

# **A Short History of the Headship Doctrine In the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

Copyright 2014 Gerry Chudleigh

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## Chapter One: Questions

The “headship principle,” which was discussed extensively in the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the 2012-2014 General Conference (GC) Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), may be new truth or it may be new heresy, but it is definitely new.

Though I was born into a conservative Adventist family in 1943, attended Adventist schools from first grade through seminary, and have been employed by the church as a minister for 46 years, I had never heard the headship principle taught in the Adventist church until 2012 when two areas (unions) of the United States called special business sessions to consider ordaining women to ministry. When several Adventist ministers began talking about the “headship principle” I started asking lifetime Adventist friends if they had ever heard of the headship principle before 2012. John Brunt, pastor of the Azure Hills church and a member of the GC TOSC, gave the same answer as nearly everyone I asked:

“No. Never.”

One person gave a different answer: a lifetime Adventist, now retired after many years teaching at Walla Walla University, told me he had heard male headship preached by a lay member in a small country church in the 1980s.

It is not just church employees or trained theologians who have never heard headship theology taught by Adventists. David Read, on the independent Adventist website, Advindicate, blames a conspiracy for the headship principle never being mentioned in Adventist churches:

“I don't know about you, but whenever I read the Bible and come across one of those many statements on male headship in the home and the church, it seems like my private secret, a secret that I've stumbled upon despite the very best efforts of my church to hide it from me. I always think, “Wow! I've never heard any Adventist pastor discuss this before.”<sup>1</sup>

In this study we will see that “the headship principle” is, in fact, new to Seventh-day Adventists in all parts of the world. Today’s popular male headship theology was developed in North America by a few Calvinist Evangelical teachers and preachers in the 1970s and 1980s, imported into the Adventist church in the late 1980s by Andrews University professor Samuele Bacchiocchi (1938-2008), and championed among Adventists during the late 20th and early 21st centuries by a small but committed group of Adventist headship advocates, mostly based in Michigan.

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## Chapter Two: What is the Headship Principle?

The foundations for the modern “headship principle” are two Bible passages written by Paul. Those texts are, of course, not new. Paul mentions to Christians in two cities in Asia Minor that man is head of woman. In 1 Cor. 11:3 he says, “The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” And in Eph. 5:22-23ff, he tells Christians they should all “submit to one another,” and then illustrates this by telling wives to “submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church.” He balances that advice with: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

Those texts have always been in the New Testament. But what do they mean? How is the headship of men, or of husbands, to be applied today? The modern “headship principle” is one of many possible answers to that question.

Seventh-day Adventists, like other Christians, have never talked much about these headship texts. According to the online index, Ellen White, who wrote about the Bible for over 70 years, never quoted Paul’s statement in 1 Cor. 11:3 that “the head of woman is man.”<sup>2</sup> Paul’s point in 1 Cor. 11 was that women should not cut their hair and they should wear hats to church. Like other Christians, most Adventists have believed that long hair and hats were local cultural requirements in Paul’s time, but not in ours. When those cultural issues went away, Paul’s headship argument was sort of orphaned—an argument without an apparent application.

Paul’s counsel to the Ephesians, that all Christians, especially husbands and wives, are to submit to one another in love, has not usually been controversial. Ellen White, co-founder of the Adventist church, who had much to say about the relationship between husbands and wives, mentioned this text 14 times, almost always affirming that the husband is the leader or head of the family, but urging mutual love, mutual respect, mutual support and mutual submission of husbands and wives.

In 1957, the *SDA Bible Commentary* took the same approach when commenting on Eph. 5:

“The supreme test of love is whether it is prepared to forgo happiness in order that the other might have it. In this respect, the husband is to imitate Christ, giving up personal pleasures and comforts to obtain his wife’s happiness, standing by her side in the hour of sickness. Christ gave himself for the church because she was in desperate need; He did it to save her. Likewise the husband will give himself for the salvation of his wife, ministering to her spiritual needs, and she to his, in mutual love.”<sup>3</sup>

While men dominated both society and the church for thousands of years, Paul’s headship statements were not developed into the modern headship principle until the late 20th century.

In North America in the 1970s and 1980s, several Evangelical Calvinist theologians (also known as Reformed theologians) developed a detailed system of patriarchy, which organizes almost all human relationships around authority and submission—which they call the “headship principle.” The modern headship movement is most common where it developed—among Calvinist churches. Like Calvinism itself, it is found most often in Presbyterian and some Southern Baptist churches. Outside the Adventist church the headship movement is closely identified with the American Christian homeschool movement.<sup>4</sup> Adventist websites that sell homeschool materials often sell materials promoting headship theology.<sup>5</sup>

While no single authority controls headship theology, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), a Calvinist organization based in Wheaton, Illinois, and co-founded by Wayne Grudem and John Piper, is the best-known and most influential organization that develops and promotes headship theology.<sup>6</sup> The most authoritative document of the headship movement is the Danvers Statement, drafted by CBMW in 1987.<sup>7</sup>

The belief that the husband is head of the family, by itself, is not the modern “headship principle”—which includes several additional elements. While not everyone who accepts headship theology agrees on every theological point, and many may not agree with some of the points below, the following characteristics of headship theology are common among both Calvinist and Adventist proponents.

- The belief that Adam’s headship in marriage was established by God before the fall, not as a result of sin, and that God created Eve to be subservient to Adam.<sup>8</sup>
- The belief that Christ is eternally in voluntary submission to God the Father, though still fully God.<sup>9</sup>
- The belief that Eve’s sin was not so much in trying to become like God as in trying to escape her subordinate “helper” role, and become like Adam.<sup>10</sup>
- The belief that Adam’s primary sin was in not exercising authority and leadership over Eve, but letting her lead him, thus reversing the roles they believe were assigned by God.<sup>11</sup>
- The belief that last-day reformation requires that the original pre-sin roles be restored, with men learning “godly headship” (the role that Adam failed to exercise) and women learning “godly submission” (the role that Eve rejected).<sup>12</sup> (In contrast to this, people who believe that Adam’s authority over Eve was the result of sin usually believe revival and reformation should include the restoration of pre-sin equality.)
- The belief that the church is an extension of the family and that pastors and church administrators are authorities over members. Therefore, it is a sin for women to serve as pastors, elders, authoritative teachers or denominational leaders.<sup>13</sup>
- Polarizing language. Advocates of headship theology almost always express their ideas in ways that allows for no other belief or practice.<sup>14</sup> They talk about biblical manhood, biblical womanhood, biblical family structure, biblical headship, biblical authority, biblical submission, biblical methods of child discipline, etc. Any relationship of husbands and wives that is not built on authority of the male and submission of the female is, by definition, unbiblical. Women’s teaching Bible to adult males is unbiblical. The only

alternative to biblical submission is rebellion. And the only alternative to biblical headship theology is feminism, which they associate with liberalism, secularism and homosexuality.

