

**The Report of the
Sydney Diocesan
Doctrine Commission
on the
Ordination of Women
to the Priesthood**

aam

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**REPORT OF THE SYDNEY DIOCESAN DOCTRINE
COMMISSION RE: ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO THE
PRIESTHOOD OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Question

- 1.1 Should the priesthood of the Anglican Church be open to women as well as men? Such an option has never been available in Australia, although it has occurred in various other parts of the Anglican Communion and other Protestant Churches have accepted women as ordained ministers. *The question involves the application of Scripture to a precise issue. It is not so much ordination which is under study but ordination to a priesthood which, as described in the formularies of the Anglican Church, involves ultimate pastoral responsibility for a congregation.*
- 1.2 One of the most valuable features of the present discussion has been the way in which the joint ministries of men and women as endorsed in the New Testament have been re-discovered and applied. All would wish to emphasise the high value placed on women in the Bible, the reality and importance of their ministries in the Church, and the significance of the work done by women in Scripture and history. These things are not in dispute.

The Importance of the Question

- 1.3 The agitation within the Church is sufficient witness to the contemporary importance of the issues involved. The recognition of the rights of women in society generally and their increasing participation in all aspects of professional and social life has led to a drastic re-assessment of the Church's traditional stance.
- 1.4 Some regard the matter as having a deep importance for the preaching of the Gospel. They ask whether we dare address a world in which women are accorded (in theory at least) a proper respect, while the church fails to do so. It is asserted that the world has become more enlightened than the Church. Others point to the injustice done to women and the genuine distress caused by a denial of the liberty to minister fully in response to God's call. From another point of view, fears are expressed that our understanding of God as Father is at risk. As well, the scandal of division and the pain involved in argument are also factors to be considered. Can one church exist with two different views on this matter and how will it relate to other denominations? Some (on both sides of the debate) see the need to argue strongly

about the question because they believe that the fundamental issues of the authority, interpretation and application of Scripture are at stake.

The Problem of Authority

- 1.5 Across the range of the Christian Church, the reasons given for supporting or denying the ordination of women differ widely. On both side of the case it is not uncommon to find proponents agreeing on an answer without accepting all the arguments advanced. The Doctrine Commission has addressed itself to this question on biblical grounds, believing that until the biblical material on the ministry of women has been thoroughly investigated, no real consideration of the other issues around which the matter of the ordination of women to the priesthood revolves can be satisfactorily dealt with. In this regard, the importance of Article 20 is noted: "It is not lawful for the Church to ordain (i. e. to enact) anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another."
- 1.6 It must be noted, of course, that even those who begin with the same scriptural presuppositions differ in their conclusions. There are those who have taken such differences to mean that nothing can be affirmed, but such a course does not help in deciding whether or not the present situation should remain. It is, furthermore, overly pessimistic.
- 1.7 It is often the case that in a theological debate of this importance much time is required before a consensus on the meaning of texts begins to emerge and the reasons for differences in interpretation become plain. There is no substitute for hard work on the text of Scripture accompanied by a willingness to change. We must all be open to challenge and interrogation; time to reflect and a humble seeking after God's mind must accompany the discussion.

The Commission's Procedure

- 1.8 The Commission has seen its task as first and foremost to examine the biblical texts and to follow through the question of their application. This has been done through study and discussion of biblical scholarship in the relevant areas. Various members of the Commission have particular experience in the debate and in the area of the ministry of women and retain different emphases within a broad framework of agreement.
- 1.9 In order to assist the process of examination, the Commission corresponded with Dr. Leon Morris, and interviewed

the Rev. Kevin Giles at some length. Most members had the benefit of hearing Dr. David Scholer during his visit to Australia and talking with him. Recourse was also had to the literature of the debate, and to the earlier Reports to the Synod.

- 1.10 This Report does not aim to give all the details of the argument, but to set out the conclusion of the Commission in a manner that gives a broad indication of the way in which it has reasoned.

2. METHOD OF APPROACH

- 2.1 The Commission understands its approach to biblical theology to be governed by three factors, which interact with one another.
- 2.2 In the first place there is the careful interpretation of particular biblical texts in their historical and cultural setting. In this work the whole range of relevant material must be considered, and, in accordance with the approach mentioned in Article 20, one text must not be suppressed in favour of another, but all must be given their due weight.
- 2.3 Second, exegesis must be conducted in the light of the wider scope of relevant biblical material. In other words, there is a reciprocal relationship between the theology of Scripture and the exegetical task. Exegesis shapes theology and theology informs exegesis. In regard to the subject under discussion biblical material relating to ministry, tradition, headship, and congregation are amongst the relevant topics.
- 2.4 Third, attention should be paid to the history of interpretation. We do not approach the biblical text anew in every generation; the results of earlier study must be taken into account.¹ The Bible, however, remains supreme. The history of exegesis as such is always relevant to our interpretation, but never decisive.
- 2.5 It should finally be noted that at several points in the exegesis of biblical passages, a limited application of certain importance principles and arguments has been attempted. A number of issues raised by these passages cry out for further consideration and careful application: the members of the Commission felt constrained to present their conclusions to Synod, although they could not pursue the implications of all aspects of the New Testament teaching.

