is no definitive reason why the question of women as Elders was raised so quickly after autonomy Franklin Pyles suggested that a possible reason is because the Canadian C&MA wanted to change, perhaps intentionally, its structure for leadership to exclude women from the higher ranks of authority.

When the C&MA was united across the border its leadership structure included Pastors, Elders and an Executive Board. Traditionally, the Executive Board, which consisted of both men and women, made authoritative decisions for the church while the Elders, who were literally older men who had retired from ministry, would aid in ministry. When the Canadian movement became autonomous, however, the denomination in Canada switched to a one-board system, abolishing the Executive Board

¹ www.cmacan.org

² Rod Remin, personal interview, fall 2005.

³ Arnold Reimer, personal interview, summer 2005.

and giving the Board of Elders all of the tasks that had traditionally been assigned to the Executive Board. According to Franklin Pyles this change in government is directly responsible for why the issue of women as Elders was raised so quickly after autonomy:

What is important to realize is that the reason this became an issue in the C&MA was because the Canadian organization was new and the Canadians organized their churches differently than the organization in the United States. We moved to a one-board system, which is what created the issue. In the United States the Alliance worked with an executive committee and women on the executive committee was very common. The issue of Elders was rarely raised because the Elders were traditionally a group of elders: older men who had served a kind of emeritus position. The Elders were older godly men in the church who had served well during their years. This would be a fairly common situation and they would pray for the sick or interview people for membership. There wasn't a high level of concern so the issue never really surfaced. When we came to a one-board system and power became tied in with the position of Elder that is when it became an issue and the subject was raised almost immediately in 1984.⁴

Elders, who were to be men, suddenly had a position of prominence that had never existed in the past within the denomination and women were excluded from a role that they had previously been allowed to hold as members of the Executive Board.⁵ It is difficult to judge whether or not the exclusion of women was truly the motivation behind the change in structure,⁶ however, the attempts made in 1984 to bar women from the Board of Directors and DEXCOM,⁷ would seem to indicate that there was a new desire to change the available roles for women in the denomination. Whatever the initial motivation was in changing the leadership structure of the denomination, it is clear that there was a new sense of propriety developing during the early 1980's that had not previously existed.

⁴ Rev. Dr. Franklin Pyles, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁵ Franklin Pyles, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁶ Rev. Keith Taylor suggests an alternative reason for why the C&MA in Canada moved to a one-board system. He believes that it was because they felt as if the Executive Board, which was not particularly spiritual, had the utmost authority in the local church and they wanted to ensure that the ultimate authority of the church was held by Godly men: Keith Taylor, personal interview, winter 2006.

⁷ Biennial Report (General Assembly: Hamilton, 1984), 26.

One person who was directly influenced by this change of structure was Wendy Thomas, an accredited member and official worker of the C&MA who was serving as a pastor in South-Eastern Ontario. Thomas was the second pastor on staff at Cedarview Alliance Church in Nepean, Ontario. The membership of this congregation was over fifty percent female and Thomas had been chosen for her position in 1981 specifically because of this high percentage of women. Thomas was responsible for a broad ministry as she served within this church, being responsible for all of the pastoral responsibilities beyond what the pastor could handle, including sitting on the Executive Board. After the change in structure Thomas was no longer able to serve on the board since, although the responsibilities had not changed, they were now called Elders. This was a difficult reality for Thomas because her ministry until this point had not been questioned and within the local church still was not being questioned. However, while this decision made by the denomination was fought by other local churches, including East Gate Alliance Church (the nearest C&MA congregation to Cedarview), Cedarview did not choose to raise their concerns because the pastor was new to the denomination and did not feel as if he had yet earned the right to speak on a national level.⁸

Tension Builds: 1984

The second General Assembly of the Canadian C&MA was held in Hamilton, Ontario, during the summer of 1984 and it is remembered as an extremely tense period in the history of the debate over women as Elders. After two years of consideration the delegates were called to discuss the issue of women as Elders for the first time on a serious level and it was quickly realized that this issue was going to become a difficult issue to resolve and possibly divisive for the denomination. The Board of Directors, after

⁸ Wendy Thomas, personal interview, winter 2006.

considering the report that was commissioned in 1982, issued a statement entitled “The Basic Scriptural Principles of Women in Ministry.”⁹ In this statement they declared that God, in His sovereignty, ordained an “order of creation and redemption, relationships of authority and submission.”¹⁰ They made four points on the equal nature of different roles and the importance of recognizing equality in situations of authority and submission, unity and diversity, equality and submission and eldership and oversight. The fifth point of the report proclaimed the encouragement of the Board for women to seek a “deep walk with God” and to explore the “full dimension of ministry possibilities within church structure worldwide and in their private lives.” They based their affirmation on Romans 12 and attached a list of ministry options for women to the report as an appendix. The Board of Directors then offered the following recommendations:

- a. The licensing of women, accredited for ministry in Canada, shall be according to ministry function.
- b. Women are not eligible to serve as elders in the local church, as members of the District Executive Committee, or on the Board of Directors.
- c. The Board of Directors is to issue an official statement setting forth ministry roles available to women accredited for ministry.
- d. Local church leadership is responsible to prayerfully affirm ministry functions for women in the local church.¹¹

When the recommendations were given to the Assembly to discuss on the floor a tense and emotionally charged debate developed almost immediately. While the delegates did eventually pass the first and the fourth recommendations the second recommendation was referred to a future assembly and the third recommendation created such controversy that it was never approved in its original form.

⁹ Biennial Report (General Assembly: Hamilton, 1984), 26.

¹⁰ Ibid, 26.

¹¹ Ibid, 27.

The report was brought to the floor for discussion and a recommendation was made to delete section V – “Ministries of Women” from the report while also making changes to the appendix of suggested ministries. These motions were called to vote and carried, but a second motion was made and seconded to undo the changes and revert to the original wording. This second motion was defeated but is important to remember since it is indicative of the unstable and divided nature of the delegates on this matter. As a result of this turmoil, a motion was then made to refer the report to the Committee on General Legislation and to suggest that that committee offer another report regarding the role of women in ministry to the Assembly. This motion was carried and the Committee on General Legislation met and reported back to the Assembly on the following day. The Committee on General Legislation made five recommendations in its report “Re. Women in Ministry”, the most significant being the fifth recommendation that resolved that “women are not eligible to serve as Elders in the local church, as members of the District Executive Committee, or on the Board of Directors.”¹² This motion was brought to the floor and was defeated when a second motion, requesting that, prior to any definitive decisions being made, an exegetical paper be written on the subject by those knowledgeable in the original languages. This motion was carried after considerable debate, again revealing the divisive nature of this discussion within the denomination. The vote was so close on this motion, in fact, that delegates were required to stand-up to be counted in order to be certain of the majority vote.¹³

Although the issue of women as Elders may have been unexpected in 1982, by 1984 the question had had enough time to sink in and many delegates came prepared to

¹² Ibid, 74.

¹³ Ibid, 67.

state their case and plead with their opponents for their cause. It is certain that whenever the discussion was given the floor a serious debate would have followed, however, it is important to realize that the extremely tense nature at this time could be a direct result of the continual delay and postponement of the open discussion. Although the discussion had been scheduled for early in the week it was not until one of the final sessions of the week, in a room without air-conditioning (during a Southern Ontario heat wave), that the issue was finally given the floor. The discussion became a debate immediately when the first person to the microphone stated that Elders must be men because of the masculine grammar in the key biblical passages that, therefore, clearly revealed God's intention for the role of Elder. Rod Remin, professor of Greek and Hebrew at the denominational seminary, immediately followed with a response that refuted this argument and revealed another option for interpretation. This in turn spurred another pastor, Arnold Reimer, to the microphone who encouraged the delegates not to be intimidated by theologians who live in "ivory towers." Reimer then went on to equate the decision to make women as Elders with the decision to ordain homosexuals and compared the hermeneutics of the professor with the hermeneutics of the United Church of Canada, remarking that he believed such interpretations would lead the C&MA in the same direction as that of the United Church; away from the authority of scripture and the gospel completely.¹⁴ The

¹⁴Arnold Reimer, when considering the statements made during this assembly greatly regretted what was said, although in essence would still stand by his statements. When asked about his comments at General Assembly 1984 he said, "If I can recall the words I made the comment that what I'm hearing are the very things that brought into the existence the United Church of Canada: holding still to the formulas of truth but raising questions that deviate from those very creeds. They soon were able to write the first 12 chapters (of the Bible) as a myth and it really took them about 50 years to lose in essence their connection to the gospel and its authority and transforming reality. It sounds terrible to put it in the same sentence but they moved from language to behaviour, to women in any position to eventually homosexuality. They almost became a form of Unitarianism and they run the gamut from evangelical to pagan in their denomination. I thought we were making those same initial steps and I made the statement that what took fifty years in the United Church we were doing in ten. And then I hate to say it but I said it would be better for these theologians,

debate was again pushed to another level when the Dean of the seminary, Dr. David Hartzfeld, moved to the microphone and remarked that while scripture stated homosexual activity was sinful nowhere did the scripture say that it was a sin to be a woman and that the previous argument was unfounded.¹⁵

The debate was intensely emotional and required, on the following day, participants from both sides of the issue to apologize for comments that were made. The debate also revealed tension that was developing over this issue between members of the College and Seminary and pastors within the denomination. There was a sense of mistrust between the two groups at this point in history, with certain pastors believing that the professors were too liberal in their hermeneutics and certain professors believing that pastors were unwilling to recognize the mistakes in their own interpretations.¹⁶ For instance, when asked how well he believed the denomination had handled the issue, Arnold Reimer made a point of remarking on the freedom given to the college and the seminary concerning the issue. In his opinion too much liberty had been allowed within the institutions and for this reason, due to the teaching of emerging pastors, the denomination had greater difficulty dealing with the issue than should have existed.¹⁷ In response to this belief, Rod Remin, when asked about the influence of institutions on students concerning this subject, stated that he did not believe the college and seminary had actually had a significant impact upon changing the opinions of students.¹⁸ Regardless of the actual impact upon students, the mistrust between the college and the

not to speak in assembly like this until they have come to conclusions on what they believe rather than to spread uncertainties with their questions.” Arnold Reimer, personal interview, summer 2005.

¹⁵ Rod Remin, personal interview, fall 2005.

¹⁶ Wendy Thomas, personal interview, winter 2005.

¹⁷ Arnold Reimer, personal interview, summer 2005.

¹⁸ Rod Remin, personal interview, fall 2005.

general pastorate added to the tension of the discussions and created a divisiveness that accentuated the differing opinions that were held within the denomination.¹⁹

A Controversial Change: 1988

The 1984 General Assembly concluded its discussion of women as Elders without any resolution except for a decision made to return to the issue after an exegetical report could be written and read by the Board of Directors. Therefore, General Assembly 1986 was relatively silent on the matter of women as Elders, since the report that was commissioned was not complete. The report was completed and submitted prior to General Assembly 1988, Saskatoon, and the debate was once again given the floor with interesting results. The Board of Directors reported that they had given careful attention to the report that had been written and to the historical position of the C&MA in regards to Eldership and the role of women in the church. This resulted in the presentation of the following statement: "It is recognized that the historical and biblical pattern has been that Elders in the church have been men. The weight of evidence would imply that this pattern should be continued."²⁰ This statement was dismantled²¹ and debated, although with more restraint than during Assembly 1984, and was finally approved by the

¹⁹ Tension between pastors and the college and seminary continued to grow throughout the years of debate and as a result, prior to a General Assembly in the late 1990's President of the Seminary, George Durance, asked faculty to clearly state that their offered opinions were personal and not the official position of the college. Andy Reimer, personal correspondence, winter 2006.

²⁰ Biennial Report (General Assembly: Saskatoon, 1988), 112.

²¹ The Assembly did not agree upon the presented statement at first and therefore in an attempt to resolve the issue the statement was taken apart and it was decided that each section would be voted upon. The statement was split into three sections:

1. God's pattern for the church is that elders are to be men.
2. There is scriptural evidence that circumstances have arisen where women were placed in leadership.
3. The determination of circumstance requiring the installation of women as elders is the function of the local church. There was then a vote to reinsert the word normal in the first point and this motion passed 257 to 162. The first division was defeated, however, and so the moderator ruled that since this was the main thrust of the issue they would return to debate with the original motion provided by the committee on General Legislation. The motion, in its original form was carried by 246 to 238 votes. Biennial Report (General Assembly: Saskatoon, 1988), 74.

Assembly. In the midst of the debate, however, it would seem that either by accident or by design the final written and approved version of the statement in regards to women as Elders was altered from its original form. The statement that was resolved and recorded reads: "It is recognized that in the biblical pattern and in the historical practice of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Elders in the church have *usually* been men. The weight of evidence would imply that normally this pattern should continue."²² This change in wording, although small, would add to tension that would soon develop over the issue of women as Elders because the meaning of the statement was drastically changed when the word "usually" was added to the statement.²³

The debate over women as Elders at the 1988 General Assembly was closed with the belief that further discussion of the topic on a national level would be counterproductive and that the issue had essentially been resolved. The Board of Directors issued the following statement:

Whereas the spirit of the Alliance historically has been to rally around those biblical essentials which unite us, and whereas major differences of opinion do exist regarding the role of women as Elders, and whereas we believe at continued debate concerning this matter on a national level would be counterproductive to our calling and mission as the Alliance it is recommended that the report entitled "Role of Women in Ministry", be circulated to the constituency as an instructional statement.²⁴

²² Ibid, 74.

²³ The proposition to bar women from the Board of Directors and from DEXCOM was dropped at this point and would not be considered again for several years. The Board of Directors, who felt nervous about writing a defining ministry list when new possibilities for ministry might always emerge, also graciously declined the other remaining aspect of the motion from 1984 that called them to list the roles available to women in the denomination. The final aspect of the issue raised during the 1988 General Assembly was the ordination of women. A motion was presented to study ordination, the goal of which was the presentation and consideration of a report on ordination during the following Assembly so that they might consider the reasoning for ordination and the possibility of ordaining women. The motion was tabled. Biennial Report (General Assembly: Saskatoon), 1988. However, general consensus is that the Alliance will not consider the ordination of women again for at least ten years. Franklin Pyles, personal interview, summer 2005.

²⁴ Biennial Report (General Assembly: Saskatoon, 1988)

The problem, however, was that following the General Assembly Douglas Schroeder-Tabah wrote an article in *Christian Week* that generated a great deal of controversy and, along with the change in wording of the resolution concerning Elders, the discussion was inadvertently forced back to a national level. Schroeder-Tabah reported on the developments of Assembly 1988 in regards to women as Elders in the C&MA and interpreted the agreed upon resolution to mean that women, although the practice was not normative, could be Elders in the church.²⁵ Schroeder admitted in the article that he was in favour of having women as Elders and that if the opportunity were to arise within his local church he would no longer feel restricted. Schroeder-Tabah also affirmed the “decision” made during Assembly to allow each church the discretion of deciding whether or not women as Elders was appropriate within their context since he did not feel that the issue should be forced upon a church unprepared for such a decision.²⁶ The problem with this article, however, was that its interpretation of the decision of the General Assembly was debatable.

In his article, Schroeder-Tabah offered a definitive response to the issue of women as Elders on behalf of the denomination to the Christian Community with perhaps inappropriate haste, creating one immediate question and a great deal of debate in the years to come. Rev. Peter Ralph, who disagreed with the interpretation of the events offered in the article, believed that the intention of the resolution was never to permit local churches to elect women to the Board of Elders. Ralph wrote to the National Office to state his concern over the article, and submitted the article along with his letter for consideration. To his surprise, however, Ralph received a reply to his letter written 8

²⁵ Douglas Schroeder-Tabah, “Alliance Consents to Women Being Elders” in *Christian Week* (September, 1988).

²⁶ Ibid.

November 1988 that actually affirmed Schroeder-Tabah's interpretation of events. This reply was especially surprising because in it the writer, Gerald Fowler executive vice-president of the denomination, stated that he discussed the letter of concern as well as the article written by Schroeder-Tabah with the President of the C&MA in Canada, Rev. Mel Sylvester, and they both believed the article to be in keeping with the developments of the General Assembly.²⁷ The trouble, however, was that while it would seem that Schroeder-Tabah was officially vindicated in his interpretation by the National Office, national leadership was about to change and with it came a change in opinion.

The Schroeder-Tabah article and the letter written by Gerald Fowler sparked many difficulties in the years to come and pressed forward the issue of women as Elders. While Peter Ralph did not act right away on the general permission granted he did retain the letter he received from national office. When his local church, Westside Alliance in Regina, raised the question of women as Elders he brought forward his letter to ease concerns that the church might be acting out of turn through its actions. After reviewing the letter Ralph's church did move forward and elected women to the Board of Elders with confidence that they were acting in good faith with the present and accepted sentiment of the denomination.²⁸ When the National Leadership changed, however, and Dr. Arnold Cook became president of the C&MA in Canada in 1992, the interpretation of Assembly 1988 also changed. Dr. Cook as well as others in national leadership positions did not believe that Assembly 1988 opened the door to women as Elders and actively petitioned Westside, as well as other churches that had since also placed women on the Board of Elders, to remove the women immediately from their positions of authority. Dr.

²⁷ Gerald Fowler to Peter Ralph, personal correspondence, November 1988.

²⁸ Peter Ralph, personal interview, fall 2005.

Cook first wrote to each of the churches and then personally visited them to discuss the situation and to ask the church to submit to his interpretation of the resolution. Two of the churches agreed to remove women from the board but Westside refused, asserting that it had acted in good faith and that it was uncomfortable with the ability to change passed decisions with changing administration.²⁹

The decision made by Westside was not accepted with enthusiasm, however, and in the following years Westside Alliance, along with other churches who chose to place women on their Board of Elders often had difficulties on a national and a district level. In correspondence between Rev. Ralph and District Superintendent Arnold Reimer, for instance, it is clear that Peter Ralph believed that his church had and was acting in good faith, but that because opinions had changed on a national level his church was being mistreated within the district. Rev. Ralph wrote to Dr. Reimer explaining the history of the church's decision, including with it a copy of Schroeder-Tabah's article and Gerald Fowler's letter. After explaining his own actions Rev. Ralph appealed to District Superintendent Reimer for support and encouragement:

My heart is grieved however when I hear leaders on the highest levels as well as in the ranks speaking of those who favour women in eldership roles as renegades that need to be brought into line. This is unfair, slanderous, and wrong. I appeal to you my superior because I respect your integrity, to defend us against such slurs, even though you hold different views.³⁰

In response to this letter and plea, Rev. Reimer replied in a manner that he deemed appropriate considering the opinion of the current President and his own personal opinion on the role of women and service within the denomination. He wrote:

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Peter Ralph, of Westside Alliance Church to Rev. Arnold Reimer, District Superintendent Canadian Mid-West District, personal correspondence.