- A fondness among headship scholars for the word “ontological,” a Greek word used to describe the true nature of something.<sup>15</sup> Headship advocates argue that teaching that Christ is eternally and voluntarily subordinate to God the Father is not heresy because Christ, in their view, is ontologically equal to the Father. The belief that Eve was created subordinate to Adam is not unbiblical because she was created ontologically equal to Adam. And Paul’s statement that Jews and gentiles, men and women, slaves and free are all one in Christ is only ontologically (and soteriologically) true: women still cannot be leaders in the church because that would make them authorities over men. (And slavery, according to many headship advocates, is not contrary to Christian teaching, as long as slaves are recognized as ontologically equal to their owners and as long as their owners treat them according to biblical instructions for slave-owners.)<sup>16</sup>
- The belief that God requires that women be removed from leadership positions in churches and the belief that people who do not accept these changes are in rebellion against God.<sup>17</sup> Critics in Calvinist churches and seminaries frequently state that the introduction of headship theology has caused division in many congregations and in several denominations in the United States.<sup>18</sup>
- The belief that it is wrong to accept women into ministerial training courses, and then deny them jobs. So religious colleges and seminaries should create separate training programs to train women for roles suitable for women.<sup>19</sup> When, for example, the Southern Baptist Convention formally adopted the Danvers Statement, several Baptist seminaries were dramatically reorganized, resulting in the loss of many professors.<sup>20</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine whether the Bible supports the headship doctrine or not, but in-depth biblical studies are available.<sup>21</sup>

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## Chapter Three: Adventists Have Never Taught Headship Theology

The modern headship doctrine was unknown in the Adventist church (or the Christian church) before the 1970s, and never appeared in any published book or article written by an Adventist before 1987.<sup>22</sup>

Headship theology is not found, for example, in the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, which were adopted by the GC in session in 1980. If Adventists had always believed the headship doctrine, as some advocates claim, and if the headship principle defines all relationships in the home and the church, its absence from the Fundamental Beliefs is difficult to explain.

The Fundamental Belief on marriage and the family could easily have said that at creation God assigned to the husband the role of benevolent leader, and to the wife and children the roles of cheerfully submitting to his leadership. Instead Fundamental Belief No. 23 says about marriage: “Mutual love, honor, respect and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church,” and “God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity.”

And the Fundamental Belief on Unity in the Body of Christ (No. 14), does not say that unity in the church is based on following the headship principle, with men leading and women following. Instead this belief says, “In Christ we are a new creation; differences between ... male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.”

The Fundamental Belief on spiritual gifts does not suggest there is a difference between the gifts God gives to men and those He gives to women, and the Fundamental Belief on Christian behavior says nothing about being subject to authorities.

Clearly, if the Seventh-day Adventist Church had believed in the headship principle in 1980 when the Fundamental Beliefs were first adopted, or at any time since, we should find some hint of that theology in the Fundamental Beliefs. Instead we find the opposite.

But the absence of headship theology in the Fundamental Beliefs is a small part of its absence from church documents. There is also no trace of headship theology in the 900-page *GC Working Policy*, the *Church Manual*, the *Ministers Manual* or the *Official Statements* voted by the GC and published on the General Conference website. The headship doctrine is absent from the *SDA Bible Commentary*, the *SDA Encyclopedia*, the *SDA Bible Dictionary*, and the *SDA Bible Students' Sourcebook*.<sup>23</sup> There is no mention of the headship principle on Seventh-day Adventist baptismal certificates, in the Voice of Prophecy Discover Bible lessons, or in SDA

textbooks for any level of education. And I have found no mention of modern headship theology in Sabbath School quarterlies or any book or article written by any Adventist pioneer.

The extensive bibliography in Bacchiocchi's anti-women's-ordination book, *Women in the Church*, lists no supporting Adventist references, and later books condemning women's ordination list none before Bacchiocchi's book. Current anti-women's ordination websites that offer publications for further study offer nothing written by Adventists before Bacchiocchi's 1987 book.[24](#)

Proponents of headship theology, including Bacchiocchi, do quote texts from the Bible and statements by Ellen White that they believe support headship theology, but they don't quote or list any Adventist teacher or minister before the 1980s who understood those texts and statements to teach headship theology.

Before the development of the headship doctrine in the 1970s and 1980s there were arguments against women in church leadership and arguments against ordaining women to ministry, but they were not headship arguments and they were usually used *against* Seventh-day Adventists, not *by* Seventh-day Adventists. For example, the argument that all 12 disciples were male so all ministers today must be male, is part of the argument that the church today should be restored to exactly what the church was like in the New Testament. That is a restorationist argument, not a headship argument. Advocates of headship theology argue that the 12 apostles were all male because of the headship principle, but the restorationist argument existed on its own long before headship theology was developed.

Paul's instructions that women should keep silent in church and that a bishop should be the husband of one wife are not headship texts; they are used by modern advocates of headship theology to illustrate that male headship is a biblical principle, but for more than 100 years before headship theology was developed those texts were used by critics to condemn the Seventh-day Adventist Church for recognizing Ellen White as a spiritual authority. They were not used by Adventists to show that women should submit to men.

Before we examine how headship theology was introduced to the Adventist church by Calvinist teacher Bill Gothard, and later adopted from several other Calvinist theologians by Bacchiocchi and others, we need to take a quick look at Calvinism to see why the earliest headship advocates were Calvinists.

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## Chapter Four: Calvinism and Headship Theology

It was not an accident that headship theology was developed by Calvinists.

During the 16th century, Protestant theologian John Calvin taught what Adventists usually refer to as predestination, the belief that God “elects” who will be saved and who will be lost, and that there is nothing anyone can do to change the decision God has made. In this regard, Calvin’s teaching was similar to that of Martin Luther and to Catholic theologian, Augustine.<sup>25</sup> Calvin, Luther and Augustine all taught that God knew from eternity past whether each person would be lost or saved and that God’s foreknowledge *determines* ultimate destinies: there is nothing any person can do to change what God has always known. Calvin’s “double predestination” was more direct, teaching that God actively *elects* some to be saved and *elects* others to burn eternally in the fires of hell.

Seventh-day Adventists are not Calvinists, or Lutherans, but Arminians.<sup>26</sup> Jacobus Arminius believed that God does not consign anyone to be lost without any choice on his or her part. He believed that predestination makes God a dictator and the author of evil, not at all like Jesus. He taught that the grace of God makes it possible for “whosoever will” to be saved.

The free will theology of Arminius—after being made even “freer” by the founder of Methodism, Charles Wesley—forms the foundation of Seventh-day Adventist Wesleyan-Arminian theology. In her book, *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White tells of the millennia-long battle between religion that is based on force, and the true religion of love, which is based entirely on free choice.<sup>27</sup>

What does all this have to do with headship theology? Just this: our view of God determines how we understand Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 11:3, “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

If God makes all the choices, as Calvin taught, and humans can only submit, then when Paul says that man is the head of woman—like God the Father is the head of Christ, and like Christ is the head of man—then male “headship” is all about authority and submission. In this version of Calvinist theology, men are given no choice but to submit to the decisions of Christ, so women are given no choice but to submit to the decisions of men. Modern marriage classes based on the headship principle, such as Grudem’s “The Art of Marriage,” are designed to teach men how to lead firmly but fairly, and to teach women and children how to submit cheerfully and with thanksgiving. But the principle is the same: wives submit to the God-given authority of husbands.