3. THE TEXTS

- 3.1 In a report of this nature it is not possible to examine in detail the complex exegetical issues that have been raised

by various writers in this field. The aim is rather to highlight the issues, to assess the weight of various arguments in relation to the key biblical texts and to present the conclusions reached. The references are not intended to represent a comprehensive bibliography on the subject.

Genesis 1-3

- 3.2 This portion of Scripture is significant in the debate because of its foundational importance in Biblical Theology generally and also because of the allusions of Paul to this material in his discussion of male-female relationships (cf. 1 Cor. 11:7-12, 14:35, 1 Tim. 2:13-14).
- 3.3 The teaching of the creation narratives is that when God created mankind in his own image, he created them male and female (Gen. 1:27). In the narrative of Genesis 1 the question of the relationship between men and women is not specifically addressed. The emphasis is on the relationship between *humanity and God* (male and female together functioning as the image of God) and *humanity and the rest of creation* (male and female exercising dominion). However, in Genesis 2:18-25 the relationship of men and women to *one another* is specifically portrayed within the context of those other relationships. The female is formed after the male to be “a help corresponding to him” (2:18 RSV “a helper fit for him”). The point is often made that the priority of the male in this narrative does not indicate his superiority; indeed, his inadequacy apart from the woman is emphasized. On the other hand, it appears from the narrative that an *ordered relationship* is indicated. The man names his wife, implying a special responsibility for her. It would not be possible to exchange the man for the woman in this narrative without changing the presentation significantly.² We therefore contend that a difference between men and women in function and responsibility is taught here before the fall narrative of Genesis 3. This suggestion of a difference in the relationship between men and women is not a contradiction of the teaching of Genesis 1 about men and women together being created “in the image of God” and together exercising dominion over creation.
- 3.4 It is important to notice that the ordered relationships of Genesis 2 are inverted in the fall narrative of Genesis 3. The serpent assumes the role of God in relation to the woman and the woman assumes the role of man and becomes the initiator in that relationship. The judgement of God imposed in 3:14-19 involves a re-establishment of his created order.³ However, because of sin those relationships

will now be painful. It is not correct to say that the notion of order in the relationship between man and woman is introduced as a result of the fall.⁴ Genesis 3:16 introduces the note of pain in the relationship but not the note of order. The subjugation and abuse of women by men is an expression of sin. Christians are obliged to oppose all forms of oppression and evil and this must include every distortion of the God-ordained relationship between men and women.

Jesus and Women

- 3.5 The Old Testament nowhere teaches that women are intrinsically inferior to men although it presents a patriarchal structure of family and society. Some have argued from Jewish literature that by New Testament times the role of women had hardened to a considerable degree so that women were relegated to a position of inferiority. The uniform testimony of the Gospels to the presence of women among the followers of Jesus and to his serious teaching of them is said to constitute a dramatic break with tradition, “without precedent in contemporary Judaism”.⁵ However, we cannot be too dogmatic about attitudes to women in Galilee or Jerusalem before 70 AD, owing to a lack of evidence. Furthermore, there is no saying of Jesus indicating a special concern for the matter and no indication that his behaviour offended the Jews at this point.⁶ Too much can be made of the supposed difference between Jesus and Jewish male society in their attitudes to women. Nevertheless, the presence of numerous women among his followers and his attitude towards them certainly points to his acceptance of them as joint heirs with men of the Kingdom he proclaimed.

Galatians 3:28

- 3.6 By contrast with the rabbinic tradition as we know it from later documents, Paul certainly voices a radical sentiment when he declares that “in Jesus Christ . . . there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). However, this text should not be taken to mean that the distinctions of race, social rank or sex are simply obliterated in Christ and, consequently, it should not be taken as a key for the interpretation of Pauline texts on the contribution of women to corporate worship.⁷
- 3.7 Within its context, Galatians 3:28 addresses the twofold question: who may become a child of God and on what basis? It answers that any person, regardless of race, sex or

civil status, may become one by faith in Christ. Since all are under the judgement of God all must be saved on the same basis and come before God on an equal footing. "The distinction that exists between men and women by virtue of creation is not abolished, any more than that between Jews and Greeks; to be in Christ does not therefore mean natural equality. But all, both male and female, are one in Christ, i.e., they together constitute one body".⁸

3.8 If the Apostle were teaching in this passage that all social distinctions were obliterated, he could not proceed to give separate instructions to slaves and masters in Ephesians 6 or insist that the gospel should go to the Jew first then to the Greek in Romans 1:16. The former passage shows how Paul envisaged a transformation of the relationship between masters and slaves in Christ and the teaching of Ephesians 5 similarly points to a transformation of the relationship between husbands and wives in Christ. The practical implications of a text like Galatians 3:28 must be worked out but not on the assumption that natural distinctions or functional differences are removed by the work of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 7:17-24).