Though I do realize you have a letter regarding the role of women as Elders, "Alliance leadership has historically affirmed a restraint upon the woman's role in government of the local church." Item 4 further states, "It is recognized that the historical and biblical pattern has been that Elders in the church have been men. The weight of evidence would imply that this pattern should continue." Your decision as a church to elect women as Elders flies in the face of decision that was democratically decided. Yes it was contentious, and not overwhelmingly supported, but it stands. An added concern to me is the strong affiliation your church has to the college and seminary. That, too, should have added special caution to your decision as a church in initiating such a dramatic and divisive change...Having said all this I do agree that you should not be subject to inferences that you are "renegades" or "rebellious:" against authority. I have not found you and certainly not your elders, to be such, nor to manifest such an attitude. I shall be pro-active in correcting such inferences as I can.³¹

In the years to come similar letters would be written back and forth between the national and district offices and pastors within the denomination.³² The discussion was clearly far from over and despite the best efforts made in 1988 it was clearly necessary to resume discussion of this matter on a national level.

A Change of Focus: 1996

The issue of women as Elders was raised again, indirectly, on a national level in 1996 at the General Assembly in Regina due to the nomination of a woman to the Board of Directors. The motion made in 1984 to restrict women from the Board of Directors and from DEXCOM had never been carried in its original form, and therefore there was no official ruling against nominating women. Since the issue of women as Elders was creating dissension within several districts it was not surprising that when the nomination of a woman to the Board of Directors was made a tense debate immediately followed. Jean Daly was nominated for election to the Board of Directors and although there was no ruling against women holding such a position in the denomination a delegate followed

³¹ Arnold Reimer as District Superintendent of the Canadian Midwest district to Peter Ralph, personal correspondence (October 7th, 1993).

³² Scarborough Alliance Church was also in correspondence with the National Office during this time. Copies of these letters were provided by Peter Ralph, personal interview, fall 2005.

this nomination regarding the appropriateness of such a nomination. The chairperson of the Board of Directors, Rev. Keith Taylor, declared that while it was not against denominational policy it was not general practice of the denomination to elect women to the Board. Controversy followed with an emotionally charged debate that many who were interviewed have cited as a low point in the history of the discussion on women and authority in the denomination.³³ Many strong statements and derogatory comments were made during the course of discussion.³⁴ It was moved that the Committee on Nominations only offer male nominees for the Board of Directors but another motion followed that suggested such a motion be considered at General Assembly 1998. This motion was carried and nominations were about to be moved to a vote when Jean Daly withdrew her name from the list of nominations.³⁵ On the following day, due to the extremely destructive comments that were made concerning women and their role in church leadership, Ross Howell offered an apology to the women of denomination for all that had been said during the course of the debate.³⁶

A Definitive Motion: 1998

In 1998 the issue of women on the Board of Directors, a question of propriety that had been linked to the issue of women as Elders since 1984, was raised again and considered during General Assembly. While the debate during General Assembly in 1996 was disheartening most remember General Assembly 1998 in Hull as a positive experience where delegates were able to express opinions in a healthy manner.³⁷ There

³³ Miriam Charter, personal interview, spring 2005; Dave Freeman, personal interview, spring 2005.

³⁴ Ken Draper, personal letter, spring 2005.

³⁵ David Freeman, personal interview, spring 2005.

³⁶ David Tjart, personal interview, winter 2006.

³⁷ Ken Draper, Wendy Thomas, Miriam Charter, David Freeman, personal interviews, summer 2005 and winter 2006.

were two hours of open discussion on the topic and in the meeting of those on the Committee on General Legislation there was a general consensus that the issue needed to be definitely settled. The manner in which the issue should be settled, however, was debated. Some believed that it would be best to leave the matter by maintaining the status quo and allowing women to be nominated to the Board since there was no official restriction while others wished to make sure that the issue would permanently close the door to women in positions of ecclesial authority.³⁸ There was a desire by some within the committee to revive the original motion that intended to restrict women not only from the Board of Elders but also from the Board of Directors and DEXCOM. Five positive motions were, therefore, proposed and many on the committee believed that they would finally resolve the confusion that had come out of Assembly 1988 and the ambiguity of how women might serve within the denomination.³⁹ The motions presented were:

1. That there be no gender restrictions on the membership of Board of Directors and that any conflicting legislation, policies or instructional statements be removed from the manual.
2. That there be no gender restrictions on the membership of DEXCOM and that any conflicting legislation, policies or instructional statements be removed from the manual.
3. That there be no gender restrictions on the membership of the elders board if the local church and that any conflicting legislation, policies or instructional statements be removed from the manual.
4. That there be no gender restrictions on the membership of the elders board of the local church and that any conflicting legislation policies or instructional statements be removed from the manual.
5. That there be no gender restrictions on the administration of ordinances and that any conflicting legislation, policies or instructional statements be removed from the manual.⁴⁰

Those on the committee who proposed the motions refused to present them to the General Assembly because it was expected that motions be presented in a positive form (for

³⁸ Franklin Pyles, personal interview, spring 2005.

³⁹ Franklin Pyles, personal interview summer 2005.

⁴⁰ Biennial Report (General Assembly: Hull, 1998).

example, while the intention was to restrict women from the Board of Directors the motion made was that there be no gender restrictions on the membership of the Board of Directors). Those who desired to maintain restrictions on the roles that women might have in the church, therefore, did not want to present motions that seemed to eliminate those restrictions. As a result Franklin Pyles, a member of the committee and future president of the denomination, presented the recommendations to the Assembly.⁴¹ Pyles' presentation took the entire day because he chose to explain and debate each motion on the floor with the delegates. Dr. Pyles had the privilege of both opening and closing the session since he was presenting the motions and he chose to use that privilege to his advantage by thoroughly explaining his position to the delegates.⁴² As a result, of the five motions presented four were voted on and passed while the fifth, concerning women as Elders, was referred to General Assembly 2000 in Calgary.

The Assembly was divided almost equally on its opinion of how women should lead in the church. The votes were so close in fact that delegates were once again forced to stand to place their vote. The result, however, of the vote on whether or not women could be on the Board of Directors was passed with an affirmative 60% decision. This meant that women could be nominated for the Board of Directors.⁴³ In 1998 there were six open positions to be filled on the Board of Directors and earlier in the week, unsure of how the vote would turn, the nominating committee had submitted the name of one woman, Miriam Charter,⁴⁴ along with the names of five men for nomination. There were

⁴¹ Franklin Pyles, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Miriam Charter, personal interview, spring 2005.

⁴⁴ Miriam Charter was approached prior to her nomination and asked if she was willing to bear the possibility of personal attacks on her character and a negative and drawn-out debate over women in authority for the sake of the advancement of women's roles in the denomination. She acknowledged these

also three nominations from the floor and so there were nine names on the ballot and eight of those were men. When the vote was taken, an hour after the vote on the appropriateness of having women serve in positions such as the Board of Directors and DEXCOM, 75% of the people voted for Miriam Charter.⁴⁵

Most of the people who desired the restriction of women from the Board of Elders, the Board of Directors and DEXCOM, claimed that their stance was based purely on a clear biblical restriction set out by God for the Church. The result of the vote, however, would indicate that this was not entirely true since Miriam Charter was elected to the Board of Directors with such a majority of votes despite the ample opportunity given to the delegates to elect a man in her place. If those who changed their vote had wished to restrict women from this role out of strong biblical conviction, Miriam Charter, although respected and trusted within the denomination, would never have been elected to the Board of Directors with such a majority of votes. Most interesting is that one of the most vocal people against women in positions of authority at the time, President Arnold Cook, was one of the delegates who had changed his vote. The day after the vote Dr. Cook⁴⁶ congratulated Miriam Charter on her new position and revealed that he had voted for her even though he had voted against having women on the Board of Directors.⁴⁷ Dr. Cook, who actively supports women in ministry but with equal activity

possibilities and assured her nominees that she would not withdraw her name from the process. David Freeman, personal interview, spring 2005.

⁴⁵ Miriam Charter wrote down the numbers and determined the statistics immediately after the voting process. Miriam Charter, personal interview, spring 2005.

⁴⁶ When interviewed and questioned on his voting during General Assembly 1988 Dr. Cook replied that he viewed the issue of women on the Board of Directors as different then women as Elders and then referred to A.B. Simpson's approach to women in leadership. Arnold Cook, personal interview, summer 2005. However, this distinction did not prevent him from voting against women as members of the Board of Directors. Miriam Charter, personal interview, spring 2005.

⁴⁷ Miriam Charter, personal interview, spring 2005.

attempts to restrict women from the roles of authority, changed his position by voting for Miriam Charter.

A Final Decision: 2000

General Assembly 2000 in Calgary finally, after eighteen years, resolved the question of whether or not women could serve on the Board of Elders in the local church. Since this one issue could not be resolved during the Assembly in 1998 the Board of Directors realized that a new recommendation was necessary during General Assembly 2000 if they wished to end the discussion. The Board of Directors, therefore, in their report to the Assembly, stated their objective to present a motion that would be unifying and God-pleasing and then considered the situation and the reasoning behind their new motion. Within their rationale they wrote:

For some time Alliance Christians with a high view of Scripture have been unable to arrive at a consensus on whether women can serve as Elders. When we have approached this with our best views of Scripture and our personal illustrations we have only increased our inability to arrive at a consensus.⁴⁸

Within this paragraph the Board reveals the surrounding pressure of the debate including both hermeneutical and cultural ideals that influenced the decision making process. While not explicitly referring to tradition or the effect that feminism was having on the country during the debates, it does acknowledge that there was more involved in this decision process than a simple and easy reading of scripture for resolution. They then presented their recommendation for resolution:

Our historic understanding of the Biblical pattern is that Elders are to be men. We recognize that some churches may differ with this understanding and accept their right to do so. Therefore we recommend the following options for structuring church leadership.

⁴⁸ Biennial Report (General Assembly: Calgary, 2000), 52.

- a) An Elders Board consisting entirely of men. A church may, by a two thirds majority vote at a duly called meeting of the membership, choose option b) or c)
- b) An Elders Board consisting of a majority of men.
- c) A governing board consisting of a majority of men who are Elders.⁴⁹

This motion, however, was not accepted. Discussion went on throughout the week over the recommendation and when the motion was brought to a vote it was considered to be too conservative in its presentation, even though it begrudgingly allowed for the possibility of women Elders in the local church. The Committee on General Legislation was therefore called upon to present what they felt to be important goals for the change in legislation and offered the following advice:

- a) That in any resolution we adopt a position which does not explicitly or implicitly convey a negative inference that those who hold to an alternate view are holding an inferior position.
- b) That any resolution must respect the right of people and local churches to hold to their convictions on this matter without recrimination.
- c) That we adopt a position which our people will be able to affirm with as much integrity as possible.
- d) That we adopt a position that does not force local churches to address this issue unless or until they choose to do so.⁵⁰

The Committee on General Legislation then affirmed the conviction of the Board of Directors that denominational consensus would be nearly impossible to achieve and that it was their will to move forward in unity under the authority of the scriptures, recognizing there is room for differences of opinion. Paul Little, a committee member then proposed that the recommendation made by the Board of Directors not be approved. This motion was voted upon and passed. Paul Little followed his first recommendation with a second that called the Local Church Constitution to be amended with the insertion of the following statement: "The local church may by a 2/3 majority choose to have

⁴⁹ Biennial Report (General Assembly: Calgary, 2000), 53.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 53.

women on their Board of Elders.”⁵¹ Although a motion was made to challenge the recommendation and reinsert that a local Board of Elders would always have a majority of men this challenge was defeated and the recommendation made by Paul Little was carried.⁵² The manual of the C&MA was officially changed to allow women to serve as Elders if the local church voted upon the matter and agreed with a 2/3 majority that it was the will of God. This was a resolution extremely similar to what Douglas Schroeder-Tabah believed the denomination had resolved in 1988.

The debate over women as Elders in the local church was finally resolved and yet within the denomination tension remained over the issue. Those who argued that women should not be allowed to serve as Elders in the church felt as if a great wrong was done in 2000 and that the decision to allow women to be Elders had started the denomination on a journey away from the gospel. They believe that the denomination is losing its focus on the authority of scripture and that if such actions continue it will no longer be a Bible-believing church.⁵³ Many of those who argued on behalf of women as Elders, however, also felt uncomfortable with the decision made during Assembly 2000 believing that the decision left much to be desired.⁵⁴ However, the decision made in 2000 ended the discussion on a national level and it has preserved the unity of the denomination that has always desired unity despite diversity for the greater good of the gospel.

⁵¹ Biennial Report (General Assembly: Calgary, 2000), 189.

⁵² Ibid, 231.

⁵³ Arnold Cook, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁵⁴ “The decision made was consistent with the middle of the road tendency of the C&MA but the fact that they did not make a more conclusive decision still makes it awkward in some churches.” Wendy Thomas, personal interview, winter 2005.

Conclusion

It is clear that more than what was considered a high or low view of scripture affected the debates that went on throughout the 1980's and 1990's concerning women as Elders in the Church. The interpretation of scripture, along with the interpretation of tradition was undoubtedly affected by the cultural changes that were taking place throughout Canada. Clergy and laity alike reacted to the discussion of women as Elders as a result of their personal understanding of tradition, Christianity and culture and hermeneutics. While some saw the possibility for equality, others saw the destruction of the denomination. However, all those involved desired the best for the church. The problem was that the points that they argued and their opinions of the proper outcome were not without outside influences. A proper interpretation of scripture was the weapon of choice for those on both sides of the debate, but culture and tradition also played a significant role in the decision making process.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURE: THE SILENT PARTNER

The debate over women as Elders took place during a period of rapid cultural change, both inside and outside of the church. The purpose of this chapter is to reveal how these changes affected the debates within the C&MA by presenting the issues and explaining how they had an immediate impact upon the denomination. The most notable cultural change, the rise of feminism¹ in Canada and the United States, will be the main focus of the chapter through an examination of the issue in two parts: feminism in popular culture and evangelical feminism.² This study will be completed by considering the impact of feminism on the denomination by considering the opinions of those interviewed and by examining some of the popular texts and action groups that targeted evangelicals on the subject of feminism that had an immediate influence on members of the C&MA throughout the 1980's and 1990's. Following the examination of the role of feminism on the debates, this chapter will consider a significant cultural event that took place within evangelicalism that created change and influenced the way that evangelicals thought. This significant event was the rise of neo-evangelicalism and the debate over inerrancy among evangelicals in the 1970's and 1980's. Both of these events had a significant, if unidentified, impact on the debate over women as Elders within the C&MA.

¹Feminism can be defined, on a basic level as, "a movement that seeks change for the better for women, for justice for them; thus feminism can mean a doctrine of social and political rights, an organization for working for those rights, the assertion of the claims of women as group and the body of theory they have created, and the recognition of the necessity of long-term social change." Ann Loades (ed.) *Feminist Theology: A Reader* (London: SPCK, 1990), 1.

² Canadian sources will be used when available. However, many sources within this section will be American because, as Manfred Hauke notes, "Modern Feminism has its most important source in the USA. Parallel developments in other Western countries have been variously stimulated by the, "Women's Liberation Movement," M. Hauke, *God or Goddess* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 33.

God Keep Our Land

The second wave of feminism emerged in Canada during the 1960's and developed in strength as it created awareness and change throughout the country.³ Developing in a society that had become extremely conservative in its opinion of women's roles, this movement was convinced, at first, that its actions and agendas were brand new. The truth that was soon realized, however, was that the second wave of feminism was successful because it was able to build upon the foundation laid by the feminists of the turn of the century. The first wave of feminism in Canada established the basic awareness that women are human beings and that they deserve the vote as much as any man. The second wave feminists, able to take these rights for granted, were able to focus on the destruction of feminine myths and inequality in the workforce.⁴ The influence of feminist thought grew in Canada throughout the 1960's and 1970's and by 1980 feminism was a part of Canadian culture and no organization was able to ignore its effects.⁵

Feminists throughout the 1960's were convinced they had begun a new movement because of the extreme repression of women's roles following WWII. After the war, as reported in chapter two, there was a desire to return to a seeming fairytale nation of strong Christian values and traditions that had never actually existed. The feminist movement that had obtained the status of personhood for women and the right to vote

³ Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 40.

⁴ Ibid, 3.

⁵ For further consideration of feminism in Canada and the changing roles of women see: S. Burt, L. Code and L. Dorney (eds.), *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988); V. Strong-Boag and A. Clair Fellman (ed.), *Re-Thinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman Ltd, 1991); J. Wine and J. Ristock (ed.), *Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co, Publishers, 1991); Tilley Carwley (ed.), *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich Canada Inc. 1988); N. Adamson, L. Briskin and M. McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988).

only a generation before was remembered with embarrassment as women viewed working outside of the home as a lesser role and one that was not truly feminine. There was a period of time following WWII that saw women retreat from higher education and the workforce as their goals changed from personal advancement to marriage and childrearing.⁶ As this change took place in everyday culture it also took place in the church. Women, who during the 1920's would plant churches and evangelize the Prairies were, during the 1950's and 1960's, expected to help in the nursery on Sunday and host women's teas. As the culture changed so did the church.