Some people who approach 1 Cor. 11 and Eph. 5 with these Calvinist (or sometimes even Lutheran or Catholic) presuppositions see that the submission of women to men is the “plain and obvious” meaning of the text. In the modern headship formula, a God who makes men’s most important decisions is reflected by a husband who makes his family’s most important decisions.

But as Andrews University professor, Darius Jankiewicz, explains, if you believe, as Arminians do, that Christ's part in salvation was entirely voluntary from beginning to end; if you believe that Christ freely chose to suffer and die to save everyone, because He loves everyone, but then He exerts no pressure of any kind to force submission, then it follows that men's "headship" of women, like Christ's headship of men, is sacrificial service without any hint of mandatory submission or hint of violating free will.<sup>28</sup> Seventh-day Adventists have taught for decades that without genuine free will, real love—whether for God, for men, or for women—is not possible.

When Arminians read 1 Cor. 11:3-16, they do not see a system of authority and submission. Instead, they see Paul correcting a problem with arrogant and disruptive women in Corinth. They see instructions for a husband to tenderly protect, nurture and submit to ("prefer") the decisions of his wife, as Christ tenderly nurtures the church. And an Arminian sees a wife lovingly supporting, respecting, nurturing and submitting to ("preferring") the decisions of her husband. Instead of moving from 1 Cor. 11:3 to theories of headship and submission, an Arminian is more likely to move to 1 Cor. 13 and other texts that tell people how to love and serve each other as Christ loves us.

The modern headship doctrine that appears to some (but not most) Calvinists as the plain and obvious meaning of Paul's council to the believers in Corinth and Ephesus, does not appear at all to most other Christians.<sup>29</sup>

Headship theology played no part in Adventist thought until the late 20th century, when flyers began to arrive for Bill Gothard's seminars.

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## Chapter Five: Bill Gothard's Chain of Command

In the 1970s, hundreds, possibly thousands, of Seventh-day Adventist youth, youth leaders, teachers and parents attended the enormously popular Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts seminars conducted by then-Wheaton College (Calvinist) professor, Bill Gothard.[30](#)

The key phrase in Gothard's pioneering version of headship theology was "God's chain-of-command." One illustration showed God holding a hammer—identified as "father"—in His left hand. The hammer pounds on a chisel—"mother"—in his right hand, and the point of the chisel chips imperfections off a diamond—"teen-ager." Notes around the illustration said, "God is able to accomplish His purposes in our lives through those he places over us," and "When a teen-ager reacts against the 'tools' God brings upon his life, he is, in fact, reacting against God himself."

Over every person on earth, God has assigned authorities. The authorities relay God's guidance and protection. For a teen, the highest authority is his or her father. For a wife it is her husband. The father delegates some authority to the teen's mother, teachers, school principal, employer, government, police, etc. A teen is to submit to all of them to the extent that the father directs. Each authority becomes a link in the chain of command, all under the authority of the father.

In Gothard's success stories, if a young person decided to become a Christian, be baptized, and attend church every week, but the young person's non-Christian father told him or her to have nothing to do with Christianity, the youth was to obey the father. Of course, this created a conflict with the commandment of Jesus to obey God rather than man, but Gothard had two answers: "How big is your God?" and the "creative alternative."

"How big is your God?" meant that regardless of how hard-hearted your father (or husband, teacher or employer, etc.) might be, God could change that person's decision. So, for Gothard, if the person in authority over you asked you to do something you believed was contrary to God's will, you were to obey the person over you anyway (unless he asked you to commit some clear moral sin like worshipping an idol or killing someone); God was just testing your level of trust. While obeying the authority, the youth (or wife) should look for a "creative alternative," a way to help the authority know you would be loyal and submissive, yet encourage the authority to change his mind and give you permission to do God's will. Daniel's suggestion that Nebuchadnezzar test the Hebrew diet was an example of a creative alternative.

When Adventist youth leaders and ministers repeated Gothard's chain of command theology in Adventist boarding schools, they (we) sometimes created serious questions in the minds of students who had come to the school to escape religious conflict at home. Some had been kicked out of their homes for becoming Christians or Adventists. They had given testimonies at school about how God had taken care of them when they courageously obeyed Him, but now they wondered if they should leave school, ask their parents for forgiveness, and only practice Christianity and/or keep the Sabbath when their parents told them to.

Gothard taught the same submission to the government. That was an emotional topic in the early 1970s, when many church youth were protesting the Vietnam War and considering avoiding military service by hiding, claiming conscientious objection or fleeing to Canada. Gothard's answer: God placed the government over you. The government's laws are God's laws. Do you trust God? If God wants you to not join the army He will fix things so you don't have to join, but only after He sees that you trust Him enough to join when required.

I was intrigued at the time by the fact that Gothard's headship teaching appeared to be described almost word for word by Ellen White in *The Great Controversy*, where she wrote about persecution in the final days before the coming of Christ:

“The miracle-working power manifested through spiritualism will exert its influence against those who choose to obey God rather than men. Communications from the spirits will declare that God has sent them to convince the rejecters of Sunday of their error, affirming that the laws of the land should be obeyed as the law of God.”  
{GC 590.2}

By the mid-1970s, the war had ended, there was no more military draft, the hippie movement was dead and Adventists (and other Christians) mostly lost interest in Gothard's chain of command. There may have been hundreds—possibly thousands—of Adventists who were now comfortable with headship theology, but there was no issue in the church that brought it to the surface again until feminism and the ordination of women became issues in the 1980s.

But headship theology was not dead. In the late 1970s and 1980s Calvinist theologians Wayne Grudem, James B. Hurley, and John Piper emerged as leading developers and proponents of a rejuvenated headship theology, and their writings largely define the headship doctrine among Calvinists and some Adventists in the 21st century.<sup>31</sup> In the early 21st century, Adventist churches frequently offer marriage seminars, parenting seminars and youth training camps based on the headship theology of Grudem, Hurley and Piper.<sup>32</sup>

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## Chapter Six: Samuele Bacchiocchi and Adventists Affirm

In 1986, the GC published the Mohaven Papers, a collection of study documents and recommendations from a General Conference-sponsored committee that more than ten years earlier had studied the ordination of women to ministry.<sup>33</sup> That GC committee reported that there was no biblical reason to not ordain women to ministry and recommended that the church begin actively finding ways to incorporate more women into ministry.