3.9 In this connection it should be noted that Professor F. F. Bruce has argued for the ordination of women on the following principle: "whatever in Paul's teaching promotes true freedom is of universal and permanent validity; whatever seems to impose restrictions on true freedom has regard to local and temporary conditions".⁹ Galatians 3:28 is thus counted as having universal and permanent validity but certain texts relating to the ministry of women in the congregation have regard to local and temporary conditions in New Testament times. However, this principle of interpretation is untenable and unworkable. For, who decided what true freedom is! It cannot be the absence of all restrictions. Indeed certain restrictions actually promote true freedom. The whole-hearted adoption of Professor Bruce's principle of interpretation would mean that any New Testament prohibition would be seen as local and temporary if it conflicted with one's own view of true liberty.

Ephesians 5:21-33 (cf. 1 Peter 3:1-7)

3.10 In Ephesians 5:19-21 a series of principles indicate in practical terms what it means to be "filled with the Spirit" (v.18). "Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" (v.21) is the final exhortation in the sequence. However, since v.22 has no verb in Greek, it must be assumed that there is a very close link between v.21 and what follows

(5:22-6:9). Some commentators understand v.21 to be calling for the mutual submission of both partners in the husband/wife, parent/child, and slave/master pairs. While it is true that the leadership of the husband is to be patterned on the self-sacrificing service of Christ for his church, Paul does not mean that the functions of husband and wife are simply interchangeable. The functions of parent and child or master and slave are similarly not interchangeable in the passage. The gospel should transform the way leadership is exercised in each of these relationships. However, the verb in the expression "submitting to one another" (*hupotassomenoi*) is used on more than forty occasions in the New Testament with the sense of willingly recognising authority and subjecting oneself to it (cf. Rom. 13:1,5; 1 Cor. 14:32,34; 15:27, 1 Peter 5:5). It is not simply a synonym for a verb like *diakonein* ("to serve").

3.11 There has been much controversy over the meaning of Paul's description of the husband as "the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church" (v.23). Although some prominent scholars have argued that the Greek word *Kephale* ("head") can mean "source" or "origin", it is submitted that there is no known use of the word in this sense in Greek literature of the period: its common metaphorical sense is "ruler" or "authority over".¹⁰ In Ephesians 1:19-23 Paul parallels his assertion that things are subject to Christ with a declaration that he is appointed head (*kephale*) over everything. There can be no escaping the idea of rule or authority here. The idea of head then leads to a second concept: Christ's rule is "for the church, which is his body". In Ephesians 5:23, 25-29 Christ's headship over the church is clearly shown to be exercised in his saving work — it is demonstrated at the cross. Christ's loving self-sacrifice in the interests of his bride is to be the pattern for husbands in the expression of their headship in the marriage relationship (cf. Mark 10:42-45). The figure of headship apparently represents the exercise of responsibility for the welfare, security, and spiritual growth of the wife.

3.12 In Ephesians 5:22-4 the Church is to be subject to Christ's headship. This model provides a pattern for the wife's relation to her head. Husbands are not told to *make* their wives submit but rather to act towards them with self-giving love. The wife is not called to live in a state of subjection but to recognise and accept her husband's responsibility in the relationship. It will involve respect of the husband's authority to fulfil that responsibility under God (v.33).

3.13 The concept of the “headship” of a husband is one that is not simply uncongenial to much contemporary thinking, but one that is profoundly difficult to apprehend in its New Testament sense and context. As other central words in the New Testament, notably for example, “love”, have been distorted by everyday use, our concepts of headship may be so formed by everyday use that we have difficulty in understanding their New Testament sense. This difficulty, which is of immediate relevance, represents one particular aspect of the permanent problem we encounter in relating the language of the Scriptures to the particular place and situation in which we find ourselves. Phrases such as “head of school” or “head of state” or “departmental head”, carry with them such overtones of status and in some cases, arbitrary power, that the application of the word “head” to marriage seems both foreign and unacceptable. There is need for a transformation of our understanding where this term is used. The key will come primarily along a further understanding of the headship of Christ in relation to the Church, and by consideration of the Gospel narratives where we see Christ in association with the community of the disciples and friends around him. The headship which is Christ’s must be seen in the context of his other attributes and functions as disclosed in the New Testament. Christ the Head paradoxically expresses his headship in the role of the Servant — the eternal and sovereign Lord acts as the foot-washer, accepting the task that no other would apparently undertake (John 13), and becomes the crucified victim of the crucifixion narratives. Christ’s leadership is exercised in this self-denying and self-giving way, offering his all — indeed his life — for those over whom he is head.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

3.14 In this important passage concerning the roles of men and women in the Christian congregation, it is essential to note that authority is the fundamental issue. Paul teaches a divine order in creation in the relationship between men and women and relates this to an order in the relationship between the Father and the Son: “the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (v.3 RSV). There is a certain ambiguity in the use of the Greek words *aner* and *gune*, which may be translated “husband” and “wife” or more generally “man” and “woman”. The narrative of Genesis 2, to which Paul alludes in vv.8-9,12, presents its teaching about man-woman relationships generally in terms of the portrayal of the first “marriage”. We may similarly suppose that in 1 Corinthians

11, the question of male headship is mentioned with reference to marriage relationships but it is possible that a more general reference to man-woman relationships in the congregation is also intended. This is not to be construed to mean that all women are subject to all men in congregational life.