There was a clear period of time in the C&MA when women stopped actively serving the church through evangelism, church planting and preaching.⁷ In Leslie Andrews' paper, "Practice and Cultural Diversity in Relation to Women in Ministry", there is a suggestion that after Simpson's death there was a growing concern surrounding the roles that women had in the C&MA. The actions of Paul Radar, the succeeding president to Simpson, set in motion the restrictions placed on women in the C&MA that had not previously existed and women did not serve in high level positions again until Mavis Weidman became national Sunday school secretary in 1951. This position was a rarity during this time especially because while Weidman was given a significant role it was during the 1950's and 1960's that the majority of women were most restricted in their service in the C&MA.⁸ Despite claims that during this period there was a

⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing Co. 1963), 14.

⁷ After Mrs. Simpson died in 1924 there was not another women placed on the Board of Directors for the denomination until 1977. Mrs. Simpson's death can mark the beginning of the period, which climaxed during the 1950s and 1960s, when women stopped serving the C&MA in leadership roles: L. James Tieszen, "An Alliance Historical Perspective" (Submitted to the Board of Managers for the Delegates Council, USA, 1996), 84.

⁸ Leslie Andrews, "Practice and Cultural Diversity in Relation to Women in Ministry," *Report of the Committee on the Study of the Role of Women in Ministry* (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1995), 122.

continuance of a longstanding tradition in the church, in truth there was a significant departure from the “Alliance Tradition” as the church actually followed the postwar trend in culture.⁹ Women were called to be content in supportive roles because it was taught that God had created them to be submissive and caring. Being a homemaker who supported her husband as he went out into the world was, supposedly, a tradition and women were to be fulfilled in this role because God had given it to her.¹⁰ In a paper written for the Alliance in the United States as they considered the role of women in ministry in 1995, Dr. Samuel Stoesz openly claims that “Before WWII, with rare exception,¹¹ women were considered satisfied in their homemaking role as wives and mothers though they often worked hard helping husbands in business or on the farm.”¹²

The rebirth of the feminist movement began quietly during the early 1960’s. Women’s groups that had formed during the first wave of feminism continued to meet and to discuss women’s issues during this time, despite their small size and lack of political power. Ideas about employment, birth control, divorce and poverty began to emerge in *Chatelaine* magazine after Doris Anderson was appointed editor in 1959 and “everyday women” were given the opportunity to seriously consider these issues for themselves and speak openly about their reality.¹³ It was also during this time, in 1963, that Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, a text that was revolutionary in its

⁹ Rebecca Merrill Groothius, *Women Caught in the Conflict* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing 1994), 42.

¹⁰ Ibid, 21.

¹¹ Sam Stoesz inadvertently contradicts himself on this point. Later in his paper, although trying to prove that the ordination of women in evangelical denominations was inappropriate, Stoesz offers statistics of evangelical churches during the 1920’s that had high percentages of women as clergy proving that it was not necessarily tradition for women to stay in the home. These statistics dropped significantly following WWII, however, they show that women in the C&MA, the Nazarene church, the Pentecostal church and the Church of God all had a significant amount of women clergy during the 1920’s: Samuel Stoesz, “Perspective on Women in Ministry,” *Report of the Committee to Study The Role of Women in Ministry* (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian and Missionary Alliance 1995), 97.

¹² Ibid, 86.

¹³ Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 41.

impact on the developing wave of feminism in Canada and the United States.¹⁴ Friedan wrote about the fifteen years following WWII and the story that was circulated which taught women should be happiest and most fulfilled serving their husbands and children in their own home. She revealed the secrets of how the media was manipulating and promoting this ideal through advertisement and stories and she also revealed to the nation that many women were no longer able to hide their dissatisfaction with such predetermined goals. Friedan referred to this dissatisfaction as the problem that had no name and then gave a name to the image which was causing the problem; the Feminine Mystique:

The feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity. It says that the great mistake of Western culture, through most of its history, has been the under-valuation of this femininity. It says this femininity is so mysterious and intuitive and close to the creation and origin of life that man-made science may never be able to understand it. But however special and different it is in no way inferior to the nature of man; it may even in certain aspects be superior. The mistake, says the mystique, the root of women's troubles in the past is that women envied men, women tried to be like men, instead of accepting their own nature, which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity.¹⁵

During the early 1960's, through quiet awareness and (sometimes) controversial books, feminism came out of the closet in Canada and the United States and reminded its citizens that women could do more than cook and clean.

Near the end of the 1960's and the beginning of the 1970's the feminist movement in Canada exploded in regards to its impact and popularity. Questions that had been raised during the earlier part of the decade took root and women began to rebel against the social norms. There was a great deal of anger as women began to take hold of

¹⁴ Friedan's text is openly criticized in a paper by Dr. S. Stoesz: see Samuel Stoesz, "Perspective on Women in Ministry," *Report of the Committee to Study The Role of Women in Ministry* (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1995), 95.

¹⁵ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963), 37.

feminist ideals and realize the oppression that had been forced upon them. There was also a sense of optimism and power as women rallied together to organize for change and within only a few years feminism developed real political strength and power.¹⁶ A significant event in the feminist movement in Canada was the legalization of birth control and abortion, which was approved in 1969. This was a bitter victory for feminists who had been fighting for birth control and abortion rights in Canada because the parameters still surrounding the option for abortion were viewed as unfair. This enraged many within the feminist community and early in 1970 they began to rally against the federal government to change the laws surrounding abortion.¹⁷ During this time numerous organizations on women's rights were founded throughout the country and meetings were held to discuss how change could be implemented on a national level. Programs on women's studies were created in universities and women's issues were being written about in texts and journals. During the 1970's feminists successfully made the public aware of their cause and were busy trying to implement their goals.

It was during the late 1970's when evangelical churches chose to react against feminism by attempting to sustain a sort of Victorian culture within the church. By altering Victorian ideals enough to gain support within the present culture while still maintaining patriarchy and hierarchical structures, many evangelical churches fought what was happening in the world around it. Evangelical churches attempted to pass a Victorian type of woman and family off as traditional and biblical, however, as Rebecca Merrill Groothius wrote in 1994, this tradition was not as true to the past as was suggested:

¹⁶ Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 42.

¹⁷ Ibid, 46.

Although traditionalism continues with the tradition of male authority, its teachings are untraditional at several key points. First, today's traditionalism breaks with the church's historic practice or "tradition" of simply endorsing current cultural views of women. Second, it invests the family with a historically unprecedented symbolic significance, reinforcing the traditionalist-specified "order" and "roles" with which every Christian family is expected to comply. Third, though the idea of authority as a male prerogative is undeniably traditional, the traditionalist reconceptualization of it in response to modern cultural trends is not. The customary view of male authority has been modernized and mollified at the hand of today's traditionalists. Fourth, the traditionalist-prescribed woman's role as a homemaker or "full-time wife and mother" is not the role historically occupied by women, but is a cultural invention of the middle class in nineteenth century Victorian society.¹⁸

The C&MA followed the trend of general evangelicalism, as observed by Groothius, and separated itself from the cultural trend in regards to the appropriate role of women. The reasons given for this separation were that society was departing from biblical traditions and that the church must not follow such trends but rather stand up for biblical truth.¹⁹ Remembering the history of the C&MA and the similarity that it had with culture in the past, however, it would seem as if this reasoning was not reflected upon thoroughly.

During the late 1970's and early 1980's there was a reorganization of the feminist movement. Change had come since the movement reemerged during the 1960's and as it stabilized within the culture public opinion on the matter was confused. While many different feminist organizations had surfaced during the early 1970's, the last part of the decade saw the gradual emergence of three main streams of feminism that integrated smaller groups into their folds. The main three streams of feminism were: Radical feminism, focusing on the overthrow of male domination by challenging the oppression and violence against women; Socialist feminism, focusing on the integration of class and

¹⁸ Rebecca Merrill Groothius, *Women Caught in the Conflict* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), 23.

¹⁹ Wendy Thomas, upon reflection, believed that the denomination was fighting against the changes in culture during the early years in the discussion, however, later after the emergence of the seeker sensitive phenomenon popularized by Willow Creek Church, the C&MA changed its opinion of culture to a certain degree and attempted to be culturally relevant again. Wendy Thomas, personal interview, winter 2006.

gender and breaking down social barrier; and, finally, Liberal feminism, focusing upon legal and federal changes in legislation that oppressed women.²⁰ The reason for these amalgamations was the developing need for unity because of the negative insinuation promoted in the media that early feminists had been extremists. The media wished to promote the idea that while there was a legitimate need for some forms of feminism, there was no need for the 'excess' emotion and action of the 1960's.²¹ Feminists united for strength in order to sustain the incredible work that had been achieved in the previous twenty years.

During the 1980's, the years that saw the debates over women as Elders begin within the C&MA, there was a renewal of right-wing politics in the United States, Britain and Canada. As Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister of Britain and Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States, Brian Mulroney, leader of the Conservative party, was elected Prime Minister of Canada. During this time there was also a widespread renewal of religious fundamentalism in Canada that regarded the feminist movement with mistrust and fear.²² The result of this right-wing rise to power in relationship to the feminist movement was cutbacks in funding to social agencies and the need for the women's movement to revive its instinct to fight for what it regarded as necessary within society.²³ The right-wing movement also attacked one of the most significant victories of the feminist movement in Canada, the right for abortions, as it began to organize against the feminist movement. As the Right grew in power during the

²⁰ Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988) 71.

²¹ Ibid, 76.

²² Ibid, 85.

²³ Ibid, 86. For further insight see; J. Wine and J. Ristock (ed.'s), *Women and Social Change* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., Publishers, 1991), 118-128.

1980's funding decreased to women's centers that offered support to lesbians and pro-abortion counseling. The feminist movement across the country was forced to fight for survival throughout the decade as it dealt with an opposition that was renewed in its purpose.²⁴

The influence of feminism in Canadian culture upon the church in general, and the C&MA in particular, cannot be doubted. During the early days when women shared in the leadership of the movement women in the general culture were also experiencing new types of freedom as they received the vote for the first time and were named human beings. Following WWII women left the workforce and returned to their homes believing that that was where they should be and this ideal was accepted in the evangelical church generally and the C&MA specifically.²⁵ As feminism began to once again infiltrate social norms the church also again felt the influence of the wider culture and reacted. The difference at this point, however, was that the church was divided over which cultural influence to follow. During the 1980's when the right-wing political leaders organized and reacted against the feminist movement in Canada certain members of the C&MA, along with many other people throughout greater evangelicalism, were influenced by this decision and also reacted against what they believed to be feminist ideals in the church. Those in support of equality, however, sympathized with the women's movement and began to fight for equality with greater determination.

During the 1990's the feminist movement had established itself in Canada and for young professionals in urban Canadian cities there was a general acceptance of the idea

²⁴Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 86.

²⁵ Leslie Andrews, "Practice and Cultural Diversity in Relation to Women in Ministry" *Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry* (Camp Hill: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1995), 121-123.

that men and women were to be considered equals.²⁶ The Liberal party of Canada had regained political power under the leadership of Jean Chrétien and in the United States Democratic leader Bill Clinton was elected President. The culture in Canada and the United States changed in the 1990's and many of the questions and debates of the 1980's no longer existed. It is for this reason that Andy Reimer, during a district conference during the mid 1990's, chose to point out that Canadian urban churches now existed in a post-feminist culture and that they, the leadership of the denomination, needed to discern what this meant for their future ministry to Canadians.

Andy Reimer had listened to numerous debates over scripture and whether or not women should be allowed to be church Elders and he did not believe that reopening an exegetical debate at this point would accomplish any positive change. For this reason, although he was professor of New Testament studies at Canadian Bible College, Reimer revealed the importance of culture and the impact of feminism on decisions being made by the C&MA by publicly addressing what he understood to be the cultural situation in which the church was found. He did this because he believed that culture was extremely important to the issue. Reimer remembers that he argued the following points:

1. I belong to a post-feminist generation. The feminist movement has already transformed the culture I, and my peers, grew up in. When I entered the work force it was just a given that I had female colleagues and female supervisors and this seemed simply a given as to how the world worked. You have to understand that for my generation, excluding women from positions of leadership just looks odd and foreign. When I was at 10th Avenue Church in Vancouver in the early 1990's, the under 30 crowd was professional, with both men and women working as equals in their professions. When they called the Board of Elders to the front of the church, it suddenly felt odd that it was all one gender and it took a second for it to register even why it looked odd. So my first plea is that Assembly will recognize that for the post-feminist generation this is not even an issue, but that we need churches that will recognize this as our cultural

²⁶ Andy Reimer, personal correspondence, winter 2006.

reality and that some churches will be allowed to reflect that cultural reality. I have no problem if Seven Oaks in Abbotsford [a more conservative church existing in a more conservative section of British Columbia] doesn't want to do it, but the 10th Avenue churches should be allowed to reconfigure how they do Boards. We need churches that reflect post-feminist realities.

2. I teach young people getting ready to go into ministry. Many of my top students are women. What you decide in terms of women as Elders is a signal to them as to whether there is room for them to do ministry in the Alliance. I don't want to lose these women. What signal are you sending these young, talented, and mature women who want to do ministry in the Alliance? Is there room for them? What you decide and how you decide it sends a signal! Don't blow it.²⁷

Reimer's arguments were received with a mixture of positive and negative responses. He recalls that one woman rose and stated that from the experience she had working with women they were not suitable for leadership and should not be allowed to be Elders in the Church. A man then stood and condemned Reimer for arguing from culture and stated that the Bible did not allow for women to be Elders and that should simply be accepted without question. Following the debate President Arnold Cook approached Reimer and stated that he too agreed that the C&MA needed to be careful of losing talented women from service, although he did not believe women should be in positions of authority in the church. Rev. Robert Peters, a District Superintendent and known advocate for maintaining the accepted ruling that only men be Elders, stated that he appreciated Reimer's apparent concern for his students.²⁸ Reimer was also informed, almost a year later, that the president of the college had received several emails by concerned members of the constituency regarding his arguments and the moral state of the college. Many complained that Reimer, as well as other faculty members, were

²⁷ Andy Reimer, personal correspondence, winter 2006.

²⁸ Ibid.

promoting a form of “liberalism” that would ruin the denomination by damaging the minds of developing pastors.²⁹

Evangelical Feminism³⁰

In 1973 a movement began among evangelicals in the United States to formally enter into discussions on women’s rights.³¹ At a conference, convened by John Sider and Jim Wallis, on social justice and the opportunities available to the church to make an impact in the political world a small group of concerned feminists gathered together to discuss women’s rights and how the Church should act and respond to the issue.

Although the conference was not organized specifically to deal with women’s rights the subject was raised by Nancy Hardesty, a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and co-author with Letha Scanzoni of a yet to be published text on women’s liberation entitled, *All We’re Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women’s Liberation*. Hardesty believed that evangelical churches needed to consider the equality of men and women and that they needed to begin considering such issues as equal leadership, mutual submission in the home, pornography, abortion and equal pay and recognition in the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ For Further reading on feminism in the Church in Canada see M. Higgins and D. Letson (ed.’s), *Women and the Church* (Toronto: Griffin House, 1986); E. Muir and M. Whiteley, *Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); P. Bays, *Partners in the Dance* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1993).

³¹ In this chapter many references are made to events that transpired in evangelicalism in the United States rather than in Canada. The reason for this is due to the fact that Canadian evangelicalism is directly impacted by events in the United States and because fewer significant events in evangelicalism (due to the smaller evangelical population) actually take place on the Canadian side of the border. David Elliott in *Amazing Grace*, notes that presently Canadian evangelicalism “operates with a ‘branch-plant’ mentality, taking their direction from American headquarters.” Elliott also notes that while this phenomenon is quite new (beginning in the 1950’s) the C&MA has always been a denomination that seems to “know no borders” due to A.B. Simpson’s fundamentalist ministries that flourished in both Canada and the United States. G. Rawlyk and M. Noll (eds.) *Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), 349-356. For further consideration of the similarities between Canadian and American evangelicalism, as well as their differences, see Sam Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003). Reimer’s premise is that in evangelicalism there exists a “trans-denomination, trans-national evangelical subculture in North America” (21).

business world. During the conference a small group of people met to discuss these issues and as a result at the end of the conference when a declaration was made regarding several issues of social justice two resolutions regarding women's rights were documented.³²

In what has been termed the "Chicago Declaration" a resolution was made to condemn improper and negative interpretations of scriptural passages regarding women and to reconsider these passages using new hermeneutical methods. In addition to this resolution a statement was made that expressed the realization of those involved in the improper subjection of women in the church: "We acknowledge we have encouraged men to prideful domination and women to irresponsible passivity. So we call both men and women to mutual submission and active discipleship."³³ The conference held in Chicago became known as the Thanksgiving Workshop and after its successful first year a second conference was scheduled for the following November and women's rights were again recognized and given priority. During this conference two significant proposals were made in regards to the development of evangelical feminism. The first proposal was that the responsibility of coordinating the resolutions made at the conference be given to *Daughters of Sarah*, a journal committed to writing on biblical feminism. The second proposal that was invaluable in the development of evangelical feminism was the development of the Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC). *Daughters of Sarah* agreed to maintain and coordinate a mailing list of those involved in this new organization and within two months a national conference was scheduled for the following November and

³² Pamela D. Cochran, *Evangelical Feminism* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 11.

³³ Ronald Sider, *Chicago Declaration* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1974), 2.

seven local chapters were organized in several states. The EWC became the first organized movement of evangelical feminists.³⁴

In 1974 Hardesty and Scanzoni's *All We're Meant To Be* was finally published to the great benefit of the evangelical feminist movement. Following the organization of the EWC the publication of this text provided an added boost to general awareness within the church that a Christian feminist movement existed. Despite the controversial support of the pro-choice movement in regards to abortion, egalitarian marriages and the possibility of acceptable lesbianism found within the text, *All We're Meant to Be* provided evangelical feminists with a sense of freedom to vocalize what they believed and to make several arguments for biblical equality and the liberation of women. Those involved in the movement from Pentecostal and Holiness Movement churches, like the C&MA, began to argue for women's liberation through their theology of sanctification and the leading of the Holy Spirit.³⁵ A new appreciation for scholarship within the evangelical world³⁶ also created new interpretations of often difficult passages in regards to women and evangelical feminists pursued these new interpretations along with scholarship from non-Christian feminists, psychologists and sociologists to prove the validity of their beliefs.³⁷ *All We're Meant To Be* offered a voice to evangelical feminists in the same way that *The Feminine Mystique* offered a voice to women in general culture during the 1960's before the second wave of feminism had gained momentum.