Andrews University professor Samuele Bacchiocchi tells us that he became so concerned about the threat of feminism and the possibility that the church might begin ordaining women to ministry that he cancelled a major research project he had started and went looking for biblical arguments that would stop the Adventist church from voting to ordain women to ministry<sup>34</sup>. His bibliography reveals that he found those arguments in the teachings of a few Calvinist Bible teachers who were at that time developing headship theology. In 1987, Bacchiocchi self-published *Women in the Church*.<sup>35</sup> This groundbreaking book imported the entire headship doctrine from those Evangelical Calvinist writers into the Adventist church.<sup>36</sup>

Bacchiocchi did not leave us to guess about the source of his headship theology. His book was published with two forewords, both written by the Calvinist theologians who were developing the emerging headship theology: Wayne Grudem and James B. Hurley. Both expressed high praise for Bacchiocchi's book. In his acknowledgments, Bacchiocchi says:

“Among the hundreds of authors I have read in the preparation of this book, two stand out as the ones who have made the greatest contributions to the development of my thoughts, namely, Prof. Wayne Grudem of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Prof. James B. Hurley of Reformed Theological Seminary.”

Though Calvinist theology seems like an unlikely fit in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whose theology, as we have seen, is Wesleyan-Arminian, not Calvinist, the emerging headship doctrine was quickly adopted and championed by a group of Adventist theologians, historians and writers, mostly residents of southwestern Michigan, who, ironically, said their purpose was to prevent the church from adopting new theology. Those early adopters of the emerging headship theology included, in addition to Bacchiocchi, Mercedes Dyer, William Fagal, Betty Lou Hartley, C. Raymond Holmes, Hedwig Jemison, Warren H. Johns, Rosalie Haffner Lee, C. Mervyn Maxwell, Samuel Kornanteng-Pipim, and others. This group created the journal, *Adventists Affirm* (initially entitled *Affirm*). The first three issues of *Adventists Affirm*, beginning in Spring 1987, were devoted to promoting headship theology, as were many articles in the months and years that followed.

Evidently, the *Adventists Affirm* group kept a close watch on the Calvinist theologians then developing headship theology. In 1987 the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, co-founded by Grudem and Piper, drafted what remains today the defining document of the headship movement, the Danvers Statement.<sup>37</sup> The CBMW published the Danvers Statement

rather quietly in November 1988, but in January 1989 they attracted much wider attention for the Danvers Statement when they published it as a center spread in *Christianity Today*.

Almost immediately (Fall, 1989), the *Adventists Affirm* group published their own headship statement, using the same presentation style as the Danvers Statement, repeating some of its points, and borrowing some of its language.<sup>38</sup> Though the *Adventists Affirm* statement makes many of the same points as the Danvers Statement (e.g. women are equal to men but have been assigned different roles), it is not entirely parallel because the *Adventists Affirm* statement focused more narrowly on the ordination of women, which was by then on the agenda for the 1990 General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.

In 1995 *Adventists Affirm* asked Samuel Korentang-Pipim, then a doctoral candidate at Andrews University to write a new book showing that the ordination of women was contrary to Bible teachings. In the decades that followed, Pipim became the most well-known and the most quoted advocate for the new headship theology. His initial 96-page book, *Searching the Scriptures*, relied heavily on the same Calvinist writers who had influenced Bacchiocchi. After four chapters outlining church policy and defining the headship doctrine, chapters five and six deal with "Theological Obstacles to Women's Ordination" and "Biblical Obstacles to Women's Ordination." In the first endnote for chapter five Pipim says,

"Those desiring to pursue this subject in greater exegetical and theological detail will greatly benefit from John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, (Wheaton, Ill., Crossway, 1991). Detailed in scope but written for the informed church member, this volume by 22 scholars of different professional backgrounds deals with the main passages of Scripture used by 'evangelical feminists.' Its exposition of the strengths and some of the weaknesses in the arguments for ordaining women has enriched the study presented here."

In 2000, *Adventists Affirm* published *Prove All Things*, a 424-page book, edited by Mercedes H. Dyer, advocating the headship principle. Near the back (pp. 405-412), is a section listing 100 recommended books or articles for further reading. Of those, 63 were Adventist sources, all but nine from *Adventist Affirm* authors or staff. Of the 38 non-Adventist recommendations, 22 are various chapters in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by Piper and Grudem, and most of the remaining 16 non-Adventist recommended sources are from well-known Calvinist authors and publishers.

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## Chapter Seven: Changing Culture and Changing Attitudes

While it is clear that Bacchiocchi played a pivotal role in introducing Calvinist headship theology to Adventists, he did not operate in a vacuum. Bacchiocchi's new headship theology seems to have answered a need that was keenly felt in the church in the middle 1980s, a need that had not been felt earlier. If fundamentalism arose in the early 20th century because Christians were alarmed by modern science and liberal theology, and Gothard's teachings were popular in the 1970s because Christians were frightened by cultural upheaval, what happened in American culture between about 1975 and 1985 that causes enough fear to create a market for adopting new theology?

A look at almost any book, paper or website advocating male headship theology provides a clear answer: the threat of feminism.

Gerhard F. Hasel (1935-1994) provides an interesting illustration. From the 1970s to the early 1990s, Hasel served as professor of Old Testament and biblical theology as well as dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich. In 1973, Hasel presented a scholarly paper to the Mohaven Committee demonstrating that Eve was not created in any way subservient to Adam, that even her role after sin did not include Adam exercising arbitrary authority over her, and that there was nothing in the Bible that precluded women from any leadership roles in the church, including that of ordained minister.<sup>39</sup>

But in 1989 *Adventists Affirm* published an article by Hasel entitled, "Biblical Authority and Feminist Interpretations," which, without mentioning his earlier position, identified women's ordination with feminist methods of Bible interpretation, which, he said, undermined the authority of the Bible and did away with the Sabbath.<sup>40</sup> Hasel had not even mentioned feminism in his 1973 paper, but after the mid-1980s Hasel spoke and wrote about the danger of feminist principles of Bible interpretation—symbolized for him by the ordination of women to ministry.<sup>41</sup>

Gordon Hyde underwent a similar change. In 1973, as director of the GC Biblical Research Institute, Hyde was asked by the General Conference to establish a committee to study the ordination of women to ministry. He organized the Mohaven committee and served as its secretary. In 1989 Hyde told *Adventists Affirm* readers, "At Mohaven I was an advocate of new opportunities and wider authority for women in the church."<sup>42</sup> Hyde reported at its conclusion that the committee had found no biblical reason to not ordain women to ministry. The Mohaven committee proposed a process that would lead to ordinations of women by 1975.

But in 1989 *Adventists Affirm* published an article by Hyde entitled, "The Mohaven Council—Where It All Began: What really happened, and why the secretary has changed his mind."<sup>43</sup>

Again, what happened after 1973 that caused Hyde to see old scriptures in a new way?

Not surprisingly, Hasel and Hyde in their later statements mention changes in the intellectual world. Hyde says, “several papers subsequently came in, from individuals whom I highly respect for their scholarship and their Christian leadership, challenging the assumption by Mohaven that the Scriptures themselves were neutral on the ordination-of-women question.” In a few paragraphs Hyde summarizes the arguments made by Bacchiocchi in his 1987 book, though he does not mention Bacchiocchi by name.

Hasel has much more to say about the biblical reasons for his new position, but most of his new insights were the same as those presented by Bacchiocchi and the Calvinist theologians Bacchiocchi learned from. Hasel references several of the Evangelical theologians that Bacchiocchi lists as contributors to his thinking.