3.15 Once again it must be asserted that the attempt of commentators to understand the word *kephale* (“head”) in terms of “source” or “origin” cannot be supported from evidence outside the New Testament. However, care must be taken in applying the normal meaning of this word (“ruler”, “authority over”). God’s headship over Christ, which involves an initiating activity in sending the Son for our salvation, in no way suggests that Christ as Saviour has any less dignity or worth than the Father. Rather, the issue is *function within the relationship*. Likewise, issues of dignity and worth are not under discussion regarding man and woman. Indeed, their interdependence is stressed in vv.11-12 (cf. 7:3-5).

3.16 The weight of scholarly opinion is that Paul maintained the right of women to pray or prophesy in the public meetings of the churches. In marked contrast with synagogue practices, this liberty was an important expression of the new life in Christ (cf. 1 Peter 3:7 “joint heirs of the grace of life”). However, it appears that some of the Corinthian women were enjoying that liberty in a way that “dishonours their heads” (v.5). The RSV follows those commentators who see a reference to the abandonment of veils in this passage (vv.6,10). Some have argued that the veil was a symbol of the *authority* of a woman in Christ to pray or prophesy in church.¹¹ However, Paul does not use the word “veil” except in v.15, where he says a woman’s long hair is “given her for a veil” (*anti peribolaiou*). It may be that the Corinthian women were wearing their hair in a way that suggested that old marital patterns no longer applied and that they were no longer subordinate to their husbands.¹² In this case, Paul is arguing that they should wear their hair long and in a fashion appropriate to the cultural norms of that day, seeing it as an expression of the proper headship of their husbands. While it is difficult to be certain about the practice condemned by the Apostle, he clearly affirms that the oneness of man and woman in Christ (stressed in vv.11-12) does not obliterate the distinction given in creation. By the way in which they were acting, the women were somehow displaying a rejection of God’s plan for the relationship of man and woman.

3.17 In vv.7-9, Paul refers to Genesis 2 to make his point that the created order between men and women is to be acknowledged and *not overthrown by conduct in the congregation*. The Apostle is not denying the truth of Genesis 1:26 when he says that man is “the image and glory of God” and women is “the glory of man”. The glory of a thing is that which points to or manifests its dignity, honour or station. A man is particularly to be the image or glory of God by taking the initiative in self-sacrificing love in the marriage relationship (cf. Eph. 5:25-8). A woman is to be “the glory of man” presumably by standing in a proper relation to her husband and affirming his role as head by her response to him (cf. Eph. 5:22-4). In this presentation, Paul does not deal with the detail of a whole possible range of relationships within the congregation nor with the problem of members who have an unbelieving spouse (cf. 1 Peter 3:1-6). The Apostle then appeals to his readers’ sense of seemliness (v.13), to the teaching of “nature” (vv.14-15) and to the general practice of the churches (v.16) to support his argument about the way in which women pray or prophesy.

3.18 For all its exegetical complexities 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 has a simple underlying message: the freedom of Christian women to minister in the congregation must not overflow the pattern of man-woman relationships. Whether Paul is speaking about the wearing of a veil by a woman in church or the wearing of hair in a way that indicates her place within the created order of God, there are clearly issues here that relate specifically to first-century Corinth and not to our own culture. Nevertheless, it must be observed that the basis of Paul’s view of the headship of men was not in an area which is culturally relative. “His appeal to a Christological hierarchy and to the creational relation of Adam and Eve are independent of the actual cultural setting of the Corinthians”.¹³

1 Corinthians 14:33b-36

3.19 If v.33b is taken as the beginning of this section, Paul was concerned about the Corinthians acting independently from other churches in the matter of the participation of women in congregational meetings: “as in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches” (cf. v.36). Since 1 Corinthians 11 allows women to pray and prophesy in church under certain conditions, the command to be silent in 14:34 cannot be an absolute one. Many commentators suggest that v.35 provides the key, forbidding women to interrupt proceedings by asking questions which could more properly be put to their

husbands (lit. “their own men”) at home, or “by taking part with more ardour than intelligence in the discussion of prophetic messages.”¹⁴ Since Paul deals with the ministry of prophets and the importance of weighing what they say in vv.29-33, the passage about the women being silent may be specifically related to this.