³⁴ Pamela D. Cochran, *Evangelical Feminism* (New York: New York University Press 2005), 15-17.

³⁵ For an article on the belief within holiness churches that sanctification allowed women leadership roles see: Nancy Hardesty, Lucille Sider Dayton and Donald W. Dayton, "Women in the Holiness Movement: Feminism in the Evangelical Tradition" in *Women of Spirit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 241-250. Franklin Pyles, Peter Ralph and Rod Remin all agree that the emphasis of the C&MA on sanctification has been used as an argument for expanding the roles of women in the church.

³⁶ See Pamela D. Cochran, *Evangelical Feminism* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 19.

³⁷ Ibid, 26.

During the early years evangelical feminists were unified organizationally despite the many differences in theology and biblical interpretation. The EWC quickly organized local chapters throughout the United States and within Canada from 1974 to 1978 and national conferences were held where goals for the church were proposed in regards to women's liberation and speakers lectured on different subjects concerning scripture, women and equality. From 1978 to 1983 the EWC continued to grow and remained a financially stable organization. Feminists began to pursue equal rights within the church and to produce articles and books on the subject to inform others of the possibility of unity between feminism and Christianity.³⁸ During this time the overarching goal of evangelical feminists was to prove that traditional interpretations of Pauline passages regarding women were wrong and unjust, however, there were two streams of writing at this time that reveal major theological differences that existed within the movement. Evangelical feminists were unified organizationally during the 1970's and early 1980's but there was within the movement a spectrum of beliefs ranging from conservative to liberal. The authority given to scripture within the writings revealed the spectrum of belief that existed. For example, Virginia Mollenkott, the most vocal example of liberal evangelical feminists during the 1970's and 1980's, while still affirming the authority of scripture, was willing to say that in certain instances passages could be ignored because the writer was simply wrong in his judgment of the situation. Patricia Gundry, however, a more conservative member of the organization was uncomfortable with such a decision and was unwilling to simply disregard any texts but required instead that they be reconsidered and reinterpreted within the present culture.

³⁸ Ibid, 38.

The differences in theology among members of the evangelical feminist movement are significant to the discussion of women as Elders in the C&MA because they affected the credibility of arguments presented by members of the C&MA.³⁹ In 1986 the differences between conservative and liberal feminists became too great to allow for a continuation of one umbrella movement and so the movement divided. While the EWC had provided the much needed support and awareness in the early days the single movement had also created an implied acceptance of certain hermeneutical methods being used by those within the organization and other questionable issues, although this was not necessarily the case. Unfortunately, the radical position of certain evangelical feminists enhanced a fear of feminism within conservative churches, like the C&MA, and therefore when the movement divided it was to the benefit of its conservative supporters. When the EWC divided a more conservative feminist movement emerged under the leadership of Catherine Clark Kroeger: Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE). This organization provided support to conservative evangelicals who believed in biblical equality as well as the authority of scripture in the life of the believer. CBE provided members of the C&MA a feminist position that had

³⁹ "Mediating forms of evangelical 'feminism'--that is, arguments for egalitarianism that shied away from classic feminist critique of oppressive patriarchal hierarchy were bound to be more successful. Evangelicals arguing for egalitarianism had to avoid being seen as simply following the lead of the 'bra-burners.' I think you needed a form of egalitarian argument that was positive rather than overly negative. Feminism typically starts with a violent deconstruction of patriarchal power structures--for evangelical egalitarians to engage in this would be seen as overly hostile. There was a need for a 'softer, softer' approach and creating more moderate or mediating positions was the only way to win more traditionalists over. So, questions like, 'Should women be empowered to exercise all the gifts of the Spirit they are given alongside men?' got a lot more mileage than any arguments about men guarding their privileged positions. Re-conceiving ministry in horizontal rather than vertical lines was probably the real key. Once you worry less about authority and more about gifting, then women's participation was less threatening and could proceed without having to name the sin of patriarchal privilege. So mediating positions that could say, 'We're not doing this because we've bought into feminism' were very helpful to my mind at least." Andy Reimer, personal correspondence, winter 2006.

clearly distanced itself from more extreme hermeneutics and therefore provided a more acceptable source for argument within the denomination.⁴⁰

I've Decided Not to Be Militant

The impact of feminism upon the debates over women as Elders is definite and yet also obscure. While there were never any official discussions on national or district levels concerning the impact of feminism upon the debates, when asked whether or not feminism had a direct impact upon the discussions nearly all, upon reflection, believed that this movement had been influential in one way or another.⁴¹ Dr. Franklin Pyles asserts that because the issue was creating such an impact within general society pastors, in and outside of the C&MA, were preparing themselves for how they would react:

Feminism was, in the parlance of the time, a hot button issue and there was definitely a fear of feminism and the feminist agenda... Pastors were reacting early to that scene of what they thought might be an attack on the biblical norms of the family and the overthrow of scripture -they tied that in, probably illegitimately, but they did... There was a lot of fear of the destruction of the family. That kind of thing rose up as a huge agenda in evangelicalism.⁴²

On a national level, when the topic of women as Elders was raised Dr. Pyles is clear that the fear surrounding feminism on a local level was brought to Assembly and affected the discussions that went on. Arnold Reimer and Arnold Cook also agree that feminism influenced the discussion of women as Elders on a national level. Dr. Cook actually attributes a great deal of the discussion and how it transpired to the feminist movement⁴³ and while Arnold Reimer would not speculate on the degree of influence he did admit

⁴⁰ Prior to the division of conservative and liberal evangelical feminists, members of the C&MA used liberal feminist sources in support of their own egalitarian positions. However, after the division, only conservative evangelical feminists were cited in any official documents supporting an egalitarian position.

⁴¹ Upon reflection, each person interviewed except for Rod Remin believed that the rise of feminism had a significant impact on the debates within the C&MA. See the following page for Remin's opinion of feminism and the debates.

⁴² Franklin Pyles, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁴³ Arnold Cook, personal interview, summer 2005.

that it pushed the denomination to rethink its structure and how it was to employ women in the service of God:

I think that as in all these debates there was genuine concern for how do we accommodate increasingly involved women in their various roles and not appear to put them down or to limit both their gifts and their involvement. How do we honestly accommodate their abilities and their desire to effectively serve the Lord and His Church? I think that the cultural issue certainly helped magnify that issue but not just that but I think that it maybe pushed it farther than I've always felt it should have gone and it was a strong enough influence that it was bearing its own fruit.⁴⁴

Feminism in culture produced a new way of thinking in the church that could not be ignored. The impact of feminism on the church and the dissonance that was growing between the church and society were substantial and while the issue was not openly admitted at the time it definitely had an impact on the discussions over women as Elders.

A possible reason why the impact of feminism on the debates over women as Elders was obscure in the C&MA could be due to the fact that men, primarily, dominated the discussions. Unlike other movements for equality that primarily involved women fighting for their rights,⁴⁵ the battle to call women Elders was led in the C&MA by men. Miriam Charter, when interviewed, even went as far as to say that within the C&MA there were more men than women feminists: "I heard a boy once say to his brother 'our mother is a feminist' and his brother's reply was, 'so is our dad.' I have met more evangelical feminists, if you like, among men then among women. Most often they are very fine theologians."⁴⁶ With the exception of a few vocal women who participated in the discussions, it was men who spoke to the issue and men who used their positions of

⁴⁴ Arnold Reimer, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁴⁵ For an example of how women across Canada led and had a majority voice in fighting for women's rights See: J. Dawn and J.L. Ristock (ed.'s), *Women and Social Change* (Toronto: James Lorimer Publishers and Company, 1991).

⁴⁶ Miriam Charter, personal interview, spring 2005.

influence within the denomination to create change.⁴⁷ In fact, when remembering the first major debate that took place in 1984, Rod Remin recalls that while women were vocal during other discussions when the issue of women as Elders was raised they became extremely quiet.⁴⁸ At no time were women controlling the discussions and for that reason the debates did not resemble a typical feminist battle and did not require an official response for or against feminism by those in leadership.⁴⁹ Although there was a clear reaction to the changes within society it was out of context to name a man a feminist and so the influence, although detected and realized, was never truly exposed. Remin inadvertently expressed this sentiment as he refuted the idea that feminism had any influence on the debates. As he reflected upon the discussions and considered whether or not feminism had a direct impact on them he stated: "You need to have a feminist in the denomination before you can truly say that feminism was the reason for the debates. There are no feminists in the C&MA, and if there were they've left."⁵⁰ While there may have been feminists in the denomination they did not suit the expected norm and, therefore, there was a luxury available to those involved to pretend they did not exist and to avoid adding to the discussion an official debate over feminism.

There were many reasons why women in the C&MA were uncomfortable fighting for equality within the church. In her interview, Wendy Thomas reported that she felt

⁴⁷ This is not to say that women had no voice during the discussions but rather to assert that the majority voice was that of men. A sampling of women who spoke to the issue were Norma Bailey Holtslander and Penny Hall who both believed women should be allowed to be Elders and Louella Gould who was opposed to women as Elders.

⁴⁸ Rod Remin, personal interview, fall 2005.

⁴⁹ While feminism was influencing the debate it was purposefully ignored by those who accepted its principles for the sake of credibility, as Andy Reimer recalls: "Feminism was a dirty word in the debate. You never ever wanted to ground your argument in any way that suggested it was the feminist movement that had generated your particular reading of the text. A few brave men ventured out to use feminism on occasion but that was all." Andy Reimer, personal correspondence, winter 2006.

⁵⁰ Rod Remin, personal interview, fall 2005. Remin would assert that the reason why any feminist who might have been a part of the denomination has left is because of the ongoing restrictions that are placed on women.

uncomfortable speaking to the issue because of the extremely negative nature of the discussions. Thomas felt personally attacked because of her position of pastoral leadership and had not realized prior to the General Assembly in 1984 how opposed many within the denomination were to women in leadership.⁵¹ Melody Kilbank reported feeling unprepared to debate on a theological level since her training had been in education rather than theology or biblical studies. Additionally she felt as if she would lose her voice within her local church if she spoke out for the equality of women since she was from a conservative local church setting.⁵² Miriam Charter stated that active measures of feminism would not be accepted in the C&MA as an evangelical denomination. Like Kilbank, Charter felt as if she would be limited in ministry if she actively fought for women as Elders and chose rather to work hard and to trust that God would open doors for her:

I have been with this debate from the beginning in Canada and I decided that I wouldn't be militant because it won't get us anywhere in the evangelical church. I have just tried to model the life of Christ and to serve. And doors have opened to me right and left and so many times. I have people inviting me to do things that shock me because I think, "Why- I'm a woman". But they trust the person. Its so much tied to an attitude. But I have to admit I have struggled more with the hurts- and the temptation to get angry and to be strident builds.⁵³

Charter, Kilbank and Thomas all understood their roles within the denomination to be precarious. While each was able to serve in positions of authority they realized that they were not secure and needed to act carefully if they wished to continue to serve. Unlike their male coworkers who could speak their minds without great fear of loss of status Thomas, Kilbank and Charter all knew that if they chose to speak they needed to do so with great care. Additionally, although this was not their motivation, each realized that if

⁵¹ Wendy Thomas, personal interview, winter 2006.

⁵² Melody Kilbank, personal interview, winter 2006.

⁵³ Miriam Charter, personal interview, spring 2005.

they were careful they would be given roles of authority commonly understood to be for men. While they heard arguments for and against women from biblical reasoning on a practical level they were appointed to positions of authority because they had proved their worth.

Garbage In: Garbage Out?

As feminism began to impact popular culture and the church, evangelicals were able to learn more about the issue through action groups and texts that were specifically designed for Christians.⁵⁴ Whether in support of feminism or opposed to the movement there were numerous evangelical Christian resources available during the 1980's and 1990's to help explain feminism to the layperson. Members of the C&MA, clearly divided on the issue and unsure of how to appropriately integrate this subject into their discussions, utilized resources from both ends of the spectrum.⁵⁵ The most significant teaching resources available to evangelical Christians in regards to feminism and the church were made available through the work of two action groups that emerged in 1987. These groups, Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) and Christians for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) began in the United States and quickly gained support in Canada as the former promoted equality in the church and the latter a retention of traditional role distinction between men and women.⁵⁶ These two groups represented for conservative evangelicalism the two sides of the debate and presented valuable

⁵⁴ Barabara J. MacHaffie, *Her Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 135.

⁵⁵ In a survey of Canadian C&MA pastors in 1999, only a year before the final decision to make women as Elders the choice of each local church, 51% disagreed with allowing women to be Elders, 33% agreed with allowing women to be Elders and 16% were uncertain. Arnold Cook to all District Superintendents, *Memorandum* (June 29, 1999).

⁵⁶ 9 out of 10 people interviewed for this project referred to resources by CBE and CBMW to support their positions and as suggested resources for study on this subject. Additionally in suggested reading material provided by the C&MA concerning women as Elders material by the CBE and CBMW are mentioned as significant resources. Ken Radant, "Men and Women in Christian Ministry: An Introduction to the Gender Roles Question" (February, 1999), 22-23.

encouragement and support for those seeking affirmation of their biblical interpretations and beliefs. Both groups advertised in magazines and flaunted a list of biblical and theological scholars who supported their exegesis and their goals and so legitimized their separate agendas.

CBE gained support in the C&MA by those who, through the influence of feminism, wished to develop an egalitarian structure within the denomination.⁵⁷ CBE began in 1987 under the leadership of Catherine Kroeger (after the division of the EWC). Kroeger called those involved together to pray for evangelicals “to be informed about the basic biblical teachings reading equality of men and women of all races, ages, and economic class.”⁵⁸ The core value of CBE is that men and women were created equal and that men and women were both given gifts to be used in the world, the home and the church. Members of CBE also believe that Christians are called to actively oppose injustice and their purpose is to equip Christians through encouragement and education on these values so that they might better serve the world and the church. CBE have ten points within their statement of faith, which as the first major document they published, that clearly explain what they believe:

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.

We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, and in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

We believe in the unity and trinity of God, eternally existing as three equal persons.

We believe in the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.

We believe in the equality and essential dignity of men and women of all ethnicities, ages, and classes. We recognize that all persons are made in the image of God and are to reflect that image in the community of believers, in the home, and in society.

⁵⁷ Miriam Charter, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁵⁸ Susan McCoubre “Happy birthday: Now we are Four!”, *Priscilla Papers* (summer 1991 Vol. 5 #3), 14.

We believe in the sinfulness of all persons. One result of sin is shattered relationships with God, others, and self.

We believe that men and women are to diligently develop and use their God-given gifts for the good of the home, church and society.

We believe that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again.

This salvation is offered to all people.

We believe in the family, celibate singleness, and faithful heterosexual marriage as God's design.

We believe that men and women are to oppose injustice as mandated by the Bible.⁵⁹

This statement of faith expresses the intent of the organization to remain faithful to scripture and to the gospel while also affirming an egalitarian position within the Church.

In reaction to what was happening in the church and within culture CBMW was also formed in 1987. This group was led by Wayne Grudem and John Piper with the goal to “present a noble, biblical and compelling vision of manhood and womanhood, so that the Church, the faithful bride of Christ, might maintain her obedience and full health in human relationships from generation to generation until He returns.”⁶⁰ The CBMW, like CBE, developed a support base within the Alliance of those who wished to maintain what they believed was the traditional view of family and roles within the church. Aiding in the process was Arnold Cook who circulated material written by the organization to pastors and Elders within the denomination.⁶¹ The claim of the CBMW is that it does not hold blindly onto tradition but has carefully examined tradition and kept the good while discarding the bad.⁶² The first major publication of the CBMW was the “Danvers Statement” which they wrote to describe their purpose, goals and vision. Within this statement they presented a ten-point proclamation of what they affirm to be true

⁵⁹ Christians for Biblical Equality, http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/about/who_we_are 2005.

⁶⁰ Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, <http://www.cbmw.org/about/danvers.php>.

⁶¹ Keith Taylor, personal interview, winter 2006.

⁶² John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Can Our Differences Be Settled?* (Chicago: Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 1992), 10.

regarding gender as well as ten points to explain their rationale for existence. The rationale is focused on the loss of distinction and roles within society and the failure of Christians to remain faithful to scriptures. The first point of the statement is that there is a “widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary difference between masculinity and femininity.”⁶³ This, as well as the following points that condemn “the increasing promotion of feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in scripture” between husband and wife and “the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women,”⁶⁴ explicitly reveal the reaction against feminism. Other points that deal with “the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities” and “the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching”⁶⁵ reveal their antagonism towards groups like CBE who believe that scripture supports their position of equality.

The CBMW as well as CBE were both formed as a reaction to culture and decisions that were being made in the church. Both groups provided a rationale for their existence, scripture and support in the form of experts who believed in their cause. Both groups published journals on topics relevant to gender-issues, culture and the church and both developed an international reputation and membership amongst Christians. The C&MA was not unaffected by the influence of CBE and CBMW. Members of the C&MA read what these two groups published and used their arguments in support of

⁶³ Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, <http://www.cbmw.org/about/danvers.php>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

their own.⁶⁶ As the CBE and CBMW would write critiques of each others' arguments and exegesis and would promote or pass judgment on different texts that were being written, members of the Alliance would respectfully consider what was being presented to them and read or disregard what was being written based upon the latest consensus of their preferred group.⁶⁷ The CBE and the CBMW offered a valuable resource to the evangelical community as it tried to understand feminism, equality and role distinction within the church. However, the CBE and CBMW also played a significant role in perpetuating the disagreements within the church as they pressed their agendas with conviction.