General Conference President Neal C. Wilson also reported a change of attitude during this time. He said during the 1985 GC Study Committee on the Ordination of Women, that from 1973 to 1975 his position “was more favorable toward ordaining women than it is today.” He said he had become “much less certain and increasingly apprehensive regarding where such changes as ordaining women will carry us.”[44](#)

But, why? What happened during the ten years after Mohaven (1973) that made headship theology attractive to Adventists? What caused feminism to look like such a threat to the church that Bacchiocchi’s new theology was adopted by Hasel, Hyde, Pipim, Holmes, Dyers, and many other conservative Adventists?

The answer is clear. The decade beginning in 1972-73 saw extraordinary advances in women’s rights. No doubt, many Adventists were as alarmed by some of these feminist victories as were other conservative Christians during the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1972, the federal Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was passed by both houses of congress. If it had been ratified by 38 states within the ten-year deadline, it would have changed the U.S. Constitution, giving the federal government the power to intervene and stop any discrimination against women in the United States. For more than a decade Americans in almost every state suffered through months, or years, of political campaigning, with opponents claiming passage of the ERA would result in such things as unisex restrooms and drafting women into combat roles in the army. In the end, only 35 states ratified the ERA, so it did not become federal law.

In 1972, “Title IX” (“Title Nine”) was added to the Civil Rights Act of 1962, ending public schools’ ability to spend more on men’s sports programs (or any educational program) than on corresponding women’s programs. It was seen by many as a threat to the American way of life—just to satisfy the ambitions of a few shrill women.

Worse was to come. In 1973, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade* that women have a constitutional right to decide whether or not to have an abortion, resulting, in the view of many conservative Christians, in the murder of perhaps a million babies each year—again, to satisfy the ambitions of a few women.

But nothing concerned Adventist church members and leaders more, or had a wider permanent impact on the church, than the Merikay Silver lawsuits against Pacific Press, demanding equal pay for women. This courtroom drama started at almost the same time (1973) as the Mohaven study and lasted for more than 10 years. Accounts of this crisis are available elsewhere, so we do



not need to recount it here, but a short summary will remind us of how it sensitized the church—in a largely negative way—to issues of gender equality.<sup>45</sup>

Before “Merikay Silver,” church policy enabled almost all church entities in the United States, from elementary schools to colleges, hospitals, publishing houses, media ministries and conference offices, to balance their budgets by paying women a lot less than men, even for the same work. If the church in the United States was suddenly required to pay women the same wages as men doing the same jobs, almost all church budgets would be in trouble.

While many Adventists saw Merikay Silver and other female employees as ordinary church members asking to be treated fairly, others saw them as ambitious and greedy, willing to destroy the mission of the church for the cause of feminism. It is difficult to imagine a conflict better designed to create a demand for new theology teaching the “biblical” submission of women and the different “roles” God had assigned them to play. A conservative, independent website illustrates not only the threat that many saw in the Merikay Silver case, but its connection in some minds with the ordination of women to ministry.

In [1973-] 1985 ... Merikay betrayed the Press, and exposed it to government interference. The excellent head-of-house-hold plan, which enabled mothers to stay at home with the children was betrayed. All the workers at the Press were betrayed [by Merikay.] For seeking to grasp more, many were laid off. The betrayals at Pacific Press soon spread throughout the church in the United States. One effect was layoffs. The reason: The women workers had to be paid more. Many small church schools closed their doors; other workers were laid off. [The Merikay Silver case] added momentum to the women’s lib movement. It had effectively started in September 1973, when Dr. Josephine Benton joined the Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, as the first female associate pastor of an American Adventist congregation. In 1980, she became the first American in recent history to serve as senior pastor of a church: the Rockville, Maryland, church. Winning the war on women’s wages ... gave great impetus to the “women’s rights” issues in the church. Every year the larger battle—to make women as full-fledged pastors as the men—increases.” [www.sdadefend.com/MINDEX-M/Silver.pdf](http://www.sdadefend.com/MINDEX-M/Silver.pdf), p. 12. (Condensed for space.)

Merikay Silver and the church settled out of court in 1985, but not before the U.S. Government (EEOC) had won its class action suit, requiring the church to treat women equally in pay and employment practices. In the view of many, probably most Adventists today, paying women the same as men for doing the same job simply made the church a better, more Christ-like, place. But for others, the Merikay Silver case meant the church was the victim of an ungodly feminist campaign.

Whether the Merikay Silver case was a contributing factor or not, by the late 1980s feminism was viewed by many Adventists as a threat to the mission and survival of the church. And many welcomed headship theology as just what the church needed to stop feminism’s advances.

From 1987 until 2012, headship theology appeared in several independently published Adventist books and sermons written or preached by *Adventists Affirm* board members and contributors, but it almost never appeared in the official publications of the church. One exception was 1995, when Gerard Damsteegt, professor of Church history at Andrews University (in southwest

Michigan) featured the new headship doctrine in his arguments against the ordination of women during his presentation at GC Session.<sup>46</sup> That presentation gave headship theology its widest Adventist exposure to that time.

In 2012, when the GC chose 108 people to re-study the theology of ordination and the place of women in ministry, GC leaders gave advocates of headship theology equal representation. As a result, the documents posted on the GC TOSC website show that the committee has spent a large part of its time debating headship theology, instead of studying the theology of ordination.

It is likely that the Theology of Ordination Study Committee process, with headship theology advocates (and opponents) traveling from North America to meet with the division Biblical Research Committees around the world, and arguing their case at the GC TOSC meetings, has provided the broadest venue to date for the spread of headship theology among Adventists.

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## Chapter Eight: What's New in Modern Headship Theology?

The modern headship principle, developed by Wayne Grudem, James B. Hurley, John Piper and others in the 1980s, included two new elements that made it attractive to some Seventh-day Adventists: an upgraded view of the value of women, and new Bible arguments supporting male headship and female submission.

By the 1980s the old views of women as morally and intellectually inferior, flawed and incapable of leadership, were no longer possible for Christians, especially in developed nations. Women were beginning to outnumber men on college campuses, outperform men academically in most subjects at all levels of education, and perform well in once-male-dominated professions, including medicine, law, business, communication, counselling, politics, and others. If patriarchy was to survive, it had to be adjusted to present women as just as valuable and capable as men—but assigned different roles by God. The modern headship movement met that need, defining Eve as both equal to Adam (ontologically) and not equal to Adam (functionally). That was new. Though critics consider this idea of equal but not equal to be simply self-contradictory and impossible, headship advocates say it makes perfect sense and is God's will.

Viewing women as equally valuable to men called for a new kind of headship and a new kind of submission, with husbands exercising loving and self-sacrificing service to their wives (without giving up authority), and wives offering loving service to their husbands (while recognizing his authority). There is officially no place in the modern headship principle for men abusing or dominating women, though many critics say abuse is an inevitable and common result.

The second innovation proved just as important to Adventists—the arguments that Grudem and Piper created in support of the modernized doctrine of male headship. Before Rushdoony, Grudem and several other Calvinists created the new headship arguments, Adventists had no set of biblical arguments supporting male headship and female submission.