3.20 When Paul says “it is shameful for a woman to speak in church”, he must be understood in the light of v.34b: “they are not permitted to speak but should be subordinate, as even the law says”. The speaking in view constituted some sort of exercise of authority and was therefore “inconsistent with the subordinate or submissive role which Paul believed women should play in the assembled church body.”¹⁵ Against those who propose Genesis 3:16 as the Scriptural basis for Paul’s assertion here, it is much more likely that the reference is to the creation narratives of Genesis 1:26ff.; 2:21 ff., on which the Apostle has based the argument of 11:3ff. Once again it is possible to perceive that behind his condemnation of certain first-century practices there lies an apparent concern to promote relationships between men and women that are consistent with the order of creation.

1 Timothy 2:9-15

3.21 These verses follow Paul’s instructions about the offering of appropriate prayers and thanksgivings by Christians. It is natural to see them as a reference to congregational, rather than to family worship (vv.1-7). In v.8 the Apostle is concerned that the manner of life of the men should not mar their prayers. The word “likewise” (*hosautos*) at the beginning of v.9 could mean that the conduct of women in public prayer is also in view (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3). Women should not focus on fancy adornments but on good deeds as the proper manner of life of “women who profess religion” (v.10). In Jewish and pagan texts, “the rejection of external adornment was part and parcel of a woman’s submission to her husband and a recognition of her place among men in general.”¹⁶ The word *sophrosune* is used in vv.9 and 15, emphasising that the whole paragraph is about the need for good judgement, moderation and decency, presumably with regard to the standards of Scripture and the cultural norms of the day. The Apostle is similarly concerned for the reputation of Christians within society at large in 3:7, 5:14 and 6:1 (cf. Titus 2:5,8,10).

3.22 The manner in which women *learn* in the congregation is then the focus of v.11. Paul says they are to learn “in quietness” (*en hesuchia* means in peacefulness or not

disturbing the appropriate order of things, but not quietness in the sense of never speaking) and “with all submissiveness” (*hupotage*). Here again it must be noted that the manner in which this injunction is applied will clearly vary from culture to culture. The next verse may be taken as making two distinct statements: the Apostle does not permit women to teach or to exercise authority over a man. However, the structure of the verse in Greek, suggests rather that the expression “to exercise authority over men” specifically defines the sort of teaching denied to women.¹⁷ Once again we are told that they are to be “in quietness” (*en hesuchia*, at the end of v.12 as at the beginning of v.11).

3.23 It is clear from Titus 2:3 that women were expected to teach one another. It is also clear from texts such as Colossians 3:16 and 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11,14 that all believers were expected to share to some extent in the task of teaching and admonishing one another (cf. Rom. 15:14, Heb. 5:12). The ministry of prophecy in which women engaged in Corinth was certainly a means by which “all might learn and be encouraged” (1 Cor. 14:31). In Acts 18:26 we are told that Priscilla joined her husband Aquila in expounding to Apollos “the way of God more accurately”. However, the prohibition and restriction of 1 Timothy 2:12 concerns specifically *teaching which is an exercise of authority over men*. The application of this injunction to our own situation is discussed in sections 4 and 5 below. Much debate has raged about the meaning of the verb *authentain* in this context. Although the verb is only used here in the New Testament, examination of its use in other contexts suggests that it does not carry with it the meaning “to domineer” or “to exercise illicit authority” (AV “to usurp authority”). It is rather a neutral term, meaning “to have authority”.¹⁸

3.24 Some commentators have argued that the injunctions of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 are directed against women influenced by a particular form of false teaching. This heresy constituted “an assault on marriage and what were considered appropriate models and roles for women in that society.”¹⁹ Such an approach stresses the occasional or *ad hoc* nature of Paul’s instructions and denies that 1 Timothy is a “church manual”, relevant to every age and situation. While it is true that Paul’s teaching here is related to a specific historical and cultural context, it must be noted that the use of Genesis 2 in 2:13 introduces the theological principle of male headship employed in passages discussed above. Paul appears to see the prior formation of Adam in Genesis 2

implying a leadership role for man in relation to woman. The Apostle does not use this text selectively, according to the point he is seeking to make in a given context, but consistently to maintain a perspective on man-woman relationships in Christ in line with the original will of God expressed in the creation narrative. Our task is to discern the manner in which the teaching of women in our churches today might be an infringement of this fundamental principle of Scripture.

3.25 The clear statement of Romans 5:12,17 is that sin came into the world because of Adam’s disobedience. Thus Adam is not exonerated by the statement of 1 Timothy 2:14 (“Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor”). Furthermore, the teaching of this verse about Eve being deceived cannot be taken to mean that all women are too gullible to engage in teaching (cf. Titus 2:3). As suggested in paragraph 3:4, the fall narrative of Genesis 3 pictures an inversion of the created order; the serpent assumes the role of God in relation to the woman and the woman assumes the role of her husband and becomes the initiator in that relationship. Paul’s reference to the deception of Eve would appear to have this inversion of roles in view.²⁰ When he speaks of childbirth in v.15, therefore, we may take it that he is referring to a typical part of a woman’s role to represent the whole. Christian women are to consider their God-given responsibilities in the created order and fulfil them in a way that is glorifying to God. This does not mean that women should measure their worth in terms of child-bearing or that wives should see themselves as restricted by Scripture to domestic duties. Given the Apostle’s concern in other places for an effective ministry of believers to one another and to those outside the congregation, Christian women today must be urged to exercise their gifts in whatever ways are possible within the framework of such family responsibilities as they may have. As those responsibilities vary from person to person and from time to time a whole range of options for the ministry of women should be explored.

4. THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Although the culture of the ancient world needs to be taken into account in the process of biblical interpretation, the Bible’s fundamental theological principles are not controlled by a particular culture. Indeed the pattern of the Christian life set forth in Scripture challenges the norms of every culture and has enduring applicability. When the Apostle Paul deals with the question of male and female

relationships in the family and the Christian congregation he does not only respond to first-century problems with pragmatic solutions appropriate to that culture. Rather, he appeals to *theological principles that he regards as foundational and God-given* and applies them in a way that regularly challenges and reforms the attitude and behaviour of his contemporaries. Our task is to discern the theological principles of Scripture and apply them to our own situation, so that the ministry of women in our churches may be encouraged in a way that is consistent with those principles. Christians in every generation must be prepared for the words of Scripture to challenge the conventional wisdom of church and society.

- 4.2 Our study of the relevant biblical texts suggests that a consistent theme is the principle of order in the relationships between husbands and wives. The Apostle Paul describes this in terms of the figure of headship. The same notion of order is expressed by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:1-7, without the term "head" being used. While it is undoubtedly true that the notion of headship implies authority rather than source or origin, it is regrettable that this has been understood to promote an authoritarian or domineering pattern for male leadership. As indicated above this is entirely contrary to the teaching of Jesus on loving service and its application by Paul to marriage in particular. For Paul, the husband's authority is to be exercised by responsible and self-sacrificing care for his wife and the maintenance of this relationship in security, harmony and love. It is leadership which *seeks to promote the personal growth and fulfilment of the wife in Christ, including the exercise of her gifts and abilities*. However, whereas in the relationship between Christ and the Church, Christ is not dependent on the Church, in the New Testament view of marriage the Christian husband is also dependent upon his wife for personal growth and fulfilment (1 Cor. 7:3-5; 11:11). This stress on mutual dependence must not be taken to imply a simple interchangeability of man and woman. The Biblical view is far richer than that. We believe that it is the exploration of such a pattern of relationships which will most fruitfully challenge the tendencies to irresponsibility on the part of husbands and wives afflicting the family in contemporary society.
- 4.3 It is evident that the Bible itself connects the relationship of men and women in the family with relationships in a Christian congregation. This is more obvious in 1 Corinthians 11 where the apostle authorises women to pray and prophesy

in the congregation but only in a way which recognises the headship of men in a manner appropriate to that culture. The fact that women referred to in 1 Corinthians 14 have to ask their own husbands at home suggests that the Apostle is specifically concerned about the maintenance of appropriate relationships between husbands and wives in the congregation. In 1 Timothy 2, however, the relationship of men and women in general in the congregation is in view, and here again there is an assumption of an appropriate order based on the portrayal of marriage in Genesis 2. In this connection it is important to note that the congregation is described as a household in 1 Timothy 3:15. It is no accident, therefore that an important qualification for eldership in the congregation is the ability of a man to manage his own household well (1 Timothy 3:4,5). The picture of congregation that emerges from the New Testament is not egalitarian or democratic but one in which we recognise the presence of leaders or elders appointed from the earliest times (e.g. Acts 14:23) who rule, and to whom respect and obedience are due (1 Thess. 5:12,13; Heb. 13:17; Phil. 1:1). Their authority is not intermittent or functional but the authority of an office appointed to teach.

- 4.4 Since women are mentioned as engaging in the ministry of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 11, it is necessary to decide what is meant by this. Prophecy is one of the most important ministries mentioned in the New Testament lists (1 Cor. 12:28f.; Eph. 4:11; cf. Rom. 12:6), and within the period of the early Church there were numbers of prophets who functioned outside the local churches as well as within them (Acts 11:28; 13:1f.; 21:4,9, 10f. and esp. 1 Cor. 14), including Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:9).
- 4.5 The Apostle Paul desired that this gift might be widespread among the Corinthians and so he urged all of them to seek to prophesy (1 Cor. 14:1,39). Congregational prophecy was so valuable because of the upbuilding, encouragement and consolation (14:3) to other Christians that resulted from its proper exercise. Prophecy differed from other speech activities in that it was a public proclamation arising from a direct revelation (14:30). Such a revelation was not additional to Scripture but a disclosure by God to the prophet of the specific needs of men and women in the congregation, needs which might otherwise have been known only to God (14:25). Accordingly, the secrets of their hearts, their worries or tears, or their refusal or hesitancy to do God's will were the content of their revelations. Such prophecies were to be tested carefully to ensure that they were

truly God-revealed (14:29).