In addition to the support offered by the CBE and CBMW, Alliance leaders read a number of texts during the 1980's and 1990's on the subject of women, authority and the church.⁶⁸ One text that was specifically remembered was *Women and the Word of God* by Susan Foh. Susan Foh wrote a response to biblical feminism in 1979 in which she upheld the belief that God made men and women equal with different roles within the world. Foh's text would have been used as support by members of the Alliance who

⁶⁶ Arnold Cook, Ross Ingram and Keith Taylor, when interviewed, each cited the importance of books that were written during the period of the debate as influential in the development of their ideas and opinions. Arnold Cook, personal interview, summer 2005; Ross Ingram, personal interview, summer 2005; Keith Taylor, personal interview, winter 2006.

⁶⁷ In 1999 David Freeman, who openly supported equality in the church, wrote a response to the CBMW for the C&MA in which he claims that Grudem and Piper distort the image of male and female and husband and wife, demonstrating through opposition the support that had developed within the denomination for this group. David Freeman, "The Search for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Preliminary Response to the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood" (unpublished paper)- (Toronto, 1999).

⁶⁸ Each book that is referred to in the following pages was given as an example of books that were read during the 1980s and 1990s by pastors in the C&MA. Each text that is mentioned was always referred to by more than one person. Additionally each book was found on either a suggested reading list given sent to Sr. Pastors across Canada on March 5, 1999 by Arnold Cook, entitled "Suggested Reading on Women in Ministry" or from a suggested reading list provided by Kenneth Radant that was prepared as a resource for church leaders prior to assembly in 2000 entitled, "Men and Women in Christian Ministry: An Introduction to the Gender Roles Question" (February, 1999), 22-23.

wished to continue restricting women from the role of Elder in the Church.⁶⁹ Foh carefully asserts that the Bible is not against women and that, in fact, it is extremely clear that women are important and equal creatures in the world with men. She then goes on to assert that women are called to submit to male leadership in the church and in the home. Foh does not see this as a form of oppression that is to be overturned, but rather, as a freedom within which women who have been set free from their sin in Christ might live.⁷⁰

Texts were also written during the 1980's and the 1990's from an egalitarian position that offered support to those within the C&MA who wished to abolish restrictions and hierarchy in the church.⁷¹ One text was *Paul, Women and Wives* (1992).⁷² Within this text, Keener raises questions concerning Paul's intended meaning and presses the church on whether its current opinion of roles is truly traditional. Keener considers the context of several difficult passages in the Pauline epistles and presents an exegesis that promotes a basis for equality in roles in the present day. Rebecca Merrill Groothius also wrote a text during this period to challenge the belief that women should be restricted from certain roles in the church. In *Women Caught in the Conflict* (1994), Groothius considers the history of evangelicalism, tradition and the relationship between the church and culture as she lends support to the egalitarian position. Groothius does not argue specific Bible verses to prove her point, but she does reveal the unfair manner in which traditionalists attempt to paint all Christian feminists. Groothius explains the

⁶⁹ As a representative for this position Arnold Cook offered this text for study.

⁷⁰ Susan Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979) 100-117.

⁷¹ Texts were offered by those interviewed and given support by suggested reading lists sent to church leaders prior to discussions at General Assembly.

⁷² Craig Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992).

difference between several versions of feminism and she provides insight to evangelical feminism. Through this work Groothius provided evangelical feminists, or egalitarians, with a text that explains feminism in a positive manner and that dispels myths and fears that often accompanied feminism in the evangelical world.

As members of the C&MA, and other evangelical denominations, tried to understand what was happening in culture they used the resources available to them from within their own smaller evangelical culture to help in their pursuit. Whether in support of equality or some type of role distinction, members of the C&MA were provided with a wide range of literature and supportive arguments for their personal position from the CBMW and the CBE as well as through other books that were being published by evangelical publishing companies. There was ample opportunity to read about feminism from a relatively safe evangelical point of view and while many within the C&MA did choose to utilize these resources it would seem as though those involved in the debates only seriously appreciated that which agreed with their predetermined view.

The Battle for the Bible

The impact of feminism upon the church was significant during the 1980's and 1990's, however, it does not stand alone as a cultural event that had an impact on the debates over women as Elders within the C&MA. Following WWII significant changes occurred within evangelicalism that began a new period within the movement known today as "neo-evangelicalism."⁷³ These changes included a new appreciation of scholarship, a willingness to dialogue with non-evangelicals⁷⁴ and a desired distancing

⁷³ D. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard 1988), 29.

⁷⁴ Pamela D. Cochran, *Evangelical Feminism* (New York: New York University Press 2005), 18.

from fundamentalism.⁷⁵ The effect of these changes on evangelicalism during the 1970's and 1980's had a direct impact on the debates over scripture and interpretation that dominated the debates in the C&MA during the 1980's and 1990's.⁷⁶

After WWII two prominent strands of thought emerged among evangelicals. The more conservative evangelicals, who distanced themselves from fundamentalists while not completely rejecting the label, remained cautious in their willingness to accept new ideas. Although there are changes in several areas of thought, this group of evangelicals, known as right-wing evangelicals,⁷⁷ held specifically to the principle of biblical inerrancy⁷⁸ and the ultimate authority of scripture. The second group of evangelicals, who chose to completely reject fundamentalism, became more open to different forms of textual criticism and were willing to release their hold on inerrancy. This group, known as either moderate or left wing evangelicals,⁷⁹ while still maintaining the authority and

⁷⁵ Donald Bloesch describes fundamentalism as the right wing of evangelicalism (prior to the split between evangelicals and fundamentalists) that is defensive and separatists in its nature as it attempts to fight modernism in the church. Fundamentalists, however, hold views that stray from classical protestant orthodoxy. D. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard 1988), 24.

⁷⁶For further study of the recent history of evangelicalism in Canada see: John Stackhouse, Jr., *The Protestant Experience in Canada Since 1945*, in *The Canadian Protestant Experience: 1760-1990*, ed. George Rawlyk (Burlington: Welch, 1990), 198-252. John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Regent, 1998).

⁷⁷ The use of the descriptors "right-wing" and "left-wing" in this section have been utilized in order to describe the different voices that were emerging in evangelicalism during the 1970's. The definitions offered have been taken from Donald Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard 1988), 24. Although these terms are often used in a pejorative manner, that is not the intention in this text.

⁷⁸ Inerrancy is defined as "the quality of being free from falsehood or mistake...so that Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions." Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy with Exposition (1978), 4.

⁷⁹ Donald Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard 1988), 24.

the importance of the Bible would prefer to describe scripture as infallible⁸⁰ in its salvific message rather than completely without error.⁸¹

The emergence of neo-evangelicalism after WWII opened the door to serious study of scripture and it allowed evangelicals the right to question assumptions that were held in the past. Neo-evangelicalism also opened the door to a great deal of tension among evangelicals who progressively became more divided because of their beliefs regarding the inerrancy of scripture. The willingness of some to reject inerrancy created a great deal of concern for right-wing evangelicals, including the C&MA's own Dr. Arnold Cook, who felt that this willingness to question the prevalent view within evangelicalism of inerrancy would lead quickly to a total disregard of scripture.⁸² The reason for this intense concern is due to the core value placed upon scripture by evangelicals. Although a definition for evangelicalism is difficult to achieve, Alister McGrath offers six overarching convictions that are shared by all evangelicals and the first and most prominent is "the supreme authority of Scriptures as a source of knowledge of God and a guide to Christian Living."⁸³ Since the emergence of evangelicalism the movement has emphasized the revelation of God in Scripture, both in its inspiration and in its further interpretation and have understood the Bible to be the central point for all of life. This emphasis, as Alister McGrath explains, reveals the determination of evangelicals to keep the gospel pure and to protect Christianity from cultural influences

⁸⁰ Infallible is defined as "The quality of neither misleading nor being misled... so that scripture is a sure, safe and reliable rule and guide in all matters." Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid, 24.

⁸² Arnold Cook, *Historical Drift* (Camp Hill: Christian Publications, 2000), 126. This text is extremely significant in C&MA history since it was written and promoted by the President of the denomination during the discussions on women as Elders. His perspective was widely respected within the denomination and is representative of the official position on the subject.

⁸³ Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 55.

that would weaken the gospel message.⁸⁴ It is for this reason that right-wing evangelicals felt such concern when some within their own tradition began to question what was considered to be a foundational assumption. Without inerrancy right-wing evangelicals feared that their contemporaries would essentially abandon the faith. Right-wing evangelicals within the C&MA held this assumption and feared for the future of the denomination.⁸⁵ Dr. Cook's remarks in his text, *Historical Drift*, reveals how he felt this issue was affecting the denomination and how he desired an acceptance of the inerrant view to eventually win:

I am convinced that for all who affirm the deity of Christ, there is nothing more important than our absolute commitment to the Scriptures. Many lament the ongoing battles for the Bible. Personally, I rejoice that we're still fighting for this Book. Many segments of Christendom signed a truce with culture years ago. They now enjoy the serenity of the Ecclesiastical graveyard.⁸⁶

The realization that there was diversity in thought over the issue of inerrancy began during the late 1950's as some evangelicals began to question the predominantly accepted statement on inerrancy, *The Classic Princeton View of Inerrancy*. This statement affirmed that there were absolutely no errors in the Bible and while these theologians still held to the infallibility of scripture they were no longer willing to accept this statement on inerrancy. These same evangelicals became immersed in the world of historical and textual criticism, a field of study that evangelicals traditionally avoided since they assumed that there could be no error in the text.⁸⁷ The issue was given further credibility during this time when *Christianity Today* published a survey on inerrancy in

⁸⁴ Ibid, 60.

⁸⁵ Paul Little explained how he feared for the future of the denomination because of the willingness of some to do 'gymnastics' with the text to achieve their desired interpretation. Paul Little, personal interview, summer 2005. Arnold Reimer offered a similar opinion. Arnold Reimer, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁸⁶ Arnold Cook, *Historical Drift* (Camp Hill: Christian Publications, 2000), 126.

⁸⁷ Pamela D. Cochran, *Evangelical Feminism* (New York: New York University Press 2005), 18-22.

1957. The magazine polled evangelical clergy in America about their position on inerrancy and revealed that only half of the clergy questioned were certain that they believed the traditional evangelical view.⁸⁸ This survey further revealed the existing diversity of thought within evangelicalism, however, it was not until 1972 that the issue fully materialized and began to affect the general population of evangelicals.

The official beginning to the debate over inerrancy can be attributed to the change in the statement of faith at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1972 and the resulting division among the faculty. This event signifies for many a significant change within evangelicalism in relationship to inerrancy, hermeneutics and biblical scholarship.⁸⁹ Several conservative members of the faculty, including Harold Lindsell,⁹⁰ left in reaction to these decisions.⁹¹ Harold Lindsell, a founding faculty member of Fuller, resigned from his position at Fuller because of the change in the statement of faith and in further reaction wrote *The Battle for the Bible*. This text stirred the controversy already prevalent within evangelicalism and brought the issue of inerrancy and appropriate scholarship to the front of evangelical discussions. The argument of Lindsell's book is that for the Christian "the only true and dependable source for Christianity lies in the Bible."⁹² Lindsell does admit that a person may still be a Christian if he or she does not believe in the infallibility of scripture, however, in his opinion the loss of a belief in inerrancy will result in "the loss of missionary outreach; it will quench missionary passion; it will lull congregations to sleep and undermine their belief in the full-orbed

⁸⁸ Mark Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 215.

⁸⁹ Dr. Cook specifically mentions the change that took place at Fuller in his text as well as during his personal interview. In his opinion this was a significant moment in the history of evangelicalism.

⁹⁰ For a biographical sketch of Harold Lindsell see: G. Heath, "Lindsell, Harold," in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. T. Larsen (Dowers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press 2003), 362-364.

⁹¹ Pamela D. Cochran, *Evangelical Feminism* (New York: New York University Press 2005), 2.

⁹² Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1976), 17.

truth of the Bible; it will induce spiritual sloth and decay; and it will finally lead to apostasy.”⁹³ In his text Lindsell considers how a refusal to accept inerrancy has affected other groups apart from Fuller Seminary and he continually presses the importance of a doctrine of inerrancy for the evangelical church. In his final chapter, in fact, Lindsell states:

The label evangelical has traditionally stood for a series of doctrinal conviction of which one has been biblical infallibility. Surely if the assertion that Christ is not God, or that the atonement was not vicarious, or that the virgin birth did not happen, or that Jesus is not coming again, or that Jesus did not rise bodily from the dead, is reason to deny the badge “evangelical” then he who denies the doctrine of infallibility – the only sure guarantee that these other doctrines are true cannot truly be an evangelical.⁹⁴

Following the change in the statement of faith at Fuller Seminary there was a significant discussion within the church over the issue of inerrancy. Many books were written by right-wing evangelicals to preserve their belief that scripture is without error and should not be questioned. These writers used the clear definition offered in the Chicago statement on inerrancy that was developed at an International Summit Conference of evangelical leaders, sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy held in Chicago during the summer of 1978.⁹⁵ The Chicago Statement on inerrancy was written in response to the changing views of some within evangelicalism concerning inerrancy and consists of nineteen affirmations and denials concerning the inspiration of scripture and the resulting infallibility of the text. The statement also considers why it is necessary to believe in the inerrancy of the scriptures and concludes by sharing the concern of the congress participants for those who are willing to relinquish their belief in the infallibility of scripture. While Harold Lindsell was careful to resist

⁹³ Ibid, 17.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 18.

⁹⁵ I.H. Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 10.

from calling those who did not believe in inerrancy un-evangelical, the Chicago conference moved closer to making such an accusation in its final remarks:

We are conscious too that great and grave confusion results from ceasing to maintain the total truth of the Bible whose authority one professes to acknowledge. The result of taking this step is that the Bible which God gave loses its authority, and what has authority instead is a Bible reduced in content according to the demands of one's critical reasoning and in principle reducible still further once one has started. This means that at bottom independent reason now has authority, as opposed to Scriptural teaching. If this is not seen and if for the time being basic evangelical doctrines are still held, persons denying the full truth of Scripture may claim an evangelical identity while methodologically they have moved away from the evangelical principle of knowledge to an unstable subjectivism, and will find it hard not to move further. We affirm that what Scripture says, God says. May He be glorified. Amen and Amen.⁹⁶

This declaration, along with the books that were being written on the subject, gave fuel to the debate over inerrancy and created a sense of mistrust between evangelical Christians who held differing views on the subject.⁹⁷

During this time, while certain evangelicals in Canada were clearly concerned with the issue of inerrancy that was taking place in the United States, as Dr. Cook's *Historical Drift* implies, the church in Canada was dealing with the problem of inerrancy and the authority of the Bible on an even grander scale. During the 1960's John Stackhouse writes that Protestants who held a "high view of the inspiration and authority of scriptures, the importance of personal conversion, and the centrality of evangelism in the mission of the church felt more and more estranged from others in their denominations whose concerns seemed disturbingly different."⁹⁸ This sense of estrangement was due to the loss of dominance over Canadian culture that the Protestant

⁹⁶ Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy with Exposition (1978), 4.

⁹⁷ I.H. Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 10.

⁹⁸ John Stackhouse, "The Protestant Experience in Canada Since 1945," in *The Canadian Protestant Experience: 1760-1990*, ed. G. Rawlyk (Burlington: Welsh Publishing Company, 1990), 204.

Church in Canada had once held. Many people in Canada during the 1960's stopped attending church on a regular basis. This decline continued into the 1970's and 1980's despite attempts, such as the new curriculum introduced by the United Church in 1962 that questioned traditional assumptions about the Bible, by mainline churches to appease the masses through relevancy. While evangelical churches did exist in Canada during this period of time their numbers and their concerns were small and they were often simply ignored by popular culture.⁹⁹ While the evangelical church did begin to grow in prominence in Canada during the 1980's its influence was never as great as the influence of the evangelical church in the United States and its internal problems have not been recorded with such great detail.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, while the debate over inerrancy was significant for many evangelical Christians in Canada it has been remembered differently than in the United States. The mass exodus of the general population from the Protestant church during this period of time as well as the attempts made by some to change the gospel in order to keep some people content is how the inerrancy debate was experienced and recorded in Canada.

This new willingness to reconsider the text, to question how interpretations were achieved and to reopen the Bible using new hermeneutical methods provided the debate of the C&MA over the role of women as Elders a basis for existence. Without this debate over inerrancy that existed in the United States and influenced evangelicals in Canada, and the forced willingness of evangelicals to realize that they did not all believe the same thing in relation to the scriptures, there would have been no place for a debate over the role of women. The debate over inerrancy and the changing opinion in regards

⁹⁹ Ibid, 220-225.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 215-235.

to scholarship provided space within the C&MA, especially in the denominational college and seminary, to question the rules of the denomination concerning the biblical role of women and men.¹⁰¹ In conjunction with the rise of feminism the debate over inerrancy and the value of critical scholarship allowed a setting for the debate over the role of women in the church to exist.

The debate over inerrancy also affected the C&MA by prolonging the discussions over the role of women in the Church. Franklin Pyles, in remembering the debates affirmed this impact by stating:

Yes, the inerrancy debate did impact this discussion. However, the question must arise, is it inerrancy that is the issue, or was inerrancy being used as a means of supporting a particular point of view? That of course is impossible to answer. I would say that in floor debate the issue of inerrancy was raised a number of times. That is the reason why, at GA in Hull in 1998, when I debated I opened the debate by reading the 1 Timothy 2: 11-14 in Greek, in KJV and in NIV and proceeded with an extended exegetical lecture. In so doing I attacked, at its foundation, the argument that this is fundamentally an issue of inerrancy. I sought to demonstrate that there was an interpretation issue here, not an obedience one.¹⁰²

There were many arguments among members of the C&MA over what scripture said. To some, the literal reading of words was to be accepted without question while others argued that in order to understand the texts they needed to be interpreted. During this time, as Pyles reveals in his testimony, many scholarly papers were written by those on both sides of the debate in which scriptures were interpreted with conviction and with convincing research. However, there was unwillingness among those involved to even

¹⁰¹ During the 1990's there was an online discussion concerning women as Elders, hosted by Dr. Ken Draper (Academic Dean of CBC). This discussion involved certain members of the faculty from the college and seminary and many egalitarian positions were presented on this website by these faculty members. The result of this support for egalitarian positions created complaints by some that CBC no longer had faculty who would promote traditional ideas about men and women's roles. While this complaint was untrue it does reveal the willingness within the college to question the accepted position on women as Elders. Andy Reimer, personal correspondence, winter 2006.