If you were an Adventist in 1980 and you wanted to prove from the Bible that a woman was forbidden by God to serve as pastor of a local congregation, where would you have started? We have already seen in chapter three that you would have gotten no help from any Adventist denominational publication. You also could not turn to independently published Adventist books or articles on the topic because they hadn't been written yet. So it would be just you and the Bible. Where would you start?

The most obvious—but problematic—place to start would be with the texts that said women should be silent in church and that women should not teach men. But for more than 120 years Church of Christ ministers and members had been using those texts to try to prove that Ellen White's preaching and teaching ministry was contrary to the Bible. And for the same period of time Adventist preachers had been demonstrating that the "keep silent" and "don't teach men" texts dealt with local issues in the first century but did not exclude women from preaching and teaching either in New Testament times or today. Ellen White, the most prominent co-founder of the church, preached in churches regularly and taught religious truth to men her whole life. She

preached evangelistic sermons that brought sinners to Christ, and she made passionate speeches at business meetings that resulted in organizational restructuring and institutional development. Clearly these texts would not work for Adventists.

Or you might have started with the texts that said a bishop or deacon should be the husband of one wife and have well behaved children. But Adventists believed, as indicated in the SDA Bible Commentary, that Paul's intent was to require moral integrity, not to require that elders be men, married or parents. A literal application of these texts would have excluded both Paul and Jesus from church leadership.

The emerging headship theology offered Adventists a new place to start. The books published independently by Michigan Adventists in the 1980s and early 1990s make it clear that the new headship argument was simple. It had three parts.

The first part of the new argument created an emotional context by talking about the breakdown of society—divorce, immorality, feminism, homosexuality, rock music, etc.—and asserting that those things were all parts of a feminist attack on the Bible and religion. Specifically, they were the results of disregarding the distinct roles that God has assigned to men and women.

Second, proponents of the headship doctrine began their Bible arguments in Genesis 1-2, asserting that—before sin—God created men to lead and women to submit. They claimed that sin was the result of both Adam and Eve abandoning their assigned roles.

All headship theology seems to live or die on this one assertion—an assertion that Adventists had never made. If Eve was created subservient to Adam, then women's submission to men can be seen as a permanent, God-ordained principle. With that point established, the rest of the Bible becomes a collection of illustrations of the headship principle. (By contrast, all denominational publications taught that Eve was created equal to Adam and became subject to his rulership as a result of sin. If that is the case, then the original principle of perfect equality, no matter how difficult to find during much of history, remains the eternal model and a significant goal of redemption and restoration.)

Third, having satisfied themselves that male headship is a permanent principle established before sin, headship advocates, whether Calvinist or Adventist, sweep through the Bible finding illustrations of male headship and female submission almost everywhere: Old Testament priests, New Testament apostles, elders and deacons, Paul's counsels on women, etc.

And now, since they have already established the male "headship principle," none of these illustrations or texts are required to prove anything. Whether women were Paul's co-workers or not, they still had no authority over men. If women preached and taught and lead churches, they didn't have authority over men because that would have been contrary to the principle established in Eden; if all the disciples were men, that illustrates the male headship principle and it doesn't matter that they were also Jewish because there is no eternal principle that leaders must be Jews. If in Christ there is no male or female because we are all one in Christ, that is only ontological equality; women still can't be leaders of men because that would be contrary to the principle of male headship established in Eden. If requirements that women wear head coverings, not cut their hair, keep silent in church and not teach men were all due to local and temporary cultural conditions, these requirements still illustrated temporary expressions of the eternal male headship principle. And now the texts that said bishops and deacons should be the husband of

one wife did mean that only men could be church leaders because that is the principle that was established in Eden. (Of course, marriage and bearing children were also established before sin, but for some reason headship advocates do not insist that ministers be married and have children).

So the headship principle is a closed system. Once Eve's original, pre-sin role has been defined as submission to Adam, no other argument or text can disprove it. In the judgment of critics, the headship doctrine forces some very clear New Testament texts (like Gal. 3:28) to fit into a doubtful and speculative, or even impossible, interpretation of the creation story, but to its advocates the headship principle becomes the key to scripture.

That is what Bacchiocchi and others found new and useful in the Calvinist headship theology that was emerging in the 1980s: first, a new definition of the value of women that fit late 20th century culture, while still denying certain leadership roles; second, the motivation gained from the threat of feminism and confused sex roles; third, a new way of interpreting the creation story in which Adam and Eve were equal but not equal; and finally, a biblical sounding eternal "principle" that served as a guide for how every Bible text regarding women was to be interpreted.

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## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Before Bacchiocchi and *Adventists Affirm* introduced headship theology to the Adventist church in 1987, Adventists had been moving slowly and steadily toward fully integrating women into ministry. This was not a huge issue for a church that was co-founded by a woman—a wife and mother who today remains the highest spiritual authority outside the Bible in the Adventist church. During the last 50 years, the church has approved the ordination of female elders (47) and deaconesses (48) and has voted that women may serve as “commissioned” pastors and may perform substantially all the functions of ordained male pastors.49 In some parts of the world, conferences and unions have begun treating women exactly the same as men, including ordaining women to ministry. And in other parts of the world, where culture prohibits women serving in leadership positions, and where having women pastors would hinder the spread of the gospel, the integration has moved much slower, or not at all. In this, the church may be following Paul’s example: “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22, NKJV).

Whenever the GC has formed committees in the past to consider ordaining women to ministry they have found no biblical reasons not to. If Bacchiocchi and others had not brought uncompromising headship theology into the Seventh-day Adventist church, study committees in the 21st century would almost certainly be affirming previous committee findings that the leadership of women is in keeping with the principles of the New Testament church. Leaders would be deciding where in the world the ordination of women as pastors would contribute to bringing more people to Jesus and where such a practice would hinder the mission of the church—that is, deciding how to be “all things to all men” in order that by “all means” we might save some.

In his introduction, Bacchiocchi makes it clear that he believed the emerging headship arguments were so powerful that they would unite the church behind a policy that no women could serve as elders or pastors, whether ordained or not. Instead, the new headship doctrine that he introduced seems to be polarizing the Adventist church over the question of whether Seventh-day Adventists will accept the new headship doctrine.

When the Pacific Union and Columbia Union Conferences announced in 2012 that they were calling special constituency sessions to consider ordaining women to ministry, the advocates for headship theology insisted that the church provide equal time and space for headship advocates to present their doctrine.50 No church entity gave headship advocates equal time and space until the GC TOSC. In fact, as a person involved in the discussions at both the Pacific and Columbia Unions, I can report that no one I know of recognized at that time that people opposing the ordination of women to ministry had adopted a new doctrine that had never had broad exposure among Adventists.

All that changed when the General Conference leaders invited nearly every known advocate for the emerging headship doctrine to participate in the GC TOSC. The TOSC steering committee

has granted advocates of headship theology at least as much time to present their theology as they have granted to other views, transforming the TOSC process into what may be the first Adventist school of headship theology.