- 4.6 Potentially any Christian might receive the gift of prophecy as a manifestation of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7,11, though cf. 12:29), but this potential *in no way implied that with gift came authority to lead the congregation*. Paul's desire that all the Corinthians should prophesy would make no sense if it meant all would then exercise leadership. Prophets themselves were to submit to the apostolic rule (14:26, 29-33, 37). No verses in the New Testament speak of prophets actually performing leadership functions. Prophets in the New Testament churches did not constitute a distinct or well-defined group. There was no form of recognition or appointment such as ordination has become, and the term "prophet" was descriptive of a function: anyone who prophesied might be called a "prophet".
- 4.7 Somewhat surprisingly *prophecy and teaching are consistently distinguished in the New Testament*. Prophecy, as we have seen, always depends on a direct revelation of God, speaking to specific needs of the moment. Teaching, however, is often an exposition or application of Scripture (Act 15:35; 18:11,25; Rom. 2:20,21; Col. 3:16; Heb. 5:12) or an explanation and reiteration of apostolic injunctions (1 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Timothy 2:2; 3:10). In the Pastoral Epistles, teaching appears to be an authoritative function concerned with the faithful transmission of apostolic doctrine or tradition and committed to men specially chosen (e.g. 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-2; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9). It is within this context that the specific prohibition of 1 Timothy 2:12 must be understood. Women are not to assume *the authoritative teaching office that properly belongs to men in the Christian congregation*. In our own context this would not appear to exclude absolutely the possibility of women preaching or teaching in church. It nevertheless appears to exclude the possibility of women exercising the role of teaching elder or "priest" as that term is defined by the Anglican Ordinal.
- 4.8 From the New Testament evidence apostles, apostolic assistants (such as Timothy and Titus) and elders are *the only ones specifically said to rule in churches*. There is considerable and persuasive evidence for ruling elders within the various strands of New Testament traditions (Acts 14:23; 15:2ff.; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Eph. 4:11; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; Heb. 13:17; Jas. 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1f). This leadership was related to their functioning as pastors and teachers (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9; Eph. 4:11). It must be noted however that by "rule" the New Testament

means the *self-sacrificial leadership exemplified by Jesus himself* (Mk. 10:40-45; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

- 4.9 It is sometimes suggested that the subordination of women to men in the family and congregation are features of life subsequent to the fall and before the work of Christ, but have no place in the new relationships which have arisen after his death and resurrection. Such a view fails to do justice to the structure of Genesis 2 and its interpretation in the New Testament. It also fails to take account of the continued fallenness of the men and women who make up the Church and the world until the second coming of Christ. As well, it can claim no specific backing of Scripture in support, and assumes that subordination is inherently unjust. There are cases when subordination will be unjust, and when it is wrongly imposed. But there are other cases where subordination may be the right and proper role of either a man or woman in a particular set of circumstances, or in the acceptance of particular responsibilities within the fallen order of things in which we live.
- 4.10 Insofar as within this debate there is discussion concerning the nature of God and its disclosure in scriptural language, we would affirm that scriptural language about God is inspired by God, and we are not at liberty to modify or change it. While it is patent that God, being God, is neither man nor woman, he reveals himself in masculine terms. This is no denigration of femaleness but remains essential to a Christian understand of God, and is an aspect of God's self-disclosure which lies outside human authority to change.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This Report has been prepared in response to Synod resolution 9/84, which requests the Doctrine Commission to consider and evaluate the report submitted to the 1984 Synod concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood pursuant to Synod resolution 7/83, and to prepare a submission for the Standing Committee.
- 5.2 We have interpret this resolution in a broader rather than a narrower form and addressed ourselves to the basic subject of the Ordination of Women to the Ministry of Priesthood, as set out in the formularies of this Church. While we believe that in the course of this work we have come to a deeper understanding of theological and other issues involved, further understanding was still being gained at the time of the Report's completion.

- 5.3 We recognise that we are far from having reached final and unassailable conclusions on many issues. We have worked in areas where there is still much to learn. We particularly note the problems that we have encountered in our study of the apostolic use of the Old Testament. We have, of necessity, given much attention to the theological principles behind the relationships of men and women as between each other, and the relationships between husbands and wives. We are not unanimous as to whether these are independent, whether the husband/wife relationship is dependent on a prior theology of the relationships of men and women, or whether it has a theological autonomy of its own. We have recognised that the place of the unmarried woman in congregational ministry seems to be one to which Scripture does not directly address itself, leaving questions to be resolved by other Scriptural passages which we have examined in this Report.
- 5.4 We have endeavoured to consider and report on the question of “headship” and “submission” and those theological principles which may be prior to these concepts. We have recognised that both “headship” and “submission” are expressed in a variety of ways and in different forms of words in Holy Scripture. Some of the particular applications we believe, are not presently valid, and not every instance in the New Testament is necessarily an on-going requirement in the Christian community.
- 5.5 We have not reached unanimity in our own minds on every detail of the ministry of women, while finding that there are certain restraints on which we agree, and certain principles for the extension of the ministry of women which we would wish to see encouraged.
- 5.6 Our investigation of other theological work has both helped us in our own, and enabled us to see that this matter is under urgent discussion in many parts of the world. On the application of theology to a particular ecclesiastical situation, we have noted the UK General Synod paper, “Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: Further Report, 1984”. In studying this Report we have noted that the matters discussed in our own Report are not local, but also that the conclusions we have submitted have been reached by others independently.
- 5.7 To conclude, we believe that our theological work and the application of it has not provided sufficient reason to change the existing practice of restricting to men, admission to the Priesthood as described in Anglican formularies. It