¹⁰² Franklin Pyles, personal interview, summer 2005.

consider the arguments offered by someone who had identified themselves with the opposing position.¹⁰³ This determined unwillingness to listen to an interpretation of scripture that did not coincide with one's own belief was a direct result of the tension within greater evangelicalism over inerrancy. During the discussions over the role of women, although popular culture and history affected the debate, members of the C&MA concentrated upon the interpretation of scripture to find an answer to their division. While it cannot be easily divided that those opposed to equality held to inerrancy and those who did not had rejected the principle of inerrancy, it must be recognized that those who were in support of the women as Elders were often accused of holding a "lesser view of scripture."¹⁰⁴ The debate over the role of women in ministry within the C&MA was also a continuation of the greater evangelical debate over the authority of scripture.

The determination of those who opposed women as Elders in the C&MA was directly related to their desire to hold onto their doctrine of inerrancy. The unwillingness within the denomination to listen was the result of the mistrust that was bred during the 1970's and the early 1980's in regards to inerrancy in both Canada and the United States and this led to years of stalemate within the denomination. The debate over inerrancy created a realization that change was taking place within evangelicalism and that not all evangelicals held the same beliefs. The reaction to this debate in turn created a defensive attitude on the part of right-wing evangelicals to fight for what they believed to be the traditional and unique characteristics of evangelicalism and it pushed more left-wing evangelicals to fight for their claim upon evangelicalism, to prove that they were still evangelicals and that their differences in belief were not wrong. This divisive argument

¹⁰³ Miriam Charter, personal interview, spring 2005.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Little, personal interview, summer 2005.

over inerrancy promoted mistrust within the C&MA and removed the option of truly open discussion from the debate.

Conclusion

Prior to, as well as throughout, the debates over women as Elders there were many cultural events that affected the attitudes and the arguments of those involved in the discussions. Members and leaders of the C&MA were affected by the rise of feminism inside and outside of the church and reacted with both fear and supportive encouragement to this movement throughout the debates. In addition to the rise of feminism the growing division within evangelicalism over the authority of the Bible and hermeneutics added to the tension and the fear that existed within the discussions as passages of scripture were used in support of both equality and role distinction. Both of these events had a significant, if perhaps unconscious, impact upon the members of the C&MA who debated and discussed women as Elders. It would be irresponsible to ignore these influences or to attempt to pretend that they had no bearing upon the debates.

CHAPTER FIVE

SCRIPTURE: THE BATTLE FIELD

The most explicitly argued point of the debates concerning women as Elders was the interpretation of scripture. Because of the traditional emphasis placed upon the plenary inspiration of scripture within evangelicalism and the relatively recent tension and division that existed on that subject, the issue of women as Elders was quickly taken to the Bible.¹ There was an extremely strong desire among those involved to prove the validity of their position based upon their interpretation of scripture. For those desiring to maintain a more conservative interpretation the goal was to show how plainly scripture limited the role of women in leadership while maintaining that women and men were created equal. For those who wished to prove that women might share equally with men in leadership the purpose was to prove through new hermeneutical methods that scripture allowed women to use the gifts God had given them in any form of ministry. The purpose of this chapter is to record the arguments, the hermeneutical methods and the responses of those involved in the debates through a study of the papers that were commissioned on the subject throughout the 1980's and 1990's in both Canada and the United States.² Because the actual debates were not recorded the substance of the debates will be discerned through an examination of the written arguments presented prior to the debates, papers commissioned specifically for consideration throughout the debates in Canada and papers that were commissioned at the same time for the C&MA United States. These papers all focus on the passages of scripture that were most troublesome to members of the C&MA and were debated at length. This chapter will reveal the heart of the issue through its

¹ Leslie Andrews, "Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry" (USA, 1995), 1.

² Papers written for the C&MA USA will be considered because often they were authored by members of the C&MA in Canada.

examination of the arguments over scripture because, although tradition and culture most certainly influenced the debates throughout the years, it was the authority of scripture and hermeneutical methods that were verbally debated.

In the Beginning

Just prior to the autonomy of the Canadian C&MA and the beginning of the debates over women as Elders two dissertations were written by members of the C&MA on the subject of women in leadership. These two dissertations, *Perceptions of the Role of Women in the Christian and Missionary Alliance* by Leslie Andrews (1976) and *The Role of Women in the Ministry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* by Wendall Price (1977) reveal the questions that were beginning to surface over the appropriate role of women in the C&MA and the basic assumption that an answer to the question would be found in scripture. The main emphases of both of these papers is on the exegesis of passages in both the Old and New Testament, the same passages that would later be debated officially in Canada. While Price goes through sections of scripture, Old Testament, Gospels and Epistles, outlining pertinent opinions offered by both liberal and conservative scholars, Leslie Andrews chose to examine four specific passages, ignoring the most conservative views since they were the most familiar to her audience,³ and focusing instead on new interpretations in order to present an alternative to the traditionally accepted understandings. Both of these dissertations, written to fulfill requirements for a doctor of ministry, were written for the benefit of the C&MA as it was moving into a time of transition. While they were written in the United States they reveal

³ Leslie Andrews, *Perceptions of the Role of Women in the Christian and Missionary Alliance* D. Min. diss., (Georgia: Columbia Theological Seminary, 1976), 8.

the general sentiment of Canadians as well; it was necessary to revisit the issue of women in leadership and reconsider what the scriptures had to say on the subject.

Andrews' main resources for the creation accounts are Letty M. Russell, Mary Daly and Paul Jewett.⁴ These writers are used to support her arguments that both men and women were made in the image of God and that there is no intent in the passages to imply female subordination.⁵ While providing an example of an extremely conservative interpretation of this passage by Charles Ryrie (that Adam was created first so that it was clear he was never subordinate to Eve and that Eve's first sin revealed how she was unfit to lead) Andrews does not focus upon the traditional interpretation but instead studies why and how the creation accounts do not imply female subordination.⁶ In her opinion, the creation accounts reveal a hierarchy that was a result of the fall. Women were not preordained to be subordinate to men and through redemption men and women might once again return to the equal relationship of creation.⁷

Andrews' exegesis of the Epistles offers arguments that are very similar to those in her study of Genesis. When considering 1 Corinthians Andrews reminds her reader that Paul was writing to and referring to the believers in the church and that he seems to have been speaking specifically to married believers. Continuing to use Jewett and Daly as resources, Andrews concludes that Paul's writings on headship could not be a rule of every man over every woman due to the context of the passage in relation to a questioning

⁴ It is important to note that during the 1980's and the 1990's as the Evangelical Feminist movement began to divide into more liberal and conservative camps, papers written by Canadian members of the C&MA began to cite more conservative writers and no longer used Mary Daly, Letty Russell and Paul Jewett as sources. See J. Dahms, F. Pyles, A. Runge, *Women in the Church* (Canada: C&MA, 1987).

⁵ Leslie Andrews, *Perceptions of the Role of Women in the Christian and Missionary Alliance* D. Min. diss., (Georgia: Columbia Theological Seminary, 1976), 8.

⁶ Ibid, 13.

⁷ Ibid, 17.

church.⁸ Andrews also deals with the assumption that, in reference to the order of creation, Paul meant to imply the subordination of women and concludes that this passage is in specific reference to husband and wives and cannot be read for all men and women.⁹ In her study of 1Timothy 2:8-15 Andrews acknowledges the difficulty in interpretation that this passage has created. Beginning her study with a consideration of the historical setting, however, Andrews focuses on three points of the passage: the way women dress, the call to learn quietly and the explanation of these restrictions. For these verses Andrews uses Dr. Bushnell and William Barclay as her resources. Andrews begins by explaining that 1Timothy must be read against both a Greek and a Jewish background in order to understand the low position that women held in society. Women, she explains, were either extremely restricted within their homes or oppositely used as prostitutes in the temple. Andrews went on to also consider the threat of persecution from the Emperor, Nero, and she submits that Paul's intent was to maintain a safe and reputable image for the church that could easily be disregarded or persecuted in such circumstances. Overall, Andrews deems Paul's exhortations to be cultural reactions that were necessary for the circumstance but not universally applicable to all women throughout history.

Andrews' analysis of scripture is significant because in her support of egalitarian interpretations she reveals the rising influence of modern hermeneutics within the C&MA. Andrews' chosen interpretations incorporated research into the historical and cultural situations in order to obtain the meaning of the passage. This method of interpretation differed from the expected evangelical reading that would, prior to the debate over inerrancy, have read the passage and accepted its message as something that

⁸ Ibid, 22.

⁹ Ibid, 25.

transcended culture because of its inerrant nature.¹⁰ In her dissertation Andrews departed from the preferred evangelical method of reading and revealed that within the C&MA there was a changing attitude concerning scripture, interpretation and the appropriate role for women in the church. Using Charles Ryrie to illustrate the difference between the old and the new, Andrews also illustrated the difference between the “conservative” and the “more liberal” members of the C&MA.

Wendall Price, writing his dissertation the year following Leslie Andrews’, explicitly stated in his abstract “the Bible is the rule of faith and practice in the C&MA and it is important to understand what it says and how it applies to the contemporary situation in regard to women in the ministry.”¹¹ The contemporary situation in reference was, of course, the rapid changes that were occurring in society in regards to women and equality. Price’s purpose in writing was to deal with his belief that the C&MA was not truly dealing with the situation in a biblical way. Price saw obvious discrepancies within the C&MA in regards to women, roles and restrictions and he was convinced that members of the denomination must understand and abide by what was written in scripture and that while this was the desire of the denomination they were currently failing in their attempts.¹² In order to discover what the message of the Bible was on this subject Price studies various passages in the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles.

Price begins his study of scripture by acknowledging the tension amongst evangelicals over inerrancy. The interesting point, however, is that Price does not believe that this is a problem for the C&MA:

¹⁰ Ibid, 34.

¹¹ Wendall Price, *The Role of Women in the Ministry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* D.Min. diss., (San Francisco: San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1977), 2.

¹² Ibid, 2.

Since the position of the Christian and Missionary Alliance has always been the belief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible and that it is the only and ultimate rule of faith and practice, it is not an issue of whether to believe the Bible or not. It is an issue of interpretation. How is it to be understood? What is it really saying? There must be an understanding of what is tradition and what is based on Scripture and properly applied and understood. Hermeneutics is the key issue in the whole process.¹³

Price does not think that using new methods of interpretation and study should disqualify someone from a belief in the plenary inspiration of scripture. Although he is careful to qualify his remarks to exclude the extremes, Price writes that he was not outside of the comfort zone of the denomination in his openness to consider different techniques for understanding scripture. This would be a disputed point by conservatives within the denomination who felt that interpretations that required more than an understanding of the exact words were analogous to a gymnastics routine.¹⁴ What is important to understand from Price's words, however, is not whether he was right or wrong in his understanding of inerrancy but that he clearly believed he was still working within a conservative and evangelical paradigm for his exegesis. He did not believe that he was abandoning the scripture as his guide for faith and it must be acknowledged that others within the denomination, who would later fight for equality based upon their interpretations of scripture, also felt the same way.¹⁵

Price chose to use Georgia Harkness and H.C. Leopold as his primary resources for his exegesis of Genesis 1 and 2. He also considers the work of Phyllis Tribble, Nancy Hardesty and Letha Scanzoni as further resources. As Andrews did, Price concludes that woman was created equal with man and that there is no implied subordination in the

¹³ Ibid, 71.

¹⁴ Arnold Reimer, personal interview summer 2005.

¹⁵ Ross Ingram, for example, in his interview stated that he believed he was interpreting scripture faithfully and appropriately without any sense that he was pushing the boundaries.

word “helper” as it refers to the woman’s role.¹⁶ Additionally, Price concludes that while a hierarchy was formed through the fall, in the redemption available through Christ men and women might once again be equals.¹⁷ In his consideration of the New Testament Price reaffirms that the text was inspired by the Holy Spirit while also revealing his acceptance of and felt need for textual criticism. Beginning with the Gospels, Price focuses on Jesus’ attitude towards women and indicates that he believes Jesus treated women as equals.¹⁸ In this section Price also used Charles Ryrie to illustrate the most conservative interpretation of scripture, explaining that Ryrie argued that women had significant but different spiritual roles from the men. Price leaves this interpretation as an open possibility but continues to consider all of the positive ways that Jesus acknowledged, ministered to and encouraged women in ministry.

Price then examined the Epistles with the goal of “determining what was the actual intention and teaching of Paul regarding the position of women in the church.”¹⁹ To begin, Price considered the numerous female workers that Paul mentions in his letters, specifically in Romans 16.²⁰ Price then examined the traditionally difficult passages: 1 Corinthians 11: 2-16, 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 and 1 Timothy 3:11. In his study of these passages Price presented differing opinions, consideration of authorship and historical application, but his conclusion of the matter was that the instances of limitations on

¹⁶ Wendall Price, *The Role of Women in the Ministry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* D.Min. diss., (San Francisco: San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1977), 86.

¹⁷ Ibid, 90.

¹⁸ Ibid, 102.

¹⁹ Ibid, 110.

²⁰ This is the same passage of scripture that convinced Rev. Ross Ingram to welcome women into equal ministry in the church during the 1970s. Ross Ingram, personal interview, summer 2005.

women were cultural and should always be read in light of Galatians 3:28 that states in Christ there is no longer such distinctions.²¹

Price concludes his study of scripture with the decision that the church should not withhold ordination from women. He writes that the church had “misunderstood and misinterpreted the Scriptures in relation to the women’s position”²² and as a result change needed to take place within its structures. In his dissertation Price reiterates the sentiments expressed by Leslie Andrews and shows that the question of women in ministry was not unique to one church or one area within the C&MA. It was a question that was being raised across the country and the answers that were being found were not in accordance with the traditional denominational position. The exegesis of scripture that was preserved by Andrews and Price during the 1970’s is indicative of the exegesis that was being done throughout the C&MA, in Canada and in the United States. The questions that were raised by Andrews and Price were soon raised on a national level in Canada and the answers that they found in study were similar to what many within the denomination had come to believe.

The Genesis Accounts

The most significant passages of scripture in regards to women as Elders, due to the impact of the results upon the interpretation of other passages, are the creation accounts in the book of Genesis. There are two arguments of interpretation regarding these passages. First, before the fall God created woman to be a complementary helper for man. Second, before the fall God created man and woman as equals. Those who desired to maintain restrictions on the roles of women in the church would tend to

²¹ Wendall Price, *The Role of Women in the Ministry of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* D.Min. diss., (San Francisco: San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1977), 138.

²² Ibid, 142.

support the former argument, while those who wished to have those restrictions removed offered the latter. The reasoning behind these interpretations and assumptions was preserved in a report in which Franklin Pyles, John Dahms and Albert Runge exegete scripture according to their personal understanding and respond to the exegesis of the others. This report was commissioned by the General Assembly in Canada in 1984 and was presented to the Assembly in 1987. The interpretations offered by Runge and Pyles are representative of the arguments of those in support of women as Elders and the interpretations offered by Dahms reflect the arguments of those who wished to maintain a distinction in roles. The relevance of these opinions are bolstered by reports written for the C&MA United States that further reveal the general opinions of those involved in the discussions.

Albert Runge, a pastor within the C&MA, offers an exegesis of the creation accounts in Genesis in support of the opinion that women and men are equals and might serve in equal roles in the Church. During the 1980's and the 1990's Runge was asked to exegete these passages for the benefit of both the C&MA in Canada and in the United States. He was a part of the committee commissioned by General Assembly in Hamilton in 1984 which offered its conclusions in 1987 and was a part of a committee of study assembled in 1994 that presented its results to the General Council in the United States in 1995. In the report to the General Council, Runge begins by emphasizing that God, who is neither male nor female but who has characteristics that are illustrated using male and female examples (Isa. 66:13 and Matt. 7:11), created man and woman in his image and both are representative of that image.²³ Calling on the belief in the inerrancy of scripture

²³ Albert Runge, "A Theology of Women Based Upon Genesis 1-3" in *Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry* (Pittsburgh, 1995), 30.

Runge then calls his readers to consider that traditional interpretations of subordination might be wrong and should be reconsidered.

Runge continued to argue in his reports for the C&MA in both Canada and the USA for the equality of man and woman. He concluded that the word “helper” in Genesis 2:18, 20 did not imply a role of subordination for women.²⁴ Runge points out that in the Psalms this term is used in reference to God helping humanity, and that in this passage no one would assume God’s subordination to humankind. Additionally he considers what it means to be a helper in the Bible and concludes that there is no implication of inferiority in that role. Runge insists that man and woman are equal in creation with neither in a position of superiority over the other. This point is argued further in Runge’s exegetical report to the C&MA in Canada in his consideration of Genesis 1:28. Runge points out that God blessed both man and woman and called both to rule over beings of the earth. In his estimation there is no indication that prior to the fall there was a hierarchical structure between men and women and that one would rule over the other.²⁵ Regarding the fall Runge emphasizes Adam’s equal participation in the event by arguing that while Eve was deceived by the serpent’s offer of wisdom Adam, who was also present at the time, was not deceived but chose to go against the command of God. Runge’s argument at this point is in reaction to the argument that will be described later implying that women cannot lead because they are too easily led astray.²⁶

²⁴ Albert Runge, *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 18.

²⁵ Ibid, 13.

²⁶ Albert Runge, “A Theology of Woman Based Upon Genesis 1-3” in *Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry* (Pittsburgh, 1995), 37.