Were it not for the new headship doctrine, the church might have easily adopted a policy of unity in diversity, allowing each division, union and conference to decide how to incorporate women into ministry. Instead, the church is faced with the difficult task of learning how to relate to a new theology that is rooted in a Calvinist view of God and that permits no compromise or diversity.

No one is advocating that Seventh-day Adventists adopt the entire package of Calvinist predestination theology. But is it possible to pick just one apple from the Calvinist tree without changing Adventists' traditional understandings of such things as the gracious character of God, the spiritual relationship between Christ and his followers, the commitment to religious liberty for all, and the urgency to take the gospel to every person on earth? That is the question that the church must answer before members and leaders can unite around any ordination theology.

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## Endnotes

1 David Read, "Are Adventists Coalescing into Opposing Parties?" (Part I), Advindicate.com, March 24, 2014

2 <https://egwwritings.org/> (Click "Search" and "Scriptural Index")

3 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957. Vol. 6, p. 1035.

4 For example, one of the earliest and most controversial headship theologians, Presbyterian minister R. J. Rushdoony, earned a large part of his income as an expert witness, testifying in support of homeschooling; Bill Gothard redirected his organization almost entirely from headship seminars to homeschool training and supplies, and the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, the center of Calvinist headship theology, is a major homeschool resource.

5 While some Adventist homeschool websites, such as <http://www.orion-publishing.org>, offer books arguing for male headship and against women in ministry, this appears to be because most Adventist homeschoolers are conservative, not because the Adventist homeschool movement is rooted in male headship theology.

6 <http://cbmw.org/>

7 Read the full Danvers Statement here: <http://cbmw.org/core-beliefs/>

8 Danvers Statement, Affirmation No. 3; and, e.g., Gerhard Pfandl with Daniel Bediako, Steven Bohr, Laurel and Gerard Damsteegt, Jerry Moon, Paul Ratsara, Ed Reynolds, Ingo Sorke, and Clinton Wahlen, "Evaluation of Egalitarian Papers," TOSC, p. 4: "God appointed Adam as leader in the Garden of Eden before creating the woman."

9 Most Adventist headship advocates are firm that Christ is voluntarily submissive to God the Father. Some are also clear that this is an eternal role distinction. For example, Edwin Reynolds, in "Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians," TOSC, p.23, says "It[voluntary submission] is characteristic of the role relationship between Christ and His Father that extends from eternity past to eternity future."

10 John W. Peters, "Restoration of the Image of God: Headship and Submission," TOSC, P. 17, says "Eve's hope to be like God was not the 'higher sphere' which she sought to enter, nor is that the higher sphere that modern Eves hope to enter. The context suggests that modern Eves hope to



enter a higher sphere by attempting to rise above their original positions, by their husband's side."

[11](#) Peters, p. 19, says "By choosing to take the fruit from Eve and eating the fruit, Adam relinquished his headship role. In effect Adam transferred his headship role to his wife, and the role reversal between Adam and Eve was consummated."

[12](#) Edwin Reynolds and Clinton Wahlen, in "Minority Report," (p. 200 of NAD TOSC report) approvingly quote Calvinist theologian Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., "Christian redemption does not redefine creation; it restores creation, so that wives learn godly submission and husbands learn godly headship." From "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," a chapter in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2006.

[13](#) For example, C. Raymond Holmes, in "Women in Ministry, What Should We Do Now," TOSC, 2014, p.12, says, "While the role of women in ministry is unique and 'essential', it is different in function than that of men in that it does not include the headship office and supervisory responsibility of elder."

[14](#) Holmes, p. 10, says, "Any solution that would ignore the biblical principle of headship ... is simply untenable."

[15](#) See for example, Paul Ratsara and Daniel K. Bediako, "Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation" (paper presented at TOSC, July 22-24, 2013)

[16](#) See, for example, P. Gerard Damsteegt, Edwin Reynolds, Gerhard Pfandl, Laurel Damsteegt, and Eugene Prewitt, "Interpreting Scripture on the Ordination of Women," TOSC 2014, p. 24.

[17](#) Holmes, p. 15, says, "We have some repenting to do," beginning with "rescinding all previous actions permitting the ordination of women as local elders. Also, the 1990 General Conference action allowing women to perform most of the functions of an ordained minister in their local churches should be carefully reconsidered."

[18](#) While Calvinist critics of headship theology often mention that headship theology has split many churches, these "splits" are difficult to document because when a congregation, school or denomination is "split" by the headship theology, a new organization is not usually formed—those opposed to the new headship demands usually move to an existing congregation, seminary or denomination that does not teach the modern headship principle. Examples include the local congregation that former President Jimmy Carter left, the Southern Baptist Seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention, all of which retained a core of headship supporters while large numbers of non-supporters left.

19 Holmes, p. 12: “As long as women in ministry are trained for the same office and role for which men are trained, they can be expected to claim the same outcome.” “We do the women God is calling to ministry a terrible disservice as long as we do not provide training for the specific ministry to which God is calling them. It is our failure to provide such training that constitutes unfairness and injustice.”

20 On March 10, 2014, Cedarville [Ohio] University President Thomas White announced that due to the concept of headship in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 the university is restricting classes in the women's ministry program—which some say is every Bible class taught by a woman—to only female students.” <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2014/march/christian-college-solidifies-complementarian-cedarville.html>

21 Several papers at the 2014 GC TOSC examine the headship doctrine from a biblical perspective. In support: John W. Peters, “Headship and Submission: Image of God.” Against: Angel Rodriguez, “Evaluation of the Arguments Used by Those Opposing the Ordination of Women to the Ministry,” and Kendra Haloviak Valentine, “Is Headship Theology Biblical?” See also Richard M. Davidson, “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” Chapter 13 of *Women in Ministry*, Special Committee, SDA Theological Seminary, Nancy Vyhmeister, editor. Read online at: <http://session.adventistfaith.org/assets/393498>

22 Historians have noted that in Reformed theology the subordinate position of women is similar to the position of women in pre-reformation Catholic theology. One difference is that the older theology usually presented women as weaker spiritually, less intelligent and more gullible than men, while the new headship theology, following the pioneering headship theologian, R. J. Rushdoony, insists that women are not inferior to men, they have just been assigned a subordinate functional role.

23 On Gen. 1-3, the *SDA Bible Commentary* (Wash. D.C.: Review and Herald, 1957) gives no hint that Adam was head over Eve before sin. On Paul’s counsel in I Tim. 3, that bishops and deacons should be “the husband of one wife,” the commentary lists four possible meanings: that they must be male is not included in the list. To modern readers looking for arguments for or against the headship principle, the comments on the two headship texts, 1 Cor. 11 and Eph. 3, look as if they were written by an egalitarian and a headship advocate who took turns writing paragraphs. There is plenty for both sides to love and hate. But the headship doctrine was not developed until a quarter century after the commentary was published, so the authors were not addressing our questions. The Commentary affirms that before sin the authority and rank of Adam and Eve were perfectly equal, that as a result of sin man has been assigned to be the head, leader or even “ruler” of the family, that the gospel seeks to restore the relationship of husband and wife to perfect equality, and that in a Christian home husband and wife will work

so diligently for the happiness and benefit of each other—even at the cost of their own lives—that neither will ever think about who is the head. The authors do not connect the headship texts with the issue of which church offices a woman may hold. See especially Vol. 6, pp. 753-759 and pp. 1035-1038.