may be that further theological work could lead to modification of this point of view. However, we have not, in our work to date, seen that as demonstrated, and thus we report accordingly. We do not consider that any scriptural objections exist to the ordination of women to the Diaconate as described in our formularies.

For and on behalf of the
 Diocesan Doctrine Commission
 E. D. CAMERON (Bishop)
Chairman
 R. G. BOWLES (the Rev.)
Secretary
 19 July 1985

As at the date of this report, the members of the Diocesan Doctrine Commission were:

The Rev. Dr. P. W. Barnett	Canon D. B. Knox (on leave of absence)
Bishop E. D. Cameron	The Rev. R. E. Lamb
The Rev. Dr. R. A. Cole	The Rev. Dr. P. T. O'Brien
Bishop R. H. Goodhew	The Rev. Dr. D. G. Peterson
The Rev. Dr. P. F. Jensen	
Deaconess M. A. Rodgers	

N.B. The report is reprinted here by kind permission. The Sydney Diocesan Synod debated this report in October 1985 and then rejected the proposal that women should be ordained, 354 voting against and 152 in favour.

ENDNOTES

1. A brief survey of the interpretation of some of the key texts across the centuries is provided in chapter 4 of Myrtle Langley, *Equal Woman: A Christian Feminist Perspective* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott: Basingstoke, 1983).
2. A number of observations on Genesis 1-3 are derived from J. W. Woodhouse, “The ordination of women Why not?”, *Australian Church Record*, May 6, 1985, 4-5.
3. The relationship between these chapters is discussed in some detail by J. T. Walsh, “Genesis 2:4b — 3:24 — A Synchronic Approach”, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 96 (1977), 161-177.
4. So F. F. Bruce (“Women in the Church: A Biblical Survey”. *Christian Brethren Review*, 23) wrongly states the case when he asserts that “it is in the fall narrative, not in the creation narratives, that superiority of the one sex over the other

- is first mentioned". It is not a question of superiority, even in Genesis 3.16, and the note of order in the relationship is introduced in Genesis 2. Compare the comment of Bruce on 1 Corinthians 14:34 (note 14).
5. Note the extensive research of James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (IVP: Leicester, 1981), 31-114.
 6. See the helpful arguments of John Pryor, "Jesus and Women: A Reply", *Interchange* 24 (1978), 247-254. Compare William Oddie, *What will happen to God?* (SPCK: London, 1984), 43-50.
 7. F. F. Bruce (The Epistle to the Galatians [Paternoster: Exeter, 1982], 188-190) argues quite speculatively that "if a Gentile may exercise spiritual leadership in church as freely as a Jew, or a slave as freely as a citizen, why not a woman as freely as a man?"
 8. H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of his Theology* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1975), 307. J. R. W. Stott (*Only One Way. The Message of Galatians* [IVP: London, 1973], 100) says: "when we say that Christ has abolished these distinctions, we mean not that they do not exist, but that they do not matter. They are still there, but they no longer create any barriers to fellowship".
 9. "Women in the Church: A Biblical Survey", *Christian Brethren Review*, 23. The comments in response to this reflect the arguments of John Woodhouse ("The Ordination of Women: Are the Arguments Biblical?", *Southern Cross*, July 1985, 17-18).
 10. Wayne Grudem, in an appendix to the revised edition of George Knight, *The Role Relationship between Men and Women* (Baker: Grant Rapids, 1985), 43-68, has surveyed 2,336 examples of *kephale* in Greek literature and come to the conclusion that the word is never used to mean "source" or "origin" from which something else is derived or obtained.
 11. M. D. Hooker, "Authority on her head: an examination of 1 Cor. 11:10", *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963-4), 410ff.
 12. Hurley, 168-181.
 13. Hurley, 184.
 14. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Oliphants: London, 1971), 135.
 15. Hurley, 191.
 16. D. M. Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Woman in the Church's Ministry" (a paper made available to the Doctrine Commission and scheduled for publication in a book by IVP).
 17. Hurley (201) notes the inverse parallelism between v.11 and v.12.
 18. Cf. G. W. Knight III, "Authenteo in reference to women in 1 Timothy 2:12", *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984), 143-157.
 19. So Scholer, p.7. He argues that Paul is particularly counteracting this heresy in v.15 and not simply in the matter of dress or the exercise of authority in church.
 20. Hurley, 214-221.