It is in the marriage relationship that Runge finds a prescription for male authority in the creation accounts.²⁷ In Genesis 3:7-13, 16, God punishes the man and the woman for their sin and tells the woman that her husband will rule over her. This is not, according to Runge, because of her inferiority as created person but because through sin humanity was alienated from God as well as from each other and the result was the necessary institution of structure and authority. Runge is careful to note, however, the difference between the relationship of a husband and wife and the general male-female relationship and states that God instituted this order for unity in the family. In general society, Runge argues, even after the fall men and women are to have equal roles and he calls his readers to consider the women of the bible as proof for God's approval in these roles. Based upon his reading of the creation accounts in the book of Genesis Runge calls the denomination to allow women to use their gifts and to follow in their tradition of allowing Godly women to speak and lead.²⁸

In response to Runge's exegesis of the creation accounts in Genesis, John Dahms provides significant insight into the arguments used within the C&MA to suggest that since the creation of man and woman God intended men to lead and women to hold helping and subordinate roles. For instance, Dahms questions the assumptions of equality between male and female suggested by Runge.²⁹ Without disagreeing with the text that states man and woman were created in the image of God, Dahms points out the physiological differences that exist between male and female and uses this to illustrate his

²⁷ Typically, those in favour of equality between men and women in the Church will agree with Runge on this point and differentiate between the marriage relationship and the relationship between genders generally. In interviews with both Franklin Pyles and David Freeman there was a distinction made between the roles of women in the church and the role of wife; personal interviews, summer 2005.

²⁸ Albert Runge, "A Theology of Woman Based Upon Genesis 1-3" in *Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry* (Pittsburgh, 1995), 44.

²⁹ John Dahms, *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 47.

argument that while human beings are equal in dignity, men and women were given different roles in the world. Dahms presses this argument further by referring to 1 Corinthians 11:8-9: "Man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" implying that the role of the woman since her creation was to complement the man and not to assume that she would have the same role as man. Her equality is in her creation as person not in her position of life.³⁰ Dahms continues to argue that women were created to have complementary roles to men by questioning Runge's interpretation of Genesis 1:28; that Eve, along with Adam was given authority to rule over the animals of the earth. Dahms argues that this does not imply equal domination by Adam and Eve through an example of parliamentary hierarchy in Canada: All of the government has the responsibility to rule but the Prime Minister may overrule or ignore the insight of a cabinet member because of their position of authority.³¹

To prove further the argument that since creation God intended women to have complementary roles Dahms questions Runge's interpretation of the word, "helper" and his link to the reference of God as a "helper" in the Psalms. Dahms argues that the difference between the use of the word in Genesis and in Psalms is based in the purpose for existence. God was not created for the purpose of being a helper, although he often does help, while Eve was created for this specific purpose: "Eve is a helper out of obligation."³² Dahms again refers to 1 Corinthians and the statement that woman was

³⁰ John Dahms, *The Role of Women as Elders: Main Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 20.

³¹ John Dahms, *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 47.

³² John Dahms, *The Role of Women as Elders: Main Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 22.

created for man and insists that it is clear the subordinate role of woman existed prior to the fall. In reaction to Runge's interpretation of equal status in the word helper in Genesis 2:18 Dahms also points to Genesis 2:24 for further explanation of what it meant that God did not think it was good for man to be alone. The following excerpt is from the response made by Dahms to Runge's exegesis of Genesis and reveals not only Dahms interpretation of Genesis 2:18 but also the type of debating that took place during the 1980's on this issue:

- Dahms: Gen.2:18 (a) Helpers are of many kinds and give various kinds of help. The only kind of help I can find in Gen. 2 is sexual (2:24).
- Runge: Certainly you are not suggesting, at least I hope, woman's value to a man is only as a sexual object to release his sexual frustration.
- Dahms: (b) A helper need not be a subordinate person. But what about a situation in which the helper's *raison d'être* is to help, as Gen. 2 seems to say about Eve? (God is helper but that is not his *raison d'être*).
- Runge: While God's reason for existence is not to be a helper He is one who does help. Therefore I do not see any contradiction with what I originally said, 'a helper does not mean subordination in the kingdom of God.'...
- Dahms: Gen. 2:18 "Knegdo" means 'according to what is in front of him'. This seems to be a euphemistic reference to his penis. There was no sexual partner for him among the animals but woman provided such. Eve satisfies Adam's physical need in this respect. I find nothing in Gen. 2 to indicate that man's intellectual, social and or psychological needs are in view. Eve's humanity is evidently implied in Gen. 2:23. Since humans differ in their capabilities and talents, intellectual and otherwise, nothing is implied in Gen. 2 as to her equality with Adam in these respects.³³

Dahms is convinced that there is nothing in the creation accounts that support an egalitarian view of men and women prior to the fall. By using the same passages as Runge while developing different conclusions he reveals the significantly different approaches to scripture that existed within the C&MA as well as the conviction with which they held to their arguments.³⁴

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Dahms, Pyles and Runge were to write a paper that would provide answers to the issue for pastors but their differences of opinion were so great that in the main report the majority of the arguments presented

Further to his objection that there is an egalitarian structure in the creation accounts, Dahms argues that there is an implied hierarchy between men and women not only within the marriage relationship but also in the church in general. Using Ephesians 5:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3 as his source, Dahms argues that the submission of wives to husbands is indicative of the relationship that should also exist between men and women in the church. When Paul speaks of the relationship between Christ and the Church so often in conjunction with an illustration to the marriage relationship Dahms understands this as a pattern that implies God's expectation that women will not only be submissive to their husbands but to men in general, especially in view of 1 Corinthians 11:3. While Runge would argue that there is a position of authority in the home he would argue that Pauline passages that indicate female submission to male authority are meant to be understood within the marriage relationship and that a passage which may generally speak of the relationships of the church will narrow to consider the husband-wife relationship specifically, a change in emphasis that should not be ignored.³⁵

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

An exegetical report on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, written by an American member of the C&MA, further exemplifies the opinion within the denomination that women should be considered equals in ministry. This passage has numerous points that seem to imply the necessary subordination of women in roles within the Church, however, as Lucy Guzman illustrates, the interpretation of these points are not without controversy. In her paper, Guzman considers whether or not Paul approves of women prophesying and

are those of Runge and Pyles while the endnotes present Dahms' dissension and his own personal opinion of how the texts should be understood see: John Dahms, Franklin Pyles and Albert Runge, *The Role of Women as Elders: Main Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987).

³⁵ Runge's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 will be considered in greater detail in the following section.

praying in public while also dealing with other issues of the passage including: the appropriate manner for women to dress in the church, Paul's implication of gender hierarchy and the question of whether or not redemption dissolves the differences between men and women. Gordon Fee and Richard Longenecker are an example of the sources used by Guzman who attempts to prove her argument by beginning with an examination of the context of the passage. Guzman states that problems have arisen in the Corinthian church due to the diverse religious practices within the city that have created questions for the believers concerning the appropriateness of their own practices. Paul is not writing to a healthy church, but a church with problems and one that is not disposed to hearing the advice being given.³⁶ This is significant because it implies that Paul's advice might not necessarily be normative since this is not a church that is experiencing normal conditions.

Guzman begins by interpreting Paul's message concerning head coverings³⁷ for women and the argument for headship. The portion of the passage that allows for debate is disagreement over the meaning of the word *kephale* (*Head*). The two major definitions for this word are "superior rank, leader," used by those who wish to maintain distinction between the roles of men and women in the church, and "source," which is accepted by many who understand men and women to be equal in their choice of roles. Guzman determines that based upon the context of the passage it is logical to interpret *kephale* to mean the latter definition because this allows for a metaphorical allusion to the second creation account that is fitting with the passage. Additionally, to define *kephale* as one

³⁶ Lucy Guzman, "1 Corinthians 11:2-16" in *Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry* (Pittsburgh, 1995), 46.

³⁷ It should be noted that the C&MA does not consider head coverings for women to be a necessary or even a suggested practice.

with superior rank would lead into the heretical mistake made by the Arians who wished to create a hierarchy within the trinity with the Son subordinate to the Father. Paul's ordering in the passage reveals that he is not attempting to create a chain of command but rather that he is comparing three sets of relationships. Guzman concludes this section by determining that if Paul wished to imply hierarchy and authority structures in this passage he would have used other terms that would have revealed this more explicit meaning.

Continuing within this passage Guzman argues that Paul called women to cover their heads not because they were inferior members of the church but because they were flouting their freedom in Christ to the detriment of their neighbors. It was the social custom that women cover their heads in public and when the Christian woman stopped this practice it was hurting their evangelistic opportunities. It was uncommon enough for women to speak and pray in public and this practice was amplified by the fact that they were doing so with their heads uncovered. Therefore, Paul's warning in this passage is cultural in the sense that women today do not need to have their heads covered but normative in the truth that one must be sensitive to the needs and the expectations of those outside of the church who are watching and evaluating the gospel through the example of the Christian.³⁸ In the same vein, when Paul refers to women as the glory of men and that woman should have authority over her head Guzman argues that Paul does not mean to imply the complete subjection of women to men because of his inclusion of verses 11 and 12. Although Paul does support remaining within some cultural traditions that imply the subordination of women verses, 11 and 12 reveal Paul's opinion of the equality of men and women. In verse 11 Paul refers to the creation account in Genesis

³⁸ Lucy Guzman, "1 Corinthians 11:2-16" in *Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry* (Pittsburgh, 1995), 52.

1:27-28 when both man and woman were created in the image of God and called to rule over creation. In the following verse Guzman again argues that Paul is pressing his vision of equality through his reference to birth and that while woman came from man now man comes from woman. The completion of this section with a reminder of interdependence reveals Paul's normative opinion of the gender relationship, according to Guzman.³⁹ The final set of controversial verses are 13-16 in which Paul questions the appropriateness of women to pray without their heads covered. Guzman argues that this is again due to the cultural expectations of the time since the argument that women have long hair and men short by nature is faulty. Paul's point is to emphasize that men and women are still different and that it is not wrong to respect the cultural symbols that express these differences.

The acceptability of Guzman's argument as indicative of an argument made within the Canadian debates is illustrated by Runge's similar exegesis in the report that was presented in Canada in 1987. Runge suggests that the understanding of head coverings as a custom kept by the Corinthians is acceptable based upon Paul's greeting in which he states that they (the Corinthians) have kept the traditions that they have been taught.⁴⁰ Runge continues his argument by also considering the word *Kephale* and states that both meanings, source⁴¹ and chief, are applicable. Reminding his reader of how God is both helper to humanity, as well as Lord, he argues that Paul intended in this passage to

³⁹ Ibid, 53-56.

⁴⁰ Albert Runge, *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 36.

⁴¹ For an article written on the meaning of *kephale* that supports the interpretation of "source" see Ann Jervis, "But I Want You To Know... Paul's Midrashic Intertextual Response to the Corinthian Worshippers (1Cor. 11:2-16)" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (1993) 231-246. Rod Remin and Andy Reimer, professors at Canadian Bible College and Canadian Theological Seminary and members of the C&MA in Canada who have actively supported the push to have women as Elders in the denomination, suggested this article for study.

insinuate both meanings. Guzman and Runge do separate in their arguments on this point, however, because Runge believes that Paul is referring to wives usurping the authority of their husbands, an order of leadership that is still in effect in the present day. He is careful, however, to clearly state that this authority is only within the marriage relationship and that not all men have authority over all women.⁴² Runge further argues for the equal position of women in the church by pointing to Paul's reference in 1 Corinthians 11:5 that women pray and prophesy. Agreeing with Guzman that the discussion of head coverings is a cultural situation and that Paul calls the church to be culturally sensitive, Runge points out that Paul makes it clear in this passage that women were praying and prophesying in public, and he does not call for this practice to end. Runge argues that the prophet is one who speaks with authority for God and that Paul has made it clear that this is a practice in the church.

1 Timothy 2:11-15

As a consultant to the committee to study the role of women in ministry in the C&MA United States, Franklin Pyles offered his study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 for consideration. His paper is also posted for consideration of the issue of women as Elders on the website of Canadian Bible College.⁴³ In this report Pyles asserts that this passage is primarily responsible for beliefs within the C&MA concerning the appropriate roles for women. This is because within this passage there is a prohibition against women teaching or exercising authority over a man despite the fact that this seems to contradict other portions of the Bible. This passage is also contentious because of the reference to Adam and Eve and the insinuation that the prohibition on women teaching is based in the

⁴² Albert Runge, *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 37-38.

⁴³ www.auc-nuc.ca/alliancestudies/pyles

order of creation. In this report Pyles presents a study of key words in order to demonstrate how the passage has been misinterpreted and to provide a rationale for why women are free to lead in the church. Pyles' report offers an example of how this passage was presented within the debates by those who were in favor of women as Elders.

Pyles, like Guzman, begins by reminding his readers of the cultural setting of 1 Timothy and presents the opinion of I.H. Marshall which supposes the epistles were written to deal with specific situations that were plaguing the church and that they are not to be read as manuals or complete instructions for church life.⁴⁴ Pyles emphasizes that the primary concern of 1 Timothy is not to create rules for church life but more importantly to protect the church from heresy and to keep the church pure. Therefore, the prohibitions or recommendations made were necessary for this specific church while the overall message to be careful to keep the church from false teaching is for all people and each church may need to use different means to protect itself from such plagues.⁴⁵ Pyles is also careful to note that Paul is not only speaking of public worship but, as he does in many epistles, begins by writing to the issue in general terms of the church and the community and then narrows his discussion to the family. Therefore, Paul is not talking about proper order for worship throughout the entire passage. Pyles concludes that in this passage Paul shifts to issues concerning the family in verse 12.⁴⁶

The first words that Pyles studies are *manthaneto* (to learn) and *hypotage* (subjection, subordination, obedience). In this study Pyles uses the work of Craig Keener

⁴⁴ Franklin Pyles, "1 Timothy 2:11-15" in *Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry* (Pittsburgh, 1995), 65.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 67.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 74.

to support his argument that the passage is not simply about what women may or may not do. Keener insists that the reason why Paul writes women should learn in quietness is because women in this society were generally not taught but left in ignorance. This “prohibition” in Keener’s opinion is actually a step forward in how women were treated in this culture. Women are being instructed by Paul to learn, and since this is a new possibility he tells them how to learn “in silence and submission.” This is not, according to Pyles, a restriction placed on women to keep them subordinate to men but rather an instruction on the proper attitude of a learner, either male or female.⁴⁷

Pyles continues his word study by considering the word *didaskein* (to teach). In this study Pyles notes a popular argument made by Keener that asserts that Paul prohibited women from teaching because the Ephesian women had been influenced, in their ignorance, by false teachers and thus possibly held heretical ideas that needed to be resolved through learning the truth from proper teachers. Keener continues this argument by stating that there is an implication that once the women had learned they were to teach. However, due to a lack of evidence for this position, Pyles disagrees. He concludes that the reason why Paul prohibits women from teaching is because, in addition to their need to learn, it was probably not culturally acceptable for women to teach in the church. Therefore, Paul wished that the Ephesian Christian women not teach and so isolate the movement from culture due to scandalous and offensive behaviour.⁴⁸

Pyles continues his argument by insisting that the word *authenthein* (authority) “speaks of an action resulting in someone being harmed.”⁴⁹ Using the work of Katherine Clark-Kroeger who believes that the term implies being responsible for a terrible crime, Pyles

⁴⁷ Ibid, 69.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 71.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 73.

concludes that the word does not simply mean authority because of its relation to Adam and Eve and the idea of teaching.

The primary concern within this passage is not that women teach men, but rather it is the content of the teaching that is the issue. Because of the false teaching that was affecting the church in Ephesus, and the problem that women in their ignorance were accepting these false doctrines, Paul prohibits wives from teaching husbands and uses Adam and Eve as an illustrative example of the problem. Women in Ephesus were deceived and one way this deception was gaining strength was through their influence upon their husbands. Pyles is clear that this prohibition of women teaching men was situational because of the problems in the community and not a prohibition based upon the order of creation. Pyles states that this prohibition does not, therefore, exclude women from having ordinary authority and leadership in the church.⁵⁰ As further support for his argument that women are not more easily deceived than men, in his exegetical study for the C&MA in Canada, Pyles considers 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:15 as well and notes that within these verses women are called to teach the scriptures to children, to both male and female. The implication being that if women were more easily deceived due to their nature they would not have been given this important role, and therefore 1 Timothy 2:14 does not imply that such a defect exists.⁵¹

Based upon his study of words, Pyles concludes that Paul was writing to strengthen Timothy as the pastor in a difficult time. He calls Timothy to purity and to teaching the truth while also calling the church to the same task. The most important point in the letter is to teach the Word of God because it will lead people in truth. Paul

⁵⁰ Ibid, 73.

⁵¹ Franklin Pyles, *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 82.

does give specific instructions to women, as well as to men, but they are not normative to all Christians in all times except in their general sense that they must seek to live pure lives, to learn the word of God and to help rather than hinder others in their walk of faith. The prohibitions, however, are specific to the Ephesian church because of their specific situation. Pyles' final words on the subject return his study to the direct issue fact in the C&MA, whether or not women should be in leadership roles, and he states:

Therefore, the passage does not forbid women being involved in the leadership of the church, nor does it forbid their teaching men the Word of God. Women should be allowed, on the basis of the New Testament, to be fully active in every part, and at every level of ministry, as were their first century counterparts. I conclude in concurrence with A. B. Simpson who wrote in reply to someone who complained about women preaching and teaching in the early Alliance that the issue was not that women taught, but what they taught. As long as they taught the truth there is no reason to hinder them.⁵²

Objecting to Pyles' exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and his conclusion that this passage does not imply a permanent restriction on women teaching, Dahms presents his own understanding of the passage and aptly illustrates again the argument of those within the denomination who would call for a maintenance of distinct roles between men and women. Dahms bases his argument on his understanding of creation, the fall and Paul's reference to Adam and Eve,⁵³ emphasizing the deception of Eve in Genesis 3:13 and Paul's reference to that deception in 1 Timothy 2:14. Dahms argues in the endnotes of the main document that while woman was not since creation more *inclined* to deception she is more *susceptible* to deception than man. He argues that women are allowed to teach children and other women because in such a role they are not truly a teacher but merely a reporter of truth, a task that would require little discernment and little room for

⁵² Ibid, 80.

⁵³ John Dahms, *The Role of Women as Elders: Main Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 20. *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987). 100.

the woman to be deceived and so deceive others.⁵⁴ Dahms makes a clear distinction between a teacher who is knowledgeable with good judgment and someone who can clearly report what they have been told (as Eve reports to the serpent what God had told her regarding the fruit from the tree but does not have the good judgment to realize the serpent is lying to her). He argues that Eve was prone to deception prior to the fall (she was deceived and then she took the fruit) and, therefore, being easily deceived is a part of all women. For this reason women are not permitted to teach and for this reason women should not be permitted to be Elders in the church.