[24](#) An example of an anti-ordination site that includes no Adventist references before 1987, but suggests a list of Evangelical Calvinist authors for further study is <http://www.womenministrytruth.com/free-resources/other-insightful-works.aspx>

[25](#) See Brian G. Mattson, Double or Nothing: Martin Luther’s Doctrine of Predestination. <http://www.contra-mundum.org/essays/mattson/Luther-predestination.pdf>

[26](#) Arminians, people who mostly agree with the free will theology of Jacobus Arminius, are not to be confused with Armenians, citizens of the country of Armenia, or people of Armenian ancestry. Nor should Arminianism be confused with Arianism, the belief that Jesus was not eternally and fully God.

[27](#) Woodrow W. Whidden, II, says in the *Review and Herald*, Oct. 14, 2010: “To put it very simply: no 'free grace' and its 'freed wills,' no God-vindicating 'Great Controversy theme' for Seventh-day Adventism!” <http://archives.adventistreview.org/article/3799/archives/issue-2010-1533/grace-free-will-and-judgment>

[28](#) Darius Jankiewicz, “Two Visions of God and Male Headship: A Study in Calvinist and Arminian Presuppositions.”

[29](#) For Evangelical criticism of Calvinist headship theology see <http://www.godswordtowomen.org/headship.htm>

[30](#) In 2014 the Bill Gothard website states that 2.5 million people have attended his Institutes.

[31](#) Some church historians date the emergence of the modern headship movement from the publication of Grudem’s *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, in 1994 (Zondervan).

[32](#) As I write this paper in early 2014 I see that a church in the Central California Conference is advertising a headship seminar for youth at a lodge in Yosemite, and a church in the Southern California Conference is offering a video seminar for couples, “The Art of Marriage,” featuring the headship teachings of Wayne Grudem.

[33](#) See GC Archives at <http://www.adventistarchives.org/1973-5-mohaven-.U00AMcd00lo>

[34](#) Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: a Biblical Study of the Role of Women in the Church*, Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, pp. 11-18.

[35](#) The full text of *Women in the Church*, by Samuele Bacchiocchi is available at this website:

<http://peter.hitechemail.com/english/dnl/bacchi/books/womench.pdf>

[36](#) Evidently, Bacchiocchi was not the first Adventist in the 1970s or 1980s to express headship ideas. At Mohaven in 1973, Hedwig Jemison presented a collection of statements from Ellen White, with commentary suggesting she had accepted headship theology. And the skeletal minutes from the GC's 1985 Role of Women in the Church committee, indicate that at least one unnamed member of the committee was presenting headship arguments. But Bacchiocchi was the first Adventist to compile and publish the emerging headship doctrine.

[37](#) Read the full Danvers Statement here: <http://cbmw.org/core-beliefs/>

[38](#) Read the full *Adventists Affirm* Affirmations Statement at <http://session.adventistfaith.org/no> or in the *Pacific Union Recorder*, August, 2012. The Danvers Statement was written in the form of 10 "concerns," followed by 10 "affirmations." The *Adventists Affirm* statement took the form of 11 "concerns" followed by 10 "affirmations." The following complicated sentences from THE DANVERS STATEMENT (#3) and the *Adventists Affirm* statement (#7) illustrate the way the *Adventists Affirm* group borrowed language, style and ideas from the Danvers Statement:

In their statements, both the DANVERS group and the *Adventists Affirm* group are: CONCERNED (*deeply concerned*) about the "INCREASING PROMOTION (*increasing promotion*) GIVEN TO FEMINIST EGALITARIANISM (*of feminist interpretations*) WITH ACCOMPANYING DISTORTIONS OR NEGLECT OF (*which distort*) THE GLAD HARMONY PORTRAYED IN SCRIPTURE (*what the Bible says*) BETWEEN THE LOVING, HUMBLE LEADERSHIP OF REDEEMED HUSBANDS (*about the sacrificial headship role of a caring husband*) AND THE INTELLIGENT, WILLING SUPPORT OF THAT LEADERSHIP (*and the willing helper role*) BY REDEEMED WIFES (*of an intelligent, loving, wife*)."

[39](#) Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Relationship of Man and Woman in the Beginning and at the End," unpublished manuscript presented at Mohaven, 1973. In the final sentence, Hasel calls for men and women to "participate in full equality of responsibilities and privileges in all lines of work in order to hasten the coming of our beloved Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

[40](#) *Adventists Affirm*, Fall, 1989, pp. 12-23.

[41](#) One theologian told me that before his death Hasel returned to his original position, but Hasel never wrote anything documenting that change.

[42](#) *Ibid.*, p.42

[43](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

[44](#) Report of Role of Women in the Church Committee, Mar. 26-29, 1985, P. 18. <http://www.adventistarchives.org/1985-study-committee-minutes.pdf>

[45](#) For the story from Merikay Silver's perspective see her book, *Betrayal: The Shattering Sex Discrimination Case of Silver Vs. Pacific Press Publishing Association*, Mars Hill Publication, 1985.

[46](#) P. Gerard Damsteegt, "A Response to the North American Division Ordination Request," is available online: <http://www.andrews.edu/~damsteeg/Ordination.html>

[47](#) GC Committee Minutes, April 3, 1975, 75-153-154, and October 14, 1984, 84-386-387

[48](#) GC Committee Minutes, April 3, 1975, 75-153-154

[49](#) On Oct. 5, 1989 the GC Committee voted to refer to GC Session 1990 a recommendation that (1) women not be ordained, but that (2) commissioned women pastors "may perform essentially the ministerial functions of an ordained minister." But on Oct. 9, the same committee voted to split that action, sending the recommendation that women not be ordained to GC Session, but immediately authorizing commissioned women pastors to perform essentially the ministerial functions of an ordained minister. Source: General Conference Committee Minutes, October 9, 1989, 89-429-431

[50](#) At the Pacific Union Conference special constituency session in 2012, leaders assigned more time to the General Conference team to speak against the ordination of women than they assigned to other presenters to speak in favor of ordaining women. The GC team did not present headship arguments, or any Bible arguments, choosing instead to appeal to church policy and long-standing practices. The situation in the Columbia Union was similar.

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## **About the Author**

Gerry Chudleigh is communication director for the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, based in Thousand Oaks, Calif., and publisher of the Pacific Union Recorder. But the views expressed in this paper are his own, not necessarily those of his employer. Some people refer to him as a serial learner, having both studied and taught classes in such things as antique clock repair, photography, book collecting, Bible study and backpacking. When he's not researching a topic that catches his attention, he's probably photographing a humanitarian project in a developing country or a church event in North America, reading, or exploring the California desert in his Jeep.

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