Dahms is careful to note that the susceptibility of women to deception does not make them more susceptible to sin in general, for there are other sins that would be more common among men. He also acknowledges that men may also be deceived, citing Galatians 6:3 and 2 Corinthians 11:3 as examples, but notes this is not a normative state for men nor a state that they were given in creation. As a result of this susceptibility to deception, and in order to make sense of verse 15, Dahms continues to argue his point concerning the appropriate role of women by placing an emphasis upon the importance of childbearing. It is the role of men to teach and to lead and it is the role of women to bear children and care for their families, unless they cannot bear children for a good reason.⁵⁵ Dahms bases this argument on his understanding of God's pronouncement to Eve in Genesis 3 when He states "Your desire will be for your husband." Dahms understands this to mean God is revealing to Eve that because of this sin all women will be prone to forget their purpose and the greatness of their role in bearing children and will desire

⁵⁴ Ibid, 105.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 106.

other roles instead, which is a distortion of His original plan.⁵⁶ 1 Timothy 2:15 therefore should be interpreted in light of this pronouncement and understood to mean that women will be saved as they accept God's plan for their lives, which is bearing children.⁵⁷

Examples as Proof

In the exegetical papers written by John Dahms, Albert Runge and Franklin Pyles for the Report *The Role of Women as Elders* numerous passages that contain the names of women were studied to determine the role they had in the early church and to present opinions of what these findings might mean to the church today. As this section will illustrate, one avenue that was used to argue the appropriate role of women in the church during the 1980's and 1990's was through the citing of examples of biblical women. Even when mentioned only briefly, the women of the Bible are treated as keys to demonstrating how women either had great freedom to serve equally with men or they prove that while the women were faithful they held complementary and subordinate roles to the men.

In the exegetical paper written by Dahms a number of verses and situations in scripture, generally used by those in support of women as Elders and teachers in the church, are interpreted and argued from the perspective of one who believes that role distinctions were instituted in creation and expected to be upheld. Building upon the argument that women might report truth to other women and children but they should not teach (based on 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15), Dahms considers the teaching of Priscilla as it is reported in Acts 18:26, the prophesying of Peter's daughters in Acts 21:9 and the significance of the roles held by Phoebe and Junias as reported in

⁵⁶ Ibid, 50.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 106.

Romans 16:1-2 and 7. Dahms begins by admitting the significance of Priscilla's name being mentioned before that of Aquila but quickly notes that there is no indication that her helpful explanation of the truth required any teaching in the sense of knowledge and good judgment. Priscilla was helpful and told the truth concerning the way of God but Dahms argues that she was merely transmitting truth that had been given to her rather than offering any new insight into her explanation of the gospel. Similarly, in his consideration of Peter's daughters Dahms argues that as prophets the women were not doing anything outside of what God had called to happen, however, they should not be considered teachers because they were merely relaying a truth given to them.⁵⁸

When considering Phoebe, Dahms acknowledges her aid to the church and to Paul but points out that there is no indication that she held any role of teaching or authority. Phoebe was probably a financial benefactress with social connections that she used for the benefit of the Christians, but was not a leader in the church. Similarly, the mentioning of Junias who is called an apostle does not definitely imply that she had a leadership role in the church. Dahms notes that she may have been among the five hundred to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection, or perhaps with her husband she was given the title because of their evangelistic and missionary work. In none of these women does Dahms find any merit to the claims that their presence indicates equal roles between men and women in the early church. Each of these women were faithful to their calling and should be recognized and appreciated, but they should not be given undue importance by those wishing to dissolve distinctions between the roles played by men and women in the church.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 54-55.

Runge counters the explanation offered by Dahms on the roles of Priscilla, Junias, Peter's daughters and Phoebe in his exegesis of Deborah's role in the book of Judges. Runge focuses his attention on Deborah because she was prophet and judge in Israel. While Dahms would suggest that the role of prophet does not involve discernment since God gives the truth directly to the messenger, Runge emphasizes Deborah's role of authority in the community. Deborah presented Israel with the words of God and she also governed with both political and religious authority. Deborah was more than an empty vessel who proclaimed messages without understanding; she led the people of Israel, women and men alike. Runge presses his argument further by addressing the argument that Deborah was an exception to the general rule.⁵⁹ To this he replies that Deborah may be a single case that indicates a new pattern or rule and he uses the account of Cornelius being filled by the Holy Spirit in Acts 10 as an example of such a situation.⁶⁰ Runge continues to argue for Deborah as an example of a woman in authority through Judges 5:7 in which she states "I rose a mother in Israel." A mother has authority over her children to teach and to guide and Deborah, as a mother of Israel, holds the same authority and responsibility. In conclusion, Runge states that women, as Deborah exemplifies, will be called by God to serve in a variety of ways and that they should not be prohibited from doing so.

Pyles presents examples of women in the New Testament to prove that women held roles of authority in the early church. Beginning with Euodia and Syntyche, women

⁵⁹ In his interview Arnold Reimer presented this belief as an argument for why women should not have authority. Admitting that some women have held roles of authority in biblical tradition he argues that this was because the men were not following their duty and so God was required to use women to fulfill their roles for them. When men are faithful to God women will not be called upon to lead. Arnold Reimer, personal interview, summer 2005.

⁶⁰ Albert Runge, *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 25-27.

who are not often remembered with pride since they are mentioned because of a quarrel they could not settle, Pyles points to a section of the passage that is often ignored or overlooked: “help these women *who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life*” (Philippians 4:3). The point of the argument is that these women were considered to have been equal with the men in their service. Pyles continues to support his argument by considering the importance given to older women in Titus 2:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15 and 1 Timothy 5:2. In these passages Pyles points out that the instruction given by these women demonstrates that women were assumed to be incapable of teaching. These women are capable of doing good, of teaching others, of being wise and faithful. Pyles is clear to illustrate through these passages that there is no insinuation that women were created without good judgment that would generally allow them to be wise and good teachers.⁶¹

The Qualifications for an Elder

The two specific passages that are used within the C&MA to describe the qualifications of an Elder are 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.⁶² The arguments based on this passage, although directly about the subject of debate, are the most brief and simple of all the arguments concerning the issue. These passages describe the characteristics necessary for one to become an Elder in the church and since they both explicitly offer examples appropriate for a man it has been assumed that a man must fill the role. The role of Elder is limited to men because it says the one seeking to be an Elder must be faithful to his wife. Dahms specifically argued that because women have been prohibited

⁶¹ Pyles, *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 82-85.

⁶² David Freeman, *The Eligibility of Women to Be Elected as Elders* (Ancaster, 1993), 1.

from teaching in 1 Timothy 2:5 that the qualification to be able to teach proves that this role was intended for men only.⁶³ The counter argument is that men are used as the example because of the cultural expectations of the time and that these characteristics might easily be transferred to women with exactly the same understanding. A woman who was an Elder should be faithful to her husband and be blameless and not prone to drunkenness.⁶⁴ Those who believe women should be Elders see no support for the belief that these passages purposefully exclude women from the desired role.

Conclusion

Disagreement over the appropriate roles for women in the church existed within the C&MA prior to the autonomy of the denomination in Canada and prior to the official beginning of the debates in 1982, as both Andrews and Price exemplify through their dissertations. Additionally, Andrews and Price reveal, through the emphasis of their research on the interpretation of scripture, the appropriate means to argue through this disagreement was to find scriptural support for the desired belief. This practice was continued when the C&MA in Canada did begin to discuss officially the possibility of women as Elders. Each debate, although influenced by tradition and culture, focused on passages of scripture that either supported the exclusion of women from church leadership or provided a way to understand how women could be allowed leadership positions. The commissioned exegesis papers by John Dahms, Franklin Pyles and Albert Runge reveal the importance of scriptural arguments to the denomination and they also exemplify the type of arguments that were being made throughout the 1980's and 1990's in regards to women, church leadership and scriptural interpretation. The goal of the

⁶³ John Dahms, *The Role of Women as Elders: Supporting Document* (Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1987), 74.

⁶⁴ Peter Ralph, personal interview, fall 2005.

denomination during these debates was to remain faithful to the authority of scripture, the problem that developed, however, was that while all remained convinced of this authority there was disagreement over how to interpret these authoritative words.

CHAPTER SIX

THE END OF THE DEBATE

The debates over women as Elders in the C&MA in Canada finally came to an end during the General Assembly of 2000, held in Calgary, Alberta. After nearly twenty years those involved agreed to disagree. With Godly leaders utterly convinced of opposite interpretations of scriptures and unwilling to change their belief on the subject the options available to move forward were few. A strong decision in either direction, to completely restrict women from the role of Elder or to universally allow women as Elders, would have, as it was decided, inappropriately alienated significant portions of the membership and possibly created a split within the denomination. This opinion was specifically expressed by Paul Little who, having avidly fought for the continued restriction of women from the role of Elder and even prepared at one time to leave the denomination if the decision was made to allow women as Elders, decided prior to the decision of 2000 that it was more important for the denomination to remain united due to its great mission internationally than to divide over this issue.¹ While it was not possible to make a strong decision neither was it right to end discussions on the subject without any resolution since nearly twenty years had been spent considering the subject. The final decision, therefore, was to allow each local church the right to discern whether or not it was appropriate to call women to the role of Elder. This decision was a compromise that was consistent with practical means for operating within the C&MA: in order to continue furthering the gospel a certain amount of disagreement was permissible.²

¹ Paul Little, personal interview, summer 2005.

² Wendy Thomas, personal interview, winter 2006.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how the C&MA dealt with the issue of women in leadership during the 1980's and 1990's and to argue that the lack of resolution during this time was the result of a variety of interconnected factors. First, there was disagreement over the denomination's tradition of women in ministry. Second, there was disagreement over the appropriate response to cultural change inside and outside of the church. Third, and most explicitly, the inability of the denomination to come to a consensus on the interpretation of scripture contributed to the lack of resolution. This purpose has been accomplished through a study of the denomination's history and through an examination of the cultural influences upon the church during the 1980's and 1990's. This was also accomplished through a study of exegesis papers written by members of the C&MA throughout this period that revealed a representation of the thoughts on difficult passages concerning women during this time.

The history of the denomination, although not officially debated, had a direct impact upon the discussions of the 1980's and 1990's because members of the denomination, from both sides of the debate, felt as if they were being faithful to the tradition of the movement. Since there was a strong history of women in positions of leadership during the formative years of the C&MA, and because A.B. Simpson himself encouraged women to be involved in significant areas of ministry, many within the denomination felt as if the restrictions placed upon women were incompatible with the history of the denomination. Those who believed that the restrictions were appropriate, however, also felt as if they were acting within the tradition of the denomination as they encouraged women to act in many roles while insisting, as A.B. Simpson himself had insisted, that within the church proper women should not have positions of leadership.

The debate regarding women as Elders in the C&MA emerged out of a tradition that restricted women from leadership in theory while encouraging women to take any leadership necessary in order to spread the gospel. This confusing reality gave strength to the convictions held by the members of the C&MA who took part in considering the possibility of women as Elders. Both sides of the debate felt as if they were acting within the accepted tradition of the denomination and both felt as if their positions were strengthened by this fact.

The cultural impact of the rise of feminism during the 1980's as well as the controversy concerning inerrancy during the 1970's had a great effect upon the members of the C&MA as they debated the issue of women as Elders. The rise of feminism created within members and leaders of the denomination a sense of fear as well as supportive encouragement for the movement. As members of the denomination debated the possibility of changing roles of women in the church it was impossible to ignore the changing roles of women in general society. Additionally, the division among evangelicals concerning the authority of the Bible and hermeneutics added to the tension and the fear that existed throughout the debates. There was a sense of fear in some that as evangelicals debated the role of women in the church they were actually debating whether the authority of the Bible. This belief made the debates over scripture intense and often emotionally charged because there was more at stake than arbitrary church structures. Although these cultural events, like the influence of tradition, were not explicitly argued, their impact upon members of the C&MA was significant. Upon reflection, members of the denomination do not deny the impact of feminism and that the inerrancy debates had a great effect upon their decisions although they were never

officially acknowledged during the 1980's and 1990's. The rise of feminism and the inerrancy debates were silent factors that prolonged and confused the debates over women as Elders.

The focus of the discussions on women as Elders existed through debate over the appropriate way to interpret scripture. During these times of debate members of the denomination, who all held to the authority of scripture, used the Bible to prove their individual points. Through a study of Leslie Andrews' and Wendall Price's dissertations it is obvious that even before the official debates began in the 1980's there were questions concerning the practice of the denomination and the accepted interpretations of scripture in regards to this subject. They also reveal the importance felt within the denomination to base their arguments on scripture. The papers commissioned by the denomination continue to reveal the importance there was in making a decision based upon a proper interpretation of scripture while additionally revealing what members of the denomination believed concerning scripture and how it should be interpreted during this time.

The C&MA is a denomination with a confused history concerning women in ministry. While women have continually been encouraged to serve the church through various means they have also been limited in their participation by their exclusion from the offices of Elder and ordained minister. The debates over women as Elders from 1982 to 2000 were a continuation of this confused history as members of the denomination remained divided over the appropriate place of women in the church. Although the general tendency would be to assume that the debates were based purely on the interpretation of scripture it is clear that in addition to an important consideration on the

meaning of scripture these debates were also heavily influenced by the tradition of the denomination as well as by the cultural changes that were taking place during this time.

As the denomination moves into the future and continues to consider how women are to serve in the church it will be essential that these influences continue to be recognized and acknowledged if they wish to avoid another twenty year debate.

Appendix 1

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M.A. Christian Studies
McMaster Divinity College
Supervisor: Dr. Gordon Heath

Standard Interview Questions

The Great Debate: An Answer to Why there is No Agreement Over the Role of Women in Leadership in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Canada

1. Can you please describe your position in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Canada (member, pastor, superintendent, missionary) and how long you have been a part of the C&MA?
2. Can you please explain what role you have had in the discussions concerning women in leadership within the church?
3. Can you please explain your impression of how the denomination has handled the issue of women in leadership?
4. Are there any specific events or discussions pertaining to this subject that stand out in your mind?
5. What is your personal opinion of how women should be allowed to lead and serve in the church and how did you arrive at your position (were there any influential leaders or books that influenced your thought)?
6. There are certain passages in scripture that seem to speak directly to this subject. Can you please list those passages for me and explain your interpretation of them and how you have come to reach your position?
7. It would seem that the discussion concerning women in leadership emerged during a period of fast cultural change (specifically there was a strong emergence of feminism during the 80s). Do you think this influenced the way we have made our decisions in the 80s and 90s?
8. How do you feel the tradition of the denomination influences the way that we believe women should lead within the C&MA? Do you think that tradition is important to the issue?
9. Why, do you think, after 2 decades there is still no resolution on this issue in the C&MA? What do you think remains the greatest point of division?
10. How was the decision to allow women as elders (with the 2/3 majority vote of each local church) brought about at the general assembly in 2000?
11. Can you explain how policy is developed within the C&MA (how are committees formed, what authority do they have, how important are the votes that take place at general conference) and how you believe this has affected the discussions of women in leadership?
12. How do you think increasing women's roles in pastoral leadership/missions/outreach would affect the church? Would it hinder or help the overall effectiveness of the church's mission?
13. Do you think there is a gap between what is believed and what is actually practiced within the church in regards to the roles women are given?

Research Consent Form

The Great Debate: An Answer to Why there is No Agreement Over the Role of Women in Leadership in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Canada

I hereby agree to participate in the research project entitled, "The Great Debate: An Answer to why there is no Agreement over the Role of Women in Leadership within the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Canada". I understand that Alexandra Meek, a member and accredited worker of the C&MA in Canada, is researching this topic as she attempts to complete the thesis component of her M.A. (Christian Studies) at McMaster Divinity College. My participation will include an interview that will last approximately 1 hour, during which time I will be asked to answer a set of 13 standardized questions.

I also understand and agree to the following components of the project:

1. The interview will be recorded with my permission only and then transcribed by the researcher. Any information offered may be used in the project, unless I expressly indicate that I am speaking "off the record." In these circumstances, I am assured confidentiality. That is my name will not be connected with what I have said. Nor will any information that allows me to be identified as the source of the information be included."
2. My name will appear in the written project and the information I share in the interview will be used appropriately throughout the project. I understand that this is beneficial to the project because of its historical nature and I am willing to waive my right to confidentiality.
3. I have the right to refuse to respond to any question I do not wish to answer.
4. I have the right to withdraw from the project at any point in time and understand that the researcher will destroy any research given up to this point and remove my name from the project immediately unless I indicate otherwise.
5. I understand that if I choose to remain a part of the project, the interview recorded will be kept by the researcher for 5 years and then destroyed.
6. If I so desire I may request a copy of the final paper with which the researcher will provide.
7. To avoid the misrepresentation of my views or opinions, I may request to see how my position is being characterized in the project prior to the submission of the paper to ensure that my views and opinions are being appropriately represented.
8. I recognize that this topic has caused much stress within the denomination and because I have been personally involved in those discussions I may be putting myself at risk of psychological damage. I recognize that questions in this interview may create strong feelings of anxiety or frustration and I recognize my right to end the interview immediately if I so choose.
9. I understand that this is a topic that has divided support within the denomination and that open acknowledgment of my personal position may place me at risk of social damage. That is, I understand that what I say may have implications for my reputation and relationship with others within my community. However, I know that I will be discussing only views and opinions that I feel comfortable having publicly known and that I need not respond to any question I would prefer to skip over.
10. This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the McMaster Research Ethics Board and if I have any concerns or questions I may contact the board at 905-525-9140 x. 23142 or at srebsec@mcmaster.ca
11. Alexandra is being supervised by Dr. Gordon Heath, faculty member of McMaster Divinity College, and that I may contact him at 905-577-4782 x 26409
12. I may contact Alexandra at alexandrameek@hotmail.com if I have any questions or concerns following my interview.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

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